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THE TUNISIAN DEVICE.

HYPER-MOBILITY AND INTIMATE LABOUR IN INTRA-AFRICAN MIGRATION.

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J'ai tiré en somme deux leçons de mon expérience. La première, […]
c'est que l'oppression, à partir d'un certain degré d'intensité,
engendre non une tendance à la révolte, mais une tendance presque irrésistible à la
plus complète soumission […].
La seconde,
c'est que l'humanité se divise en deux catégories, les gens qui comptent pour quelque chose et les gens qui comptent pour rien. Quand on est dans la seconde, on en arrive à trouver naturel de compter pour rien – ce qui ne veut certes pas dire qu'on ne souffre pas. Moi, je le trouvais naturel. Tout comme, malgré moi, j'en arrive à trouver à présent presque naturel de compter pour quelque chose. Je le dis malgré moi, car je m'efforce de réagir tant j'ai honte de compter pour quelque chose, dans une organisation sociale qui foule aux pieds l'humanité[1].

[1] Weil, S. (1951,124).

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations.

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFTURD	Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement
AIT	Association des Ivoriens en Tunisie
ALDA	Association pour la Leadership and Development en Afrique
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
APROFE	Association for the Promotion of Women's Economic Projects
ASF	Avocats sans Frontiers
AU	African Union
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BAD	Banque Africaine de Développement
BMP Maghreb	Border Management Program for the Maghreb
BTS	Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité
CAR	Central African Republic
CDW	child domestic workers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CFA	African Financial Community
CMR	Central Mediterranean Route
CoE	Council of Europe
CPR	Centri per il Rimpatrio
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCs	Developing Countries
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFU	Egyptian Feminists Union
EhoA	East and Horn of Africa
EMR	Eastern Mediterranean Route
ENPI	European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument
EU	European Union
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

FTDES	Forum Tunisien pour le Droits Économiques et Sociaux
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOA	Horn of Africa
IACE	Institut Arabe des Chefs d'Entreprises
ICBT	Informal Cross-border Trade
IDPs	Internal Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labor Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDP	United Nation Development Program
INLCTP	Instance Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes en Tunisie
INST	Institut National de la Statistique Tunisien
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IOs	International Organisations
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRC	International Red Cross
LAS	League of Arab States

MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFFES	Minister of Women, Family, Children and Seniors
MMP	Missing Migrant Project
MPLA	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non Governamental Organisations
NOA	North of Africa
OAU	Organisation of the African Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFPRA	Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides
PSC	Personal Status Code
SAP	Structural Adjustment Plan
SLC	Sahel and Lake Chad
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
THBOR	Trafficking in Human Beings for the purpose of Organs Removal
TND	Tunisian Dinar

UGTT	Union Générale Tunisian du Travail
UMFT	Union Musulmane des Femmes de Tunisie
UN DESA	United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNECE	United Nation Economic Commission for Europe
UNFT	Union National de la Femme Tunisienne
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNODC	United Nation Office for Drugs and Crimes
VoT	Victim of Trafficking
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WB	World Bank
WENELA	Witwatersrand Native Labor Association
WMR	Western Mediterranean Route

Introduction.

Crisis Scenarios. African Migration and Its Containment Devices

What kind of place is Africa? It is with this provocative question that James Ferguson stressed the process through which Africa, as we know it today, is more of a Western invention, a concept hence, rather than a place[2]. As a matter of fact, for decades, when one hears about Africa it is never simply about Africa but about its crises, its failures or the moral challenges the continent poses to the international community wherein Africa remains *a scar on the conscience of the world,* as one will recall from British Prime Minister Tony Blair's famous discourse[3]. Several scholars have argued the process by which, throughout history, Africa has served the West as the "Other", the "black continent" against which to build its ideal of whiteness, development, enlightenment and, indeed, its historical narrative. Africa, as Achille Mbembe argued in *On the Postcolony*, is represented as *an absent object*[4] set always in relation to the full presence of the West. By this standpoint, indeed, Africa took the form of a polemic concept[5] which simultaneously defined what the West was, nourishing *its desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world*[6], and establishing what Africa was not. For all that has changed, as Ferguson highlighted, Africa continued to be portrayed through a series of lacks, absences and failures.[7] Yet, shortly after Mbembe published his book *On the Postcolony* in 2001, the world would undergo a momentous change, especially in terms of global security that marked, one might say, a progressive shift in the concept-Africa from the metaphor of absence, to the *metaphor of crisis.*

What I mean, from this viewpoint, is that unlike Ferguson's or Mbembe's emphasis on Africa's voids or absence, the current concept-Africa seems to be based rather on chaos and unpredictability.

As Mark Duffield has extensively noted, from the end of the Cold War onward, the very idea of security that until then had been closely related to the military apparatus of nation-state defence, have progressively undergone a broadening process to include a wide and undefined range of other threats to the *security of the West*[8] such as poverty, economic and environmental collapses, civil wars, international terrorism, migration and pandemic just to name a few. Despite remaining strongly intertwined with concepts such as emergency, insecurity, risk, danger etc., contemporary crisis, which are now accelerated and spearheaded by the globalisation process, have lost their temporal and spatial

[2] Ferguson, J. (2006). See also Mudimbe, V. Y. (1988)
[3] Ibid.
[4] Mbembe, A. (2001,2).
[5] Ibid.
[6] Cfr. Ferguson, J. (2006, 2).
[7] See Ferguson, J. (2006); see also de Haas (2008).
[8] Duffield, M. (2007, 24)

specificity; they may be everywhere and nowhere at the same time, generating a global society perpetually in danger[9]. In this vein, as J. P. Dupuy pointed, crisis is no longer an incoming and predictable event but the condition in which we are currently confined[10].

The multilevel crises that followed and spread across many African countries following the decolonisation phase (to name a few the Ethiopian and Sudan famine of mid-1980s, the 1992 conflict in Somalia, the genocide of Rwanda in 1994 etc.), reinforced the Western-European fears of Africa as a threat to international stability, placing it in the *new and emerging zones of crisis*[11] *and fragile states*[12]. By acquiring an increasing space in international policy discourse, from 1990s onwards, African fragile states became the emblem of perpetually unstable and ungovernable spaces because of their inability *to reconcile the demands for progress with the need for order*[13]. In a nutshell, their very existence became a threat the global stability[14]. In such a crisis scenario, the massive movement of people which fragile states would trigger, has assumed an increasingly important role in contemporary international security discourse and practices[15]. As a consequence, over the past three decades at least, scientific research on human mobility has undergone a major boost by embracing new methodological approaches and an enriching multidisciplinary that has certainly allowed for a broadening understanding of a complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

However, in the European context, most research continues to focus on South-North flows, reinforcing, willy-nilly, the African metaphor of the crisis and offering a partial knowledge, at best, of the current migratory context. Although the African continent accounts for only 14% of the global migrant population – compared to 41% from Asia and 24% from Europe[16] – its flows continue to be portrayed as *flooding the world*[17]. Building on this, the fundamental concern of this research is less with Africa as an empirical territory, or a *geographical accident,* to recall again Mbembe's words, but with Africa as a political category through which contemporary migration are imagined, produced

[9] Ibid.
[10] Dupuy, J. P. (2016)
[11] Duffield, M. (2007, 66).
[12] According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), *fragile states have characteristics that substantially impair their economic and social performance. These include weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, and often, violence or the legacy of armed conflict and civil war. In these countries the poor quality of policies, institutions and governance substantially impairs economic performance, the delivery of basic social services and the efficacy of donor assistance*. See IMF (2008, 8).
[13] Duffield, M. (2007, 163)
[14] Ibid.
[15] See Bigo, D. (2002).
[16] See Africa Center for Migration Studies (2023) accessible through: https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2023/
[17] The reference is to the paternalistic and neo-colonial speech given by French president Chirac in 2006 in reference to the need to implement development aid policies in Africa to prevent the "invasion" of Europe by "African migrants" and, at the same time, alleviate the causes of "African misery". See de Haas, H. (2008).

and governed. To focus on the role of Africa as a political category means, here, to critically analyse how Africa's zones of crisis are strategically implemented, placed and moved to regulate migratory flows while, at the same, analysing the strategies of power whereby populations are differentially allowed to move along the current borderscapes. The phenomenon of migration is indeed not disheartened in absolute terms. It is rather shaped by different degrees and hierarchies of accessibility that allow for the discernment of a "good mobility" that contains tourists, skilled migrants, financial flows, weapons and a "bad mobility" made of illicit trafficking, refugees, unskilled workers, terrorism etc. which requires to be contained. In an attempt to analyse the discursive practices that have characterized the international migration policy debate since the 1990s, Antoin Pécoud for instance argued that the goal of current migration governance is to transform the chaotic nature of migration flows into an orderly process[18]. Admittedly, many theoretical-political studies that address migration issues have largely explored the growing role of borders and their reconfiguration in the global space, as a means of reordering flows by filtering, blocking and suspending them. Unlike these perspectives, by analysing intra-African flows, the aim of this study is to theorise how, instead of ordering migratory flows, current migration governance in Africa aims to disorder them, reinforcing the rhetoric of their ungovernability and, consequently, *the crisis as a technology of government*[19]. Narrowing the scope of the investigation on the Tunisian case, it will be argued that rather than decreasing or slowing down mobility, current migration governance seems to be increasingly shifting towards a production of hyper-mobility, accelerating and expanding flows both in spatial and temporal terms. Since the early 2000s indeed, Tunisia has experienced an increasing phenomenon of immigration from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and sub-Saharan Africa[20] (SSA). Within the Eurocentric perspective of the African metaphor of the crisis, the increase of flows headed to Tunisia, although very small in quantitative terms[21], led the EU and international actors involved in the migration governance to define Tunisia, and the whole Northen Africa, as a *transit hub for migrants from sub-Saharan states intending to reach Europe*[22]. Beginning in 2015, with the so-called "refugee crisis," this belief has been pushed further, leading the EU to strengthen its restricting migration policies far beyond North Africa and targeting several countries in the Sahel area and SSA as "transit countries". Interestingly though, qualitative-quantitative analysis of intra-African migration shows that many of the countries so defined, are actually historical destination countries of intra-continental flows. Paradoxically, the major efforts on the restriction of mobility that such

[18] Pécoud, A. (2015,77)
[19] Tazzioli, M. (2020a)
[20] See Boubakri, H., Manzella, S. (2005); de Haas, H. (2007).
[21] See, Africa Center for Migration Studies (2023); See also Institut National de la Statistique Tunisien, (2021).
[22] World Migration Report (2022, 73)

countries require, worsen the migrants' living condition and thus the need to keep moving, reinforcing the *government of the crisis*[23]. With the 2011 fall of Gaddafi in Libya and the deteriorating political situation in the country, Tunisian government has assumed an increasingly central role as a reliable interlocutor for the EU and the Italian government in controlling flows in the Central Mediterranean. As a result, Tunisia has become the strategic *device* by which migration is governed in the Mediterranean and beyond. It should be noted that the use of the term device, takes on a very specific and particularly important meaning in this study. Drawn from Foucauldian philosophical thought, on which this research is rooted, the device (*dispositif*) should be intended, put it in the simplest terms, as the configuration of the exercise of power which *circulates within social relations.*[24] Although Foucault never provided a precise definition of the "device", the term starts to appear in his writings in the mid-1970s, when he begins to deal not simply with power, but with the modalities in which power, since the birth of the modern state, is exercised through a series of mechanisms and institutions that, working together, aim to regulate the behaviour of populations[25]. In this perspective, the device comprises *a resolutely heterogeneous group that includes speeches, institutions, architectural installations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions; said, as well as what is not said, these are the elements of the device*[26]. The device, thus, consists of the network that is established between these elements[27]. More importantly, however, the heterogeneous elements making up the device, and that

[23] Tazzioli, M. (2020a)
[24] Brigaglia, M. (2014,538)
[25] Cfr. Agamben G. (2009);
[26] Foucault, M. (1977b, 299).
[27] For explanatory clarity, it is really necessary to highlight a preliminary fundamental point here. So understood indeed, the concept of device could be confused with or traced back to that of *governance*, suggesting their interchangeably functions. Nevertheless, there is a substantial difference between the two concept that, in general terms, can be ascribed to the role of the state, the government (and the way government itself is understood) in the exercise of power. In our common understanding, and in governance scholars' formulations, *governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.* (Stoker, J. 1998, 24). As it clearly appears hence, here the government means something very close to the ontology of the State which, on the other hand, Foucault criticised. Indeed, within the illuminating Foucauldian conception of the *modalities* by which power is exercised (what he calls *governmentality*, or, *the art of governing*), power is inscribed in a broader practice in which the government is not to be intended as an institution rather as an activity. Governmentality, works as a *rationality* acting upon and through both the governed and the governors, and wherein the "government of the self" and the "government of others" compenetrate in the space of freedom that governmentality requires for power to circulate. The device hence is the network whereby governmentality takes place. See section 1.3 of this thesis.

always results from the power/knowledge[28] relations, are never fixed rather they can change their functions and hence their purposes, according to a given historical moment, or, an emergency[29].

The challenges posed by Tunisia in today's chaotic and ungovernable African borderscapes – exacerbated by political and discursive practices that emphasize its growing role as a transit country rather than a mere country of origin –, have resulted in Tunisia becoming a device *par excellence* whereby, as the Eurocentric concept-Africa is strengthened, the lives of bodies in motion are regulated. Undoubtedly, it is precisely the body that takes on an important analytical lens in Foucauldian political theory, as it does in this study, since it allows to better understand how power structures and acts in the device. Yet, bodies, being themselves part of the device, are not the mere object of power but are productive of power: they undergo and at the same time exercise power. Rather than being centralized, power relations circulate, taking up Brigaglia again, in the sense that they literally *move* among the elements of the device. In this vein, as Wendy Brown notes, if power constructs human bodies rather than simply acting upon them, *then power is above all generative and constantly exceeds itself. (…) Power is not, as convention would have it, simply about enactment of the will, though it may well be tactical, strategic, and logical*[30]. This aspect is crucial when tackling Tunisian device. As anticipated, indeed, rather than emphasizing how by means of the Tunisian device the movement of people or population is governed, it is intended to analyse the perspective according to which people and populations are governed through mobility, not merely *letting them move* but *making them move*. As a matter of fact, if power relations are fundamentally mobile, then it should be considered that the governance of migration do not only deal and cope with mobility; rather, it works *through* mobility, it *becomes* based on mobility[31]. Such a shift, while being currently undertheorized[32], yields at least two insights. Firstly, referring to strategies of power that acts *through* mobility rather than *on* mobility contribute to enrich our understanding of current migration

[28] In Foucauldian thought, the intricate power/knowledge relationship is explicated by the importance of the concept of discourse because of its ability to elucidate how power operates as a regime of truth. Unlike mere language or speech, Foucault's discourse encompasses a specific field of terms, categories, and beliefs articulated through statements that are widely accepted and considered common sense within that discourse. For Foucault, hence, discourse is a collection of speech practices that convey values, classifications, and meanings. In other words, discourse does not just describe reality; it actively creates relationships and channels of authority by establishing norms and standards. This understanding of discourse highlights how power is exercised through the creation and dissemination of knowledge. By defining what is true and what is not, discourses exert power over individuals and societies, influencing how people think, act, and understand themselves and the world around them. Thus, Foucault's concept of discourse is crucial for recognizing how power structures are maintained and challenged through the production of knowledge and truth. See, Brown, W. (2009). See also chapter one of this thesis.

[29] Agamben G. (2009);

[30] Brown, W. (2009,2).

[31] Bærenholdt, J.O. (2013, 27).

[32] Ibid. See also Tazzioli, M. (2020a); Walters, W. (2015) and Jensen, O. B., and T. Richardson. (2004a, 2004b).

management placing mobility, rather than just borders, as a method of investigation. In such a way, mobility is not only a side-effect of the *border regime*[33] but a strategy of power through which borders are produced and reproduced within the device. Mobility, on the other hand, is itself an action. Consequently, it makes explicit, more than borders do, the active and never predictable process of the *making of migration*[34] whereby migrant-bodies are not merely objects acted upon by circumstances but subjects who shape their own trajectories.

Secondly, looking at the production of mobility as a way of governing migrant-bodies involves a further analytical and interpretive effort, juxtaposing the analysis of the securitarian paradigm with that of contemporary capitalism and, more specifically, how labour and life are being transformed within it. The point is drawn here in continuity with studies that question the centrality of the securitization process as the main analytical lens for observing actual migration governance[35].

On the other hand, as noted by Duffield, the transformations of the securitization paradigm itself and its containment apparatus[36], cannot be decoupled from the socio-economic and political transformations occurred within the global neoliberal order. As will be observed, neoliberism actually takes on a particularly important role in this study. In fact, analysed through a critical approach, the neoliberal paradigm allows one to go far beyond analyses of neoliberalism understood as mere set of economic manoeuvres or, as it is commonly argued, of neoliberalism as the "retreat of the state" in face of the market. Rather, in this study neoliberalism will be explored as "*a new global disciplinary system,*" a *rationality* that restructures the actions of the governors and the governed into a new, purely economic dimension, producing a new (planetary) subjectivity[37].

Adhering perfectly to the Foucauldian concept of *governmentality*, neoliberalism is a technology of power structured no longer around the rules of the state but rather the economic mechanisms of

[33] As Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos (2008, 164) pointed, the concept of *regime* applied to migration phenomena was introduced in recent years as a sort of synonym of "migration system". According to Giuseppe Sciortino, the concept of a "migration regime" *acknowledges gaps, ambiguities, and strains within it, emphasizing that a regime's continuity relies on ongoing repair work through practices implementation* (Sciortino, G. 2004, 32). This idea, as Mezzadra and Neilson highlight, enclose the malleable and multiscalar nature of governmentality and governance, as well as the heterogeneity of their actors and the growing intertwining of knowledge and power that characterizes them (see Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. 2013, 179). In the context of migration, it serves as an effective analytical tool for describing new patterns of migration management emerging globally. These new patterns reflect a growing recognition that traditional rigid governmental tools, such as quota systems or visa systems, are inadequate in addressing both the "turbulence" of migration and the demands of a global economy reshaped by an increasing mobile labour-force. See, Papastergiadis, N. (2018); Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013).

[34] Tazzioli, M. (2020a).

[35] Ibid.

[36] Reference is made to the implementation of development aid policies in the so called "developing countries" which, as it will be noted throughout this thesis, have an important role not merely in governing mobility practices in "fragile states" but more intrusively to shape the hierarchies of lives in terms of identities issues.

[37] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014,173). See chapter 2

the market. What changes from classical governmentality, that which emerged in liberalism, is precisely the ontology of the acting subjects: no longer individuals with rights but human capital to be invested in the enterprise, be it securitarian, economic, ecological etc. Neoliberal governmentality combines *freedom and risk, security and self-governance, individual responsibility and management of populations, placing the new securitarian strategies – now marked by an economic and emergency rationality necessary to cope with natural disasters, pandemics, terrorist attacks, economic-financial crises – side by side with old securitarian strategies built on the model of exclusion*[38]. Within such a rationality, our entire existence is thus based on forms of *self-investment* and *self-reliance* or, our abilities to withstand the adversities of an unstable and perpetually crisis-ridden world. Against such a backdrop, mobility then can be understood as an existential condition, a form of subjectivation, rather than the mere material and physical movement of bodies across nation-states' boundaries. Moving, hence, means also living an existence as flexible as possible in order to cope with the precariousness characterising our time. Mobility, in this vein, is a form of self-reliance through which to attempt to aspire to a life worth living[39]. Admittedly, paramount to any consideration on the current global processes, is the openness to the movement of goods and capital and the closure to that of human bodies[40]. In light of this, borders have become increasingly associated with walls, as it has been in most critical studies, whose function has been to exclude. However, as Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson interestingly suggest, the new international division of labour must prompt us to rethink the exclusionary nature of borders. Their argument is basically geared to show the process of commodification of precarious workers within the insecure neoliberal global order, that makes bodies the new centre of production and value-extraction. In such a scenario, borders, far from merely excluding or rejecting bodies, always stand on a *continuum* with inclusion, rather than in opposition to it. The aim of the *differential inclusion* mechanism, as the two scholars define it, is to *flexibly* manage the crisis in the attempt to produce ''economically needed" and exploitable flows out of the ''turbulence'' of ''unwanted migration."[41] By this stand point, far from reducing mobility, borders acts as a way for regulating the relations between capital, labor, law, subjects and political power, far beyond geographic border spaces[42]. "Regulation" as the Tunisian device will show, is far from any exercise of control. Rather it is configured with its opposite: uncontrol. As this study aims to show, the female body assumes a fundamental role in current production processes and thus also through the mobility regime. Historically valued for its reproductive functions, female body assumes in the

[38] Marcenò, S. (2018, 18), my translation.
[39] Butler, J. (2009).
[40] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013).
[41] Cfr. Geiger, M., Pécoud. A. (2010, 3)
[42] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013)

neoliberal dis-order, a hybridised functioning whereby its reproductive value is placed at the centre of an unbridled process of production. Surrogacy, pharmaceutical trials, the selling of oocytes and uteruses are just the tip of the iceberg of contemporary bio-capitalism and the brand-new forms of labour emerging inside of it. I will address these issues, albeit marginally, in the course of the study. Yet, I will focus on a particular female occupation which, one might argue, has nothing new at all: domestic and care work. This employment, typically female in all Western countries as well as in many other areas of the globe, has always consisted of a broad and indefinite series of tasks including looking after children, elderly people and fragile individuals affected by physical and/or mental illnesses and disabilities, as well as cooking, cleaning, washing, mending and fetching water, firewood etc. Despite its relevance in social and economic terms, domestic and care work – to which I will refer using the expression "*intimate work"*[43] – has long remained an unrecognised, *unpaid*, tiring and monotonous work performed by the women of the household. However, as the literature produced over the past 30 years shows, the retreat of welfare system, the progressive aging of the population in many Western countries, as well as the massive entry of women in the productive economy, have led to a global crisis of care which is increasingly satisfied by low-cost female immigrant work-force from the Global South. Care practices, which are a fundamental dimension of human existence and its ontological condition of vulnerability[44] that characterises it at birth, at death and in the dependency of sickness, has become, as Oxfam (2020) observed, the "new gold" to be extracted from the "Third World." The supposed increase in female economic migration at the global level, often referred to under the slogan "feminization of migration", is indeed part of a complex global transformation whereby the *unpaid* domestic and care work once carried out by the women of the household, is increasingly outsourced to more economically precarious women.

As a matter of fact, all over the world, intimate labour is dominated by women migrants. As the International Labor Organization stated in 2010, women are the overwhelming majority (83%) of domestic work-force, which represents 7,5% of women's employment worldwide. On the basis of this phenomenon, as is known, since the 1990s the study of feminisation of migration grew exponentially, enriched by new gender and post-colonial approaches through which to analyze the so-called "global care chains." Several important studies for instance, have shown that when it comes to analysing feminization of migration (particularly within global care economy), migrant women become widely subjected to intersecting structural factors and discriminations based on gender, class,

[43] The expression is coined by the scholar Arlie Hochschild, although I use it differently from her. In fact, as will be observed, in the varied proposals for phrases to describe the new dimensions of care work, I use this in a critical way with respect to the immaterial conception that would characterize care work and more generally bio-work.

