

Introduction

Power works by making it hard to challenge how power works.

Sara Ahmed, forthcoming

On the morning of 9 September 2016, a large crowd gathered at the convention centre of Hay Riad, one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods of the Moroccan capital Rabat. All those who mattered in the migration world were there: Moroccan high-ranking civil servants, European diplomats, representatives from international, Moroccan, and migrant non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and of course, officers of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The occasion was a conference marking the third anniversary of Morocco's new migration policy. Launched by King Mohammed VI in 2013, the policy reform aspired to put human rights and integration at the centre of Morocco's border management strategy. In November 2013, Moroccan authorities announced a campaign to regularise undocumented foreigners. In December 2014, the government adopted a National Strategy for Immigration and Asylum (SNIA, in the French acronym), which aimed at providing Morocco with the legal and institutional infrastructure to integrate migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Benjelloun 2017b).

Officially, the new migration policy marked a turning point in the history of migration politics in Morocco, and in the Western Mediterranean more broadly. The announcement made by Mohammed VI in 2013 followed a decade of dire treatment of black migrant people in the country. Violence at the border had caused public outcry from the part of local and international civil society organisations and raised concerns within the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH, in the French acronym). The new migration policy promised to mark a break with this dark past, paving the way for a 'humane' approach to migration regulation (Gross-Wyrzten

2020b). The announcement of such a reform had been publicly welcomed by the international community. The SNIA, in fact, perfectly suited the border control interests of the European Union (EU) and its member states, which had long tried to obtain a more significant cooperation among ‘transit’ countries in the control of the Western Mediterranean migratory route connecting Western and Central Africa to Western Europe. Already in 2015, the EU had manifested its support by granting Morocco a €10 million aid budget aimed at facilitating the implementation of the new migration policy (EU Delegation in Rabat 2016). Other donors had followed suit (see Chapter 1). At the time of the conference, the United Nations (UN) system in Morocco was lobbying donors to fund a \$13 million joint initiative in the field of migration and asylum (Kingdom of Morocco and United Nations in Morocco 2016; Nations Unies Maroc 2016). By 2016, aid-funded projects sponsoring the integration of ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ were proliferating around the country, as the entire aid industry embarked on the mission of supporting Morocco in becoming a model of integration in North Africa (Tyszler 2019).

The morning of the event, I arrived at the convention centre with two other participants and headed to the registration desk. The atmosphere was very cheerful, and security extremely relaxed. When the ceremony started, various high-ranking Moroccan civil servants from the (then) Ministry in charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and of Migration Affairs (MCMREAM),¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Interior came forward to illustrate Morocco’s achievements in the previous three years, its commitment to being an international pioneer in the implementation of a ‘humane’ approach to the regulation of migration, and the challenges that persisted along the way. “We should

¹ On 10 October 2013, the Ministry of Moroccans Residing Abroad was expanded through the creation of a Department for Migration Affairs. The Ministry’s name was therefore changed into Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and of Migration Affairs (MCMREAM, in the French acronym) (Benjelloun 2017b). The Ministry subsequently lost its autonomy and became the Delegated Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing Abroad and of Migration Affairs (MDMCREAM, in the French acronym), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC, in the French acronym). After a new institutional reshuffle, the MDMCREAM has been now transformed into a Delegated Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Residing abroad, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccans Residing Abroad. See: <https://ma.rocainsdumonde.gov.ma/attributions-mcmre/>

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not forget that Morocco is a developing country, a poor country”, one of the speakers mentioned, to emphasise the magnitude of the effort that Morocco was engaging in. Invited to talk on the stage, both the head of the IOM mission, Ana Fonseca, and the then representative of the UNHCR, Jean-Paul Cavalieri, profusely congratulated Moroccan authorities for their pioneering commitment in reforming the country’s migration policy, encouraging them to persist.

