Constructing the Mediterranean Region: Obscuring Violence in the Bordering of Europe's Migration "Crises"

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Abstract

Many names have been attached to regional spaces of migration around the edges of the European Union, including the Mediterranean, Africa-Europe, EU, and Schengen. These regional distinctions and the image of contiguous boundaries assume certain territorial stabilities that can be known, mapped, and policed: the African continent, the European Union, the Mediterranean and even the notion of territorial waters. Yet, territoriality itself is an unstable concept, and the many crises unfolding in the interstitial spaces in the Mediterranean signal precisely the fluidity of the region. Regional solutions are popular within the current panoply of

enforcement strategies used to manage migration, but they function to reify and stabilize the concept of the region and obscure violence happening at other scales. In this paper we build on political geographers' examinations of the social construction of scale to investigate the ways in which the region has been created through "migration management." Building on the work of feminist geographers, we contend that attention to the scale of the migrant body shows the violence obscured by regionalized migration management and opens up spaces and strategies of political engagement. This approach highlights the multiple places where the EU-Africa borderlands are constructed and shifts the conversation from a state-centric discourse of migration management enacted at the region to one of embodied migration politics that addresses violence transpiring at finer scales.

Introduction

Before Malta joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, most migrants who landed on the island state passed through en route to other destinations in the region. Once joining the EU, Malta held the new responsibility of policing Europe's southern frontier. The island repurposed military bases and soon held several thousand detainees, most of whom lodged claims to political asylum. While on Malta in December 2011, we met with one former detainee who had sought and found protection and been released on Malta. While he had chosen to stay on the island, he shared stories of others who had left. While Maltese officials are required to enter all migrants' fingerprints into the Eurodac database, they sometimes through small actions address what they see as an imbalance in the "burden-sharing" that Malta must carry to police the region's southern border on behalf of larger, wealthier states. Ahmed shared a story of Maltese officials at times removing fingerprints of other migrants from the system and telling them to go on to other countries. This erasure of the trace of the body buffered the migrants from the legal requirement that they seek asylum in their country of first landing and excused Malta from processing their claims.

We have no way of knowing how often this happened, or proving that it happened at all. However, the act of sharing this anecdote signals a highly significant relationship between regional struggles over what is often called migration management and the placement of migrant bodies at the center of these struggles. In this paper, we explore these multi-scalar negotiations over migration wherein states pass along responsibility to manage, police, and protect. The burden of these struggles is often born in embodied fashion by individual migrants, whether the burden of proving persecution for asylum, the limbo and uncertainty of detention, or the physical violence and punishment suffered en route.

Many names have been attached to regional spaces of migration around the edges of the European Union, including the Mediterranean, Africa-Europe, EU, and Schengen. Some think of the sites where regions meet as neat seams. These regional distinctions and images of contiguous boundaries assume certain territorial stabilities that might be known, mapped, policed: the African continent, the

European Union, the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, more critical terms such as "Fortress Europe" and "global apartheid" also lend the appearance of stability to regionally-organized geographies of mobility. But where *is* Fortress Europe? Where does Europe begin and end, given the dynamism and struggles over entry found so readily along the margins of European territory? How does the stable nomenclature of naming a region eclipse the destabilizing dynamism of struggles over inclusion and exclusion happening along the peripheral zones of the European Union?

In this paper, we argue that regional solutions of migration management rest on a reified notion of the Mediterranean as a coherent regional borderlands, and in so doing obscure both the instability of this place as well as the violence that occurs there. This is evident in the struggles over migration transpiring in the borderlands between northern Africa and the southern European Union, places whose boundaries and meanings rapidly shift as migrants try to enter the EU at any cost. Even attempts to discern the inside and outside demarcations of the European Union illustrate the many ways in which the border is itself destabilized. As we will show, the externalization of migrant processing and detention beyond the EU, in what the European Union refers to as its "neighborhood" (Collyer, 2007; Geiger and Pecoud, 2010), calls into question the extant limits of sovereign boundaries, powers, and enforcement exercises. The extension of EU enforcement offshore intensifies differential forms of inclusion and exclusion that play out on the bodies of migrants. As Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki (2012) argue, these enforcement practices in the borderlands exploit place and people though what they call "sexual border conquest." We build on their argument to examine the violence enacted on migrant bodies that is obscured by ostensibly humane, managerial regional solutions.

As we discuss below, Dublin II and bilateral readmission agreements illustrate the internal fractiousness of the EU, in spite of language about unification, harmonization, and the elusive objective of common asylum policy. For migrants and nation-states alike, the boundaries of the region are continuously re-constructed at multiple scales, with the definition of the region shifting alongside increasingly dispersed encounters between migrants and enforcement authorities. Only through understanding of the constructed nature of these scales do fluid borders of the region and the politics driving these shifts emerge.

Our transnational comparative work on island detentions and the historical evolution of European, Australian, and North American border enforcement practices has found the role of regions – however contested their definition – to be highly significant in the contemporary geopolitics of migration. Each regional formation has particular histories of colonialism, imperialism, and contemporary bilateral and multilateral state arrangements. In recent years, proximate nation-states have pursued parallel regional migration policies in concert and conflict with their neighboring states. Amid these fluid spatial arrangements, what is often referred to as "migration management" has become one of the ways in which

nation-states seek to implement and coordinate migration and refugee policies at a regional scale (see Betts, 2010).