[44] See Butler, J. (2004).

ethnicity and nationality, determining forms of vulnerability and dehumanizing conditions. In *Global Women,* Hochschild and Ehrenreich (2003) highlighted that the "dirty work" that white, middle-class Western women are no longer willing to do, involves mainly coloured women from poorer countries. Even though their research has been carried out in the United States, other scholars identified similar trends in many other parts of the world showing that the main transformation in care relationships should be analysed not merely in terms of gender but also ethnicity and class. And what about Africa? Despite the relevance of economic migration on the African continent, the metaphor of the crisis has meant that the scientific literature produced has mainly analysed the forms of internal forced migration, therefore refugees and Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs). Aware of the difficulties, I will instead focus on intra-African female economic migration, attempting to explore the relevance of intimate labour in female flows. Given the complexity of the object of investigation, rather than referring to such a thing as "Africa" in a generalised way, focusing on the Tunisian device in intra-African migration will allow to have a better understanding of how the massive process of irregularisation of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia may represents a technology of government working not merely on mobility but *through* it. By keeping sub-Saharan population on the move has become, it will be shown, the cornerstone of a (bio)political and (bio)economic management of life that builds and exploits the difference between "legalised" and "illegalised" migrants along an intersection of race class, gender and nationality. In this vein, it should be clear that investigating the *Tunisian device* means much more than analysing the containment practices within the power dynamics between countries North and South of the Mediterranean shore: it means exploring how such practices are tactically used and transformed in the device in the aim of managing intra-African flows. Whether it is true that the African metaphor of the crisis plays a key role in intra-African mobility by altering pre-existing migration patterns and routes, increasing mobility and the risks associated to it[45], the acceptance of Western rules and guidelines on migration control in Tunisia should not be viewed solely through the lens of asymmetrical power relations between Europe and Africa. Many African elites indeed, perceive and strategically use Western direct or indirect interventions as a way to enhance regime authority and use migration issues as a strategy to increase their power. These aspects will surface as early as Chapter I where, starting with an in-depth historical analysis, intra-African migration patterns from the pre-colonial times will be analysed. Consistent with the objectives of this study, contemporary migration and the growing role of intimate labour in the feminisation process of migration in Africa will be observed through a gender approach. Besides showing the relevance of South-South flows, the analysis of intra-Africa migration will be pivotal in

[45] Bisong, A. Jegen, L., & Mounkaila, H. (2023, 9)

the theoretical-political analysis of the securitisation paradigm. In this regard, the foundations for a critical reflection on the concept of "transit countries" as a governmental practice of disciplining populations through mobility, will be outlined. The second chapter will therefore explore in depth the Foucauldian political theory necessary to understand how Tunisia is analysed as a device, delving into security issues within the new neoliberal global rationality. As an important political category, I will reflect on issues relating to the vulnerability of female bodies in contemporary bio-capitalism and African borderscapes. In this vein, contemporary forms of slavery will be analysed. In the third and fourth chapter, the theoretical analysis will be focused and expanded exclusively on the Tunisian device. After an initial historical reconstruction of the migrations that affected the country from the pre-colonial era to that of independence, the Tunisian device will be analysed through a Southern perspective that takes into account the intricate intertwining of mobility practices in the processes of differential inclusion along the lines of class, gender, race and nationality affecting sub-Saharan domestic workers in the country. To this end, the case study of Ivorian maids in the metropolitan area of Grand Tunis will be presented.

Methodological Note:

Consistently with what has just been introduced, the methodological approach relies on the classical tools of historical-conceptual analysis of Political Theory and the apparatus of contemporary Critical Theory on neoliberalism and bio-capitalism. In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under consideration, qualitative analysis has been combined with a quantitative approach. The quantitative analysis consisted in utilizing and researching a data-set as wide as possible in order to understand contemporary intra-African migration patterns. These datasets were selected based on their relevance and reliability for the study of migration in Africa and in Tunisia more particularly. As a result, data produced by the African Union, the International Organisation for Migration, the International Labour Organisation as well as other UN Agencies and International Organisations has been consulted. Nevertheless, consideration was also given to the extensive scientific production of renowned research centers on the continent as well as colonial-epoch documents and censuses from various countries, where available online. Moreover, data published between 2017 and 2020 by various NGOs were used for the analysis of female domestic work in Tunisia. The quantitative analysis made it possible to identify the main critical issues concerning foreing female domestic workers in Tunisia. Consequently, the research was deepened through the exploration of a specific case study related to women workers from Côte d'Ivoire, in the urban area

of Tunis and Grand Tunis. During three different field-work period[46], I conducted several semi-structured interviews with human rights activists and five different NGOs with significant experience in the domain of migration and human rights in Tunisia. More particularly, as research fellow on the EU-funded MIGRANTS project[47], I co-organized and participated as a speaker in a seminar held at the University of Tunis El Manar, on *Contemporary forms of slavery: Women, Care and Migration. A political Philosophical Approach* which included the joint participation of four different NGOs: *Avocats sans Frontiers* (ASF), *Terre d'Asile Tunisie* and the *Association pour la Leadership and Development en Afrique* (ALDA) and Euro Med Rights with whom we discussed, each on the basis of their expertise, the issue related to the impact of European Union policies in Tunisia and the widespread problem of labour exploitation of sub-Saharan migrant in the Country. The conference was particularly important for the research purposes as it gave me the opportunity to better understand the phenomenon of domestic labor in Tunisia. The previous year, in May 2022, I interviewed the former project manager of the Euro Med Rights association in Sfax, who had extensively worked on the contemporary forms of slavery in an area I was not able to visit, confirming however that the question addressed in this study are widespread throughout the country, especially in the coastal areas. Despite the efforts made, both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis encountered some limitations. On the quantitative level, intra-African migration analysis is complex due to a generally poor, and fragmented data availability. This is particularly true for Tunisia where data on inflows are very recent (2021). As a consequence, it is not currently possible to know the extent of female inflows from other African states. In addition, on a qualitative level, the serious deterioration of the political and socio-economic situation in Tunisia makes it very hard to conduct interviews with foreign female workers due to their irregular status, in a growing context of terror. Part of the research work presented in Chapter 4 has been published by Mimesis International in September 2023.

[46] The first field work took place in 2022, from April to July, for a duration of three months. A further one-month period in April and a final week period in September were carried out in 2023. However, part of the qualitative research is based on a previous internship experience in Tunisi which took place in 2019 (for a duration of 7 months) whereby I worked specifically on national and international trafficking in human beings in the country.

[47] The Project website can be consulted from: https://migrantsproject.eu/

CHAPTER I

A CRITICAL READING OF FEMALE MOBILITY IN AFRICA.

Producing the surplus lives.

1.1 A historical analysis of African migration: a counter-narrative

1.1.1 Pre-colonial and colonial migration in sub-Saharan Africa. An overview.

The history of African migration has been characterised by an intra-continental movement that goes back to the pre- and colonial times, extending, as we shall see in the next session, to the 21st century[48]. During these periods, intra-African flows have been marked by voluntary circular and seasonal migration linked to free labourers, such as those related to the ivory trade and pastoralism in East Africa[49] or agriculture in Western and Central Africa, as well as permanent movements to new lands that supported life and sustained livelihoods[50]. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of forced migrations played a key role both in the pre-colonial phase with the slave trade and the conflicts that affected several areas of the continent, and during the European colonization period when local populations were forced to migrate within Africa to provide labour force for the colonial economies[51]. Pre-colonial movements in Africa have been widely analysed in respect to the Atlantic slave trade, thus in terms of a forced movement of people outside the continent, mainly directed towards Europe and the Americas and which served as the foundation for the systemic and continuous process of economic exploitation and social and political fragmentation that Europeans institutionalized in Africa through colonization first and neo-colonization afterwards[52]. Conversely, less academic attention has been paid to intra-African pre-colonial migrations, both in terms of slavery and non-enslaved local population[53]. Despite a less dramatic impact on the Black diaspora than the Atlantic trade, pre-colonial slavery practices were widespread within the continent long before the arrival of Europeans and they persisted long after its abolition. One of the main forms of intra-continental forced migration prior to the arrival of Europeans was the slave trade between sub- Saharan Africa and North Africa, along the so-called *Trans-Saharan route* which, despite being extremely widespread, remains little analysed to date. As it will be noted in the case of Tunisia, however, *Trans-Saharan slave trade created an intra-African forced migration system that altered the ethnic*

[48] Moyo, I., Laine, J. P., & Nshimbi, C.C. (2021).
[49] Pallaver K (2022). In M. De Haas & E. Frankema (Eds.) pp. 75-92
[50] Cfr Moyo, I., Laine, J. P., & Nshimbi, C.C. (2021). p.3
[51] Ibid.
[52] See Chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis for further elaborations on neo-colonialism.
[53] M'bay B. (2006).

composition of local populations both south and north of the Sahara[54] and whose outcomes play a crucial role today in the power dynamics and identity-building processes shaping contemporary migration. Despite the difficulties in estimating the volume of trans-Saharan slave trade, as well as precise data on slaves' destination areas, Lovejoy's figures highlight that trans-Saharan routes were the most widely travelled until the 1600s, when Atlantic trade took over[55]. Nevertheless, the Sahara crossing continued to play an important role until the 1880s importing slaves to the North from both West and East Africa. Trade activities between the two banks of the Sahara involved the commerce of several goods, mainly European luxury commodities, guns and ammunition from the North to the South, and slaves, from South to North[56].

As can be seen in figure 1, between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa (formerly referred to as Sudan) there was a dense network of routes whose viability changed depending on various contingent factors such as climatic conditions, ethnic conflicts, etc. According to Saleh and Wahby, five main routes can be highlighted: the first route, probably the oldest, went from Bornu[57] (in Central Africa) to Fezzan and then on to Tripoli (both corresponding to today's Libya); another central path originated from Kano, in the Hausa State[58], via Air and on to Ghadames (present-day Libya). With the political shift that occurred in the 19th century when the Kanem-Bornu Empire lost its centrality to the Sokoto Califate[59], the Kano-Air-Ghadames route became the most important trans-Saharan route[60]. On the Western side, one of the main routes departed from Timbuktu and reached Mogador (present-day Morocco), passing through Tagaza. The routes further east, on the other hand, included those leaving from Wadai, passing from Kufra and directed to Cyrenaica (present-day Libya) which was a more direct route than the Borno-Tripoli one, as a consequence during the 19th century it was replaced by Wadai-Kufra-Cyrenaica route. The last route instead reached Egypt importing slaves from the Nilotic

[54] Saleh, M. & Wahby, S. (2022). In M. De Haas & E. Frankema (Eds.), pp. 56 -74
[55] Lovejoy, P.E (2011). See also Austen, R. A. (1992).
[56] Saleh, M. &Wahby, S. (2022).
[57] The area of Central Africa was for centuries dominated by the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which ruled in the form of a monarchy from the VIII century A.D., until the gradual advent of colonialism in the late 1800s. The empire included the area that today corresponds to a large part of southern Libya, Chad, Northeastern Nigeria, Cameroon and the Eastern part of today's Niger. More importantly however, the empire was among the first to be Islamised during the 11th century. See Hiribarren, V. (2016).
[58] Situated to the East of the Bornu empire, the Hausa state, better known as Hausaland, consisted of a kingdom made up of a group of territories that today correspond to parts of Niger and Nigeria. Hausaland consisted of several centralised Hausa governments or city states. From the 14th century onwards, the Hausa sate was subjected to a process of Islamisation by the Mali Empire that flourished in Western Africa, and later by the jihad of the Sokoto Caliphate.
[59] By the early 1800s, after a four-year jihad against the Hausa State, 'Uthman b. Fodiye, a Fulani cleric, formed the Sokoto Caliphate (also referred as Fulani Empire) which quickly became the largest state in West Africa, until the advent of colonial powers that caused its downfall in 1903. See Salau, B. M. (2018).
[60] Saleh, M. and Wahby, S. (2022).

Sudan[61] via northern Darfur (a rout called *Darb al-Arba'in*, meaning "the 40-days route") or though the Nubian desert toward Aswan and then Cairo.

Almost the entirely enslaved population in North Africa came from sub-Saharan Africa[62].

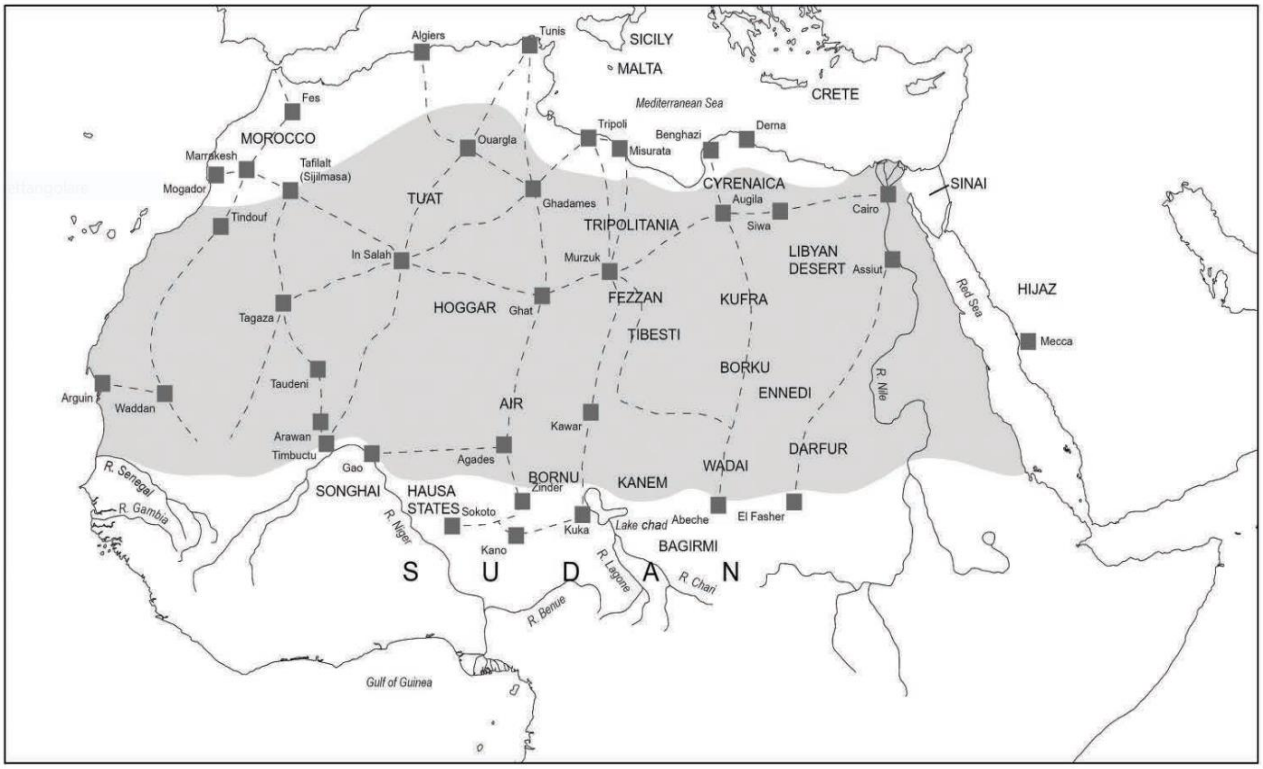

Fig. 1. Trans-Saharan Routes in pre-colonial Africa
Source : de Haas M., Frankema , E. (2022)

However, as Wright noted (2007), many slaves along trans-Saharan routes never reached their final destination in North Africa since they were purchased by local communities in the desert and oases, be it nomadic or settled in current-day Mauritania, Western Sahara, as well as in Southern and rural Morocco[63]. Interestingly, many studies have observed that despite the gradual abolitionism imposed in the early 1800s by European powers (first and foremost Great Britain), the intra-African slave trade – hence forced migration – increased exponentially[64] as it can be seen in the figure 2. How can this phenomenon be explained? According to Saleh[65], the gradual decrease in the export of slaves to the New World on the one hand, and the conflicts that erupted in East Africa with Egypt's invasion

[61] It includes large areas between Ethiopia, Sudan and today's South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, DRC, Burundi and Tanzania. From an etymological stand point, the expression "Nilotic" refers to the Nile Valley where most of the Nilo-Saharan-speaking people live.
[62] Saleh M. and Wahby S. (2022).
[63] Wright, J. (2007).
[64] See Saleh, M. and Wahby, S. (2022).
[65] Saleh, M. (2021).

of Sudan in 1820 together with those caused by the Sokoto Caliphate jihad in the Western Africa on the other hand, triggered an increased demand for slaves, which was mostly absorbed locally.

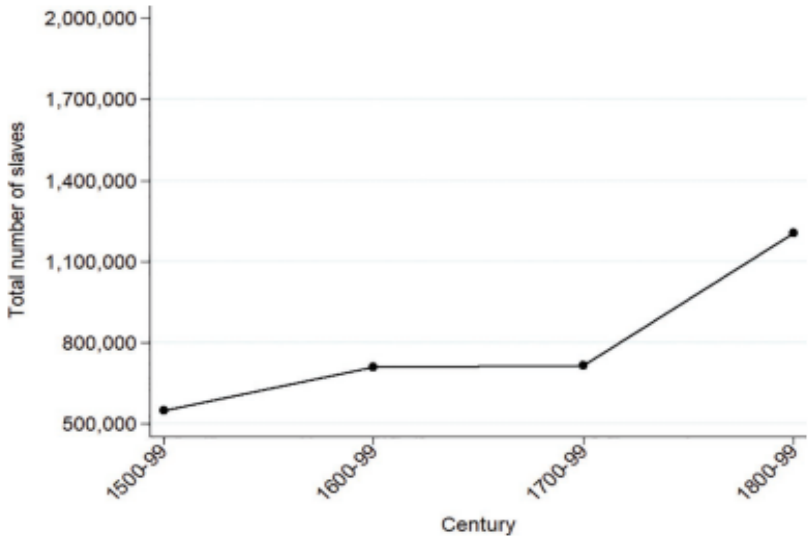

Fig. 2. Estimates of the total number of slaves crossing the Sahara (1500-1900)
Source: de Haas M., Frankema , E. (2022)

Although Austine's [illegible] Egypt witnessed a sharp increase in arrivals from Ethiopia and Nilotic Sudan, making it an almost unique case in North Africa during the second half of the 19th century[66]. As a matter of fact, the Lancashire cotton famine during the American Civil War of 1861-65, led to a worldwide boom in demand for Egyptian cotton production. Accordingly, Egypt increased the importation of slaves to be employed in its agricultural economy. As Saleh pointed out, in mid-1800s, around 96% of slaves in Egypt were black people from the Nilotic Sudan[67]. Women often constituted an important – sometimes major – part of the slaves' composition all over Africa, especially in urban areas or in the progressive urbanisation processes that took place on the Continent. As in the case of Eastern Africa that I will shortly analyse, most domestic servant in Northen Africa were female slaves who worked as domestic workers, nursemaids or wet nurses, and as concubines if they were owned by a male household head[68]. Nevertheless, slave practices were anything but a homogenous phenomenon in Africa and changed by time and space. Indeed, during the Egypt's cotton boom, the gender composition of enslaved population shifted from a traditionally (urban) female-majority slavery towards a male-dominated slavery in the rural, agricultural sector.

[66] On the relevance of military slavery of current-day Sudan, see Sikainga, A. A. (1996).
[67] Saleh, M. (2021).
[68] Saleh, M. & Wahby, S. (2022).

Alongside northbound routes, slave-related forms of forced migration were also diffused intra-regionally (within sub-Saharan Africa), especially in Central and Western Africa. During the Sokoto Caliphate's jihad Revolution, slavery spread extensively and religious identity became a key factor in determining whether or not a free person taken captive was enslaveable. Before the Islamisation process, in fact, the area was inhabited by numerous polytheistic and animist ethnic groups who, as infidels, could be enslaved together with those who had never accepted the "truth" of Islam[69]. As it will be observed in the third chapter, the presence of these groups was widespread among black slaves in Tunisia[70]. The non-Muslim communities, and their attempts to expand their borders, posed a threat to the expansionism of the caliphate, as well as other empires[71].

As a consequence, the Sokoto Empire often resorted to war and slavery to impose its rule while undertaking a number of measures to protect people who were considered to be "freeborn Muslims."[72] Western and Central sub-Saharan Africa represented the main area of the continent where people where enslaved both for the trans-Saharan (and overseas) markets and for the internal exploitation of labour. Indeed, besides warfare, in several regions of Western and Central Africa agriculture represented another crucial exploitation sector. Similar to other regions of the continent, women made up the majority of enslaved population. Nonetheless, as Lofkrants highlighted, enslaved women in this geographical area were mainly exploited in the agricultural work since *[they] were valued primarily for their productive capabilities and to a lesser extent their reproductive one.*[73] As mentioned however, in the phase shortly before European colonialism, and particularly in the first decades of the 19th century, early forms of voluntary migration began to appear. As Austin noted, although exceptional, seasonal migration has been witnessed in the agricultural export economy of free people moving from Mali and interior Senegal toward the groundnut cultivation by the Senegal and Gambia rivers.[74] These farmers, like the Krobo in southern Ghana, took advantage of the growth of the overseas demand for crops that could be produced using appropriate land extensive methods on West African soils[75]. Although, as mentioned, the abolition of slavery progressively imposed by the West in the 1800s had increased inter-regional slave trading, the Senegambia area remained safer, allowing these seasonal migrants to move more easily, albeit with some danger. As a consequence, traders, including women, used to move together. In southwest Nigeria, Yoruba traders were mainly

[69] Lofkrants J. (2023). In D. A. Pargas and J. Schiel (Eds) p.482
[70] See p. 98 of this thesis
[71] On the forced movement of people between Ghana and Côte D'Ivoire caused by Asante Empire, see also Meledje J. C (2018).
[72] Lofkrants J. (2023, 482)
[73] Ibid. p.484
[74] Austin, G. (2022, 47). In M. De Haas & E. Frankema (Eds.).
[75] Ibi. p.48

women migrants who were accompanied by men as guards[76]. These forms of voluntary seasonal or long-distance trade-related migration, as it will be shortly illustrated, also began to develop in East Africa. However, considering that slavery was a well-established institution in East Africa as early as the 16th century, forced migration were widespread. As Karin Pallaver argued, indeed, the establishment of a flourishing plantation economy in early 1800s in Zanzibar and along the Swahili coast, led to an unprecedent slave trade within East Africa, thus a migration system that supplied slave labourers mainly from the Congo area and from Southeast Africa.[77] Unlike in Western and Central Africa where the value of women slaves was assessed in relation to their productive labour – which explains their major employment in agriculture– in East Africa enslaved women, representing the majority of slaves, were valued for their reproductive power and attractiveness[78]. However, while women made up the majority of the enslaved population in East Africa between the 17th and the first half of the 19th century, during the 1850s, with the establishment of sugarcane plantations in the area of Zanzibar (present-day Tanzania) the number of slaves employed in agricultural sector dramatically increased. Similar to Egypt, such an event marked a major shift in migration patterns whereby slaves imported into the area from Lake Malawi region and Kenya were mainly men and no longer women[79]. Nevertheless, by the spread of urbanisation, many women were enslaved as *vijakazi,* young girls working within the households carrying out domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, washing the laundry, fetching water etc; they used to live with their masters in urban areas, acquiring a higher monetary value than unskilled male slaves[80]. The Kingdom of Buganda[81], corresponding to present-day Uganda, was among the most important areas of enslavement and slavery played a crucial role in the Kingdom's social and economic life. As Pallaver showed, the position of enslaved people depended on hierarchies determined both by the task performed and by the length of their stay in the society indeed, compared to newcomers, long-term residents were more likely to be integrated into the household and less likely to be sold. As experienced in Western and central Africa, also East Africa witnessed a migration phenomenon of free labourers during the 19th century linked to the ivory

[76] Ibid.
[77] Pallaver, K. (2022).
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid. p.79
[80] Liebst, M. (2023). In D. A. Paragas and J. Schiel J. (Eds.).
[81] In the period prior to British colonialism, Uganda was composed of several kingdoms, the most important of which was the Buganda Kingdom, whose origins date back to the 13th century. Over the centuries and until the advent of colonialism, the kingdom was the largest and most powerful in the region. With the establishment of the French protectorate, the kingdom was renamed precisely Uganda by the British, which means Buganda in Swahili. After going through several turbulent phases, following the gaining of independence in 1962, the Kingdom was restored in 1993. Today, the Kingdom of Buganda, located in Central Uganda, constitutes the largest monarchy in East Africa. A state within the state.

trade. As a matter of fact, the rise in price associated with world demand for East African ivory[82] between the 1820s and 1870s made the ivory trade a particularly profitable business. Due to the high mortality rate of animals in some parts of East Africa[83], ivory was transported by human carries, the porters, most of whom came from the current areas of Kenya, Mozambique, Western and Southern Tanzania. Initially, the ivory trade remained mainly linked to a circular migration wherein also women took part as companions of their husbands or by performing other small subsidiary jobs that gave them access to paid work[84]. As several studies have shown, trade became the main driver of urbanisation in East Africa with the establishment of growing urban settlements which resulted in a major shift in the 19th century migration patterns of that area turning this type of migration increasingly permanent[85]. Indeed, with the peak of the 1870s in the ivory trade, and the ever-longer distances to be travelled, many porters moved to the major urban centres. As argued by Reid, "The capital of the Kingdom of Buganda – in the area of modern-day Kampala – was unique in the East African interior for its size, population, and political and religious significance[86]. Its increasing commercial centrality attracted a significant number of people from neighbouring regions, expanding the capital in suburbs. With the onset of European colonialism in Africa which was formally established with the well-known "Scramble of Africa," during the end of 19th and the 20th century, migration linked to labour exploitation became of a paramount importance in the development of economies of extraction across the whole continent. As a matter of fact, all European powers – each according to its own interests of capitalist expansion, thus according to the occupied territories' resources – forced entire communities to leave their lands to re-allocate them to white commercial farmers or for mining exploitation. The resettlement of these uprooted communities to arid or semi-arid areas that no longer provided any means of livelihood, forced thousands of people to sell their labour on farms or to seek employment in mines and industries. Accordingly, forced migration continued to play a predominant role in intra-African migration despite the abolition of slavery and despite the emergence of various international conventions banning forced labour[87]. Except for Liberia and Ethiopia, the violence of colonisation has been the common denominator of all the

[82] Sherif, A. (1987, 102–3)

[83] Around the end of the 19th century, in fact, many areas of East Africa were hit by the spread of deadly epidemics that decimated herds with dramatic results in economic terms and survival caused by widespread starvation

[84] Pallaver, K. (2022).