The optimistic atmosphere at the convention centre in Hay Riad reflected the hopes of the international community vis-à-vis the transition that Morocco had embarked upon. But this cheerful image had its blind spots. On several occasions during the ceremony, sceptical participants raised their eyebrows at the sugar-coated image of the country’s integration policies depicted by the speakers. It was no secret that, despite the publicised commitment to engage in the ‘humane’ treatment of foreigners, the implementation of several substantial integration and legislative measures promised by the Moroccan state was languishing. The treatment of migrants at the border was still dire, with the police regularly raiding migrant camps close to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, and displacing dwellers to the interior cities of the country. Critical civil society organisations had interpreted the contradictory behaviour of Moroccan authorities as the symptom of an “undecided” migration policy – humanitarian on paper, militarised in practice (FIDH and GADEM 2015). Representatives of IOs, however, maintained a more cautious discourse. In interviews published on 16 September 2016 by the Moroccan newspaper *TelQuel*, both Ana Fonseca, at the IOM, and Jean-Paul Cavalieri, at the UNHCR, declined to comment on a question about violence against migrants. Ana Fonseca specified that she was unable to comment because she had “no information on forced displacements and violence at the border.” She then added that “every country has its own way to treat irregular migration but it is important to respect human rights” (*TelQuel* 2016, translation by author).

The sugar-coated picture portrayed by the ceremony definitely faded on 4 October 2016, when the National Platform for Migrants’ Protection (PNPM, in the French acronym) published a press release denouncing the fact that Moroccan authorities had unleashed a new wave of violence against migrants attempting to cross the border with the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. According to the PNPM, on 10 September 2016 around 100 migrant people, including 20 minors,

had been arrested, several had been injured, and many displaced to the South of the country. Despite not being an isolated episode, this arrest campaign was particularly sinister and paradoxical, because it had taken place the day after the ceremony for the Third Anniversary of Morocco's new, 'humane' migration policy. "This event [...] casts a dark shadow on the outcome of the new Moroccan migration policy" the PNPM stated. "The National Platform for Migrants' Rights [...] denounces this securitarian violence, that tramples human dignity in the name of the protection of the borders of the European Union" (PNPM 2016, translation by author).

Bordering the World through Aid

Over the past forty years, countries in the Global North have increasingly restricted their migration policies to reduce the arrival of migrants, mainly from less well-off countries in the South. The appetite of Northern states to deter, capture, and remove undesired foreigners from their territory has determined a proliferation of migration control instruments. These now include tools ranging from restrictive migration laws to border fences and immigration removal centres (FitzGerald 2019). The sophistication of containment has coincided with the expansion of the border beyond its geographically fixed location. Countries in the North have thus tried to externalise² and out-source their borders to states in the South by invoking principles of shared responsibility over the control of migration flows (Pastore 2019). They have thus engaged in multilateral and bilateral negotiations to push countries of so-called origin and transit to police the mobility of their own citizens, and of non-nationals suspected to head towards wealthier destinations (El Qadim 2015; Khrouz 2016b). The expansion of the border has also coincided with the outsourcing of migration control measures to non-state actors, including corporations, NGOs, IOs, and even private citizens (Lahav and Guiraudon 2000). In migration control, as in anti-terrorism policies (Abbas 2019; Heath-Kelly and Strausz 2019), the co-optation of non-traditional security actors has allowed surveillance to infiltrate sectors such as

² Externalisation is commonly understood as "a series of extraterritorial activities in sending and in transit countries at the request of the (more powerful) receiving states (e.g., the United States or the European Union) for the purpose of controlling the movement of potential migrants" (Menjivar 2014: 357).

healthcare, education, and development cooperation, expanding the reach of the border not only away from the physical edges of the state but also away from the national security apparatus (see Cassidy 2018; Strasser and Tibet 2020). Development aid³ has thus become a central tool in the migration control strategy pursued by European countries, Australia (Watkins 2017b), and the United States (Williams 2019). Donors, IOs, and NGOs have also become prominent actors in the regulation of international mobility due to their capacity to operate transnationally and implement development and humanitarian projects on the ‘management’ and ‘prevention’ of migration along migration routes (Geiger and Pécoud 2010).

