



Editors

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Border Crossings in and out of Europe

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Title

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INTRODUCTION

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1.

As it so often happens in academic publishing and in life, the aim of this book is manifold. As it may be guessed by its subtitle, it addresses the variety of institutional and non-institutional responses to the contemporary movement of people from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, to, within and out of Europe. As it was mainly conceived, written, and edited in what today seems a distant past – that of the pre-pandemic era (meaning the sanitary, social, political, and economic effects of the propagation of the Coronavirus SARSCOV2 among the world human population) -, it doesn't cover the changes, some durable, some not, that the viral disease has had in both Europe-related migratory fluxes and in the multiplicity of reactions to it. It is still too soon to gauge its importance and pregnancy: what parts will be but a conjectural blip and what will stay with us for the long-term, which pre-pandemic currents and conditions will be accentuated, and which will wane, what shapes the new normalcy will take and what past features will resurface, and when. In the last pages of this book, we shall return to these issues in the manner of an afterword.

While the book's title points to a particular regional and topical context – that of contemporary migratory fluxes with Europe as its gravitational centre –, its title ascertains a general epistemological stance: that of the dialogical nature of that context. Physical and mental border crossings are, differently from crossings of borders, questionings made from distinct points of departure of the implied structural stability of borders. They refer to mobility – of ideas, of people, of driving forces – and they appeal to a kind of conversation and exchange where a self-critical posture of putting oneself in the other's shoes is a pre-condition to making sense. European responses to migration, and especially to a self-declared “migration crisis” (because, let us face it, those wouldn't hardly be the migrant's words), are not simply “responses” but responses to responses to responses. In line with this, although it has been extensively observed that the current movement of migrants happens within the African continent, the issue of borders along with their identitarian appropriation continues to be obscured by contradicting conventional assumptions (see de Haas and Flahaux, 2016). Very much as conservative protestants in the 1850s or in 2020s USA were and are eager to adopt a phraseology of nativism to mark them as distinct from Irish Catholic migrants or Latin-American Catholic migrants (and otherwise), the Europeanness of European responses is filled with indicators of a delusional identity. This book doesn't deal with historical preconditions, but they cannot be dismissed as they cast an overarching shadow over the claims, contestations and reactions that underscore the current dialogue on migration into Europe. Historical outbound European migration under the banner of the colonial enterprise, as well as more recent outbound economic, military, and ideological interactions, adventures, and interventions, laid out the path for inverse fluxes. When it comes to migration and response, the popular notion of “push-and-pull factors” can be a damaging platitude as it limits the complexity and the relational nature of the matter at hand. To paraphrase a well-known masterly piece of confusionism (Donald Rumsfeld's “known and unknown unknowns”), the pulled-pushes of the pulls and the pushed-pulls of the pushes need not be dismissed.

Knowing only too well that saying so risks being taken as a cliché, the adopted stance in this book is that tackling the complexity of the sensitive issues arising from its matter not only requires a multidisciplinary approach but also a set of contributions from different (inter)national perspectives, institutional or otherwise. What we aimed to offer was necessarily fragmentary elements for a critical debate about the relation between processes of reification of borders and the many manners of their transposal, and about the chiasmic transformations these entail on those.

Considering that non-European current immigration fuels major ideological reconceptualisations of European national and extra-national identities (as well as varied forms of citizenship), the book offers topical flashes of causal and effectual aspects of human mobility towards a regional space, but also a mental space, wherein identifications, contestations, discriminations, and reorganisations convene in a swirl of humpty-dumptyan logic – meaning, in the sense that absurdity is the background whereupon sense pops up to be dissolved in it again. European integration, the rise of populist forms of nationalism, cultural interactions, ethnic-religious conflicts, and securitisation of European external and internal borders are brought to the fore, hand in hand with the tragedies of human suffering, individual and collective strategies of survival and of reinvention.

Founded on an interdisciplinary approach – we could even see it as interdisciplinary, in the sense of that is an informal and methodologically unbound dialogue between (disciplinised) practitioners –, a major goal of this publication is to provide an in-depth discussion about many of the key migratory issues that afflict the world today, as illustrated by the European case as a reference point.

2.