[85] Deutsch, J.G. (2006, 24). See also Håkansson, T. M. (2022).

[86] Reid, R. J. (2002) in Pallaver K. (2022, 85).

[87] See Okia, O. (2022). See also Maul, D. (2007).

countries that make up the African continent. As I cannot expand here on the complex history of colonialism in Africa, figure 3 will help to bear in mind the Continent's partitioning in early 1900s[88].

Fig. 3. Colonial Africa 1914
Source: Christopher, A. J. (2023).

[88] It should be borne in mind that in the figure given, Southern Rhodesia corresponds to Zimbabwe; Northern Rhodesia corresponds to Zambia; Also note that neither Liberia nor Ethiopia are included among the European colonial possessions as neither was ever formally occupied. Although under the influence of Italy in the case of Ethiopia and the United Kingdom for Liberia, both countries have always retained their sovereignty. It is recalled in this regard that Liberia, among other things, came into being in 1822 as an outpost for returning freed slaves from the Americas.

The partitioning is useful to show how European settlers have impacted on migratory patterns on sub-Saharan Africa and to some extent to argue that the legacy of these forms of displacement as well as voluntary migration are still present in several areas of sub-Saharan Africa[89]. Indeed, as Rwamatwara pointed out, in many African countries, Europeans set up a system of differential and preferential treatment of people based on regional, tribal, social and ethnic differences[90].

As it will emerge, these forms of hierarchisation have been inherited, from North to South of the continent, by the many post-independent African governments. In Portuguese colonial empires, forced recruitment and long-distance migrations were common and assumed, as Robeiro da Silva and Alexopoulou showed, three different patterns (a) rural-rural and rural-urban migration within the colonies; (b) migration between colonies within Portuguese Africa, especially to plantations and mines; and (c) migration from Portuguese colonies to other parts of Central and Southern Africa[91]. Migration from rural areas to expanding colonial cities, has been a common form of seasonal migration *within* Portuguese colonies. Most migrants worked as domestic servants or in the construction of transport infrastructure. The movement of workers in rural-rural migrations, widespread in Guina Bissau (Portuguese Guinea – PG – in the map), despite being aimed at developing agricultural exports, was used by the colony to strengthen internal colonisation. A similar pattern occurred in Angola where, between 1920s and 1970s, an estimated one million workers migrated to the north of the country to be employed in the diamond mines discovered by the Portuguese Diamond Company.[92] Comparable trends were observed in Mozambique for workers employed, voluntarily or forcibly, in the agricultural sector or in the public infrastructure.[93] However, the third migratory pattern in Portuguese colonial system represented a particular case which consisted in the movement of workers beyond colony's borders such as those directed to copper mines in southeastern (Belgian) Congo or to the gold and diamond mines of South Africa. These long-distance migratory systems mainly included unskilled workers from Mozambique and Angola, as well as migrant workers coming from South Rhodesia and Malawi (Nyasaland – N – in figure 3). The international flows of black miners to South Africa were facilitated by agencies for the recruitment of migrant workers such as the *Witwatersrand Native Labor Association* (WENELA) whose activity was regulated by inter-state agreements that secured at least some profit for the labour-exporting countries, such as Portuguese colonies. In order to avoid permanent deprivation of labour-force exporting countries, migrants were repatriated at the end of their labour contract, which never

[89] Robeiro da Silva, F. and Alexopoulou, K. (2022).
[90] Rwamatwara, E. (2005).
[91] Robeiro da Silva, F., Alexopoulou, K. (2022, 179).
[92] Ibid. p.182
[93] Ibid.

exceeded two consecutive years. In this way, the miners contributed to the monetisation of the national economy and paid the taxes imposed by the Portuguese administration.[94] Hence, as Juif pointed out, Portuguese colonial states depended on the revenue it generated from the circulation of migrant workers within and beyond imperial borders[95] rather than on the mere exploitation of its occupied territories' resources.

Unlike colonies to the South of the continent, such as South Africa or Southern Rhodesia, agricultural production prevailed over mining in British East and West Africa. The cocoa crops on the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) and the industrial boom that followed turned the country into one of Britain's most profitable African colonies in the 19th century, particularly after World War I when Ghana supplied about half of the world's cocoa production[96]. The expansion of transport network and port construction, as well as accelerating the urbanisation process of areas such as Accra, Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Abidjan, Lomé, Dakar and Cotonou, led to a high degree of geographic mobility[97]. As consequence, migrant labourers travelled great distances to work in the cocoa fields in the Gold Coast from territories as far as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, as well as French West African colonies[98]. As Wiemers highlighted, although the British Empire also resorted to voluntary recruitment in Ghana, the line between voluntary and coercive employment has always remained problematic in the whole Continent during colonial domination.[99] In several areas of West Africa, permanent flights became a strategy whereby many workers managed to escape colonial labour coercion and the increasing lack of livelihoods. In *Change among West African settlers in Northern Sudan* Mark Duffield has, for example, analysed the migration of the Hausa population of the former Fulani Empire towards Sudan as a consequence of British colonialism in northern Nigeria[100] and, in particular, the political-economic reorganisation of Sudan with the arrival of these Western African migrants, known as *fallata*[101]. The majority of the Hausa who settled in Sudan during the colonial period belonged to the poor peasant class, fleeing from labour exploitation within the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria as "indicated by the lack of traders and artisans, whose presence characterised the dispersion of the

[94] Alexopoulou, K., & Juif, D. (2017).
[95] Juif, D (2022).
[96] Okia, O. (2022) p. 171
[97] Yaro, J. A. (2008)
[98] Okia, O. (2022, 170)
[99] Wiemers, A. (2017). See also Keese, A. (2022).
[100] The process of colonisation of what we know today as Nigeria took place in 1900 with the British occupation of the northern part of the country, which at that time included the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate (or Fulani Empire) and part of the Bornu Empire, establishing the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1914, the British Empire unified the Northern Protectorate with the Southern Protectorate and the colony of Lagos (hitherto divided), establishing the Protectorate of Nigeria.
[101] On the Western African diaspora in Sudan, see Miller, C., Abu Manga A.A. (2005).

Hausa in various parts of West Africa, southern Nigeria and Chad"[102]. In Sudan, these unskilled workers settled in the agricultural regions of Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, Gedaref and Kassala, as well as in the urban areas of Northern Sudan[103] shown in figure 4.

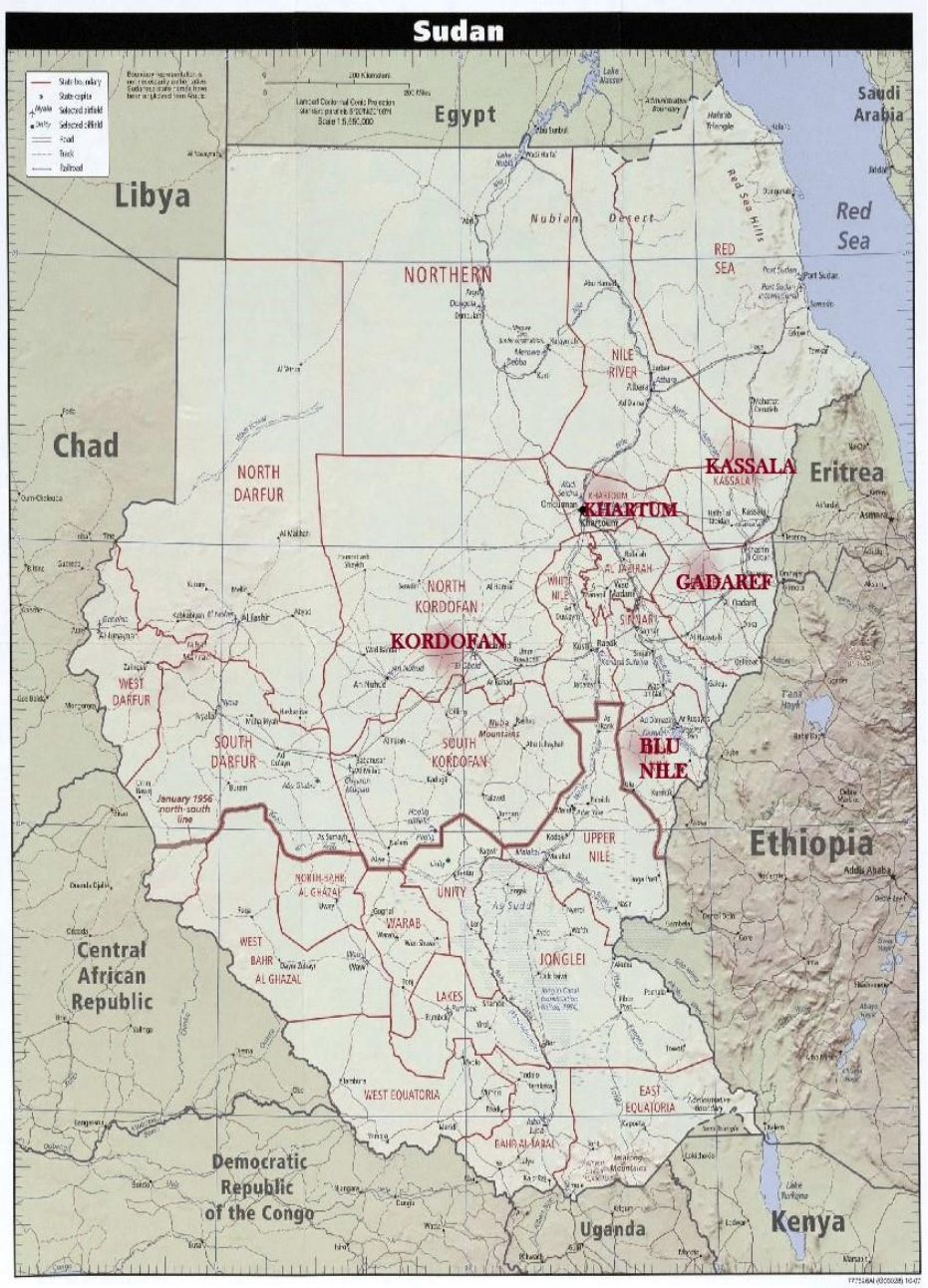

FIG. 4. Political map of old Sudan
Source: re-elaboration from Neszmelyi, G. I. (2014).

[102] Cfr. Duffield, M. (1983, 45).
[103] Ibid.

The migration of the Hausa from Nigeria represented a good economic opportunity for the British administration of Sudan since having a greater labour force at its disposal allowed it to lower its labour costs. In academic research on the development of colonial capitalism in Africa, an important topic of discussion is related to the attempts of European powers to cope with the underpopulation (or low population density) of certain large areas, such as Angola or Mozambique. According to Duffield, however, the main issues related to the establishment of a profitable economy in Sudan was not due to "underpopulation as some have argued but to the fact that the existing indigenous population was not yet socialised into dependence on wage labour[104]". Indeed, as stated in the 1908 Reports on the Finance Administration and Conditions of Sudan *The influx of West African tribes will materially benefit the labour market as these people, unlike most of the Sudanese, are anxious to make money*.[105] As a result, the permanent settlement of West African migrants was encouraged by the colonial administration. As Duffield pointed out, however, while encouraging the settlement of Nigerians in Sudan, the British settlers implemented measures whereby wages were lowered as much as possible, making these workers more dependent on wage labour and thus increasing urbanisation and the development of the country. As a matter of fact, depressing salaries was the key strategy to maximise the productivity of the Hausa by pushing them to perform more occupations[106]. From a gender perspective, the need to find alternative livelihoods to the extractive policies of colonial capitalism in Africa emerged in some research on the spread of prostitution among migrant women in newly urban areas of Kenya.[107]

As previously noted, the establishment of the early urban areas in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, preceded the colonial rule as well as the introduction of industrial capitalism. However, Katharine Frederick and Elise Meerkerk pointed out that colonialism constituted a *virtually continent-wide rupture*[108] which while varying from country to country, altered the course of African urbanisation. Whether European colonisers founded new cities or expanded pre-existing ones, African urban areas served as business centres for European economic and political interests,

[104] Cfr. Ibid. p.48
[105] Reports on the Finance Administration and Conditions of Sudan, 1908, Central Records Office, Khartoum, Reports List 2 April 1914: p.558) in Duffield, M. (1983, 48).
[106] It should be noted how the settlement of the Hausa in Sudan over time, and particularly with the arrival of new flows during the 1900s, changed the identity issues of this ethnic group. In this regard, Duffield points out how the generations of Hausa descendants in Sudan have lost their cultural and ethnic continuity with the Hausa of Nigeria. For this reason, it would be more appropriate to use the term "Tikari", adopted by the Hausa of Sudan themselves as a means of self-ascription and to distinguish themselves from other Western ethnic groups. For the transformations that occurred in the post-independence phase in Sudan with the complex recognition of the Tikari as Sudanese citizens, see Duffield, M. (1983).
[107] See White, L. (1990). Bujra, J. M. (1975); Muchomba, F. M. (2014).
[108] Cfr. Frederick, K. and van Naderveen Meerkerk, E. (2022).

attracting large numbers of African workers, both men and women from rural areas[109]. Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, sprung up relatively recently, and in the late 1800s it functioned mainly as a small trading centre and a staging depot for oxen and mules. With the construction of the Mombasa-Uganda Railway, the population of the city grew rapidly, with more than 11,000 inhabitants in 1906 alone[110]. Among the population of foreigners who settled in Nairobi, and in particular in the Kibera[111] area, the Nubians, whose roots are traced between Sudan and Uganda, constituted a large proportion. Kibera was set up by the British administration at the end of the 19th century for the purpose of housing precisely the Nubians who, as soldiers of the British crown, were held in high esteem and considered as a "better-class of Africans, with a capacity above that of the ordinary African[112]". With the increased rural-urban migration, facilitated by the new railway and the economic incentives offered by working in the capital, the population of non-Nubians grew, surpassing the presence of Nubians in the 1930s. According to Muchomba, colonial economic policies with the imposition of hut taxes on the female population (from which women had been excluded until 1934) and the expropriation of arable land, led many of the women (including Nubians) who had settled in Kibera to use prostitution as an important means of livelihood. Such a phenomenon effectively transformed the urban structure of Kibera, as well as women's engagement in sex work[113]. Indeed, with the economic boom experienced in Nairobi in late 1920s, the number of African employed men increased. These transient men, often self-employed (e.g. tradesmen) or skilled workers in the service sector (e.g. domestic servants and gun carriers) as well as European men, led women to change their work patterns. If until then prostitution took place in the home and was accompanied by care activities such as cooking and cleaning for the client, with the economic boom street-based sex emerged. As a consequence, sexuality and the provision of sexual services became the focus of women. Kibera increasingly attracted a "large number of men from Nairobi and surroundings[114]". Despite the British administration's attempts to remove the African population (including the Nubians who had lost their social status in the meantime) from Kibera, women continued to resort to prostitution as their only means of survival and as a strategy for the accumulation of wealth and property. Hausa migrants in Sudan and rural-urban migrant women in Kenya exemplified the high capacity of migrants to respond

[109] Ibid.
[110] Obudho, R. A. (1984).
[111] Nowadays Kibera is a slum in Nairobi and is home to a population of about 250.000 thousands (according to 2020 UN-Habitat estimates) in an area of just 2.5 km^2 which make it one of the largest slums in the world. The extremely poor hygienic and housing conditions, the spread of HIV facilitated by the frequent rapes and the poor use of contraceptives has lowered life expectancy to 30 years. See UN-HABITAT (2020); Desgroppes, A., Taupin, S. (2011). See also Smedt, J.D. (2011).
[112] Smedt, J. D. (2009, 204) in Muchomba, F. M. (2014, 82).
[113] White, L. (1990).
[114] Muchomba, F. M. (2014, 90).

and adapt to "the rapidly emerging spatial inequalities of opportunity, often defying (or redefining) designated roles in colonial economic blueprints[115]. As seen so far, although intra-African migration has been largely affected by forms of forced mobility, voluntary (economic) migration has existed both in the pre-colonial and colonial period. However, the increased focus by scholars on labour exploitation in colonial Africa, coupled with the lack of accessible and reliable data have blurred the relevance of the latter compared to the former, producing a gap in the literature that allows for voluntary migration to be appropriately explored. Moreover, as I will shortly observe, the long-standing assumption in research that women have always migrated passively along with the male entourage has obscured their role as migrants in both the precolonial and colonial phases, leaving an empty room for the analysis of voluntary female migrations in that period.

1.1.2 New African scenarios. Decolonization, War and Migration

Between the 1950s and the mid-1970s the majority of African countries shook of the chains of colonial oppression[116]. However, as Frankema highlighted, *Colonial rule had bequeathed Africa with more than 50 territorially compartmentalized polities, separated by a web of mostly arbitrary borders, uniting different peoples in a challenge to shape post-colonial societies, while splitting others apart*[117]. As a matter of fact, the end of colonialism ushered in a controversial era in which the dual challenge of building the institutional apparatus of the state (state-building) while simultaneously constructing an overarching national identity among disparate cultural groups (nation-building),[118] culminated in widespread and long-lasting armed conflicts, most of whom, were civil in nature. While Western countries gained a momentum of optimism with the end of the Cold War, Africa's instability showed, as Duffield puts it, a changing nature of today's conflicts which come to be characterised by violent tensions "within States rather than between States"[119].

During the early 1960s and then in 1990s when the number of civil wars globally was reaching its peak, Africa experienced a new, current, scenario of forced migration, the phenomenon of refugees and Internal Displaced People (IDPs)[120]. If it is true, as Duffield argued, that the end of international

[115] Cfr. De Haas, M., Travieso, E. (2022).
[116] Frankema, E. (2022, 330).
[117] Ibid.
[118] Cfr. Henderson, E. A. (2000).
[119] Cfr. Duffield, M. (2007, 116).
[120] In order to face the challenge of refugees and the regional dynamics, the Organisation of the African Union (OAU) – founded in 1963 in Addis Ababa and since 2002 replaced by the African Union, (AU) decided to implement the 1955 UN definition, and its 1967 Additional Protocol, with its own Refugee Convention in 1969. Building on the Geneva Convention, the OAU Convention adds that the term "refugee" shall be applied to: "*every person who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or*

bipolarity and the displacement of superpower rivalry in Africa played a role in the expansion and escalation of sub-Saharan Africa armed conflicts, Henderson and other scholars importantly pointed that the high rate of conflicts in postcolonial Africa are mostly due to internal vulnerabilities of countries than to international factors[121]. In the same view, Stedman highlighted that the origin of these conflicts "lie principally" with "policies pursued by elites to gain and consolidate power.[122]" Consequently, as Akokpari pointed, sub-Saharan states have been partially or totally responsible for the production of refugees and IDPs in the continent[123]. Starting from 1960s, Rwanda notably, has produced refugees on several occasion, particularly during the genocide of 1994 which caused more than 2 million people to flee to neighbouring countries including Tanzania, Uganda and Burundi but at the same time, it hosted Burundian and Congolese (DRC) refugees.[124] Between 1960s-70s many countries in SSA were swept up in the conflicts. Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Congo and South Africa were among the major net producers of refugees[125]. Shortly after its independence, Nigeria was shattered by a civil war – known as the Biafra War – that lasted from 1967 to 1979. Almost simultaneously, in 1977, only two years after obtaining independence, Mozambique plunged into a civil war that caused more than one and a half million refugees and between four and five million IDPs. The Chadian conflict (1960s-1980s) which stemmed from the rivalry between the predominantly black population of the south and the Islamic-Arab population of the north for domination of the country's politics, is remindful of the first Sudanese civil war (1955 - 1972) whereby *the Islamised, Arabised and light-skinned population of the north has consistently dominated Sudanese politics to the exclusion of the black, Christian and traditional worshipping populations of the south*[126] and which resulted, as it is known, in the secession of South Sudan from Sudan several decades later (2011).

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nationality" (OAU, 1969 art.1). Hence, the OAU's Convention moved beyond the traditional "fear of persecution", grasping situations stemming from external aggression or occupation while indirectly recognising the unique challenges faced by displaced populations on the continent. However, the definition of IDPs was provided in the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention) that defines IDPs as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." For 1969 OAU Refugees Convention, see https://au.int/en/treaties/oau-convention-governing-specific-aspects-refugee-problems-africa;for 2009 Kampala Convention, see https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa

[121] Henderson, E. A. (2000).

[122] Cfr. Stedman, S. (1996, 238).

[123] Akokpari, J.K. (1998).

[124] Rwamatwara, E. (2005, 7).

[125] Akokpari, J.K. (1998).