How does migration control work beyond the spectacle of border violence? This book analyses aid as an instrument of migration containment, and the involvement of non-state actors, such as NGOs and IOs, in the expansion of the border in contexts of so-called migrant transit. I do this by examining the rise of ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ as a category of beneficiaries within the development and humanitarian industry in Morocco, a country that has long been at the centre of joint European and African efforts to secure borders in the Western Mediterranean. I argue that aid marks the rise of a substantially different mode of migration containment, one where power works beyond fast violence, and its disciplinary potential is augmented precisely by its elusiveness. Contrary to more conventional security instruments such as fences or deportation, aid thus does not filter border containment power in a neat or spectacular way, by physically preventing the movement of migrants or by inflicting injury. Rather, aid enables more subtle forms of marginalisation that construct ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ as a problem to be dealt with and promote forms of exclusionary integration into Moroccan society. Because aid does not work through violence and coercion, the kind of border control it supports is not “immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility” (Nixon 2011, 2). This elusiveness makes it more difficult to apprehend how development

³ By aid, I refer to the kind of government funding that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines as Official Development Assistance (ODA), or “government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries,” and disbursed under the form of “grants, ‘soft’ loans (where the grant element is at least 25% of the total) and the provision of technical assistance” (OECD n.d.).

and humanitarian projects expand the border regime: no one can clearly retrace the contours of control or identify its perpetrators. Aid workers enact strategies which allow them *not to see* the work that they do as containment, or to justify their co-optation into the security apparatus. Domination always seems to solidify but not quite, as it could easily camouflage as something else – the case could always be made that identifying such practices as domination relies on misplaced intentionality or misinterpretation of the context. Since control looks a lot like care, or it is enacted through complex architectures of implementation, it can elude resistance and slip through. The border becomes evanescent: nobody can say where it is, how it operates, and who is actually enforcing it.

To say that aid expands the reach of the border, however, does not mean that containment works along predictable patterns. An analysis of the implementation of aid-funded projects reveals that our assumptions about the ‘powerful’ and the ‘powerless’ in migration control do not always hold. Scholars and civil society organisations have often maintained that states in the Global North can relatively easily induce countries in the South to collaborate on migration control, fundamentally by using aid as a bargaining chip to ‘buy’ their cooperation (Arci 2018; Concord 2018; Korvensyrjä 2017).⁴ A similar argument is made for IOs and NGOs, and, in particular, the IOM, who are thought to have a high margin of manoeuvre in the contexts of ‘origin’ and ‘transit’ where they operate (Caillault 2012; Fine 2018; Pécoud 2018). But in this book, I argue that viewing Global Northern actors as infallible is essentialist. Morocco, in fact, constitutes a formidable example of a setting where national and local authorities selectively support the implementation of aid-funded projects depending on how these fit the domestic political agenda. The involvement of a ‘transit’ country in migration control cooperation does not automatically denote submission and passivity (Maâ 2020b): the state can capitalise on the activity of NGOs and IOs to implement certain parts of its migration policy – for example, by directly and indirectly entrusting donor-funded actors with the provision of social assistance to poor foreigners. But the autonomy of Morocco as a border control actor appears in a clearer

⁴ The title of a report published by the French NGO La Cimade in 2017 succinctly summarises this view: “*Coopération UE-Afrique sur les migrations. Chronique d’un chantage*” [EU-Africa Cooperation on migration. Chronicle of a blackmail] (La Cimade 2017).

light through the analysis of state-led obstruction of aid-funded projects. In the borderlands especially, Moroccan authorities closely monitor humanitarian activities, coming to the point of expelling those actors that speak out about border violence (see Norman 2016).