Besides being (as already said) a fragmented attempt at an assessment and a call for debate, this book is also – or perhaps primarily – a legacy. A textual and to some extent visual legacy of more than 15 years of academic interactions that took varied forms, crossings of several borders, that were caused by and inspired a mashup of mobilities, aspirations, and conversations. It is a physical (or rather virtual, as it comes in e-book format) vestige of an unassorted journey that suffered many bumps and offered many joys along the way. Its now distant point of departure came in 2010 as an engaging (and in its authors' eyes sound) but sadly doomed proposal for an international graduate teaching and research program on, precisely "border crossings", that developed inside a pan-European interdisciplinary network of university centres devoted to the study of the African regional area – AEGIS, or African-Europe Group of Interdisciplinary Studies, that congregates all major African studies research centres in Europe, linked to African, Asian and American counterparts. The ideas that inspired that program proposal - *Border crossings in and out of Africa* – came from the perception of the relative weakness of Southern Europe's international academic presence in African studies, in comparison to its northern counterparts, and the intent of fostering research and teaching ties among European and African institutions to promote both diversity in dialogue and mutual scientific enrichment.

More specifically, the proposed program would bring together French (University of Paris I - Sorbonne), Italian (Oriental University, Naples) and Portuguese (Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa) institutions, through the driving force of their research centres integrating AEGIS: CEMAF – Centre for the Study of African Worlds (now IMAF), Naples’ Centre for the Study of Contemporary Africa, and Iscte’s Centre of African Studies (now Centre of International Studies). In the background, but at the time yet out of the main news headlines, African migrants’ deaths in the Mediterranean were already piling up, Italy and Spain were already pushing “fortress Europe’s” security borders to the southern marches of Morocco and Libya through murky partnership deals with those buffer states, and Frontex was in its first footsteps as a pan-European agency to sieve migrants. The Erasmus evaluators were unmoved: the proposal was praised but the topic lacked appeal.

For the proponents, though, it was a worthy and timely subject, and the failed program proposal soon morphed into a lighter alternative: an Erasmus Intensive Program (IP) co-organised by the same partner universities¹ that ran for three weeks in the Summer of 2014, at Iscte, Lisbon. The objectives were adapted and updated from the earlier proposal, and the initial ideas, questions and concerns were finetuned, shared, and discussed by a lively transnational group of students and lecturers. New perspectives and concerns emerged, as the Syrian and Libyan tragedies unravelled, the migratory contingents from the Middle East and Africa swelled, and important cracks and dissensions made way both inside each European nation and between European states, as fortress Europe, ecumenic Europe, liberal Europe, and atavist Europe redefined their conceptual and ideological boundaries. New words and images were enacted, and with them new landscapes took shape: “fortress”, “floodgates”, “invasion”, “identitarian”, “altright”, “plight”, “jungle”, etc. The media and the legal documents were peppered with a novilingua that came to cushion the extraordinary verbal flowerings that the Brexiteers, the ADLers, the LePeners and the Trumpers began spewing over the world.

¹ With some changes, tough: the reshuffle of institutional research in France led to the merging of many centres into large laboratories and EHESS’s small African studies centre integrated IMAF and other centres, eventually becoming today’s multipolar IMAF – Institute of African Worlds. A similar process took place in Portugal, but African studies centres couldn’t or wouldn’t transcend the competitive logic that took hold of Portuguese universities’ interrelations and CEA-ISCTE opted instead to bring to its midst in other area studies and become present-day Centre of International Studies.

From 2012, the so-called “Troika”² administrators did their utmost to dismantle the fragile Portuguese research set-up, and most financing for science dried up almost completely. The research and teaching landscapes were ravaged, with centres closing, teams disbanding, researchers migrating to greener northern countries. Funding for new editions of the IP couldn’t be found, so the way to press on with the study and debate around “border crossings” was through creative thinking and improvising: the summer course became a winter course, the previously independent program was harboured by a postgraduate course, international lecturers were recruited via the still-active Erasmus mobility grants, and so this forum of ideas and exchanges was kept open in those dreary years.

This is not the place to detail the astounding effect the radical changes imposed by the “Troika” in both the job and real-estate markets had in propelling the city of Lisbon to the top of the global tourist industry (see Malet and Ramos, 2018). The fact remains that from 2016 the city became the sweetheart of global tourists, global students, global real-estate investors, and global temp workers. The editors of the present book organised *The Current Refugees Crisis and Beyond: Narratives and Itineraries* Conference in April 2016, at ISCTE, already hinted at the relevance of enlarging the scope of analysis of the “border crossings” original plan to include other concurrent modes of migration and narrative-creation. This opening concurred with another research network involving members of CEI-Iscte in a University of Barcelona-led longstanding investigation into appropriations of space in African and European cities.³ And so, almost from night to day a research and teaching network dedicated to the study of “border crossings” became itself the target of a new wave⁴ of border crossers, that of international students.