To flesh out the stakes of these regional arrangements on the people and sites where they are implemented, we draw on writing by political geographers addressing the geopolitics of human migration (Samers, 2004; Coleman, 2007; Hyndman, 2012), and the social production of geographical scale (e.g., Marston, 2000; Cope, 2004). Political geographers have used the concept of scale analytically to explore spatial arrangements of power (Brenner, 2004). They have questioned the taken for granted nature of scale as a unit of analysis applied to study of political institutions and processes. John Agnew (1994), for example, argues that much thinking about the nation-state in the field of international relations relies on what he calls "the territorial trap," a conception of sovereignty that ends at the boundaries of national territory. As literatures on mobilities, transnationalism, globalization, and border studies have shown, such national-scale spatial containers do not hold. Instead, sovereignty is being reconstituted in complex ways that create new geographic scales and scalar configurations of power and contestation. For whom, for example, do the boundaries around European states disappear and re-appear, and who exactly polices or holds responsibility for safety in Libyan or Lampedusan waters? The boundaries demarcating states, regions, and territorial waters are at once sites of policing and containment (Frontex coordinates policing of the EU; Italy polices Italy), and sites of crossing and confusion.

To understand the EU as a regional construct, it is helpful to draw on feminist geographers' work on the constructed nature of scale. These scholars have argued that geopolitical thinking that prioritizes national and global scales obscures political dynamics transpiring at finer scales, such as the body (Marston, 2000; Hyndman, 2004). Both Sallie Marston (2000) and Megan Cope (2004), for example, argue that the scale of the household and therefore the daily lives and common sites of political engagement for women are often obscured in analyses of formal, public spheres and scales at which politics are generally understood. Discussion and debate about migration likewise focus heavily on national and global scales, wherein movement from one state to another raises debates about state sovereignty, global migration regimes, and – inevitably – regional solutions. Again, this national and global focus obscures political processes transpiring at finer scales, and the spaces of struggle and political engagement of individuals.

We suggest that the emphasis on the region at work in migration management overlooks the daily lives and political engagement undertaken by individual migrants struggling to live, work, cross, enter, and survive. In this paper, therefore, we trace the contours of the region while simultaneously challenging the taken-for-granted dimensions of the scale of the region. This move is important because of the primacy of the role of regionalization in the contemporary geopolitics of migration. Although projects of deconstruction are often dismissed as apolitical, we find that deconstruction of the region draws attention to the historic and geographic

context within which state and non-state actors are negotiating state sovereignty. The region is a perpetually shifting field co-constituted by state authorities and migrants alike in the places where they encounter each other and negotiate entry and exclusion; passage and detention; legal status of the individual and political status of the territory where individuals are located. This paper, then, offers one response to a recent call by political geographers' for more research "into the mutually constitutive interactions that produce both the novel geopolitical spaces of the EU and the daily realities of persons living in Europe's 'twilight zones'" (Bialasiewicz et el., 2009, 80). By moving to the body as the finest scale of analysis, we find the opening up of spaces and strategies of political engagement obscured by regionalized migration management.

We proceed by framing struggles over entry to and exclusion from the EU with conceptual discussion of what it means to understand "the region." The region functions as a scale whose construction holds dire material consequences for those embarking on often perilous journeys to move from one place in the region to another. We then examine specific sites of struggle in the EU-African borderlands in more depth, drawing on documentation of the outward expansion and dispersal of European border enforcement into northern Africa. The "region" is not evident everywhere evenly nor all of the time. Indeed, borderlands and their complex jurisdictions, legal geographies, and relations to territorial and international waters are rich spaces through which to explore and question the scale of the region. We look to the fringes of the EU to understand attempts to enter, interceptions at sea, and detention en route. We then consider the bodily geopolitics of the EU and EU-Africa borderlands through sites of conflict over common asylum policy within the EU. Ultimately, we conclude that a feminist constructivist approach to the scaling of the region is necessary to understand geopoliticized struggles over migration. This approach shifts the state-centric conversation about migration management to one of migration-related politics and elucidates the violence of migration management itself.

Constructing regions through migration management

Economic asymmetries between regions of origin and destination, owing in no small part to histories of colonialism, have set the stage for sometimes violent confrontation along the marginal border zones between regions. Over the last three decades, regional "solutions" have become increasingly popular spatial arrangements that capitalize on powerful states' geopolitical fields of influence, and are designed to keep people who have been displaced closer to their regions of origin (Hyndman and Giles, 2011). Officials seem to develop these solutions wherever potential asylum claimants travel by water with the hope of reaching sovereign territory to make an asylum claim. In the United States, for example, claimant arrivals by boat intensified in the 1980s and 1990s first with Haitian, Cuban, and later Chinese nationals trying to enter the southern, eastern, and western coasts. These entries gave rise to administrative changes to existing enforcement policies with the implementation of a policy of interdiction by

executive order of President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Guy Goodwin-Gill, who was working for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the time, suggests that Reagan's policy became "the model, perhaps, for all that has followed" in state practice around the world (2011, 443).