[126] Ibid. p.7

In mid-1970s, immediately after the independence from the Portugal Empire, a violent conflict erupted in Angola between the former anti-colonial guerrilla movements, the communist-oriented People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the anti-communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA); the conflict continued, with interludes, until 2002 causing according to Human Rights Watch estimates, the internal displacement of one-third of Angola's thirteen million population while another 435,000 Angolans became refugees abroad.[127] More than half a century after the disruptions caused by decolonisation, the issues surrounding the forced movement of refugees and IDPs in Africa continue. According to the most recent UNHCR estimates (2023), there are currently more than 11 million forcibly displaced persons[128] in Central and West Africa most of whom come from Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic (CAR), Cameroon and Burkina Faso. Among the population of refugees and asylum seekers, women and children make up 81% of the total[129]. Looking at the migratory landscape of East and Horn of Africa (EHoA) region, the situation does not seem to be improving. In the region there are more than 16 million forcibly displaced persons[130]. Since April 2023, following the tensions triggered by the coup d'état that ended Al-Bashir's government in 2018, a new conflict has erupted in Sudan over the country's leadership. The conflict, arguably the most violent in the country's history, is causing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Ethiopia, CAR, Chad, Uganda, Egypt and South Sudan[131]. As a result, the UNHCR estimates that the number of displaced people in EHoA will reach 26 million by 2024[132]. The new war scenario in post-colonial Africa has also caused a major shift in the continent's internal refugees' management. As emphasised by Rutwina, indeed, the refugees' policies formulated and implemented in the whole continent have been characterised by a shift from an "open door" to a "closed door" policy[133]. As the case of Tunisia will show in its different approach to dealing with Algerian refugees in the 1950s compared to present-day management, in several African countries the initial open reception approach characterising the decolonisation phase, gave away to a restricted and push-back paradigm. Indeed, the early ideological call for Pan-Africanism and African solidarity for the continent's self-determination, was gradually replaced by the assumption that international migration represents a threat for receiving country's stability and thus it must be addressed in terms of security. Accordingly, since the 1990s, many countries have moved from a practice of integration to a

[127] See Bollinger, L. (2023).
[128] In UNHCR estimates, the category of "forcibly displaced persons" is wide and include refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs, as well as stateless people.
[129] See UNHCR, 2023 https://reporting.unhcr.org/west-and-central-africa-forcibly-displaced-and-stateless-population-and-trends-2018-2023-6526
[130] UNHCR, 2023 https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/regions/east-and-horn-africa-and-great-lakes
[131] See IOM, 2021. A region on the move 2021: East and Hord of Africa. IOM publications, Nairobi.
[132] UNHCR, 2023.
[133] Rutinwa, B. (2017). See also Rwamatwara, E. (2005).

repatriation one[134]. Such an approach, however, did not apply merely to refugees but also to the so-called economic migrants, whether regular or irregular. For instance, in analysing post-colonial voluntary migration in West sub-Saharan Africa, Joseph Yaro noted that mobility in West Africa has been generally *dominated by a predominantly North-South movement from landlocked countries of Sahel West Africa*[135] mainly Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, to the more prosperous areas of coastal West Africa, particularly towards Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia[136]. Nevertheless, the economic and political instability of the post-colonial ECOWAS[137] (Economic Community of West African States) which made the free movement of its citizens one of its core principles, resulted in mass expulsions of many foreign workers. Before moving on to an in-depth analysis of the impact of the security-migration nexus in intra-African mobility, I would like to emphasise at this stage the emergence – along forced migration – of a further new migratory pattern that characterised Africa in the post-colonial era. De Haas and Frankema (2022) have defined this scenario as *the end of intra-African migration*. I believe, however, that this definition is somewhat misleading thereby I opt for a different formulation which I call *the beginning of outward-African migration.*

By referring to *the end of intra-African migration* may indeed deceive one into thinking that African migration patterns shifted from a movement characterised for being intra-continental, to one whereby migrations became extra-continental which is not the case, nor the intention, of the two scholars.

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[134] Tanzania, as Frankema argued, has long been the poster child of integrationalist ideal in Africa. Indeed, by the 1966 Refugee act, the government provided refugees and asylum seekers with allocation of lands and large-scale offers of Tanzanian citizenship through naturalization. Between 1970s and 1990s Tanzania hosted some of the largest refugee population coming from many neighbouring countries including DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Mozambique. Alongside the Pan-Africanist vision that prescribed the open attitude towards "freedom fighters" or "victims", scholars attributed the government's tolerant approach also to other economic and socio-cultural factors, such as the opportunity to dampen social tensions thanks to ethno-linguistic affinities between refugees and local residents in the north-western region of the country, or the economic contribution inherent in the repopulation of vast thinly populated areas. However, the massive arrival of Rwandan refugees in '94 and the economic depression of that period compromised access to limited public resources, increased competition for land and other natural resources, and created tensions and hardship in the countryside. As a result, the government began to strengthen the legal basis for repatriating refugees with a new Refugee Act of 1998, through which, under threat of force, refugees were increasingly expelled. See Frankema, E. (2022, 341); Bariagaber, A. (2006). Felix Da Costa, D. (2017). Similar shifts have been analysed in many other areas of sub-Saharan Africa. See Mogire, E. (2011) on the study of Somali refugees in Kenya; Backwell, O. (2000) on the case of Zambia with Angolan refugees; see also Omata, N. (2013) on Liberian refugees from Ghana.

[135] Yaro, J. A. (2008). p.4

[136] Ibid.

[137] Since its foundation in 1975 by the Treaty of Lagos, the community includes 15 West African countries of which, however, four (Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali) are currently suspended. ECOWAS constitutes an important regional and political union, whose main aims are the promotion of regional integration through the free movement of citizens of member states, and the creation of a single market and integrated cooperation. It has also assumed a military role with peacekeeping operations.

Rather, the expression is used to emphasise a turning point in the migratory movements that had dominated the run-up to decolonisation wherein voluntary human mobility in Africa was almost entirely intra-continental. As shown in figure 5, starting from 1980s, Africa experienced an *acceleration and spatial diversification (beyond colonial patterns) of emigration out of Africa to Europe, North America, the Gulf and Asia.*[138]

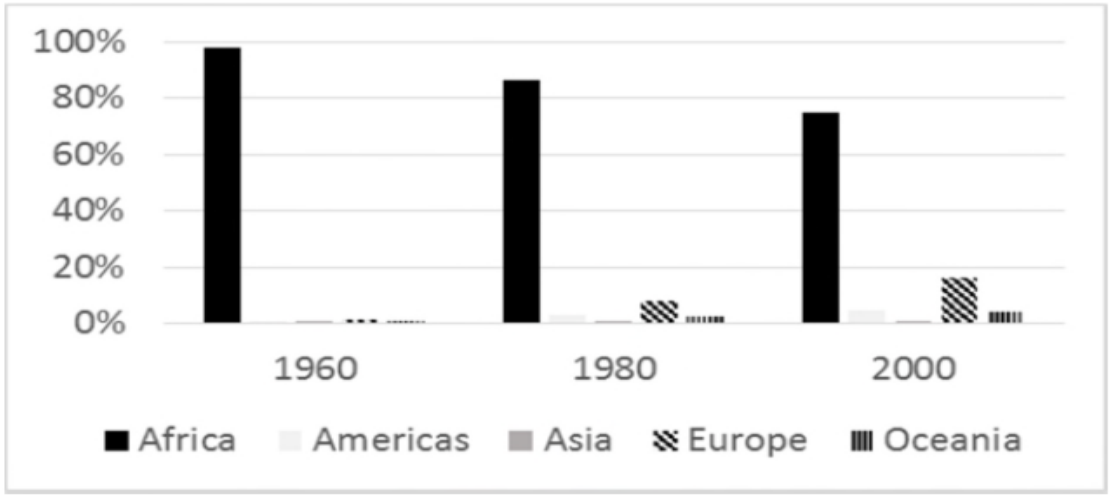

FIG.5. African intra-continental and extra-continental flows (1960-2000)
Source: Flahaux, M.L., De Haas, H. (2014, 15)

However, it is clear that until 2000, despite an increase of extra-continental flows, most of the continent's migration occurred internally as shown in figure 6. More importantly, as may be noticed in figure 7, unlike the rest of the continent, most of the extra-continental flows between the 1960s and the beginning of the new millennium involved mainly North African countries. Nonetheless, despite a *beginning of outward-African migration,* which is not however the object of this research, data collected over the last two decades show that the population of African migrants compared to the world's total migrants is the lowest[139] but more importantly that African migration is still primarily intra-continental in nature[140]. This appears to be true, inter alia, even at the sub-regional level where, as figure 8 shows, migrants tend to move mostly in their own region.

[138] Cfr. Flahaux M.L., De Haas H. (2014).
[139] See African Union. (2018).
[140] Indeed, as shown by various studies and data collection, more than 70 percent of sub-Saharan African migration occurs intra-continentally. Most of extra-continental migration takes place in Northen Africa. See: Udelsamann Rodrigue, C., Bjarnesen, J. (2020); Andall, J. (2018); Flahaux, M.L., De Haas, H. (2014); Adepoju (2000, 2001, 2008, 2022); African Union, (2018).

	From Africa to the rest of the world	From the rest of the world **to** Africa	**Within** Africa
1960	1,830,776	2,811,930	6,176,385
1980	5,418,096	1,872,502	7,966,359
2000	8,734,478	1,532,746	10,500,000

FIG.6. Estimated total stocks of migration from, to, and within Africa (1960-2000)
Source : Flahaux, M.L., De Haas, H. (2014, 9)

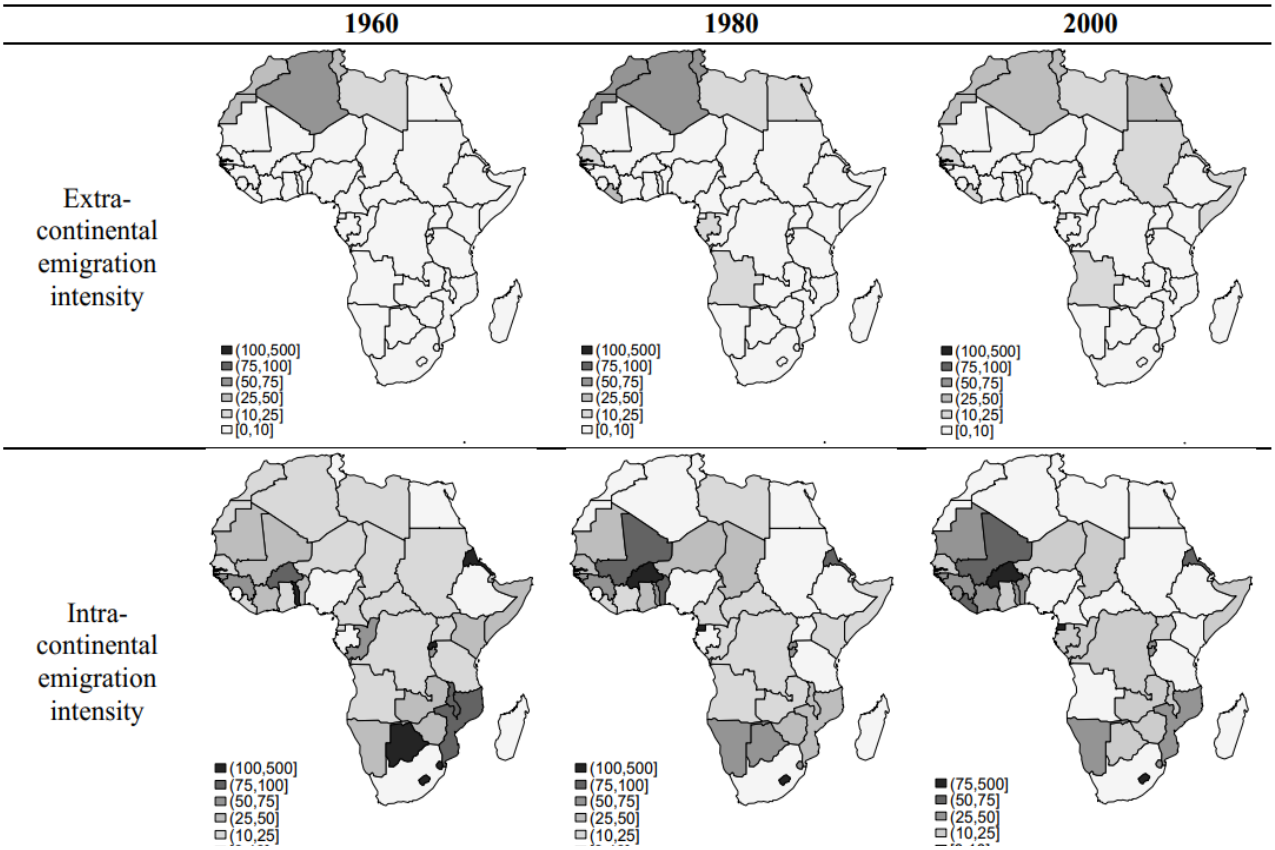

FIG.7. Evolution of emigration intensity from African countries (emigrants per 1000 people born in each country)
Source : Global Bilateral Migration Database . In Flahaux, M.L., De Haas, H. (2014, 9)

Origin	Destination			
	Eastern Africa	Central Africa	Western Africa	Southern Africa
Eastern Africa*	73.5%	9.9%	0.0%	16.7%
Central Africa	40.0%	45.8%	5.6%	8.6%
Western Africa	0.4%	5.4%	93.6%	0.6%
Southern Africa**	9.8%	0.6%	0.0%	89.7%
Sub-Saharan Africa (total)	5,387,268	2,034,915	5,864,933	2,568,393

* includes Sudan and South Sudan

** includes Zambia and Zimbabwe

FIG. 8 Percentage of migrants in sub-Saharan Africa according to origin and destination areas
Source: ISPI 2017

Although this evidence, in recent years, irregular migration from Africa to Europe has become the object of an increasing – almost haunting, one might say – attention. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of arrivals from the African continent to European countries take place through regular channels,[141] Western mainstream media reportages and public debates continue to refer to an invasion of "illegal" migrants "massively escaping" from wars, starvation, extreme poverty and environmental degradation, a narrative reinforcing the stereotypes of the *African misery*[142]. Based on the above, I argue that there is an urgent need to challenge the current narrative on migration in Africa, moving away from the Eurocentric approaches that characterise much of European academia, which, by focusing scientific research on the south-north migration axis, reinforce a paternalistic view of Africa and most importantly a flawed analysis of contemporary migration. For that purpose, it is paramount to "Swivel our gaze beyond" the Mediterranean liquid border by taking into account what happens along African borderscapes. As I will now argue, embracing a gender perspective will contribute to offer a counter-narrative on migration in Africa. Women have historically played a pivotal role in intra-African migration. However, research on this phenomenon to date remains scarce. A gendered

[141] See African Union/ IOM (2020, 27).
[142] De Haas, H. (2008, 1305)

approach to contemporary migration in Africa is indeed crucial not only to fill a gap in academic research but because, as will emerge throughout this study, the gender perspective in the study of contemporary migration can offer an interesting analytical lens for understanding the governance of mobility in Africa and beyond. For this reason, in the first few pages I will begin to address the main issues related to the phenomenon of the so-called "feminisation of migration" in the global space and then in the sub-Saharan context. However, it should be noted that what is discussed shortly constitutes only an introductory part that will be taken up and deepened in the specific Tunisian context. Indeed, given the diversity that characterises the historical, cultural and economic paths of the continent's countries, addressing this issue in a generalised manner would be problematic.

1.2 Migration in contemporary Africa. A gender perspective.

1.2.1 Forgotten debates: the feminisation of migration in sub-Saharan Africa.

Why does gender matter within current migration phenomena? In "*Gendered Migrations and Global Social Reproduction",* Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram argued that *Global transformations are also gendered transformations*.[143] Admittedly, looking at women's lives in motion allows for a better insight into the functioning of contemporary border regimes and the close intertwining of borders with contemporary capitalism. Let us proceed in order.

The focus on the gendered nature of global migration by scholars, policymakers and practitioners goes back just over three decades, in 1990s, when an increase in female migration flows began to be recorded. However, such a process, which has been labelled under the slogan of *"feminization of migration*", must be treated with caution. Due to the assumption that economic migrations were predominantly male-dominated, for a long time the role of women in international flows aroused little research interest by assigning women the marginal and passive role of men's companions. Consequently, the first study conducted on the massive presence of women among global economic flows only dates back to 1998 when the United Nations Population Division made available information on the division by sex of migrants showing that in 1990 women made up about half (47,9 %) of global migration flows.[144] While filling a lack of data, it is important to bear in mind, however, that the increased focus on women's flows since the 1990s was part of a broader political context in which, as I anticipated, Western and non-Western countries increasingly turned migration phenomena, hitherto managed by individual nation-states, into an international security issue that as such required a global governance. Thus, efforts to quantitatively measure women's participation in

[143] Kofman, E., Raghuram, (2015, 1)
[144] See Zlotnik, H. (2003)

global migration have been part of a growing process of migration control that has at least allowed, as Morini notes, disciplines such as *Migration Studies* and *Gender Studies* to gain more prestige than they had hitherto received from traditional academic fields[145]. However, as some scholars noted, the supposed growth in worldwide human mobility generated by globalisation[146] and the undue emphasis on quantitative research, has somewhat flattened the real significance of the feminisation of migration phenomenon. Indeed, while recent estimates suggest that the number of female migrants has risen from 75.3 million in 1990, to 130.2 million in 2019[147] (thus almost doubled), when considering global flows in percentage terms, thus including both sexes, women make up 48,1% of global migration flows in 2020[148] as figure 9 highlights.

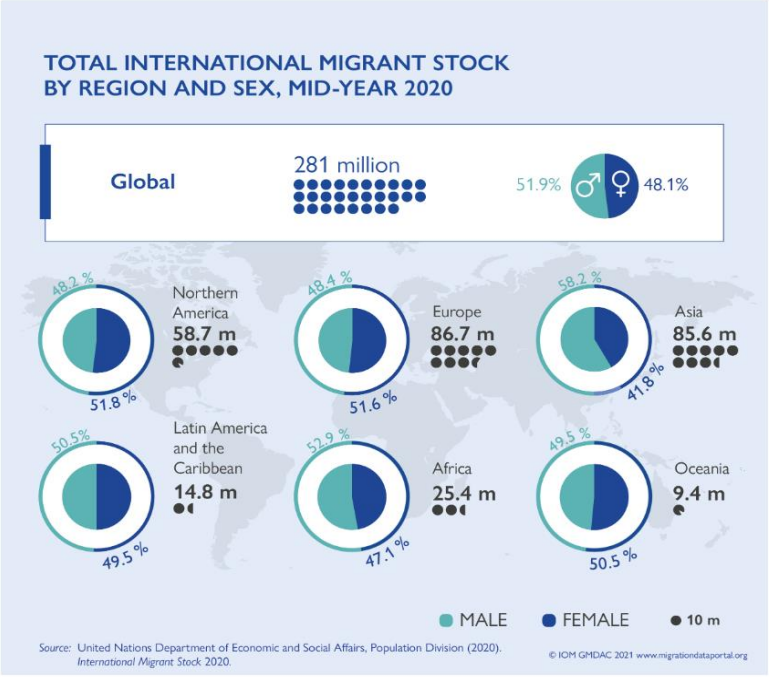

Fig. 9. International Migration stock 2020
Source: UNDESA (2020)

[145] Marchetti, S. (2018).
[146] Although it is widely argued that the globalisation process has broadened the scope of migration flows, some scholars have attempted to challenge this assumption. In an enlightening 2014 article, Hein de Haas and Mathias Czaika showed that the supposed increase in human mobility is linked more to a Eurocentric view rather than to a real intensification, diversification and greater geographical spatial division. According to their findings indeed, migration has maintained a fairly stable trend over the past 50 years, hence "the world has not become necessarily more migratory, but migration has become more "skewed" on a global level". In this vein, by analysing international flows at the regional level, the two scholars argue that globalisation has only benefited a portion of the world's population and that human mobility "reflects the asymmetric nature of globalization processes in general" . For a critique on increased migration in relation to globalisation, see de Haas, H. and Czaika, M. (2014)
[147] UN-DESA (2019) 2019 https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2020/Jan/un_2019_internationalmigration_highlights.pdf
[148] IOM (2023) https://www.migrationdataportal.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl251/files/2023-03/GDI%20Briefs_Gender_Issue_09-03.pdf

As can be remarked, despite the existence of regional differences, the proportion of women in migration flows over the thirty years considered (1990-2020) did not vary considerably. Interestingly, this percentage did not change in the three decades preceding the supposed beginning of female migration either; as a matter of fact, in the 1960s, women migrants made up 46.6% of the global flows[149]. The case of the African continent seems to be no exception from this point of view. Indeed, as early as the 1960s, women made up 49% of migration flows in North Africa while in sub-Saharan Africa they made up 40%. Nowadays, this trend can also be traced at the sub-regional level. As shown in table 1, indeed, the share of international female migrants is high in each area, with a decisive increase in female flows in sub-Saharan Africa compared to North Africa[150].

African sub-regions	% of international female migrants
Eastern Africa	50%
West and Middle Africa	47%
North-Africa	43%
Southern Africa	44%

Tab. 1 Percentage of international female migrants in intra-African migration (sub-regional level)
Source: Andall, J. (2018).