Talking about Morocco as an ‘Immigration Nation’ as I do in the book title is, of course, ironic. That Morocco has long been at the centre of border securitisation efforts in the Western Mediterranean does not mean that immigration in the country is demographically significant. Much to the contrary, the number of foreigners living in Morocco is actually very low and has considerably decreased after the country gained independence from colonial rule in 1956. In 2014, foreign residents in Morocco officially constituted only 0.25 per cent of the total population of 33 million people (Haut Commissariat au Plan 2017b), with estimates of the number of ‘irregular migrants’ ranging between 10,000 and 40,000 individuals (European Commission 2016; Médecins du Monde and Caritas 2016). Politically, however, Morocco became conceptualised by the EU and its member states as an ‘Immigration Nation’ sometime between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, when European state and non-state actors started regarding the collaboration of non-European countries as essential to reduce the arrival of migrants from less well-off countries in the South. The European drive for migration control and Morocco’s capacity to use migration as a foreign policy tool produced an unprecedented escalation of political attention towards people qualified as ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ living in Morocco. Far from being a natural category, the expression ‘sub-Saharan’ is imbued with colonial and racist prejudice. After the end of colonisation, in fact, this term replaced the expression “Afrique Noire” (Black Africa) to refer to formerly colonised countries – thus subtly coding racial considerations into a geographic category (Tyszler 2019). In practice, ‘sub-Saharan migrant’ has now become a label utilised by Moroccan and European policymakers, aid workers, journalists, and private citizens to systematically construct black people as actual or ‘potential’ migrants suspected to be transiting through Morocco to irregularly cross the border to Europe (El Qadim 2015; Khrouz 2016a). The securitisation of the Euro–African border and the policing of people qualified as ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ materialised through the rise of fences surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, the approval of restrictive immigration laws both in European countries and in Morocco, and the

establishment of aid policies specifically aimed at supporting border control cooperation (Coleman 2009; El Qadim 2015). Morocco thus became one of the first countries where the EU and its member states fuelled the emergence of a migration industry by using development as an instrument of containment – an approach that was later replicated in countries further away from European borders (Gabrielli 2016).

Scholars and journalists tend to use the term ‘migration industry’ to refer to a very broad group of actors involved both in the control and in the facilitation of migration, in licit as well as in illicit activities (Andersson 2014; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sørensen 2013). What is common to organisations as different as faith-based charities and smuggling networks, the literature argues, is that they share “an interest in migration or earn their livelihood by organising migration movements” (Castles et al. 2014, 235). In this book, however, I use the expression⁵ in a slightly different way, to refer to the actors involved in the implementation of European aid policy on the ground in countries of ‘transit’. Aid, rather than profit, defines the boundaries of the industry, determining who belongs to it and who does not, establishing accountability structures and flows of contestation, co-optation, and aspired belonging. The boundaries of the industry are not stable nor irreversible; organisations like the IOM or the UNHCR, or predominantly donor-funded local and INGOs, certainly form part of it. Smaller, critical organisations generally orbit around the industry but can sometimes become aid-recipients (see Chapter 3).

Studying the working of border power through aid can sometimes feel like chasing a ghost. The aid apparatus in Morocco, in fact, does not even explicitly express itself in terms of border control. As the opening ethnographic vignette shows, donors, NGOs, and IOs rather frame their intervention in terms of ‘integration’. One of the ways the migration industry supported Morocco’s integration strategy was through the funding of projects facilitating the access of migrants to the labour market. As I will explain in Chapter 5, these projects often failed: given the high rates of unemployment and informality characterising the Moroccan labour market, West and Central African people attending training workshops rarely ended up securing stable employment afterwards. One of the organisations that promoted labour

⁵ In this book, I use ‘migration industry’, ‘aid industry’, and ‘development and humanitarian industry’ as interchangeable terms.