Indeed, the pattern is not isolated to North America, and has repeated itself off the shores of Australia and the European Union. Over the last several years, the struggles between government authorities who enforce borders and transnational migrants seeking to enter the European Union have increased. Policy makers often label migrants in the borderlands as "mixed flows:" people who may be moving for economic reasons and those looking for protection from a well-founded fear of persecution at home. As regionalization and integration intensified throughout the 1990s, these migrations increased along the southern boundaries of the EU (Mountz and Kempin 2013). The borderlands between southern Europe and northern Africa have become hot spots, as have the zones of transit between eastern and western Europe. In this article, we focus on regional migration management practices in the European Union, and specifically on migration-related enforcement activities happening in the southern border zones between Italy and Libya, and Greece and Turkey.

EU member states have followed a spatial pattern in their enforcement practices over the last twenty years: moving outward, focusing on policing the margins of the EU as internal border-crossings were minimized for the purposes of integrating labor migration (Mountz and Kempin, 2013). The spatial logic of exclusionary enforcement policies is deterrence: thwarting those seeking to land before they reach sovereign territory. Practices that deter migrants include interception at sea, bilateral arrangements to return those intercepted, and detention of those making unauthorized entry somewhere during the transnational journey.

Research shows that as enforcement in one area intensifies, human smuggling routes move elsewhere in search of entry points with less policing (Mountz and Kempin, 2013). Further, enforcement measures and human smuggling industries tend to escalate in concert: as one intensifies, so too does the other (Koser, 2001; Hiemstra, 2012). As enforcement deepens, the prices paid to human smugglers and the risks taken by migrants increase (Nadig, 2002).

As more countries join the EU, migrants attempting to enter gather in cities and entry points along an expanding margin, such as Cairo, Istanbul, Ceuta and Melilla, indeed backing up into the Sahara dessert where the accumulation of bodies – both the living and dead – attest to the difficulty of crossing. Authorities and migrants tend to encounter one another and negotiate processes of entry and exclusion in transit regions and liminal locations of crossing. These border struggles over entry and exclusion mirror broader processes of EU integration and regionalization (Paasi, 2009). As Paasi has shown, regionalization in practice never goes as smoothly as policy suggests. When it comes to common projects of immigration, asylum, and border enforcement policy, the EU remains embroiled in

fractious migration politics that challenge any easy detection of a common identity for the region.

The Mediterranean borderlands is a complex space comprised of movement in many directions, encompassing both entry and exclusion (Karakayali and Rigo, 2010). The borderlands are built not only on mobility, but on geopoliticized state practices, such as regional agreements. Although peripheral geographically, the borderlands prove central to regional migration management solutions. Many such practices – such as interception, detention, and border fortification – are carried out with the goal of exclusion. As Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki argue (2012), these exclusionary measures obscure the violent exploitation of people and places in the borderlands.

The Mediterranean as geopolitical zone of entry and exclusion

Tensions related to migration management in the EU plague not only migration and asylum-related policy and law, but border enforcement practices in the borderlands. These tensions erupt when high-profile events along the southern borders of the EU call attention to the plight of those aiming to enter and those aiming to carry out enforcement. Building on Adrijasevic (2010) and Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki (2012), we suggest that there is violence in acts of exclusion *and* in the disciplinary forms of inclusion that border enforcement engenders.

Whereas Andrijasevic (2010) calls attention to the particularities of violent forms of exclusion, other scholars have shed light on the violence of exploitative forms of inclusion that happen when migrants experience violence and the threat of physical violence crossing borders without authorization (Kearney, 1991; Rouse, 1992). Kearney (1991) and Rouse (1992) argue, for example, that Mexican nationals crossing the border between Mexico and the United States experience disciplinary power that creates vulnerability and fear that extended through their time as workers exploited in the US. Nevins and Aizeki (2008) and Burridge (2009) more recently showed that as enforcement intensified along this border, so too did the number of deaths of migrants, "dying to live" in their crossings (Nevins and Aizeki, 2008).

Sexual violence against women and men in the borderlands is often hidden from view precisely because of its gendered naturalization. Melissa Wright (2006) focused on the exploited bodies of workers in the Mexico-US borderlands. She illustrates how violence in border regions is gendered and plays out directly on women's bodies, creating populations that are not only exploitable, but disposable. For Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki (2012), borderlands are not simply exclusionary spaces, but subjugated places where gender and class inequality are violently reproduced to create "disposable" workers and "transferable bodies," by which they mean people who are "displaced and used repeatedly as they travel their migratory route from home to subjugated border region and then are transferred from these areas by smugglers," themselves, or migration authorities (2012, 30).

These dynamics played out in southern Europe in the mid-2000s, as migrants forged extensive, transnational land and sea routes through Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria (Carling, 2007). Boat arrivals along popular vacation areas of Spain's Canary Islands captured the attention of national and global media outlets. Approximately 23,000 people entered the Canaries between January and September 2006 (Guardian, 2006, 27). Like Italy, Spain sought to balance international obligations and national agendas with tense efforts regionally to harmonize migration and enforcement and protect human rights.

Frontex began intercepting boats en route to the Canaries at this moment. Yet, as Lutterbeck (2009, 123) suggests, "plugging one hole in the EU perimeter quickly leads to enhanced pressure on other parts of its external borders". Indeed, Frontex's policing at sea and even into Morocco drove migration and human smuggling routes to other Mediterranean islands to the east (Carling, 2007, 21). This movement of enforcement farther away from the locations that were once considered the borders of the European Union destabilizes any sense of static borders and territorial stability.