Thus, the process of feminisation of migration is not relevant in quantitative terms, i.e. with respect to the increase of women in global migratory phenomena. What, then, one wonders, is the element of novelty in female migration *per se*? As already noted, on the African continent women have always migrated extensively. What has changed since the 1990s is rather the way women migrate. Yet, differently that in the past, women are increasingly migrating as solo or pioneer migrants, in long-distance movements, as workers and thus with the function of breadwinner for their households[151]. The importance of this breakthrough is twofold. If on the one hand, it reclaims women's role as key-actors within global economic and political phenomena, on the other hand, it allows for a close analysis of the importance of women's decision-making processes (so-called *agency*) in current migration, demonstrating the growing need for a multidisciplinary approach in the research of

[149] See Zlotnik, H. (2003); Masanja, G. F. (2012)
[150] Andall, J. (2018).
[151] Cfr. Marchetti, S. (2018, 445)

contemporary migration and the necessary contributions that gender studies have to offer. The most arguably pioneering study, so to speak, on the feminisation of migration can be found in the volume edited by Mirjana Morokvaśic in 1984, *International Migration Review* which consisted in a collective in which, from disciplines such as social history and social economics, the authors, influenced by the Marxist-oriented debates, analysed the market participation of migrant women in Australia, North America and Europe from the 19th century onwards, with a comparative approach to the status of non-migrant workers. However, while addressing female migration phenomena, in these study women remained linked to the migration of their husbands or to family reunification movements characterising – as we shall see in the next chapter – most of northerns African female migration during the post-colonial period of the 1960s and 1970s. A particularly relevant academic contribution however occurred in the 1980s with the encounter of migration theory and feminist and black theories[152], hence with the achievements of intersectional thinking. Since then, the focus on the feminisation of migration has increasingly addressed forms of marginalisation, racialisation and inequal distribution of wealth between black and white women in "developed countries". Despite the enormous contribution of these studies, the overly academic interest in South-North flows has led to a biased understanding of this migration phenomenon especially in areas of the globe, such as Africa, where South-South migration is predominant. Yet, while quantitative research has increased in recent decades on south-south flows, particularly in areas such as Asia and Latin America, qualitative research aimed at analysing "how the migration-gender nexus affects the negotiation of duties, expectations, possibilities and opportunities that apply differently to men and women along their migration experience"[153], remains scarce. As in other areas of the world, also on the African continent women have been mostly portraited as dependent migrants, mere companions of their husbands or, more broadly, of their males' family members. Most of the early studies carried out on female migration in Africa date back to the 1990s but given the assumption that women travelled short distances, they have been characterised by a focus on internal rural-urban migration. As Lutz notes, the view that men pioneered long distances whilst women only travelled short hauls has its roots in 1885 Raventstein's analysis of 19th century migration patterns[154] whose echo has produced an excessive focus among African scholars on flows of this type. For instance, in "*Women Stay on the Farm No More: Changing Patterns of Rural–Urban Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa",* Josef Gugler (1989) observed that "in Africa at least, women come to town by and large as dependents[155]". A few years later, Lillian Trager in analysing the demographic composition of southeastern cities of Nigeria,

[152] Ibid. p. 447.
[153] Ibid. p.445
[154] Lutz, H. (2010).
[155] Gugler, J. (1989).

highlighted that the growing presence of women in rural-urban flows was strongly affected by family ties and kinship[156]. Studies of this kind have been conducted in many sub-Saharan African countries such as Senegal (Brockerhoff 1990, Linares 2003), Nigeria (Olurode 1995, Mberu 2005), Sierra Leone (Spencer 1975, Tommy & Fatoo 1976), Mali (Vaa 1990), Ghana (Abdul-Korah 2011, Setrana & Kleist 2022), Zambia (Ashbaugh 1996, Simatele & Simatele 2009, Byrne 1994) and other southern African countries (Glaser 2012, Camlin et al 2014, Lesetedi 2003). In her study on female rural-urban migration in Ghana[157], Lynda Pickbourn recently highlighted that the dominant framework for analysing female migration in Africa remains entangled on the predominant assumption of "cooperative intrahousehold" decision-making in shaping women migration, overshadowing their ability to act as proactive agents in the migration project.[158] Nevertheless, some pioneering studies on the importance of independent African female migration – mainly in internal flows – can be found from the late 1990s onwards and subsequently during the 2000s. The analysis of the literature review in fact shows several, albeit limited, studies on independent intra-African female migration. Particularly relevant in my opinion is the already mentioned study by Luise White on the phenomenon of sex workers in Kenya. In *The Comforts of Home. Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* published in 1990, while more interested in analysing forms of women's labour in colonial times rather than the migration phenomena per se, the author argued that prostitution constituted a *reliable means of capital accumulation [rather than] a despicable fate or a temporary strategy*[159] that allowed women to be both self-reliant while at the same time being able to support their family of origin. The relevance of women as fundamental economic agents of migration processes in Africa was also highlighted by Elvyn Jones-Dube in her 1997 study on non-metropolitan female migration in Botswana. An interesting aspect of Dube's study is her emphasis on women's greater reliance on informal sector non-wage employment within rural-rural migration characterising Botswana female migration at that time. According to the scholar, in rural areas of the country where migrant women were more numerous, women were faced with a multiple regime of work and responsibility involving being in charge of the domestic work within the household, while at the same time they were expected to organise and carry out subsistence agriculture to feed the family. Moreover, where possible, they were supposed to create and engage in some type of income generation to obtain cash income[160]. As,

[156] See Trager L. (1995)
[157] Together with Senegal, Ghana is one of the countries in Western sub-Saharan Africa where scientific production on migration in general, and women's migration in particular, is most prominent. Indeed, the University of Ghana, in Accra, established in 2007 the Centre of Migration Studies which is now one of the most important hub for research on migration phenomena in the area.
[158] Pickbourn L. (2022).
[159] White, L. (1990, 2)
[160] Dube E. J. (1995).

in the main, their economic activity is not reflected in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as a result, women remained often as unacknowledged producers in the national economy.[161] This situation, as will be observed in the next section as well as throughout this study, is more relevant than ever. While it is true, as de Hass and Frankema have pointed out, that since the 2000s the increasing break away from the "mechanistic and impersonal push-pull framework[162]" that has long characterised migration studies has made it possible to recognise the existence of a growing number of independent women who migrate to satisfy their personal and autonomous economic well-being[163], thus their role as "breadwinners" or "movers", the analysis of this phenomenon in the African context remains challenging. As a matter of fact, indeed, an important aspect relating to women's labour and more specifically to women's economic migration in sub-Saharan Africa concerns the strong concentration of the female labour force in the informal sector. For the purposes of this research, I will focus, as mentioned in the introduction, on female labor migration. However, a clarification becomes necessary here. Although labour migration – often referred as economic migration – is defined in political as well as academic discourse as a phenomenon of voluntary migration, I distance myself from this interpretation for two reasons. The first concerns an ideological issue with respect to the current process of categorisation of migrants that produces an unnecessary and dangerous hierarchisation among individuals and an unequal access to the claim of their rights, which are often denied regardless of the migrant's legal status. The second, equally important, concerns the critical nature of defining a priori the voluntariness of the migratory path. This aspect is all the truer, as will emerge, in the management practices of migrant bodies in the so-called "transit countries."

1.2.2 Women and labour in sub-Saharan Africa. The case of the ECOWAS region.

As previously remarked, labor migration is the dominant form of migration in the ECOWAS area. As the International Labor Organisation (ILO) highlighted in 2020, the area has the highest female labour force participation rate of the entire continent[164], with international female migration rates above 50 per cent in Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso and Guinea Bissau[165]. Although substantial differences exist between countries in respect of migration patterns, in general terms, most female migrants work in

[161] Ibid. p. 334
[162] de Haas, M., Frankema, E. (2022, 12)
[163] Setrana, M. B., & Kleist, N. (2022).
[164] ILO (2020). Accessible through the following link: https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_751538.pdf
[165] World Bank data (2019). Accessible through the following link https://genderdata.worldbank.org/indicators/sg-pop-migr-fe-zs/

the informal economy occupying low-skilled positions[166]. Consistent with the previous pages, both men and women migrate primarily within the West African region, though as Setrana and Kleist recently observed, some also find themselves in Europe and North America, and more recently in Asia[167]. Intra-regional female mobility within ECOWAS was facilitated by the entry into force of the Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, agreed by the member states in 1979. Indeed, as Quartey et al. stated, since its implementation, the region has experienced an increasing feminisation of migration process, following infrastructural development, the increasing production of cash crops, such as coffee, cocoa and groundnut, as well as the development of the mining sectors and oil discovery[168]. Despite the relevance of informal labor, female migration involves also high-skilled women workers employed in the formal economy, particularly in healthcare and banking. Nevertheless, this type of migration tends to be more inter-regional than intra-regional[169], showing women's inclination to travel long distances, hence to cross international borders. The scant attention given to international female inter-African migration over the last decades, does not allow us to have a clear picture to date of the processes of subjectivation of women in the crossing of territorial borders and especially how labour produces forms of hierarchization and racialisation of transnational women workers. Given the high absorption of the female labour force in the informal sector everywhere in SSA and particularly in West Africa, migrant women – both regular and irregular – often find themselves in very precarious economic conditions and particularly vulnerable to various forms of violence. In her background paper on "Intra-African Female Labour Migration: Common Issues, Work and Rights", probably the most comprehensive research currently available on intra-African female migration, Jacqueline Andall (2018), has identified five most common types of informal occupations for women in the African continent, which also applies in ECOWAS regions.

As hitherto argued, *cross-border trading* has historically represented an important employment sector in several areas of the continent for both men and women. Today, intra-African female migrants are highly involved in informal trading, encompassing both cross-border trading and domestic street trading. The huge prevalence of Informal Cross-border Trade (ICBT) over the formal one ‑ which appear to be very low in SSA ‑ is linked to the strict trade regime within the ECOWAS area, revealing a failure of its own principles that theoretically should have ensured the creation of a common regional market in which trade in unprocessed local goods was liberalised in 1993. A similar contradiction, as pointed out by Bensassi et al. (2019) also occurs within the West African Economic

[166] See, ILO (2020); Andall, J. (2018); Setrana, M.B., Kleist, N. (2022).
[167] Setrana M.B., Kleist N. (2022, 59).
[168] Quartey, P., Setrana, M. B., & Addoquaye-Tagoe, C. (2020).
[169] ILO (2020, 31).

and Monetary Union[170] (WAEMU) where despite the free movement of goods being guaranteed by international treaties, in practice imported goods may face taxes at the customs, either because they have not WAEMU origin or no certificate for it; or because of remaining tariffs and restrictions[171]. According to the Africa Trade Report 2020 review of informal cross-border traders, women constitute more than 60% of informal cross-border traders in West and Central Africa[172]. The trade involving women concerns various goods and products. For instance, Fall (2007) analysed the trade in cosmetics, particularly lightening creams, of Nigerian and Ghanaian traders in Senegal[173]. Devillard et al. analysed the trade in handicrafts, paintings and textiles, and clothes between Mali, Senegal, Ghana and Togo[174]. Particularly interesting is the case of Togo's "Nanan Benz", which spread in the 1940s and 1950s, a form the trading and selling of African fabrics imported from Ghana in Togo, and which provided a popular female model of business trading with the potential for large profits[175]. As Andall notes however, the relevance of female cross-border trade is also widespread in other parts of Africa such as from Zimbawe to South Africa, or from the DRC to Zambia[176]. As some economic sectors decline, new ones emerge that offer economic opportunities for migrant labour. In the service sector of several sub-Saharan African countries, the emergence of hairstyling as an important recruitment sector has been observed. As Dosekun (2015) noted, hair care on the continent is an extremely lucrative industry: African women pay significant sums to style their hair, ranging from the reported $40 for hair styling in an open market in Nigeria to the $1,500 paid for human hair extensions by the human hair extensions by elite Nigerian women in Lagos[177]. Although the practice of hair styling is not new in sub-Saharan Africa, and indeed has long represented a political and cultural arena for identity claims, more attention should be paid to its potential to provide female migrants with a means to earn a livelihood[178]. In line with the feminisation processes of global migration, *sex work* - though difficult to quantify - has become a widespread service sector of female employment in Africa. Alongside the selling of sexual services in different venues such as streets,

[170] The WAEMU is an economic and customs union within the ECOWAS region, whose main objective is to create a harmonised and integrated economic space among the former territories of French West Africa. It was established in 1994 with the aim to counterbalance the dominance of the English-speaking countries of the ECOWAS. The WAEMU comprehends eight ECOWAS countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire , Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo distinguishing themselves by the recognition of a common currency, the Franc of the African financial community or CFA.
[171] See Bensassi, S., Mitaritonna, C., Jarreau, J. (2019).
[172] African Trade Report (2020). Accessible through the following link: https://media.afreximbank.com/afrexim/African-Trade-Report-2020.pdf
[173] Fall, P.D. (2007).
[174] Devillard, A., Bacchi, A., and Noack M. (2015).
[175]Andall, J. (2018,18); on the Nana Benz, see also Toulabor, C. (2012) and Sylvanus, N. (2006).
[176] See Andall, J. (2018)
[177] Dosekun, S. (2015).
[178] Andall, J. (2018)

brothels, massage parlours or private homes, sex work consists of the performance of different activities ranging from pornography, stripping, erotic dance etc[179]. Given the high correlation between prostitution and the spread of HIV, research on sex work in Africa is plentiful. Several studies have recently highlighted the prevalence of transactional sex in different contexts in sub-Saharan Africa. Rather than the marketisation of sexual intercourse per se, this practice implies a commodification of the relationship, often asymmetrical, between the subjects involved. Thus, the compensation for sexual performance does not necessarily translate into money as much as into gifts, favours and various material and non-material benefits[180]. Although not, generally speaking, a practice of sexual exploitation, as noted by Luke and Kurz, transactional sex in the African context is strongly linked to gender norms that place women and girls in a position of subjection to male power[181]. Whether national or foreigner, sex workers remain almost invisible and are strongly stigmatised in many African countries[182]. However, as Kofman and Raghuram note, in the case of unauthorised female migrants or asylum seekers who are barred from working, engaging in sex work is the only way of not falling into destitution. Based on available literature, it would appear that sex work in humanitarian contexts such as refugee camps has become a particularly common survival strategy among women in sub-Saharan Africa, justifying the UNHCR use of the term "survival sex", rather than sex work[183]. Indeed, as noted by Bakomeza and Rosemberg (2017), many refugees who are engaged in sex work do not identify as sex workers and they are unfamiliar with the term "sex worker[184]". According to the authors' findings, women selling sex in the African humanitarian contexts hold different views about it: while some see it as a job, others do it in order to satisfy their basic economic needs (buy food, pay rent) while striving desperately to exit. Other refugees use sex work so that they can take care of their children during the day and work at night. However, in most of the cases, sex represents "the best of limited options or the only realistic option[185]". Although it is well known that refugees engage in sex work as a form of livelihood, research on sex work in sub-Saharan Africa's humanitarian contexts is scant[186]. Moreover, stigma and silence about the issue persist in humanitarian circles. Accordingly, the sexual and reproductive health and rights of these

[179] Kofman, E., Raghuram, P. (2015, 29).
[180] Wamoyi, J., Heise, L., Meiksin, R., Kyegombe, N., Nyato, D., & Buller, A. M. (2019).
[181] Luke, N., & Kurz, K. (2002).
[182] Andall 2019
[183] UNHCR (2014). Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/ar/53bb8d006.pdf
[184] Rosenberg, J. S., & Bakomeza, D. (2017).
[185] Ibid.
[186] Given, as noted above, the high rate of refugees and asylum seekers in East Africa, sex work among female refugees in that area seems to be more documented. Indeed, well-known examples of sex work in African humanitarian contexts have been observed by the UNHCR in the Kampala refugee camp in Uganda. Similar situations have been witnessed in Djibouti with refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia. In Kakuma camp, in Kenya, there are evidences of female refugees exchanging sex for food.

refugees, and their related vulnerabilities, remain mostly neglected[187]. Ostensibly, the extent to which sex work is regulated by governmental jurisprudence plays an important role in the forms of exposure to vulnerability of women, both migrant and non-migrant. There is, as Andall points out, no consensus on how to approach sex work among African countries as evidenced by the varied policy responses. Most African countries criminalise prostitution. The ECOWAS area is no exception apart from countries such as Togo, Sierra Leone where sex work is legal, albeit with exceptions, and Senegal where in addition to being legal, prostitution is heavily regulated[188]. As O' Connel notes however, the criminalisation of sex work across African nations is for the most the remnant of the colonial legacy which through the influence of Abrahamic religions – notably Christianity and Islam – on African traditional religions, has altered traditional perceptions about women's bodies and sexuality. While, as will become apparent in the case of Tunisia, many traditional African religions celebrate women's bodies as "reproductive or sexual icons", the importation of Abrahamic religions into different contexts on the continent has re-signified women's bodies as sites of sin, moral corruption and a source of distraction from divine thoughts[189]. Consequently, colonial laws criminalising prostitution and attempts to eradicate it – as observed in Kenya – responded to a re-signification of the female body which independent African countries reiterated in their penal codes, despite the fact that sex work was generally acceptable in several pre-colonial African contexts. Similarly, the legalisation and regulation of sex work in Senegal, dating back to 1969, as Ngwena states, should not be seen as the result of a liberal governmental agenda, but rather as an attempt "to protect French colonial administrators from contracting sexually transmitted diseases from native black women[190]".

Besides sex work, another important area of mainly informal female employment identified by Andall in the feminisation of intra-African migration is the *agricultural labor.* According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), in Sub-Saharan Africa around 60% of women work in the agriculture sector[191], particularly in West Africa where agriculture is the main employment in labour market[192]. As a result, more migrant women tend to move mainly in temporary migrations to the rural areas of their country to increase their means and livelihoods, both individually and within their families. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, and in the West more specifically, migration – both male and female – related to agricultural work is closely linked to climate change,

[187] Rosenberg J.S., Bakomeza D. (2017).
[188] See, Mgbako, C., & Smith, L. A. (2011).
[189] O' Connel, C. (2019)
[190] Cfr. Ngwena, C. (2018, 192).
[191] FAO (2015). Accessible through: https://www.fao.org/3/i4862e/i4862e.pdf
[192] Awumbila, M., Benneh, Y., Teye, J. K., & Atiim, G. (2014).

which in recent decades has been leading to a decline in production in many ECOWAS countries[193]. Although, as pointed out by Amponsah at al. (2023), research on "climate migration"[194] is still scarce on the African continent, it appears to be a growing and alarming phenomenon which, as I will show in the next pages, is also assuming an increasing role in EU borders' control policies. The response to the main environmental changing affecting the area[195] whose effects are exacerbated by increasing poverty rates, gender inequities, population growth and food insecurity, include moving mainly internally. According to estimates, up to 32 million people in West Africa will move within their countries by 2050 due to the impacts of climate change. As a consequence of the increasing drought in countries like Ghana and Burkina Faso, some female agricultural workers in the informal sector move to other rural villages in search of better production opportunities. Despite the prevalence of informal sector, agricultural work is one of the few examples of female migration employed in the formal economy, where female migrants can be recruited as temporary migrants[196]. In Nigeria, women workers both national and foreigners employed in small farms play a fundamental role in the country's agriculture production, producing much of the food for domestic consumption as well as playing a crucial role as drivers of food processing, marketing and preservation[197]. Although agriculture dominates women's employment in many African countries, their activity is often hampered by barriers that limit their full participation in the market, relegating them to the lowest levels of production. Indeed, some systematic and legislative frameworks of gender division have a negative impact on women's agricultural performance. For instance, in several African countries, women farmers cannot own land because of patriarchal policies, legislation and regulations that make them dependent on male landowners. Furthermore, the small rural women farmers have limited access to reliable financial and banking facilities. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult for women to obtain subsidies and loans from financial and banking institutions. If it is true that women's financial access remains disproportionately low throughout the world, in sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap in access

[193] IOM (2020a,3). Accessible through: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration-and-agroecology-in-west-africa.pdf

[194] The IOM defined "climate migration" or "Environmental migration" as *The movement of a person or groups who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a state or across an international border*. The movement can be "voluntary or involuntary, triggered by a rapid-onset disaster or slow-onset climatic process". See IOM (2007,33) through: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/94/MC_INF_288.pdf . On climate migration in Africa, see also Osei-Amponsah, C., Quarmine, W., & Okem, A. (2023).

[195] See, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022).

[196] Andall, J. (2018).

[197] Several studies have also highlighted the relevance of female agricultural workers in other sub-regions of the continent, such as the female flows from Lesotho to southern Africa and in various areas of East Africa and North Africa.

to finance is 18%, the largest gender gap in the world. Among the female employment sectors underlying the feminisation processes of African migration observed by Andall, *domestic work* is particularly important. Given the relevance of care work in this study, I will analyse it separately.

1.*2.3 Trading Love. Care chains and domestic labour. An introduction.*

Within the strand of studies that since the 1990s has increasingly turned its attention to the feminisation of migration and thus to the nexus between women and labor, domestic and care work has become an increasingly important object of research. It is undeniable that the legacy of this debate is closely linked to the internationalisation and academicisation of feminist theories that developed in the West within the early feminist movements (the so-called first-wave feminism) that from their very first appearance, placed *reproductive labour* at the centre of their debates on women's oppression practices. Reproductive labor – or social reproduction – as the feminist philosophers theorised it, is the labour that is necessary for the reproduction of the labour force.[198] This means preparing food, mending clothing, cleaning homes, giving birth and raising children, assisting elderly and sick people and all *those tasks that are functional to people's prosperous living – day after day, across generations, and both at the material and symbolic levels*[199].

The struggles that characterised the feminist debates over reproductive labour, which reached their peak in the 1960s particularly in Europe and the United States, denounced the confinement of women within the domestic sphere and the need to recognise the economic value of the unpaid care work they performed in society. Understanding developments in feminist movements and critical theories of care work from a gendered perspective is particularly important in order to analyse the power dynamics at work in intimate work and forms of female subjectivation. However, as will be observed in chapter four, particular caution is needed when addressing such issues outside the European or the wider Western context. For as Mohanty points out, such issues must always and inevitably be situated and placed in relation to and in opposition to "Western feminism(s).[200]" Indeed, the risk is to impose an interpretative framework of universal patriarchal oppression[201].

Yet, it is also necessary to point out that globalisation has brought about a major transformation of intimate work, imposing a *new global domestic order,* as Anderson (2000) argued, whereby the unpaid domestic work once performed by women in the household is now mostly commodified.

[198] See, Kofman, E. (2012).
[199] Cfr. Peterson, V. S. (2004, 52).
[200] Mohanty, C. T. (2003, 33).
[201] Ibid.

Although *unpaid* domestic work continues to play a key role in women's work globally[202], *paid* domestic work could be considered the driver of the feminisation of migration. For the purposes of this study, hence, I will focus only on paid domestic work. Defining "domestic work" is complex because the tasks and the occupations performed by workers vary sensibly across countries, and as it will emerge in the African context, also within them. Broadly speaking, domestic work consists of providing paid personal and domestic assistance, within the framework of a formal or informal employment relationship. It may be on an hourly basis, in the form of part-time or full-time work and includes a range of activities from cooking, buying grocery, cleaning, doing the laundry and ironing; caring for children, the elderly, or sick and dependent individuals; taking care of pets or the garden, driving the family car, fetching wood or collecting water, hunting etc. In order to account for the variety of tasks that domestic work entails, in the Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 of 2011, the International Labor Organization proposed a fairly broad definition in which domestic labor is defined as "the work performed *in* and *for* the household[203]". Despite its inclusiveness, as Marchetti noted, the ILO definition still does not represent the realities of some contexts. In India, for example, female domestic workers have emphasised gender inequalities affecting the work done in the household (cooking, cleaning) that is typically done by women, compared to the work done for the household typically male. Consequently, according to domestic workers' organisations, the most appropriate definition for analysing women's domestic work in the Indian context should only concern the work done in the household. The ILO (2013) have estimated the number of people who work in and for other people's private households as domestic workers at 52.6 million; 83 per cent of them are women or girls, while one in every five domestic workers is a migrant. These estimates attest to the importance of domestic and care work as a key to employment for women at the global level and the intertwin of domestic labor and female migration. As a matter of fact, the increasing ageing population in industrialised countries, together with the entry of women into the productive economy, in an increasing process of dismantling the welfare systems of Western countries[204] has led to an exponential increase in the demand for care work. The supply is increasingly being met by migrant women from the Global South. This phenomenon explains the increasing attention that since 2000, has led research on the feminisation of migration to devote a great deal of space to care work.

[202] The unpaid care work performed by women within their households and the unequal distribution of tasks between men and women everywhere in the world constitutes, according to an ILO study, the main barrier to women's participation in labour market. See ILO (2015). Accessible through: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_633166.pdf

[203] See ILO –Domestic Workers Convention (2011/89): https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189

[204] For further consideration see chapter 2 of this thesis.