² A popular epithet referring to the group of grey administrators appointed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank to apply a harsh austerity diet supplemented by a radical neoliberal set of policies in the insolvent P.I.I.G.S.

³ This long-time research network, led by University of Barcelona’s GRECS (Grup de Recerca en Exclusió i Control socials), has been morphing from financed program to financed program: “Estudio comparativo sobre apropiaciones sociales y conflictos de uso em centros urbanos de ciudades europeas y africanas” (2009-2012); “Afric – Migration and the transformations of space as a social process: Urban planning, intercity mobility, and roadway accidents in Sub-Saharan Africa” (2021-2015); “Transafric – Urban transformations, means of transport and road accident rates in Africa” (2015-2018); “Mover – Mobility overflow: A comparative study of new urban mobilities” (since 2020).

⁴ New wave, that is, for Portugal, a country that had been until then kept apart (or according to another point of view, shielded) from the major academic circuits. Mild winters, low university fees, cheap accommodation, and cheaper still booze were/are important factors for Lisbon’s popularity among European and non-European students.

The latest iteration of the “border crossings” program was founded on an unlikely partnership between Iscte and an Australian interuniversity agency,⁵ which for three summers brought waves of exceptionally committed “Aussie” students, and very welcome financing, to Lisbon.

More than before, the AIM Overseas immersive teaching and seminar program made it possible to bring together a broad range of lecturers, researchers, activists, and individuals willing to testify of their poignant personal migratory experience. The topics, contexts, nationalities, and disciplinary backgrounds were varied and mutually enriching: comparison of European responses with those of the US and Australia, legal issues surrounding crimmigration, gatekeeping in Morocco, Libya and Turkey, migrants navigating EU’s laws and roads, the dramas of the Calais Jungle, the ghettoization of Muslims and the jihadist networks in Europe, Nepalese migrants in Southern Portugal’s greenhouses, Moroccan women workers in Spain and in Tangier’s tax free zone, media analysis of the impact of Brexit (and the Trump years) upon public opinion on migration, Sahel demographics and European geopolitics, NATO and Frontex as defenders and expanders, geo-economics in Europe-Africa relations, the agro-industrial complex and the need for cheap labour, the historical roots of Europe-Africa relations, European and African artistic and aesthetic cross-pollinations, migration of European goods and ideas to present-day Africa, the life of asylum-seekers in Portugal, refugee settlement in Germany, the complexity of internal African borderlands, women trafficking into Europe, African participation in internal European mobility, Congo in Paris, West Africa in Bahia, Paris in Senegal, Aleppo in Turkey, Addis Ababa in Italy, Africa in Lisbon, Brazil in Mozambique, Islam in Africa, Erasmus students and the touristification of Lisbon, historical and contemporary refugees in Palestine and Israel, African refugee camps, Mozambican mines, Zimbabwe politics, Medieval cosmography, halal tourism in the Maghreb, secessions in the Horn of Africa, visual methods in fieldwork.

In addition, an equally intensive fieldtrip program empirically mapped out many of the topics covered in the urban tissue of Lisbon and its outskirts. The participants were able to meet an off-the-charts Lisbon just as the city’s touristification accelerated: guided visits in mixed neighbourhoods and ghettoed African quarters (Cova da Moura, Quinta do Mocho, Chelas, Almada), exchanges in refugee hosting residencies, visits to the Portuguese structures enforcing Frontex operations,

⁵ AIM Overseas (<https://aimoverseas.com.au/>) is a private provider of international learning programs for Australian university students based on a series of partnerships with academic institutions around the world. Its activities were deeply affected by the COVID19 pandemic, given the many restrictions to international travel.

tours centred on the historical African presence in central Lisbon, interactions with NGOs running solidarity canteens and cultural centres. This variety of inputs also extended to the national and disciplinary background of the program's participants: British, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Syrian, and Turkish lecturers, and convenors; French, Italian, Portuguese, British, Australian students; filmmakers, lawyers, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, historians, international relations specialists, military intel, etc.

This was a teaching and research program that managed to survive and to thrive in the interstices of the customarily gated Portuguese academia, thanks to an altruist mindset that alleviated the effects of both institutional bureaucracy and financial shortages. To its coordinators and participants, it has been a good, practical, example of the remedial nature of promoting "thinking in the classroom" within the walls of the ideologically ruined institution that is the market-driven, enterprise-like, university (Readings, 2000).