From 2004 to 2008, the Canary Islands and Lampedusa -- a small island southwest (though administratively part) of Sicily, not far from Tunisia-- proved popular places for attempts at unauthorized entry into the EU from western and northern Africa. Not surprisingly, these soon became sites of increased enforcement activity (Andrijasevic, 2006). Until 2004, those who managed to submit asylum claims on the island were transferred to reception centers on Sicily (Andrijasevic, 2006). As a result of increasing internal and external pressure to enhance enforcement, after this time Italian authorities reduced the number of transfers to other parts of Italy. With conditions in the detention facility on Lampedusa deteriorating due to such a large captive population, Italy then began returning migrants on charter flights to Libya. Médecins Sans Frontières (2004) reported that many people's asylum claims had not been processed, nor were ample procedures in place to establish identities and assess well-being if returned to and through Libya.

Arrivals on Lampedusa and the island state of Malta increased during this period. Over 50,000 African migrants arrived by boat on Lampedusa between 2005 and 2007, and 6,500 more had arrived by July 2008 (Guardian, 2008). Italy took still greater aggressive action offshore when in 2009 it intensified its "push-back" policy (*respingimento),* intercepting and deterring migrants at sea, rather than allowing them to seek asylum on sovereign territory. Intensified policing at sea and Italy's "push back policy" increased returns of boats to Libya. But even though arrivals decreased on Lampedusa, shifting routes led to increased arrivals on Malta, Greek islands in the Aegean, and later Greece's border with Turkey.

When Malta joined the EU in 2004, the small country was already a site of increasing arrivals since 2002 (Lutterbeck, 2009, 119). As it shifted from "transit country" to receiving country as member state, Malta became responsible for

managing migration. Peaking at 2,775 migrants in 2008, the numbers of arrivals were more modest there than on Lampedusa and the Canary Islands (*Los Angeles Times*, 2010, A7). The Maltese have argued, however, that given their small territory and population, they process the highest number of asylum-seekers of any EU member state per capita. Authorities have appealed to other member states to carry a greater share of "the burden" of migration management.

Whereas fewer ships arrived by sea on Lampedusa following the expansion of Italy's interception and return policies, the political unrest in 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere in north Africa led to a spike in arrivals. By June, the number had reached approximately 42,000 (Migrants at Sea, 2011). By the end of 2011, approximately 51,000 migrants had landed (Ministero dell'Interno, 2011).

Paolo Cuttitta (2014) maps the arc of this recent history and argues that the rise and fall of arrivals on Lampedusa functions as a stage on which the "border play" of migration and migration-related politics unfold. In many ways, the island as stage reflects and refracts broader national politics in Italy surrounding migration. Like many European states, Italy holds a contradictory relationship with migrants: on the one hand, they are desired and employed as workers, but they are simultaneously vilified by politicians and attacked on the streets (Hepworth, 2011).

The many thousands of individuals stuck between states bear the great burden of migration, whether measured by the cost of smuggling fees, disrupted lives, divided families and communities, or emotional toll. In the spontaneous mass migration and displacement of 2011, thousands fled geopolitical upheaval and instability only to find themselves "managed" by enforcement on Lampedusa, or stuck perilously on broken boats while Italy and Malta bickered about the location of their territorial border (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2011b). Weber and Pickering (2011) determined that over 40,000 migrants died crossing borders during a ten-year period. As we detail below, the journey to the outer edges of the EU is neither smooth nor painless. Migrants find themselves entrapped, detained, exploited, and returned by authorities. They die crossing the Sahara, the Sinai, the Mediterranean, and the Evros River, and they are sometimes tortured at the hands of state authorities in the sites we discuss below. Even our brief overviews of migration battles in the "revolving doors" between Turkey and Greece and between Italy and Libya will poignantly illustrate that people's bodies pay the cost of geopolitical bickering over burden-sharing and the shirking of responsibilities to provide protection to those found to be in need. In the construction of the region through offshore migration management, geopolitical squabbles are violently embodied.

Embodied violence obscured by the regional scale

The experiences of migrants viscerally demonstrate the embodied geopolitics of the region. Dublin II refers to the agreement that requires migrants seeking asylum to make their claim in the first country of arrival that has an asylum system recognized by the international community. The Dublin II system and the dynamics

of border enforcement and human mobility make territories on the edges of the EU key places in which to understand the construction of the EU and the EU-Africa borderlands. As Patricia Mallia (2011, 115) observes, "the very nature of the Dublin II Regulation militates against true solidarity in that it places responsibility to determine asylum claims on a handful of Member States forming the external borders of the EU."

For example, Andrijasesvic (2010) documents that Italy increased policing in Libya in 2009, implementing deportation and detention as deterrence measures. To even reach the African coast, migrants must travel across multiple international borders and treacherous desert landscapes. Many spend years in limbo or detention, either en route or after being returned to Libya. Recent bilateral arrangements with Italy and Malta made it even more difficult for people to travel closer to Europe on their transnational journeys. With political crises rapidly building in February 2011, Italy called on the EU to develop a concerted strategy for dealing with the expected mass migration. For its part, Italy announced in early March that it would establish refugee camps along Libya's borders. As EU states panicked about the potential for mass arrivals, a refugee crisis developed along Libya's borders, and African states actually authorized European authorities to police migration on their territory.