integration projects was the one that contracted Samuel, a Congolese community-based worker whom I interviewed during my fieldwork. After years of financial struggles with small business initiatives and a dearth of job opportunities, Samuel ended up seeking employment within the aid industry itself. As a community-based worker, Samuel was crucial to the activity of his organisation as he was doing most of the outreach work necessary to secure access to precarious migrant communities. His job was extremely demanding: Samuel would receive calls at any hour of the day (including during our interview) from parents needing help enrolling children in school, from women about to give birth and needing to be transported to the hospital, or from people who had been arrested by Moroccan police. Despite the centrality of his role, however, Samuel did not have a job contract for the work he was performing. Rather, he had a ‘volunteer contract’, which came with a meagre indemnisation of 1500 dirham/month (€137/month).⁶ This was less than the Moroccan minimum wage (2,698.83 MAD/month in 2019/2020) (CNSS 2019) and considerably less than the salary of the organisation’s regular employees (see also Abena Banyomo 2019). Sabine, a European aid worker employed by the same organisation later explained that community-based workers were not employed full-time. According to Sabine, contracting these people as volunteers was a solution that allowed migrants such as Samuel to continue their professional activities, while at the same time assisting the organisation to maintain a presence in the area. As a matter of fact, however, being a community-based worker had been Samuel’s only source of employment: he had been pushed towards the aid industry by the dearth of alternative job opportunities, and he did not have another job on the side.

The case of Samuel exemplifies the forms of non-explicitly coercive control through which the aid industry contains migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking people. The organisation that Samuel works for is formally committed to the project of transforming Morocco into a country of integration – it bids for labour integration initiatives, sponsors training workshops, and talks the talk of integration. This official commitment, however, was challenged by the deliberate devaluation of Samuel’s work. This devaluation is justified by Sabine with arguments that have been long used to motivate the

⁶ All currency conversions relate to the conversion rate on 21 July 2020.

underpayment of workers in the global factory – there are no obligations, Samuel is always free to have another job, volunteering is a way for him to be active and involved. The underpayment of community-based workers is certainly less severe a form of control than other forms of hard border security that contain migrants' presence inside and outside of Morocco. But the financial and contractual downplaying of Samuel's contribution clearly produces a form of marginalisation: Samuel remains impoverished, and he is not integrated into society as a decently paid worker, but rather as a compensated 'volunteer'. In this power game, Samuel becomes a subordinate player that the migration industry feels entitled to extract value from (Andersson 2014). 'Integration' thus becomes an empty signifier: the same organisation that ostensibly tries to facilitate the access of migrants to the labour market easily dismisses, and marginalises, migrant labour.

By taking aid as a vantage point to reflect on the transformation and diffusion of migration control, I complicate our understanding of how power works within the border regime. I build on Foucault's analytic of power to develop a framework that explains the coexistence of fast techniques of bordering with emerging instruments of indirect and elusive rule. Foucauldian tools allow us to apprehend the "friability" of the border – the elusiveness, unexpected alliances, and resistances characterising it (Tazzioli 2014, 9). Discussing the ambiguity of power inevitably leads to complicate our understanding of 'benevolence', 'malevolence', and co-optation into borderwork. I bring in Elizabeth Povinelli's notion of the "quasi-event" (Povinelli 2011, 5) to provide an alternative vocabulary to examine the factors driving the expansion of the border regime. I emphasise that the elusiveness of aid makes containment less visible and thus more difficult to resist for the actors orbiting around the aid industry. I compound these different threads of analysis into a discussion about power relations in the governance of the border. This book thus de-essentialises the workings of border power by discarding four myths common in both scholarly and journalistic prose. Donors are not all-powerful: they rarely manage to get partner countries' full cooperation in migration control, let alone to perfectly transpose their border outsourcing aspirations on the ground (El Qadim 2015; Geha and Talhouk 2018). IOs and NGOs are not almighty: their movements are often critically constrained and policed by domestic authorities (Gazzotti 2019), their projects crafted in such a way as to not hurt the sensibilities of local governments, and their