A particularly interesting contribution in research on the feminisation of migration processes related to care labor has been made by Arlie Russell Hochschild, who used the catchier expression "global care chains**"** to suggest a phenomenon of "care drain" from the "Global South" to the "Global North" but more importantly the *existence of a bond between women from different parts of the world, who have to deal with the care duties that gender inequality places on their shoulders*[205]. Thus, Hochschild emphasises a kind of circular and unequal process whereby once arrived in the country of destination, the impoverished migrant women will be forced on the one hand to take care of the families of the more economically advantaged women in the "developed countries"; on the other hand, however, through remittances, they will have to entrust someone else with the care of the children and families left behind in the countries of origin. The seemingly ironic rephrasing, *if behind every great man there is a good woman, behind every great woman there is a good nanny* taken up by Susan Cheever in *The Nanny Dilemma,* is explanatory of global care chains[206]**.** One of the best-known studies on global care chains can be found in Rhacel Parreñas' analysis of the diaspora of Filipino women in the West employed mainly as nannies[207]. Here she introduces the "international division of reproductive labour" formula to expand the view from its racial division to the global level (Marchetti 2022) and points out how the unequal distribution of reproductive labour in globalisation comes about three-tier transfer between the following groups of women: (1) middle-class women in receiving nations, (2) migrant domestic workers, and (3) Third World women who are too poor to migrate[208]. It is worth noting that unlike Parreñas, for Hochschild the focus is not anymore on "reproduction" in general but on a specific ingredient of reproductive labour: *love.* Hochschild's emphasis on the "*trading of love"* is part of a feminist debate in which some scholars have preferred to use the term "care" rather than "reproductive labour", precisely in order to draw attention to the emotional aspects of this type of employment involves, both those who provide care and those who receive it. Within this contemporary and unstoppable process that, as will be observed, is including unprecedented and new forms of commodification of the symbolic and material female body, an important contribution has come from other scholars who have increasingly adopted an intersectional approach that has made it possible to observe how the "international division of reproductive labour" takes place not only along gender and class lines but also through racist stereotypes rooted in the cultures of the destination countries. In analysing the feminisation of migration in Southern Europe, particularly in Greece, Lazaridis analysed how the choice to hire foreign domestic workers over others is embedded in a series of prejudices linked to the religious beliefs of the migrants most involved in domestic work,

[205] Marchetti, S. (2022, 7).
[206] Cheever, S. (2003, 31).
[207]Parreñas, R. S. (2005).
[208] Ibid. p.560

notably Filipinas, who are constructed as "the nice Catholic girls that one can place his/her trust with" and Albanians who, as Muslims, are instead constructed as "the enemy at the doorstep[209]". The imbalance affecting the distribution of reproductive tasks changes, as Marchetti highlights, depending on how we look at it: from a gender perspective, women do take up a bigger share than their male counterparts; but it also true that *between* women, reproductive work is more often done by black or migrant women, and in general women who are from minority and racialised groups.[210] If it is true that in the last two decades research on care work in the processes of feminisation of migrations has grown enormously, applying to different contexts[211] through the sharing of a solid body of methodological and theoretical tools, strongly interdisciplinary, the African continent remains, again, almost totally unexplored. Besides the important process of feminisation of migration previously exposed in SSA for which research continues to be myopic, there is some evidence that suggests the need for more research on care work in Africa. For instance, in 2015, the International Labour Organization pointed out that sub-Sahara Africa is silently and increasingly emerging as a new geographic area producing domestic workforce. The following year, the ILO estimated that the stock of care-givers within the continent is around 9,3 million. However, considering the lack of data both in terms of care workers and irregular migration, the number of women involved in African care economy is to be considered strongly underestimated[212]. The current available information on care labor in the continent show a fragmented situation which deeply changes from one country to another. For instance, while in Botswana 45% of domestic workforce is represented by foreign women coming from Zimbawe, in Tanzania the presence of female workforce within the same economic sector, seems to be irrelevant[213]. South Africa instead, as Griffin highlighted, is an important country of destination for female domestic workers coming from Lesotho and other neighbouring countries[214]. Domestic work in Ghana is believed to be a substantial segment of the workforce.[215] Also in Africa, hence, care work seems to be a crucial dimension of the process of social reproduction that makes it possible for individuals, families and society itself to continue. As Hillage and Tamkin argued, *employability* is the key to understand why and how each worker is able to enter a specific sector and

[209] Lazaridis, G. (2000, 55). in Lazaridis G., Anthias F.
[210] On the process of racialisation of women care workers, see Burawoy, M., Hart, G., Glenn, E. N., Ong, A., & Sassen, S. (2002); Rollins, J. (1985).
[211] For the European context see for instance: Lutz, H. (2011); Cox, R. (2006); Sarti, R. (2002); Williams, F. (2012); Lazaridis G., Anthias F. (2000); Outside Europe, among many, it is important to mention Lan, P. C. (2006) for South-East Asia; Ray, R., & Qayum, S. (2009). for India; and Herrera, G. (2020)for Latin America. Other interesting publications are from De Regt, M. (2009 on Yemeni domestic workers, and Ozyegin, G. (2010) on domestic labor in Turkey.
[212] Andall, J. (2018).
[213] Ibid.
[214] Griffin, L. (2011).
[215] See Tsikata, D. (2009); OECD (2014),

subsequently move within it[216]. Building on this idea, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) showed how being more employable means being able to assert certain personal attributes together with certain specific personal circumstances that can represent an added value, value enhancing one's job opportunities. As will observe in the following chapter, this situation represents the quintessence of a neo-liberal "rationality", typical of the so-called *homo oeconomicus,* in which individuals become their own entrepreneurs in a sort of Darwinian neo-evolutionism in which, however, survival is guaranteed in terms of the appropriateness of the economic behaviour that individuals must be able to put in place[217]. However, the growing evidence that today, as never before, the world economy depends on immigrant labour, both professional and unskilled, requires us to shift the interpretive lens from *employability* to *mobility*. By this stand point, a crucial aspect of female migration no longer concerns the *reasons* why women migrate. Rather, it is about the *modalities* in which they do so or are driven to do so. As I will now observe, a political philosophical approach to the contemporary mobility regimes, assumes a fundamental role in understanding the complexity underlying the intertwin of women, labor and mobility practices.

1.3 A Political Theory perspective on African migration: from a biopolitics of mobility to a biopolitics through mobility

1.3.1 Foucault beyond Foucault: an encounter with governmentality.

Within the multidisciplinarity that characterises *Migration Studies*, and more generally the current debates on global migrations, political philosophy is perhaps one of the least common disciplinary fields. Yet, over the last two decades, political theory, which from its origins places its object of study on the meaning of political action and the link between politics and other spheres of life, have proven to offer powerful analytical tools in a growing scholarship examining the borders, surveillance systems, securitisation practices and the dynamics of power structured around migration phenomena, particularly in Europe and North America[218]. It is not my intention here to reconstruct a genealogy of the border, of which, incidentally, the literature is now overflowing. Rather, drawing on Foucauldian studies on biopolitical power, I intend to shed light on the functioning of borders or, the complex set of practices through which social orders and the hierarchies of lives are disciplined beyond the border's spatial dimension. For this purpose, after outlining the crucial aspects of the Foucauldian

[216] Tamkin, P., & Hillage, J. (1999).
[217] Marcenò, S. (2018, 29)
[218] See Fassin, D. (2011); Walters, W. (2015).

thought, I will propose a political philosophical reading of the African migratory context, wherein, rather than taking the border as a method of empirical research, I will rather propose to examine how mobility can constitute an interesting new method of research rather than its mere object. As several scholars pointed out, Foucault's interest extended to an extraordinarily wide range of human experiences, and although mobility and the movement of things and people are sometimes present in his work[219], neither migration nor borders ever represented an issue in his analysis. However, as Donzelot argued, the Foucauldian elaboration of the concept of governmentality represents "the most living[220]" research field referred to in the study of contemporary migration. In order to understand the concept of governmentality and its contribution to the study of human mobility, thus moving beyond Foucault himself, it is necessary to take a step back and start with Foucault's study on bio-power. In his work *History of Sexuality,* Foucault argues that *for millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question*[221]. Thus, if for Aristotle "life" and "politics" belong to two separate domains, for Foucault life becomes the main object of politics. Through these words, Foucault partly captures the essence of our times, wherein the emergence of new forms of scientific knowledge[222] that has characterised Europe since the 18th century has led to the entry of biological life (*zoe*) into the sphere of state power (*bios*). This led,

[219] Notoriously, in *Security, Territory, Population*, published in 2007, Foucault conceptualises biopolitics in relation to the governing of mobility. However, while arguing that the main operation of governmentality consists in *making a division between good and bad circulation* (Foucault 2007, 18), he never expands on how this division is made.

[220] Donzelot, J. (2008, 116).

[221] Foucault, M. (1976a/ 1979, 143)

[222] Foucault refers to scientific knowledge such as demography, engineering, statistics; hence a production of knowledge directed towards the activities of the body and the processes of life. This is a wide range of new scientific disciplines called upon to intervene in a systemic-environmental dimension, the purpose of which is to make government and social ordering effective. Among the newly realms of knowledge analysed by Foucault in *History of Sexuality*, medicine plays a fundamental role. Indeed, as Artières, and da Silva (2001) pointed "*Basically, for Foucault, medicine is interesting not for its own sake,* […] *but for what it reveals in relation to all the other types of discourse, for what it allows to construct. Its interest lies in the possibility it provides for Foucault to think from it. It is neither an illustration nor an example; it offers a variety of possibilities from which the philosopher can build his framework*" (ibid, p.13 my translation). In short, as Mattucci and Vagnarelli argue, Foucauldian reflection consisted in highlighting how medicine, in addition to being a body of scientific knowledge and professional practices, also played a role in social control. To Foucault, medicalisation would not simply consist in the possibility for an increasing number of individuals to have access to treatment or in a process of progressive extension of medicine's competences, but would act at the level of the norms that influence the mentality of the social classes and structure their everyday behaviour. Foucault thus, emphasised the normative and police-like character of medicine, according to which it would not only elaborate a diagnostic and therapeutic knowledge, but also produce a surveillance one. In particular, medicalisation would testify not just to the centrality assumed, from a certain moment onwards, by the body and life in the dynamics of power, rather it would make evident the overcoming of the legal-discursive paradigm centred on the law, in favour of the affirmation of a society of the norm. On this topic, see Artières, P & da Silva, E. (2001); Armstrong, D. (1987); Turner, B. S. (1995); Mattucci, N., Vagnarelli, G. (2012).

according to the French philosopher, to a fundamental transformation of the political order theorised in Aristotelian thought, constituting a modern way of exercising power, characterised by policies of care and the maximisation of life; policies that, according to Foucault, are precisely bio-political. Hence, in Foucauldian philosophical thought, the exercise of power and the *modalities* by which power is exercised, constitute a crucial point. From his point of view, as he himself writes, *politics is part of a domain in which power relations are heterogeneous, unbalanced and unstable*[223].

Power indeed, *is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations*[224]. Thus, power is to be understood as *the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization*[225]. Power, for Foucault, cannot be reduced, as Hobbes would have it, to something that applies *to* individuals but transits *through* them. In this conception, power is first and foremost a relational phenomenon; it is no longer concentrated in the hands of the prince, but it is dispersed through the society. In his writings, indeed, Foucault goes so far as to offer a historical analysis of the various mechanisms of power, differentiating sovereign power (*pouvoir royal*) from biopower. With sovereign power, the philosopher states that historically the prince's privilege was based on the unconditional right to decide on life and death. The origin of this right leaned on the notion of *patria potestas*, notably the power of the father to dispose of the lives of his children and slaves in the families of the Roman Empire[226]. According to this model, the prince could choose to *"let die"* or *"let live"*. In Foucault's view, the distinguishing feature of modernity is the transition from the prince's absolute power, to that that allows him to kill only when his life is in danger.

This meant that the former unconditional power over life and death was transformed into a power conditioned by the defence of sovereignty and its own survival. Nevertheless, according to Foucault, sovereign power was never abandoned, but co-opted by the emergence of two new forms of power: *disciplinary* and *biopower*. The former is a type of power based on the formation and surveillance of the individual human body at the local level that seeks to localise, discipline and normalise the individual human body through institutions such as schools, prisons, universities and army barracks. This form of power, in addition to subjugating individuals to political power, has enhanced their economic productivity. In contrast, biopower is associated with the development of new technologies of power, which conflate disciplinary power, but which are directed at men as a species rather than the individual body. In short, using Foucault's words, *biopolitics has to do with population. More*

[223] Foucault, M. (1976a/1979, 78)
[224] Ibid. p.123
[225] Ibid. p. 92
[226] See, Vitales, H. M. M. (2020, 163).

precisely: it has to do with population as a biological problem and as a problem of power[227]. Such biopolitical dynamics have been essential to the rise of modern capitalism, which would not have established itself as we know it without the *controlled insertion of bodies into the apparatus of production*[228] and the consequent *adaptation of population phenomena to economic processes*[229]. For these reasons, Foucault states that the old right to let die or to let live has been replaced by a power of *let live* or to *reject until death*[230] (*make die)*[231]. On the basis of what has been said, therefore, the general issue of Foucauldian analysis, rather than the genesis of sovereignty, is that of the relations of domination that invest singular and collective bodies[232]. By this standpoint, the elaboration of the term biopolitics is not only relevant for the fact that life is directly involved in political power[233], but mainly for the specific way in which this happens, namely the modalities in which biopolitical power is exercised. In this way, we arrive at the fundamental point raised earlier: governmentality. The term *gouvernementalité*, first introduced by Foucault in a series of lectures held at Collège de France in 1978 and 1979, derives from the French word *governamental*, meaning *concerning government* (Lemke, 2019). However, the government in Foucault's thought ought not be understood as an institution but rather *as an activity that consists in governing people's conduct within the framework*

[227] Foucault, M. (1997/, 242).
[228] Foucault M. (1979). in Cisney, V. W., & Morar, N. (2020. 8).
[229] Ibid.
[230] Foucault, M. (1976a/1979, 181)
[231] As will become clear shortly, with the re-configuration of biopolitical power into "let live" and "make die", death does not translate as it did in sovereign power with physical death but rather with a form of indirect violence that leads to physical or symbolic death.
[232] As he states himself in *Society Must be Defended*, *it would be a matter of highlighting the relationships of domination and letting them stand out in their multiplicity, in their difference. The manufacture of subjects rather than the genesis of the sovereign: that is our general theme.* See Foucault, M. (1997/2003, 34)
[233] Far from carrying out a genealogy of the concept of biopolitics and the different meanings it has assumed over time (even within Foucauldian writings themselves), for the sake of clarity of exposition it should be emphasised, building on Roberto Esposito, that the evidence of the nexus between politics and life, even in a biological sense, does not emerge with Foucault nor with the birth of liberalism. For instance, consider Plato's best-known text, "The Republic" in which the philosopher suggests eugenic practices such as infanticide for children of weak health. Is this not a form of interpenetration between power and bios? Yes, it is but not in the biopolitical sphere. In fact, in ancient and medieval times, the preservation of life as such was not the goal of political action, but rather, as Arendt (1958/2013) recalls, life belonged to the private sphere to the extent that political action, the *res publica,* only made sense in opposition to the private dimension. It is with modernity that the question of life and its protection comes to the heart of political theory and practice (Esposito, R. 2018, 138 my translation). Emblematic of this, the Hobbesian Leviathan state in which, however, the political categories used, such as sovereignty, the individual, etc., are in reality only linguistic and conceptual ways of naming or translating, in philosophical-political terms, the biopolitical question of the preservation of human life and the dangers of its violent extinction that threaten it (ibid.). Therefore, it is not so much modernity that poses the problem of the protection of human life. Rather, it is the protection of life itself that "invents" modernity as a complex of categories capable of resolving it. In such a context, then, traditional political categories such as freedom take on a meaning that pushes them ever closer to the need for security. In this way, freedom ceased to be understood as participation in the *polis*, to be reconverted in terms of personal security: free people are those who can move without fear for his life and property (Esposito, R. 2018, 139 my translation)

of, and using the instrument of, a state.[234] Governmentality then, takes the form of a modality of biopolitical power in which power is exercised through technologies of government, rather than through sovereign acts. These technologies set up the rules (rather than laws) of a context where actual or possible actions of individuals and social groups can take place, so that they can be supervised, predicted, monitored, administered. It is for this reason that government requires freedom as a condition of possibility since it is precisely through the space of freedom left to individuals that they will autonomously conform to certain norms through a process of self-disciplining, what Foucault calls *technologies of the self*[235]. Thus, governmentality, as Mattucci and Vagnarelli state, rather than a political-normative paradigm, is configured as a *managerial* paradigm in which both the governants and the governed are placed in a dimension wherein life must be administered, managed. Within the liberal system to which Foucault traces the origin of biopolitics, "free individuals" must be governed "as little as possible[236]". Thus, with governmentality comes the question of how much to govern. If, as Duffield notes, *biopolitics uncovers the dynamics of life at the level of population, and liberalism seeks to govern life through its freedom*[237], then security provides a solution to the problem of governing too much or too little, becoming that device of power in the name of which, everything is allowed. A notably present example on a global scale was the extraordinary measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and which in fact revealed what Foucault had theorized in 1970s in *Dits et écrits* about medicalization as a process of progressive extension of the medical paradigm into other areas of society. The global spread of COVID-19 displayed the ever precarious and changing intertwining between disciplinary practices, which apply to the individual by means of measures to avoid contagion, isolating and separating the "infected" from the "healthy" (think of the application of the green pass) and biopolitical devices such as mass vaccinations or curfews whose application were justified by the continuous production of statistical data on the number of daily infections, global deaths, hospitalisation figures, etc. In the name of health and (bio)security, as Agamben puts it, a state of exception has been instituted in Western democracies in which the threat of death has made individuals willing to accept *limitations to freedom that they had never dreamed of tolerating […]*[238]. Indeed, if biopolitics is a politics of life, a power that, as we have seen, totally encompasses and absorbs human existence, hence a *biopower*, the paradox whereby a power so interested in safeguarding the lives of populations and individuals', can actually exercise itself through death, is only apparent. Indeed, the unequal distribution of forms of protection of life, as opposed to

[234] Foucault, M. (2008, 319).
[235] Foucault, M. (1988). See also Heroux, E. (2001) .
[236] Mattucci N., Vagnarelli G. (2012, 45).
[237] Duffield, M. (2007, 7)
[238] Agamben, G. (2020).

forms of violence involving symbolic and material death, emerges to its full extent in the current process of securitisation of migratory phenomena. Consequently, after framing security, I will explore the genesis of the contemporary security-migration nexus within the African borderscapes and its implications on mobility.

1.3.2 Framing security

Foucault first began to develop his theories on security within his course at the college de France, entitled "Security, Territory, Population", on the eleventh of January 1978. In his studies on biopower, security is conceived as a biopolitical device whose ultimate aim is not to solve a problem or eradicate an undesirable phenomenon; rather, it works to govern it, to limit its action and effects, starting from the computation of its probability and the risk it entails[239]. Whilst disciplinary mechanisms are based on the principle that everything must be regulated, the biopolitical device of security, on the other hands *laisse-faire*[240]. This does not mean, as it will soon emerge, that security does not include instruments of interdiction or repression. Rather, that inside the security prism lies a level at which the *laissez-faire is essential*[241]. If the basis of biopolitics is the protection of life, the fundamental question becomes to understand what threatens it. Indeed, attempting to frame security means – put it in the simplest terms – determining what triggers insecurity[242]. In *The value of security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, and Boudrillard,* James Der Derian pointed out that until the 19th century, the condition of being protected, safe from danger, was only one of the many meanings that security could take on[243]. Nevertheless, over time, the close connection that security issues have begun to assume in the field of diplomacy and International Relations have increasingly pushed the concept of security within military affairs.

The modern state, on the other hand, came into being precisely with the function of protecting itself and its citizens from the threat of eventual external attacks, structuring its sovereignty and the exercise of the state's power of territorial defence through the establishment of territorial boundaries. As Monteleone notes, however, it was during the Cold War era that the security-military nexus strengthened to the point of becoming inextricably linked, supported by the spread of realism and neorealism in International Relations and their acceptance of the Hobbesian culture of anarchy. Nonetheless, from the 1980s onwards, the exclusively military approach to (state) security began to be questioned, as it was considered insufficiently comprehensive and unable to take into account other

[239] Mattucci N., Vagnarelli G. (2012, 150)
[240] Foucault, M. (2007, 242).
[241] Ibid.
[242] Monteleone, C. (2017)
[243] Der Derian, J. (1998).

sources of insecurity. Indeed, as Duffield pointed out, while at least in the West the catastrophe of war was receding further and further away, other sources of insecurity were emerging: economic collapse, organized crime, societal breakdowns, migration, endemic poverty etc[244]. As a result, with the end of the Cold War, the debate on broadening the concept of security began to come alive. Within that debate, a particularly prominent role was played by the Copenhagen School which 30 years after its emergence remains the most important school of thought on securitization theories. The approach to Security Studies developed by the Copenhagen School is characterized by three conceptual pillars: securitization, the security sectors (military/state, political, social, economic and environmental) and regional security complexes[245].

While the idea of securitization is due to Ole Wæver, influenced in turn by the post-structuralist ideas and political theory of authors such as Derrida, Arendt, Bourdieu and Butler and by the philosophy of language by John L. Austin, the other two pillars were mainly developed by Barry Buzan[246]. A particularly interesting facet of Security Theories developed by the Copenhagen School lies in the fact that being considered an ambiguous concept in itself, security is analysed by its leading theorists, not in definitional terms, notably *what* security is. Rather, they try to analyse *how* an issue can become "a security issue[247]". Securitization hence is structured around three main strands. The first is the *speech act* by which one begins to problematise a phenomenon in terms of security. This aspect is crucial as it underlines the distance from objectifying conceptions of security. Indeed, according to Wæver, who draws on John Austin's studies, the act speech consists in an illocutionary act[248]. In other words, it is when a problem is substantiated as a security problem that it becomes one. The second element is the *actors* of securitisation, i.e. those who enact the linguistic act. The actors can be different; they are often leaders, governments or lobbies.

As Emmers points, in democratic regimes, it is often governments and elected officials or those benefitting from electoral legitimacy who produce the securitising moves; in non-democratic regimes instead, it is the military and/or the bureaucratic and political elite who play a key role[249]. The third and final strands is represented by the *audience*, hence those who receives the speech showing, as Wæver himself argued, securitisation consists of a relationship in which securitising actors and

[244] Duffield, M. (2007, 3)
[245] Boscariol M. (2021, 562)
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid p. 563
[248] According to Austin's studies on the use of illocutionary language – which can be found in his work *How to do things with words* – a linguistic act is illocutionary when: i) there is acknowledgement of reception, i.e. when the linguistic act is to be made known to other persons; ii) the utterance produces 'conventional consequences', i.e. it translates into norms, laws, obligations, etc. See, Austin, J. L. (1975).
[249] Emmers, R. (2013).

audience together continually configure and re-configure their relationship[250]. According to the Copenhagen School, in order for securitisation to succeed, the audience must recognise the existence of the threat; Again, the audience differs depending on which regime is being talked about. In the case of democratic regimes, public opinion plays a key role, whereas in non-democratic regimes, the audience consists of the political elite of certain state institutions, particularly the army[251]. Whether democratic regimes or not, the audience is important because, as can be easily guessed, it produces the legitimisation necessary for the securitarian device to be applied. Although the Copenhagen School represented a breakthrough in Security Studies and was applied to a wide range of hitherto ignored problems by breaking the objectifying view of security, it was not without criticism and reformulation. For instance, one of the aspects that has most exposed the theorists of the Copenhagen School to criticism has concerned the role of the scholar. Indeed, by virtue of the illocutionary nature of securitisation, the question arises as to whether those who study securitisation processes can remain extraneous to the process or whether they do not end up being subsumed by the concept itself, thus becoming securitising actors. For the theorists of the Copenhagen School, the roles are clearly distinguished, yet on the practical level this demarcation seems to blur[252]. Whenever the word security is pronounced, the potential risk is in fact that the scholar contributes to constructing and reconstructing the securitising discourse. While acknowledging the risk of this theoretical trap, Wæver argues that the political consequences of the analysis of securitisation would still be of secondary importance to the policies themselves, insofar as they cannot replace the political act and intentionality of securitisation. Moreover, considering that security theories were developed to analyse the post-Cold War European context, it would be questionable to apply them in non-democratic regimes where the question of audience legitimacy could be misleading. Although this aspect is important, as we shall observe in the following pages, the transformation of migration into an international security issue allows – albeit with some adjustments – for the analysis of securitisation in non-democratic contexts (such as that of Ben Ali in Tunisia), showing its role as a neo-colonial device of power. A crucial aspect to what has been said, though not immediately intuitive, is that the shift that has characterized the contemporary securitarian paradigm is marked by the absence of a definite and determinable threat. While, as we have seen, up to the mid-20th century security was determined by threats to the security of the state, today such determinism not only vanishes but constitutes the main characteristic of the securitarian paradigm. A paradigm that is biopolitical par excellence. As Duffield notes, in a deeply interdependent world, *the threat to the*

[250] Wæver, O. (2015, 124)
[251] Emmers, R. (2013).
[252] Monteleone, C. (2017)

West's way of life[253] is now based on the *role of effective states in deciding the security needs of others.*[254]

1.3.3 Security, development and unending crisis: producing surplus population.

The translation of security from state issues, to the broader and more unpredictable issues of the international context, has helped to generate a global imaginary of a society eternally in danger[255]. As a result, in its governmental dimension, security begins to prioritize the security of people rather than the security of the state[256]. As the debate over security theories grew richer, since the 1990s migration phenomena began to be increasingly encompassed by the securitarian prism. Indeed, as Saskia Sassen stated, while *[the] consensus in the community of states to lift border controls for the flow of capital, information, and services and, more broadly, to [foster] globalisation grows, when it comes to immigrants and refugees […] the national state claims all its old splendour in asserting its sovereign right to control its borders*[257]. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, Europe was faced with a new migration phenomenon in which the previous system, dominated by movement between Europe and former colonies (thus mainly along the North-South axis), was altered by a significant flow of people from the former Soviet Union, thus from East to West.