Borderlands emerge cyclically as hot spots due to a wide array of factors. Geography clearly features prominently as a tool manipulated to deny access to protection and basic human rights. Yet geography also functions as one reason why migrants enter the EU through the borderlands, end up staying there in limbo, in detention, or deflected and deported back to places of origin and transit (Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki, 2012). In the case of the EU, territorial struggles between receiving nation-states are a source of migrants' lengthy times in transit and treacherous travel routes. Moreover, geopolitical disputes and inaction have caused the deaths of many, such as the 2011 case of 72 African migrants who died at sea after NATO, European coast guard authorities, and commercial vessels all failed to come to their aid. NATO was conducting military operations to remove Gadhafi when their boat disembarked from Libya, where states and commercial vessels did not follow protocols of humanitarian laws at sea. The poignancy of these deaths garnered severe criticism. The lead investigator of the incident, Tineke Strik, condemned European double standards: "We can talk as much as we want about human rights and the importance of complying with international obligations, but if at the same time we just leave people to die – perhaps because we don't know their identity or because they come from Africa – it exposes how meaningless those words are" (Shenker, 2012).

Even as Strik invoked a shared regional set of commitments, in practice the EU as a region is constructed through both contests and alliances. Contrary to EU discourses of policy harmonization ("solidarity") and collaborative policing coordinated by Frontex (not to mention NATO military operations), member states bicker over the extent of sovereign responsibility at sea. These regional alliances

and simultaneous unilateral actions by nation-states reveal the instability of the region in the borderlands: in squabbles on international waters, violations of human rights in offshore detention facilities, and the layering of external boundaries that place migrants in revolving doors and cycles of displacement (cf. Frontex vis-à-vis EU). These interstitial places can prove less "safe" than the sites of conflict from hence migrants fled. As a result, individual stories of displacement and travel involve multiple spaces of confinement and violence. Consider, for example, the following excerpt of one circular journey, recounted by an 18 year-old Afghan man in Sicily who had made two attempts to enter the EU:

> From Afghanistan I went to Pakistan; from Pakistan, to Iran; from Iran, to Turkey, Greece and then Italy. Part by car, part on foot, part on a rubber dinghy, at sea… Then, inside a truck…I was arrested [in Greece] because I was illegal. . . I had just called my mother reassuring her that I was in Greece. I thought that was part of Europe, too, so I… I didn't expect what they did to me. If Greek police catch you… they'll give you a good thrashing. I called my mom, I said I am arrived, so don't worry now we'll see what we can do from here. As soon as I hang up – it was a telephone booth – I get out, and two steps ahead I'm caught by the police. . . They took us to prison. I did a month inside. More than a month inside. There was no hope, I didn't even have the guts to call my mother, because she was… I had called her some time before, telling her that I was in Greece, didn't I? (Sicily, July 2011)

As this narrative demonstrates, migrants suffer multiple forms of violence and abuse as they wind their way through the EU's exclusionary infrastructure in the borderlands. From interception on water to detention and beatings in unknown places on land, the journey involves both physical violence and emotional trauma. Episodes of violence came up frequently in our interviews with migrants and human rights advocates. These are the burdens that migrants bare in the revolving doors of the borderlands. These scars are obscured in the texts of regional solutions, but visible on the psycho, social, and anatomical body.

The revolving door between Italy and Libya

Research conducted by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on the border between Libya and Tunisia in 2011 found evidence of widespread, systematic torture of migrants en route to the EU and held in detention facilities in Libya (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2011a). Although the organization was conducting this research during the conflict in Libya, the research findings distinguish between abuses suffered by those displaced by the 2011 conflict internal to Libya and those who arrived in Libya both on their way to Europe and after being returned from an attempt to enter the EU. The team's findings draw out direct links between the return of migrants from the EU and their physical abuse as both deterrent and form of sexual and economic exploitation in detention facilities (both formal and informal) in Libya:

> There is compelling evidence that the system of migrant capture, detention and deterrence has facilitated the creation of an economically-driven machine that involves not only detention but also the systematic torture and extortion of ransoms from vulnerable migrants and their families (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2011a, 4).

The team offers testimonies provided with informed consent by migrants in the Choucha camp in Tunisia along the border with Libya. The testimonies of migrants and doctors are compiled to show in great detail how detainees are "denied basic human dignity as a result of their migrant status" (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2011a, 4). The Choucha camp was run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and held approximately 4,000 people when the research was conducted, the majority from Somalia, Eritrea, and Cote d'Ivoire. The report's author notes that those interviewed for the report represented only those migrants who were accessible to the organization, which is to say a small minority. Based on the accounts of those interviewed, many more migrants were suffering more horrendous conditions in prisons and detention facilities in more distant locations in Libya that did not allow visits.

The vast majority of migrants seen by MSF staff in the camp for assistance with mental health issues – 96% - were young men between the ages of 19 and 45 (2011a, 8). The main conditions experienced were insomnia, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (2011a: 9). Women, too, were interviewed for the report, and they shared traumatic stories of gang rape and other forms of sexual violence and slavery in the custody of Libyan officials. Multiple testimonies reported women migrants who had been brought to local hospitals for injections of Valium "to make me calmer during the rapes," as one woman explained (2011a, 13). Most men, too, had experienced sexual violence in the form of electroshock, genital torture, beatings, enforced nudity, enforced masturbation, enforced rape, and incest (2011a, 12). And yet no counseling related to sexual violence was available to them (2011a, 11).