3.

The different programmes that were held across the years were certainly much richer than this book could ever be. Nevertheless, the collection of articles and visual essays to be found below aimed at tackling the diversity of contributions, disciplines, and perspectives the topic of migration entangles. The eBook then is organised around 13 chapters that seek to compose a coherent thematic and geographic path covering some to the most pressing issues concerning the crossings into and out of Europe, questioning the relative value of labels such as migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, or citizen.

Active and without an end in sight, the Syrian refugee crisis sets the background of Adam Al-Alou's first chapter. In it, the author seeks to move beyond common humanitarian analysis as well as the civil war narrative in Syria to explore the underlying politics that did not only create the crisis but also shaped its development. Migratory dynamics in the neighbouring territory of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories set the stage for Giulia Daniele's chapter in which she discusses the influx of non-Jewish immigrants, namely African, and the discretionary and ethnic-tainted political policies being crafted in this disputed land. On a more artistic and testimonial approach, in chapter 3 Manuel João Ramos depicts the struggles of an Ethiopian woman trying to make a life as an asylum seeker amidst the idiosyncrasies of its welcoming country, Portugal.

The challenges set forth by African migrants in Daniele's and Ramos' pieces find an echo in Alessandro Triulzi's chapter 4 through the dimension of memory and the traces of migrants' perilous journeys into Europe and the quest of being heard and respected. Waste, and its relative value, is the object of Pedro F. Neto and Ricardo Falcão's visual-essay, Chapter 5, in which the authors address the transformational trajectories of items deemed socially valueless, namely obsolete vehicles and second-hand and broken items, as these travel south by the hands of fearless Senegalese roadsters. Such example highlights how the possibility of crossing borders is what is often at stake, challenging the political fear-mongering discourses on the need of curbing migration and fencing up. Chapter 6, then, brings to discussion the symbolic function of the immigrant. Manuel Delgado puts into dialogue the socioeconomic and symbolic function of the immigrant, further questioning his or her impossibility to, as beings of another world, to ever partake the hosting universe.

Securitisation has been in the order of the day and served as a smokescreen to handle the so-called refugee crisis between 2013-2016. In chapter 7 Ines M. Ribeiro discusses in detail the EU responses to such influx considering the inclusion and exclusion of citizens within the union. As Filipe Faria follows-up on chapter 8, European identity debates are nourished by the broader situation, retrofeeding nationalist and xenophobic discourses and the rise of extreme-right agendas and populist parties across the old continent. Chapter 9, by Ricardo Falcão and Clara Carvalho, looks deeply at several conundrums around the practice of FGM/C through the human rights framework, with a specific focus on the connections between Portugal and Guinea Bissau. The article of Carlos Branco, chapter 10, discusses the risks of political mobilisation of Muslim populations in Great Britain and France beyond the Islamic radicalisation discourses as of a fundamental security threat/breach while advocating/interrogating assimilation policies. Chapter 11 brings another yet complimentary strand. Simone Tulumello runs to zoom in into the universe of borders, particularly the borders within the city of Lisbon characterised by the existence of several marginalised yet central districts. Fonseca & Jorge Louçã, on Chapter 12, seek to foster an understanding of migratory patterns, past and present, through the composition of dedicated algorithms. The extent to which AI will not only foresee but also decide the future of migration is yet to be clearly revealed. Finally, chapter 13, Dirk Bustorf gives some personal impressions on his experience in a refugee centre in Hamburg.

4.

From the start, Sónia Henriques, former head of the international office of ISCTE, was key to help us navigate around the institutional rocky bottoms that imperilled our teaching and researching. Thanks to her, the *Borders and Border-Crossings* learning program found an incongruous place in a largely fictitious entity: “ISCTE’s institutional degree” – out of the reach of the well-tended gardens that are its departments and schools. Also, a word of recognition and gratitude is due to CEA-CEI’s trans-disciplinary openness in a traditionally bordered milieu.

On behalf of all those who willingly or not embarked in the serendipitous travel of which this book is an unworthy portrait, we wish to also express our gratitude to Janine Ferreira, Fernanda Alvim, Ines M. Ribeiro, Vanda Fulgêncio, as well to the various lecturers, speakers and students, and to the activists, migrants, exiles, refugees, expatriates, and asylum-seekers with whom we were lucky enough to meet and to interact throughout these years.

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