These flows melted with those from the former African colonies, through that process I have called "The beginning of outwards flows". As Pécoud noted, in a general context of concern over the decline of states' influence and capacities in a world which gradually became understood as a "global village", the debate on international migration and the capacities of states to manage it, began to be "internationalised" with the aim of finding joint strategies for its management[258]. In this respect, the "global migration crises" mentioned for the first time in 1995 by Myron Weiner, played a central role in the construction of migration as a security problem, highlighting the limits of unilateral interventions by states and the need for governments to cooperate in order to achieve their goals[259]. As stated in the Hague Declaration, "in a disorderly world, all too often characterised by the exploitation of migrants, it is highly desirable to seek to achieve more orderly migration[260]" Thus,

[253] Duffield, M (2007, 131)
[254] Ibid.
[255] Bigo, D. (2002).
[256] Duffield, M. (2007,3)
[257] Sassen, S. (1996, 59)
[258] Pécoud, A. (2015).
[259] Ibid.
[260] It should be noted that in this first phase, the rhetoric of securitisation of migration processes, supported by an increasing production of data and analysis, relied more on the protection of human rights and the dismantling of human trafficking than on the criminalisation of migration that has, as will be observed, characterised the new millennium. See, Society for International Development (SID), *Declaration of The*

confronted with what the EU perceived as chaotic reality, efforts were made to regulate migration and turn it into an orderly and mainly predictable process. This sparked a renewed interest in bilateral agreements and a multitude of multilateral, regional and international initiatives, both at the regional and international levels[261]. It is within this framework, as Marck Duffield notes, that the inextricable security-development nexus unfolds. While it is true that since the 1990s, the first "threat" to the stability of the European Union and the integrity of its borders has been represented mostly by the influx of migrants from Eastern Europe, the less substantial arrivals from the Global South, particularly Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, have received a wider attention[262]. Alongside these flows, academic research and International Organisations (IOs) alerted to the presence of new migration phenomena linked to human trafficking and forms of displacement in Global South countries linked to environmental crises[263]. Duffield argues that while the chaos of decolonisation posed a threat to the "West way of life", generating new possibilities in terms of mobility, through the use of the biopolitical security apparatus and its technologies of development, the West was able to penetrate back into *an emerging world of people*[264].

Development, however, is not limited to a mere form of neo-colonialism. Rather, development is used to contain and manage the effects of underdevelopment[265] and its by-products or, using the Arendtian expression, its *human debris*[266]. Effectively, as Malthus and Comte had observed, the development doctrine had emerged as a solution to the disorder that the progress of industrial capitalism caused in the European liberal societies of the 19th century, in which a surplus population found itself excluded from the enjoyment of the social economic benefits that capitalism had promised and which rather, as the young Marx had observed, had dissolved in the air everything that was solid before[267]. Today, however, the risks posed by surplus populations translate and expand far beyond homeland borderscapes, into *low-intensity but generalised political instability*[268], which moves through the dynamics of global circulation. In this perpetually crisis-ridden scenario, the ungovernability of the "fragile states", poses and reinforces the need for the securitarian paradigm and the strategies to curb the global imbalances they cause. From this point of view, as will become apparent in the pages of this study, the concept of "fragile states" resembles – or rather functions very

Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration (2002,11), available through this link: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f13c9af4.html (accessed November 2023)

[261] Adepoju, A., Van Noorloos, F., & Zoomers, A. (2010). See chapter 3 of this thesis for the case of Tunisia

[262] de Haas, H. (2008).

[263] Pécoud, A. (2015).

[264] Duffield, M. (2007, 24)

[265] Ibid.

[266] Arendt, H. (1958, 150).

[267] Duffield, M. (2007,9)

[268] Ibid. p.186

much like – the concept of "transit countries" as places of containment of surplus populations. Since their entry into the international political discourse of the new millennium, fragile states, have become emblematic of the bankruptcy of modernity. Unlike the fears posed by *uncontrollable local scarcity wars*[269] such as those that occurred following the decolonisation of Africa, today the fragile states pose a threat to global security due to their inability to reconcile the demands of progress with the need of order. Fragile states lack various combinations of capacity and political will, they either ignore or menace the human security of their populations[270]. Consequently, fragile states are argued to be capable of triggering large flows of spontaneous refugees and asylum seekers. The evidence, reported by an International Red Cross (IRC) study in 2003, that most deaths during the decolonisation of Africa resulted from the side-effects of civil war (such as mass displacement, lack of sanitation or disease and malnutrition), rather than from the violence of the conflicts themselves has reinforced this rhetoric, justifying humanitarian intervention as a *moral responsibility to reconstruct.* For the purposes of this thesis, I will not go into the role of humanitarian assistance in Africa. Rather, I would like to focus on the role that mobility practices have assumed in the Western securitarian paradigm in Africa as a governmental device by which to govern surplus population. The main theme proposed in the following session is to analyse African borderscapes from a different point of view. The reference to a new perspective does not simply refer to analysing intra-African migrations that are often ignored by Western scholars. Rather, it is a distancing from the border-centrism that characterises current migration studies. Indeed, as Walters observed, regardless of the methodological approach with which migration phenomena are analysed, migration and borders are often talked in the same breath[271]. This does not mean denying the importance of borders, whose role with respect to the governance of mobility is undeniable. Rather, it is about enriching the encounter between political philosophy and migration studies. Indeed, borrowing Walters' words again, *The word encounter carries the connotation of an unexpected meeting, but also a struggle.*[272] While it has already been observed that the Foucauldian concept of "governmentality" offers an interesting approach through which to analyse migration phenomena (in particular the bordering practices), if we take it as a ready-made theoretical framework, a kind of template that is there ready to be applied to migration issues, we leave little room for encounter.[273] This means that rather than fix on a particular concept like borders, sovereignty, the state, or governmentality, we need to think in ways that are always open to what is emerging and what is under transformation. From this point of view,

[269] Ibid. p. 186
[270] Ibid. p. 162
[271] Walters, W. (2015, 7).
[272] Ibid. p.4
[273] Ibid.

I believe that the analysis of mobility in Africa, and in particular the progressive construction of African states as transit areas, allows for the following hypothesis: rather than relegating human mobility to being a second-order effect of the biopolitics of the border, I think we should also move in the opposite direction; or, that it is mobility, its *"laisser-fair,"* taking up Foucaut, that structures and re-structures crossing practices in a continuous governmental (re)production of borders. Looking at mobility together with the border contributes, in my opinion, to analyse how bad circulation is governed, thus extending and moving beyond Foucault's theories.

1.3.4 When words create worlds. Transit states in Africa.

A turning point in the securitisation of migration and the risks it poses in global crises came with the geopolitical upheavals of 11/09. Indeed, with the US-led "War on terror" on a global scale, the outflows from "fragile states" also began to be portrayed as a potential channel for Islamic terrorism to infiltrate Western societies. This further change is important because it also marks a shift in the discursive practices that had hitherto characterised the securitisation of migration. In fact, if up to that moment the international political discourse had relied on the protection of human rights to justify restrictions on mobility and eradicate inhuman phenomena such as migrants' exploitation or trafficking in human beings, with the new threat to the security of the West, discursive and political practices on migration were increasingly embedded in a process of criminalisation[274]. The merging of the migrants with the crime has further reinforced an important feature of the current "government of migration". Indeed, in the biopolitics of mobility, migration is not a discouraged phenomenon *tout court.* Rather, the definition of a "politicized logic of emergency[275]" has allowed a distinction between a "good circulation", made of skilled labour, tourism, finance and trade, from a "bad circulation" associated with unskilled migrants, refugees, trafficking, shadow economies and international terrorism[276]. As a matter of fact, during the early 2000s both the MENA region and SSA increasingly shot to the top of European political agendas on migration management. In general terms, Western securitisation policies on migration control in Africa respond to two main strategies: on the one hand, through a development-oriented approach based on identifying the roots of migration, they aim at promoting alternatives to migration. On the other hand, they point at restraining human mobility towards Europe through the externalisation of borders' control. European obsession for African borders' control is certainly not new. However, the evolution of the contemporary Western

[274] Herber, A. (2023). On the concept of "crimmigration", see also Van der Woude, M. (2020).
[275] Marcenò, S. (2018, 59)
[276] Duffield, M. (2007, 30).

securitarian paradigm – with the support of the development industry and the multiplicity of actors involved – has triggered the experimentation of new practices of domination on the continent through which borders are once again redrawn. European externalisation of borders control, as Cuttitta pointed, may be seen as a neo-colonial device of power through which "destination countries promote, support, delegate, impose, or directly carry out activities related to migration and border management outside their territories[277]". Through the externalization of borders, Fortress Europe, is expanding its borders beyond its own, through a kind of centrifugal motion whereby, to paraphrase Étienne Balibar, the border is no longer at the border[278]; the border is always further the other way, as far south as possible. The willingness to accept the implementation of Western rules and guidelines on migration control in Africa, however, should not be merely understood in terms of asymmetrical power relations between the North and the South[279]. Rather, Western direct or indirect interventions are perceived by most African countries' elites as a means to strengthen regime authority and/or domestic stability[280]. This aspect, although developing and changing in step with the socio-economic and political transformations of the diverse areas of the African continent, has been observed in several Western sub-Saharan countries including Senegal, Ghana and, more recently, Niger[281]. Nevertheless, given the growing relevance of the North African area in the flows heading towards Europe, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and, as will emerge from chapter three, Tunisia more predominantly, have become emblematic of such a geopolitical game[282]. As a matter of fact, the need for an ever-closer security approach on the African continent was also caused by an increase in migratory flows from sub-Saharan to Northern Africa triggered at beginning of the new millennium. As Boubakri and Potot argued (2013), from a historical point of view, the reasons can be summarised in three main factors: i)the inability of several African regions, including countries with stronger economies such as Cameroon and Ghana, to match demographic growth and market demand; (ii) the increase in ethnic conflicts and civil wars erupted through many East, Central and West African countries after independence struggles; (iii) the progressive differentiation of economic development between Northern Africa and Sub-Saharan countries[283]. Within this scenario, North Africa has been

[277] Cuttitta, P. (2020, 26).
[278] Balibar, E. (2002, 91-92).
[279] See also Duffield, M. (2007).
[280] Hahonou, E. K., & Olsen, G. R. (2021).
[281] Ibid.
[282] Such a strategy, as is well known, was observed with the refugee crisis of 2015, in the wake of which Erdogan's Turkish regime, in order to confront Assad's Syrian government for control of certain strategic areas including Idlib – a Kurdish-majority buffer zone – used the migration crisis and the presence of more than 4 million Syrian refugees in its territories, potentially heading to Greece, as leverage to obtain European funding through which to strengthen its leadership in the Syrian conflict.
[283] Boubakri H., Potot S. (2013).

portrayed as a "backdoor" where "millions of sub-Saharans are commonly believed to be waiting to cross to Europe[284]" or, as the IOM argued in its 2022 *World Migration Report*, *a transit hub for migrants from sub-Saharan states.*[285] As extensively noted, although the data belie these observations, the Eurocentrism that characterizes some of Africa's research continues to reinforce the hegemonic narrative of a continent on the run. As Clare Castillejo pointed out, one should be cautious about interpreting this reading as disregard. In fact, a lot of research on migration in Africa is funded by the EU and focuses on areas considered to be the origin or transit areas of sub-Saharan migrants coming to Europe, giving "an unbalanced knowledge and evidence base about African migration[286]". Increased fears related to the management of the ungovernable trans-Saharan routes received a further impetus with the 2015 refugee crisis when the EU launched the Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa[287] (EUTF), to-date the main financial instrument for the EU's political engagement with African partners in the field of migration management. Interestingly, as several researches have highlighted, the geographical allocation of the EUTF projects' funds is not based on traditional needs analysis but on the identification of areas of *transit* used by migrants to reach Europe (CONCORD 2018; Idemudia, Boehnke 2020). In order to target transit states in Africa, three macro-areas of intervention have been identified: the Sahel and Lake Chad[288] (SLC), the Horn of Africa[289] (HOA) and North of Africa[290] (NOA). The HOA is considered particularly relevant for the routes emanating from Eastern Africa. Migrants mainly leave from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, transiting in Khartoum (Sudan) in order to move further to the North, particularly to Libya and Egypt. Khartoum can be reached flying directly from Addis Ababa (Ethiopia); alternatively, migrants can travel through Addis Ababa to Metema, another Ethiopian city bordering Sudan, hence reaching Khartoum from there. Another option is to move from Addis Ababa to Eritrea borders and from there moving towards Amara and

[284] de Haas, H. (2008, 1305)
[285] IOM, (2022,73). Available through: https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022
[286] Castillejo, C. (2019)
[287] The EUTF for Africa was launched at the Summit in La Valletta as the main financial instrument to implement the Valletta Action Plan aimed at responding collectively to the migration challenges in a shared strategic framework. Adopted by leaders of the EU and African countries, the Valletta Action Plan set out five priority domains of cooperation: addressing the root causes of irregular migration and developing the benefits of migration; promoting legal migration and mobility; reinforcing protection and asylum policies; fighting against human trafficking and migrant smuggling; and strengthening cooperation to facilitate return and reintegration of irregular migrants. The EUTF for Africa was launched for the five-year terms 2015 to 2020 and 2020 to 2025.
[288] The Sahel and Lake Chad include: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire , the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal.
[289] In the Horn of Africa are target the following countries: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia.
[290] The North of Africa include; Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Libya.

Massara to reach Khartoum (Marchand et al. 2017). Such a situation brought the EU to define Sudan and Ethiopia as strategic partners for transit migration control. Djibouti is also increasingly assuming a relevant role as a transit country within Eastern Africa flows, especially from Somalia and Ethiopia.[291]

The political, economic and social instability of the SLC area, further exacerbated by changes in the climate, pose, as we have already observed, several challenges to migration control. Lake Chad, situated between Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria, is an important livelihood source, supplying water to 30 million people. Its depletion is causing socio-political tensions and conflicts, thus making forced migration increasingly frequent and necessary. Within this area, Niger has acquired a pivotal role in the externalisation of the EU's borders. Migrants coming from Nigeria, Senegal, Gambia, and Mali have started to use the Nigerin city of Agadez as a hub for moving to Algeria and Libya.[292] Together with Mauritania, Mali is targeted as a transit country but given the growing political instability of its Northern region since the 2012 military coup, most migrants coming from Guinea, Liberia, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire tend to choose Niger, improving its role as a transit state. At the time of writing, a military transition government is in place in Niger, following the coup d'état of July 26th 2023. Such a situation prompted the EU to suspend the substantial fundings the previous government had enjoyed on border control through the EUTF; while the military government has been recognised by Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Guinea, both the ECOWAS and the AU suspended Niger from their organisations. As Bisong et. al pointed out, it is currently unclear how the fundings' suspension will impact mobility in the area; however, partial border closures with neighbouring countries and the closure of the air space as a result of the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the UEMOA is further preventing intra-regional mobility, typical, as we have seen, in West Africa in particular on the mobility of seasonal workers and cross-border traders.[293] The targeting of North Africa as a transit area, triggered as we will see in Tunisia in the mid-1990s, has expanded and intensified to the point that nowadays, as it can be seen by the entire EUTF funds' allocation on "Improved migration management[294]", the sub-region has become a buffer zone to block irregular flows. As Düvell highlighted, and as the data on intra-African migration show, *transit migration is commonly linked with a supposed attraction of Western countries, implying that middle-income countries to the East and South of the EU cannot be destination but only transit countries*.[295] More

[291] See, IOM- Djibouti, available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/migration-management
[292] see Abebe, T. T. (2019). Idrissa, A. (2019); Hahonou, E. K., & Olsen, G. R. (2021); Krubally, K. (2022).
[293] Bisong, A. Jegen, L., & Mounkaila, H. (2023, 9)
[294] Access the EUTF website on NOA through https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/system/files/2023-12/2023%20Monitoring%20Report%20for%20the%20EUTF%20North%20Africa%20region.pdf
[295] Düvell, F. (2014, 215)

importantly however, as Bredeloup argued, rather than being a new phenomenon, transit migration is a recycled[296] but fashionable term through which to reinforce the transitory nature of migration and even worse, whose direction is impossible to determine *ex ante*, both in spatial and temporal terms. Hence, transit migration serves to stress the uncertainty in migration patterns, associating this unpredictability with ungovernability.

As I will deepen though the analysis of the Tunisian device in contemporary migration, a crucial aspect underlying the "governmental production of transit countries" is that it is achieved not through an "excess of control," but rather through its opposite, its *laissez-faire.* In this vein, as Martina Tazzioli argued, irregularisation practices, or partial data collection should not be intended as the inability or failure of states to control migration flows within their national borders but a disciplinary mechanism that draws on partial control to manage control. In a nutshell, transit countries in Africa are becoming a fundamental device whereby to establish the *government of the crisis* and the *crisis as a technology of government.* Therefore, as Martina Tazzioli suggested, in addition to talking about a biopolitics *of* mobility, we should also better theorise a biopolitics *through* mobility[297]. While the former refers to the modes of capture and government exercised over mobile bodies and the population, the latter refers to the ways in which (induced) mobility is used to govern individuals and populations[298]. Moreover, referring to a biopolitics through mobility means – as anticipated – assuming mobility as a research method, rather than a research object. Moving away from approaches that position mobility as a mere object of research also means going beyond the mere conceptualisation of mobility as movement, transporting it to the realm of power relations wherein individuals challenge, transform and shape the spaces of struggles, the racialised policies and the mechanisms of exploitation that sustain and shape different practices of mobility[299]. In order to understand mobility from this perspective, it is first necessary to analyse the deep connection between the emergence of a new governmental rationality and contemporary capitalism, or bio-capitalism. Such an aspect is paramount, as will be seen, for analysing domestic labour in the feminisation phenomena of migration.

[296] Bredeloup, S. (2012).
[297] Tazzioli, M. (2020a, 106). See also Bærenholdt, J.O. (2013).
[298] Ibid.
[299] Ibid. p.102

CHAPTER II

NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY AND FEMALE INTIMATE LABOR

Producing vulnerability

2.1 The Great Turn. A critical approach to neoliberism.

To understand mobility beyond its material dimension, that is, beyond the mere movement of a body pushed to across the geographic boundaries between one country and another, is to look at mobility as an existential condition, or a practice of subjectivation that carries within itself the twofold deadly or the salvific potential. Practising mobility between the inaccessible but always porous spaces of citizenship, labour and endless crises can be a practice of struggle for access to a life worth living, as Judith Butler would say, or, on the contrary, it can turn into a practice of subjectification where *life can be killed without murder being committed*[300]. In order to understand the ways in which life can be declined, and in what fashion mobility has become an essential and existential condition of contemporary subjects across the globe, and more specifically a new biopolitics of the feminine, it is necessary to critically analyse the transformations of contemporary capitalism that have taken place within neo-liberalism. The critical analysis of neo-liberalism, is not to conceptualize, as is conventional, a continuity between liberalism and neo-liberalism, rather as Dardot and Laval (2013) have extensively argued in *The New Way of the World: On Neo-liberal Society*, to point out precisely what the newness of neo-liberalism consists of. As already observed, in concerning himself with the history of liberal government, Foucault had highlighted the advent of a new way of conducting individuals which seeks to orientate, stimulate and combine individual interests to make them serve the general good[301]. As Dardot and Laval points thus, Foucault had intuited that what was at issue in these years was an acute crisis of the hitherto dominant forms of power[302] wherein liberalism, as a design of (bio)power, was concerned with the security of people, their well-being, freedom and rights.[303]

As I shall now observe, with the advent of neo-liberalism a new global regulatory framework has been introduced in which what is at stake is the reorganisation of the conduct of the self and others,

[300] Duffield, M. (2007, 13)
[301] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014).
[302] Ibid. p.16
[303] Dean, M. (1999).

a restructuring of the government of lives in the various sectors of society. Neo-liberalism[304] began to spread within institutions and public opinion from the mid-1970s taking over in 1978-80 and marking a transformation and reformulation of governments almost all over the world. In *The New Way of the World* that to date probably represents one of the most interesting and illuminating critical analyses of neoliberalism, Dardot and Laval refer to the "great neoliberal turn" to emphasize the shift from the Keynesian-based economic system underlying the world economy of the 1900s, to a newly economic system characterized, as I will now observe, by full market freedom and by the so-called laissez-faire policies. In *General Theory of employment, interest and money* (1936), the British economist J.M. Keynes had pointed out that a nation's economic well-being and its economic growth, cannot occur without the state taking a leading role within market regulation. In Keynesian economic theory that emerged in the 1920s, the economist argued that a typical feature of capitalism was the cyclical nature of economic crises. Unlike the neoclassical economists, Keynes rejected the view of a self-regulating market mechanisms and instead argued that in order to foster greater economic stability, state interventionism was of paramount importance, not to prevent the natural dysfunctions of the capitalist system but rather to repair it from time to time. Although it had already emerged at the end of the 19th century, with Keynesian economic theory the importance of the welfare state increased. Only the state, in Keynesian doctrine, could effectively control production and unemployment levels, and its role was crucial in supporting market demand to enable consumers to buy goods and services, and thus satisfying market's supply[305].

[304] Please note the difference I make in the use of the terms "neoliberalism" and "neoliberalism." If with the former term one refers merely to the economic aspects, i.e., the neoliberal economic doctrine, the term "neoliberalism" is used to refer to the (bio)political issues that have arisen within neoliberal economic reforms and which I will analyse shortly.