Evidence of the marginalization and abuse of migrants en route to the EU was seemingly ubiquitous, from the high rate of detention among those returned, to the involvement of Libyan and Tunisian authorities in human smuggling and trafficking industries. The report identifies migrants as experiencing "a very specific kind of vulnerability" (2011a: 12). Indeed, several people providing testimony for the report told researchers of guards in the notorious Al Khatroun prison at the Niger border who shouted, "You want to go to Italy? This is Italy!" "while administering electroshock, genital beatings and other forms of torture" (2011a, 12).

The report also documents a system that results in routine and repeated economic exploitation, reinforcing our contention that migrants themselves bear the great burden of regional migration management. One mental health worker interviewed explained the system as one in which Libyans were paid three times

for the abusive treatment of migrants: migrants themselves paid Libyan smugglers for transport to Europe; Italy paid for their capture, detention, and deterrence; and migrants were then tortured and their families coerced into paying ransom for their release. This system of exploitation played out geographically through what many characterize as a revolving door that exists along the borders of the EU: "The whole system is to make life in Libya so miserable that you are drawn to the coast to leave by boat. This is where you are then caught again, returned to prison again, asked for money in order to be released again, etc." (2011, 14).

In addition to systematic violence, the MSF team found acute problems with access to medical care for those who had experienced the trauma of sexual violence and torture. Camps and medical facilities were run by the military and therefore functioned as deterrent rather than safe haven for those who had experienced physical and sexual abuse at the hands of authorities. Alongside the condemning testimony about medical staff injecting drugs so that women could be returned to torture, there was also evidence of hospitals conducting HIV testing without patient consent as a basis for exclusion from medical care (2011a, 11). Finally, the research team also found that MSF psychologists themselves were in need of "psychological debriefing," due to the "astonishing and horrific" nature of the stories and patient histories to which they were responding on a routine basis.

The MSF report suggests that other organizations have been complicit with the cycle of violence. The IOM runs the Choucha camp for its own profit, and the UNHCR itself participates in the logic and practices of deterrence, delaying resettlement "so as to avoid creating a 'pull factor'" (2011a, 14).

Migrants trying to get from north Africa to southern Europe struggle to find relief anywhere. They cross a dessert where many suffer, only to face physical abuse in detention in Libya, and frequent loss of life among companions during Mediterranean crossings, sometimes in a cycle that repeats itself. While not our main focus here, for those who do reach Lampedusa, conditions there provide neither hope nor safe haven (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2011b). This cycle imposes the violence of exclusion and exploitation at every turn, whether in the form of limbo, psychological trauma, sexual or physical abuse.

The revolving door between Greece and Turkey

The movement of the Italian (and EU) border to Libya has a geopolitical value of distancing the conflict over, and inevitable violence of, border policing to an "outside" nation, itself negotiating a more favorable geopolitical and/or geoeconomic status with regard to the EU. A similar dynamic can be seen within the EU. There is a revolving door and cycle of physical abuse and economic exploitation of migrants moving through the Evros region between Turkey and Greece. There, the EU proves internally divided as individual nation-states and regional bodies come into conflict over states' responsibilities to carry out regional policy agreements (Bialasiewicz et el., 2009). This is especially evident in the case of migration to and through Greece, which has become the main clandestine

entryway to Europe over the last six years, as maritime enforcement intensified elsewhere along southern EU borders of the Canary Islands, Lampedusa, and Malta. Greece, too, has become a borderlands with Africa and Asia. People fleeing political conflict and economic devastation primarily in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Palestine, but also in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Eritrea now attempt another difficult water crossing at the Evros River separating Turkey and Greece.

Within the EU, Greece has attained notoriety in recent years as one of the worst violators of human rights in the reception, processing, and detention of migrants and asylum-seekers. The human rights violations in Greece include physical and mental torture and lack of clean water, space to sleep, food, and medical services. These conditions have prompted the human rights community and the European Court of Human Rights to condemn conditions in Greece (Human Rights Watch, 2011). While the No Borders campaign achieved the closure of one island detention facility in Lesbos, migrants perpetually move and are moved elsewhere. Human rights practitioners and lawyers currently working the frontlines in the Evros region describe what they call "a revolving door" wherein migrants are turned back from Greece to Turkey, and turned back again from Turkey to Evros (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Within the Dublin II system, asylum seekers first identified in Greece must make their asylum claims there, a place where access to asylum remains virtually nil. Greece has the lowest acceptance rates in Europe, even after nearly doubling this percentage from 1.2 to approximately 2% from 2009 to 2010 (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The circumstances facing asylum seekers in Greece are compounded by FRONTEX border enforcement activities. Human Rights Watch (2011) charged FRONTEX with exposing migrants to harmful and degrading treatment in Greece.

With the *MSS v. Greece and Belgium* ruling in 2011, the European Court of Human Rights determined that member states cannot presume that human rights are respected in other member states when returning migrants. Greek detention practices routinely violate the European Convention on Human Rights' prohibition against torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. The court found that Belgium also had violated its obligations to protect human rights by sending an Afghan asylum seeker to Greece where these conditions were well documented (Euractiv, 2011). This ruling effectively suspended the Dublin II arrangement, although a new EU-wide agreement for a shared asylum policy had yet to be determined.

The human rights group PRO ASYL issued in April 2012 a report, "Walls of Shame," on the migration detention facilities in the Evros River region along Greece's eastern border. It addressed many of the same conditions that had been reported for facilities on islands in the Aegean in 2007 (PRO ASYL, 2007). Routinely, detainees did not have access to attorneys, conditions of detention were overcrowded and unsanitary, and beatings by guards and police officers routine.

Greek authorities routinely pushed back migrants attempting to cross and deported people to Turkey under the 2002 Readmission Agreement, without assessing whether their readmission violates the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Examination of who is detained and who is released illustrates not only the geopolitics of the region, but also the growth in statelessness that results. Most people deported from Greece to Turkey are from countries neighboring Turkey—Iraqis, Iranians, Syrians, Georgians – and Turkish citizens. If, however, "deportation turns out not to be feasible the detainees are released" more readily (PRO ASYL, 2012a, 27). These include places like Somalia and Afghanistan with which Greece does not have consular relations necessary to process paperwork for deportation (the latter of which recently have been reestablished). One Somali woman was held in detention with over 20 other Somali people. She recounted her national determination interview and what ensued: "I think they wanted to see if I really know my country. But then they did not let me go with the others. I got another paper saying that I have to stay for six months in prison. Many others received the same message." She concluded from her experience, "I think the police did not believe me. They did not let me free like the other Somalis" (PRO ASYL, 2012a, 25). People who are released effectively remain trapped in Greek territory where the economic crisis and xenophobia foster widespread anti-migrant violence, including systemic police violence.

The revolving door between Greece and Italy

Even as the external boundary of the EU effectively reaches outward to Libya and other nation-states that have entered into bilateral migration and security agreements with EU member states, the boundaries of the EU for asylum seekers also proliferate internally. One of these places is in the port cities and waters between Greece and Italy. Italy and Greece have a readmission agreement in effect since 1999, which enables Italy to return irregular migrants to Greece at Greece's approval. Would-be asylum-seekers seeking entrance to Italy were forcibly displaced from their makeshift living quarters in the Greek port of Patras, but continued to gather there and live without homes and with police harassment.

While Italy and Greece's readmission agreement stipulates a formal process, a July 2012 report by PRO ASYL, "Human Cargo," documents the informal ways in which Italian authorities return third country nationals without the basic protections of *non-refoulement,* the principle in international law that forbids the return of those who would be in danger of being harmed if returned home. Instead, PRO ASYL found that many people were not registered, much less given the opportunity for individual assessment. They routinely faced beatings by Italian and Greek authorities. Given the contemporary geography of conflict zones and the geopolitics of who is released from detention, it is not surprising that many people seeking entry to Italy from Greece hail from Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and Iraq. One Eritrean asylum seeker whom PRO ASYL researchers interviewed recounted

living homeless in Patras and repeated attempts to enter Italy. On one occasion, Italian authorities captured him in the port:

> They searched me and just asked: "Are you Somali?" I replied: "No, I'm Eritrean." They insisted. "Somali." They did not ask me anything else. Not even my name. I tried to tell them that I need protection, that I am a refugee and that I do not want to be sent back to Greece. […] I saw the Italians speaking with the captain of the ship. It seemed as if the captain first refused to take me back, but finally he agreed. I was deported back to Greece with the same ship (PRO ASYL, 2012b, 25).

This testimony speaks to disregard of basic human rights protections, but also to blanket rejection of people from Italy's former colonies in the Horn of Africa. It also violates a basic principle of refugee law, which is the importance of understanding the identity and country of origin of the person seeking protection.

Italy and Greece have been accused in recent years of violating this principle during moments of migration crisis when several hundred migrants are landing and being processed at the border. Our field research in Lampedusa and on Sicily in 2010 and 2011 confirmed these practices. During the 2011 uprising, for example, Italian authorities routinely assigned the nationality "Tunisian" to hundreds of asylum-seekers in order to facilitate rapid returns of third country nationals to Tunisia, regardless of verifying this as their national identity (Fieldnotes, Lampedusa, July 2011).

Broader regional politics mean that "burden-sharing" is never perceived to be evenly distributed among member-states of the EU, nor are national policies harmonized. The 2011 European Court of Human Rights ruling in favor of the Afghan asylum seeker who entered through Greece again raised the principle of "burden sharing" and the challenge of multi-scalar governance of asylum. Power struggles are unfolding between EU governing bodies and those countries on the periphery of the EU that argue that they face a higher share of the burden of processing. Mainland EU states have been funding extraterritorial processing, while also creating the perception of protecting access to asylum and human rights.

An immigration attorney whom we interviewed in Greece in December 2011 spoke to this conflicting mix of "burden sharing" and its displacement: "I think they want to empty Europe starting from Greece." The interviewee was deeply critical of Greek policy and concerned about the conditions that migrants faced in and out of detention. She also observed the ways in which Greece could serve as an easy scapegoat that displaced the official and unofficial hypocrisy of other states' asylum procedures and reception of migrants.

Evidence from the human rights reports and interviews cited here destabilizes any notion of a contained or internally stable region. Internal instability exists within the EU because of Dublin II, itself the result of efforts on the part of "core" EU nations to prevent "asylum shopping." The 2011 European Court of Human

Rights ruling effectively suspended Dublin II and furthered uncertainty over migration, return, regional migration management, and the political will for common asylum policy in the EU. Meanwhile, as EU states continue to bicker over burden-sharing, migrants themselves bear the burdens of uncertainty, violence, economic exploitation, marginalization, and statelessness.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have argued that migration management involving regional solutions reifies and naturalizes the scale of the region, while obscuring the violence of regional solutions and violent power struggles playing out at other scales. In particular, we have focused on the geopolitics of regionalization as they manifest in the form of violence enacted on migrant bodies. We developed this argument by first discussing ways in which contemporary trends in migration management fuel regional responses to crises in the Mediterranean. These regional arrangements include collaborative policing to conduct aggressive interceptions at sea, enhanced landscapes of detention in zones of origin, transit, and arrival, and bilateral arrangements for return that result in revolving doors through which people cycle, often for years. We explored the particular border struggles happening along the southern edges of the European Union and the northern edges of Africa, drawing on our own research and on research conducted by Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières, and PRO ASYL.

Following the feminist strategy of shifting to the finer scale of the body, this research shifts focus to migrant journeys through the borderlands and the violence of the revolving doors therein. At the scale of the body, migration management solutions contribute to sexual violence and economic exploitation. Sexual violence at the scale of the body in fact becomes central to the geopolitical construction of the region, however unacknowledged. Moreover, our discussion of "revolving doors" within the multiply scaled borderlands of the EU illustrates the subjugation of people and place through what Bejarano, Morales, and Saddiki (2012) call border sexual conquest. We extend their focus on the creation of exploitable workers and economic profitability in borderlands by highlighting the economic revenues and geopolitical power garnered through place subjugation. Border officials, police, and smugglers alike capture revenues in the revolving doors between EU nation-states and at the edges of the EU. These come in the form of official investments in policing and the fees that migrants (including asylum seekers) and their families pay. Moreover, the geopolitical value of borderlands lies explicitly in its indeterminacy, its usefulness as a place where authorities can shift "problems" and responsibility, and "stage" plays (Cuttitta, 2014) of sovereign power.

As the dire circumstances discussed here demonstrate, the geographical boundaries of the region are destabilized both externally and internally. Externally, the reach of EU resources and enforcement practices extends into northern Africa to contain human mobility in the aftermath of political instability there. Internally,

the fractiousness among EU member states over common asylum policy, Dublin II, bilateral readmission protocols, and human rights violations also destabilizes processes of regionalization. Thinking through these conflicts at the scale of the body is key to understanding how the EU is both unraveled and simultaneously sharpened along its ever-extending borders.

Furthermore, the abuses endured by migrants show how geopolitics combines with the violence of racism, colonial, and neo-colonial politics to exercise construction of the region on the bodies of those who are excluded, detained, and tortured. Whereas sovereign powers seem to expand geographically, migrants, in contrast, experience proliferating forms of spatial entrapment (Bejarano et al., 2012). People find themselves trapped in the borderlands in Libya or Tunisia, on islands, or in Dublin II's spaces of cyclical return. Viewed at the scale of the individual, these violent geopolitical battles over migration create "transferable bodies" that generate political power and economic revenues for state and non-state actors. These squabbles over regionalization also fuel statelessness, a condition that is also born by the individual who is excluded not only from entry, but from a global state system predicated on national identity documents as the scale of political belonging.

The implications of these battles over migration management for the future of the EU cannot be over-stated. They threaten to unravel the relatively harmonious, if extensively bureaucratic process of regionalization documented by Paasi (2009). These are evident in the bilateral arrangements made between Italy and Greece and authorities' regular departure from procedures designed to safeguard access to asylum and prevent removal. They are also evident in fears that France's July 2012 high court ruling that police may not detain undocumented migrants for not having papers will lead to an unstoppable flow of migrants to the UK (Alleyne, 2012). Ironically, implicit in such nationalist discourses is a reliance on another state's threat of arrest as a deterrent. What is, of course, obscured are the conditions of fear that policies of deterrence create for migrants, without in any way resolving the forces that create displacement.

The geopolitical conflicts and national politics shaping possibilities for migrants and asylum seekers in the EU are not only located there. Decisions made in countries of origin are also significant. For example, Afghanistan's reestablishment of consular ties with Greece may mean that people who are or are thought to be Afghan citizens may now find themselves detained for removal. In a contrasting development, the Iraqi parliament in 2012 issued a declaration barring the forced removal of Iraqi nationals from the EU. This declaration, issued in the context of ongoing conflict in Iraq, was advanced by a group of Iraqi refugees based in London campaigning against deportations (Bowcott, 2012).

The implications of our argument extend well beyond the Mediterranean to other parts of the world where parallel struggles over entry and exclusion unfold in the borderlands. Whereas the EU represents an iconic example as the largest, most

ambitious bureaucratic project of regionalization, in most parts of the world regional consultative processes lie at the center of migration management strategies and broader trends of global governance (Betts, 2010).

As feminist political geographers have long argued, shifts in scale hold potential to understand politics and power relations in ways that counter dominant narratives (Marston, 2000; Cope, 2004; Hyndman, 2004). The challenges we have leveled at the taken-for-granted dimensions of the region destabilize some of the underlying premises of regional forms of migration management. The shifts in scale to the body hold implications not only for geographers' more traditional understandings of regions, borders, and the geopolitics of migration, but open the hope that new forms of political engagement and solidarity across borders and regions may ensue. New spaces and strategies of politics are opened by challenging the primacy of the region in regional migration management.

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