[305] In so doing, Keynes questions, or rather undermines, two cornerstones of all economic theory that had developed up to that time: on the one hand, by advocating state interventionism, he challenges the cardinal principle of liberalism in economics, namely the laissez-faire principle in which the action of each economic operator in pursuit of its own well-being is sufficient to guarantee the economic prosperity of society as a whole. The state therefore let the market regulate itself. However, the Great Depression of the 1920s had shown that the market alone had failed to guarantee either economic growth or full employment, leading to a global economic crisis. On the other hand, Keynes reverses the idea that it is supply that increases market demand. In fact, up until the run-up to the Great Depression, economic theory expected that the more products and goods that were put into the market, the greater the demand would be. This was an idea that was actually verified every time a new market opened up to be conquered by mass production (think of automobiles and household appliances). Supply actually had created demand in Europe and the United States as the industrial revolution spread its wings. By keeping production prices low, industrial production allowed that product to be made accessible to more people, thus increasing demand. Meanwhile, the steady increase in productivity allowed wages and thus the purchasing power of households to remain unchanged. The advent of the global crisis, however, disrupted that economic system by revealing its weakness. It was no longer enough to produce at increasingly lower costs in order to sell more and more goods. The collapse of the New York Stock Exchange

However, few years later and more particularly from the 1970s, the virtuosity of Keynes economic revolution began to come up against its endogenous limitations. Indeed, enterprises were experiencing a particularly significant drop in their profit rates. Such a decline is explained by the slowdown in productivity due to the rebalancing of industrial power, and above all by the high inflation exacerbated by the two oil shocks that occurred in 1973 first and in 1979 afterwards. Stagflation thus confirmed the end of *the Keynesian art of managing the conjuncture.*[306] At the same time, as pointed by Dardot and Laval, a further destabilising factor was represented by the international system's distortions occurred after the Second World War. The shift to floating exchange rates in 1973 amplified the influence of market forces over economic policy. Within this new framework, the growing openness of economies eroded the foundations of the auto-centred production-income-demand circuit[307]. Consequently, the global economy required the reformulation of new theories and paradigms to cope with the new crisis of the liberal economy. The need to reformulate the liberal economic system had already arisen a few decades earlier, in late 1940s, when a group of economists and intellectuals, including Karl Popper and von Hayek, established the Mont Pèlerin Society laying the foundation for the birth of neoliberal ideology. Among the organisation's main objectives was the creation of an international order that would safeguard international economic relations, and the redefinition of the role of states in the international and national economy, laying the foundation for the birth of neoliberal ideology. However, a turning point in the theorisation of neo-liberal doctrine was provided in Milton Friedman's publication *Capitalism and Freedom* in which the scholar – Nobel Prize for economics in 1972 – formulated the basis for a new economic theory. In antithesis to Keynes' formulation, Friedman suggested considerably reducing social spending, by cutting funding for the health and pension system, thus dismantling the state welfare system and accompanying these reforms by a reduction in taxes. Based on the idea that the market is

affected small investors who on the one hand supported the demand for goods and on the other invested their savings in stocks, and dragged the entire economy into the brink. Faced with shrinking demand, industries began to grind to a halt. Rising unemployment caused consumer income to plummet and, consequently reducing 'further the ability of the economic system to absorb the supply of goods, which remained unsold. Faced with markets that were no longer able to soak up production, classical theory therefore no longer worked. In order to get out of the epochal crisis, Keynes proposed to support the demand for goods from outside so that the supply that was surplus to requirements could be placed equally in the market. The state, unable to act on consumption and investment, immobilized and depressed by the economic crisis, could have acted on demand, so as to generate supply. Indeed, according to Keynesian theory, increased public spending would have turned into wages, and wages would have turned into increased consumption. The resumption of production and consumption would have generated tax revenues capable of causing the state to recover the increase in government spending. From this perspective, the economic system would thus have returned to an equilibrium phase that would have allowed for a further expansionary phase.

[306] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014, 172)

[307] Ibid.

self-regulating, for the purpose of economic recovery the economist also suggested the application of so-called *deregulation*, i.e. the elimination of market control by states or governments in order to encourage market operations. In addition, *privatisation* of the public sector was promoted in order to achieve a twofold advantage. Indeed, while increased privatisation would have reduced state's expenditure, it would also have resulted in more efficient management by the private sector, which, driven by profit, would have been more motivated to create an active, dynamic and profitable administration with positive consequences for the enterprise. As is commonly known, what had hitherto only been theories were first implemented by Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and shortly afterwards in the USA with the election of Ronal Reagan. When Thatcher became the United Kingdom's Prime Minister in 1979, the country was in an almost dramatic economic situation that made it among the least productive and economically weakest countries on the European Continent. However, by applying the principles of neoliberal economic doctrine, Thatcher was able to achieve extraordinary levels of growth within a few years it[308]. The program of government was based on encouraging individual freedom, discouraging state welfarism and launching a vast program of deregulation and bureaucratic simplification.

Moreover, the economic policies were based on the "trickle down economy[309]", an economic manoeuvre, typically neoliberal, which views lowering the taxes of the economically advantaged social classes as a strategy to improve the economic conditions of the entire social structure. In the U.S., the situation was similar. Coming into government in 1980, Reagan implemented policies consistent with the principles enunciated by Friedman and based on four points13: the reduction of public debt growth, the control of the money supply and the reduction of inflation, the deregulation of economic activity, and the reduction taxes on capital income. If the Keynesian and Fordist economic order were based on the idea that competition among capitalist firms and economies must be supervised and protected by common and fixed rules both in exchange rates and in trade policy and income distribution, with the new neoliberal norms, competition was set as the highest universal rule of governance[310]. The expansion, as I shall now observe, of the neo-liberal economic doctrine beyond Western space and above all beyond the mere economic sphere, has resulted in what Dardot and Laval have called *global disciplinary system.*[311] The global dimension of neoliberism in the two scholars' theorisation, is twofold. Indeed, on the one hand it operates on a global scale, meaning that it has expanded – or rather – it has been exported – as I will observe in the case of Tunisia – beyond the Western countries; and, on the other hand, far from being merely limited to the economic sphere,

[308] Layard, R., & Nickell, S. (1989).
[309]Aghion, P., Bolton, P. (1993).
[310] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014,173)
[311] Ibid.

neoliberalism is a universalising force, that is, it creates *a world in its own image through its power to integrate all dimensions of human existence. A global rationality, it is at the same time a "world-reason."*[312] Questioning the simplistic and naïve reading of neoliberalism as "the retreat of the state" in the face of the market, Dardot and Laval, argue that neoliberalism, far from being a mere economic paradigm, is a rationality that restructures the actions of the governors and the governed into a new, purely economic dimension, producing a new (planetary) subjectivity. In a similar vein, in *Neoliberalism and the end of liberal democracy* Wendy Brown, adhering perfectly to the Foucauldian interpretation of governmentality, argued that the neoliberal paradigm should be interpreted as a technology of government structured no longer around the laws of the state but rather the economic mechanisms of the market[313]. How then can we formulate the relationship between the state and the market? According to Brown, the role of the state, with its laws and policies, plays a key role in the functioning of neoliberalism. In fact, being itself engulfed in the economic logics of competition and the generalized calculation of costs and benefits, it acts as an economic actor, applying on the one hand new bills based on the competitive market logics, and on the other hand indexing its own success based on its ability to sustain and promote the market[314]. In this regard, it could be argued that rather than conceptualising the states in its compensatory purpose, we should see its productive one: its role is to produce the optimal conditions for the mechanism of competition to become the collective interest, and thus to produce individuals who govern themselves in that direction. In other words, going back to Dardot and Laval, at stake in neo-liberalism is nothing more, nor less, than the form of our existence – the way in which we are led to govern ourselves, to relate to others and to ourselves. Neo-liberalism defines a certain existential norm in Western societies and, far beyond them, in all those societies that follow them on the path of "modernity."[315] This norm of behaviour, requires everyone to live in a world of generalized competition and insecurity; aligns social relations with the market model; promotes the justification of ever-increasing inequalities; and even transforms the individual, who is called upon to conceive and behave as a business[316]. By this stand point, as Foucault observed, the crisis of liberalism is mainly a crisis of governmentality because it poses the practical problem of political intervention in the socio-economic field[317]. As I will now observe, neoliberalism takes the form of a technology of government wherein a new practice of "the

[312] Ibid. p.8
[313] Brown, W. (2003).
[314] See Brown, W. (2009).
[315] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014).
[316] Ibid. p. 8
[317] See Foucault, M. (2008)

management of freedom" emerge. However, rather than merely guaranteeing it in terms of competition, it exasperates it, exploits it and consumes it.

2.2 Vulnerability and Resilience. The neoliberal subjectivity to understand labor migration.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, within the current public debate, while not a category of international law, the expression "economic migrant" indicates a subject who has *freely decided to move with the only aim of improving their financial situation, in other words for personal convenience.*[318] I will return to the issue of "freedom of choice" in the next few pages. Instead, what I want to emphasise at this time, as I continue to critically analyse neo-liberalism, is the process of subjectivation of the new global rationality. To do so means, in fact, to critically reflect on who we are, how we govern ourselves, and how we "move" within the world, through the world, and against it. Going back to Dardot and Laval, the new global economic dis-order, has produced an *entrepreneurial governmentality where everyone must develop their personal qualities so as to react rapidly, innovate, create, manage complexity in a globalized economy (...) since everyone is ideally a manager who must be counted on to solve problems*[319]. Hence, with neoliberism, *the entrepreneur-state must indirectly conduct individuals to conduct themselves like entrepreneurs*[320].

The product of such governmentality is a form of subjectivity that Dardot and Laval call the "neo-liberal subject" or neo-subject. There are two main features that characterize this neo-subject in Dardot and Laval's analysis on neoliberism: first, the introjection of competition as a form of behaviour. As a matter of fact, a competitive behavioural form tends to transform individuals into business-subjects and from the social, community point of view, tends to fragment populations

[318] As the IOM highlights however, that the use of this term should be discouraged for a number of reasons. Firstly, categorizing migrants by a single reason of migration is questionable in light of the complex, and often overlapping, drivers of migration. Secondly, the term "economic migrant" is often juxtaposed to the term refugee to underline the fact that refugees are entitled to a specific protection under refugee law, whereas States have no obligations towards those migrating to seek better economic opportunities abroad. This is clearly contrary to the prescriptions of international law and overrides the universality of human rights. For this reason, the IOM suggests to use the term "migrant worker". See IOM glossary https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/IML_34_Glossary.pdf While I fully agree with what IOM has said, I nevertheless believe that the use of the term "migrant worker" has the same effect. In fact, a person who resorts to mobility for the purpose of work remains, in the political debate, an economic migrant. Moreover, using the expression "migrant worker" again reduces the complexity of the migration phenomenon as well as reproducing again the incessant recourse to new and always vague categorisation.

[319] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014, 339)

[320] Ibid.

strongly by erasing the sense of solidarity and generating societies that are extremely individualistic. With neoliberalism, in essence, all humans' conducts are economic conducts, we have become particular specimens of homo oeconomicus which has come – and here is the second characteristic – to assume the enterprise as a model of subjectivation[321]. As the neo-subjects attempts to be competitive for access to resources, for its own well-being, for access to an ever-better life, at the same time they will attempt to monetise aspects of its life that are not and have never before been directly monetisable. Thus, an entrepreneurial self-government in which our life projects are based on self-investment, with the aim to improve and consequently increase our value, a value that turns us into "financialised" human capital. With neo-liberalism, human existence thus depends entirely on the individuals' ability to know how to be in the world, on their abilities of adaptability and self-reliance in an unpredictable world of endless crisis. In a nutshell an individual who must be resilient.
It is no coincidence that since the beginning of the new millennium, the neo-liberal political lexicon has made increasing use of the concept of resilience[322] making it so ubiquitous that today it is considered a buzzword of the "*Developmentspeak*[323]" or that sort of ostensibly technical idiolect used by the various and conflicting actors in the development industry, and whose peculiarity lies not so much in its technicalities rather in its being a performative language that produces hegemonic and normalizing effects. Put it simple, resilience could be defined as the ability to cope with the shocks that may affect human's lives. Starting from 1990s, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) has been a great promoter of resilience, defining it as *the transformative process of strengthening the capacity of people, communities and countries to anticipate, manage, recover and transform from*

[321] Ibid.

[322] Originating in the early 1970s within engineering studies, the concept of resilience began to be used for the study of static systems in order to observe the ability of a material or a machine, to return to its previous state after suffering a shock. Over the course of time, the study was extended to dynamic systems thus changing in meaning: being resilient no longer implied the possibility of returning to the initial state but to the initial functions. So, consequent to an external shock, while changing the structure, the system retained its original functions unchanged. As argued by Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper, it was thanks to ecologist C. Holling that the concept of resilience was exported to the biological sciences - and ecology - first, and to the social sciences later. Holling, disengages from classical ecology according to which only some systems experience extreme fluctuations, arguing instead that in all ecosystems and the dynamic social-ecological systems there are non-linear interactions of an adaptive cycle in which four different phases can be identified: the first two belonging to the classical concepts of ecology (*rapid successional growth and stable equilibrium*), the next two belonging instead to the acuities brought to light by the new approach to the study of systems, namely collapse and spontaneous reorganization. This totalising tendency of systems has been termed *"panarchy"* according to which the structures of systems, both that of nature and that of the human (capitalism), as well as those combining the spheres of nature and the of the human, are intertwin in a continuous adaptive cycle of growth, accumulation and restructuring. On a genealogy of resilience, see Walker, J., & Cooper, M. (2011); Folke, C., S. Carpenter, T. Elmqvist, L. et al. (2002); Common, M., & Stagl, S. (2005).

[323] See Cornwall, A., & Eade, D. (2010).

shocks.[324] Upon the neoliberal doctrine, thus, resilience is the virtue that surplus populations, made of vulnerable individuals, must acquire in order to develop their own adaptation strategies, in the face of the risks and threats to which they are exposed[325]; at the same time, however, resilience is also a political technology which must serve IOs, and the donor agencies to assess the performance and the institutional capacities of states that benefit of development aid. Resilience therefore functions as a code of conduct, affecting individuals and institutions, producing the typical forms of neoliberal self-governance[326]. As a matter of fact, resilience has to do with guaranteeing the freedom of choice of individuals, and it links well-being and freedom through an ability to respond and recover in the face of adverse events. Such an ability is based on three entirely individual skills: firstly, it is necessary to be responsible for one's own life (responsibility); secondly, resilient individuals are required to be aware of the context in which they live (awareness); finally, one must be ready to react (preparedness). As underlined in the UNDP's Human Development Report (2014), individuals have to be the *active agents in shaping their destiny.*[327] It is worth noting from this point of view, how *empowerment* has become a fundamental mechanism for the functioning of neoliberal rationality[328]. This aspect also emerges in the shift that characterized development policies and political agendas in the 2000s in which vulnerability-reduction programs gave way to resilience-building programs. Among the building resilience strategies promoted by UNDP, empowerment has become one of the most common buzzwords combating female vulnerability[329]. For instance, as pointed by Marcenò, the strategies related to countering gender-based violence put in place by UNDP, are focused on women's self-empowerment, thus, on an entirely individual dimension, *the site of the re-building of a violently broken-self,*[330] whose purpose is to restore the productive performances[331]. Neoliberal subjects then, are placed in a condition of existential insecurity, exacerbated by another aspect characterising them: the self-blame[332] as process of subjectivation. Guilt-inducement is peculiar of the entrepreneurial governmentality. Indeed, whatever kind of failure happens in our lives depends solely and only on us, on our ability to invest in ourselves. The oscillation between the competitive drive and the grip of self-blame produces, as Dardot and Laval state, a false conviction: while the neoliberal subjects

[324] UNDP Annual Report (2013)
[325] Marcenò, S. (2018, 144)
[326] Ibid.
[327] UNDP (2014, 5). In Marcenò S. (2018, 132)
[328] Trnka, S., & Trundle, C. (2017)
[329] In chapter four I will also observe how female empowerment has affected feminist movements and the effects of these transformation in the Tunisian context.
[330] Marcenò, S. (2018, 78), my translation.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014, 200)

through the freedom granted is led to believe that they can succeed, on the other hand they are not offered any means through which to resist and react to adversity, producing rather forms of resignation. Resilience and vulnerability then are two sides of the same coin, two variables inversely proportional since as one increases, the other decreases. Vulnerability, besides being particularly important in this research, constitutes an analytical lens, in political philosophical terms, for analysing intimate labour and contemporary migration. Far from considering vulnerability as an inherent characteristic of migrant women, as some of the literature emphasises, building on Butler's political reflections, I would like to analyse vulnerability in a political dimension. Human vulnerability has been a widespread topic in traditional western philosophy from Kant to Heidegger who for instance distinguished between fear (that they saw as a conditional, external form of precarity) and anguish (that they rather saw as an existential and pervasive condition of vulnerability). However, with the transformation of the post-Fordist societies, that I will shortly discuss, political theory has increasingly focused the attention on vulnerability as a political, social, racial, spatial and/or gender issue[333]. Such a need, as Paolo Virno highlights, arose from continually dwelling in a sense of disorientation and insecurity characterising the neo-subjects because their lives are interminably held out to a globalised economy that is utterly unmediated and that owes them nothing. As Isabel Lorey (2015) puts it, in a nod to Benjamin, precaritisation is no more an exception, but a rule. Judith Butler, together with the philosopher Adriana Cavarero, represents probably one of the most engaged scholars in research on contemporary forms of vulnerability from a political perspective. In *Precarious life.*, she states that being vulnerable is an ontological status of human beings. Birth in fact exposes us to the risk of death. Only the absolute power of the mother to decide whether or not to take care of the newborn child can determine the care – and thus guarantee life – or whether to let it die. This is a totally asymmetrical power relationship since children, to use Cavarero's expression, are not merely vulnerable but helpless[334], that is, totally defenceless and in need of care[335]. This leads to conceptualise vulnerability both in positive terms-through *care*, and in negative terms, through what she calls *wound*[336]. In a wider, political perspective, it could be argued that while care leads to forms of protection of individuals, the wound would instead take the form of the violation of human rights. However, beyond care and wound, it exists another dimension of vulnerability in Butler and Cavarero's thought, which is wholly contingent and which represents the neoliberal *ratio.* They refer to it as *abandonment*. The Butlerian concept of abandonment is of utmost importance in this

[333] Joronen, M., & Rose, M. (2021, 1403),
[334] Cavarero, A. (2009, 31).
[335] Ibid.
[336] Butler, J. (2004).

study. Indeed, as it will emerge in the analysis on the governmental construction of Tunisia as a transit country, abandonment represents an interesting technology of government that works, not through practices of direct control over mobility, but on the contrary constitutes a form of *intervention through withdrawal.*[337] Far from being a direct form of violence, abandonment is configured as a form of indirect violence, that Foucauldian configuration of letting die which, however, is not less violent than making die. Abandonment shows us an unequal distribution of dignity at the global level which return to us a kind of cartography of how with neoliberal rationality, humanity is unequally distributed in zones of abandonment, whose surplus lives can become objects of dehumanisation and exploitation. The proliferation of transit countries in Africa is one of the unprecedented declinations of zones of abandonment. Migration and global threats can no longer be tackled along causal lines, because current scenarios do not allow political action to be directed towards solving the general and universal causes of global crisis by adopting equally universal 'cures'. Each problem must be therefore isolated from its external causes and interconnections – historical, political and economic – and addressed, in a resilient sense, by directing action to its effects, in order to re-establish an acceptable level of internal balance within social systems[338]. Labor migrants who choose to cross the borders of unknown countries represent the archetype of the neo-liberal subject. The migration process itself consists of a form of self-investment to improve one's own living conditions and sometimes also those of whom remained behind them. It may sound trivial, but who is a migrant? As noted by the IOM, the definition of who is a migrant still remains problematic[339]. The diverse definitions provided often revolve around the crossing of international borders or, as it has been said, migrants' specific goals. Nevertheless, its use remains of practical use to policy-makers working in contexts where definitions have direct legal and administrative repercussions[340]. Even in this case, however, they do not seem to work appropriately in practice. For instance, foreigners in Tunisia, are not all seen and perceived in the same way. While for foreigners from sub-Saharan Africa, expressions such as "migrants" are used, Europeans are more commonly referred as "foreigner" or "expat." Migrants are not just any subjects. Rather, they seem to be subjects whose nationality, religion, ethnicity, and above whose economic capital incarnated by their bodies, are assumed a priori to be surplus lives to be contained. Not all mobile subjects are considered as "migrants". It is then worth observing how such a process is implemented, accepted and perpetrated.

[337]Tazzioli, M. (2020a, 60). See also Tazzioli, M. (2020b).
[338] Marcenò, S. (2018, 52)
[339] See https://www.iom.int/who-migrant-0
[340] De Haas, M., Frankema, E. (2022, 10)

2.2.1 Bodies and violence: the politics of mourning

In a growing process of vulnerability and uncertainty, the body takes on a predominant role. It is through it that our existence comes into motion. The body is the embodiment of human beings' dignity, of its values, fears and aspiration. In an attempt to analyse and understand the process through which the dignity of some lives is worth less than others, hence the practices of hierarchisation of human dignity, in *Precarious life,* Butler has succeeded in a disruptive way to show the connection between the body and mourning. A geopolitics of grief[341], as she calls it, which shows the effects of abandonment in all its political scope. It should be noted, however, that the body in Butler's conception, far from being conceived as a mere biological machine, should be understood in its full political significance[342]. According to Butler, it is precisely through the analysis of the body in its public dimension that it is possible to understand how the processes of de-realisation of the *Other* take place, i.e. the consideration of certain human beings as spectral entities, neither alive nor dead and certainly not worthy of being mourned. It is necessary to start from the interpretation of our body as something that does not really belong to us, but that is configured and re-structured in relation to the other individuals that make up, animate and participate in our existences. The evidence of this existential interdependence, according to Butler, emerges when we experience mourning. While mourning is commonly thought of as a strictly intimate and personal grief, relegated to the sphere of the private, Butler shows instead that this form of "privatisation" is actually based on a complex sense of community belonging. In fact, since the body is never ours alone but always included in a public dimension that exposes and intertwines it with other lives, other bodies, with mourning we lose not only the Other but also a part of ourselves. That part through which our "me" was constructed within a relationality that is made up of the bond through which the 'we' is realised. Butler notes, however, that when we talk about bodies, and in particular the claiming of rights over our bodies, an interesting political aporia arises: When we speak of rights, think for example of decent work rights, we commonly refer to rights related to the individual sphere of workers such as a fair wage or fair working hours; however, when we demand to be defended against discriminations in the workplace, we do so as a group or class, such as the gender discriminations of domestic workers. If it is true, as Butler argues, that all bodies are exposed to loss, vulnerability, action and violence, bodies are never exposed to vulnerability in the same way but, above all, not all bodies are worthy of protection in the same way. When Butler writes *Precarious Lives*, her intention is to define the climate of terror that shook the United States after the 11/09 attacks. Her analysis, which I find particularly

[341] Butler, J. (2004)
[342] Ibid.

interesting, is aimed at analysing obituaries by showing which lives are worthy of mourning and deserve to be remembered, and which stories instead represent an "offense" to the public and consequently should not be remembered. An oblivion in which to relocate, to use Dal Lago's words, the *non-persons*[343]. Indeed, for an obituary to exist, there must be a life worthy of being remembered and valued. The obituary in this sense, can be seen as a tool that regulates the public distribution of mourning[344]. In the U.S., the broken lives of homosexuals in the Twin Towers attacks, were not received in the U.S. media frame and therefore not even in the public discourse; it was only later, and after a selection process, that some relatives were granted the right to compensation, like other US victims. Even more emblematic is the case of a U.S. citizen of Palestinian origin who submitted obituaries of two Palestinian families exterminated by Israeli troops to the San Francisco Chronicle, an important newspaper of the West Coast; the request was refused by the editors who found the request inappropriate since there was no proof of the deaths and therefore the formula "in memoriam" would have been more appropriate[345]. Despite this, some memorials were still rejected. Or again Butler recalls the media resonance that the execution of American journalist Daniel Pearl received as silence hangs over the lives exterminated in the conflict in Afghanistan. We remember the lives lost in the conflict in Ukraine but do not look at the every-day broken lives in today's most dramatic humanitarian scenarios such as Sudan and Palestine. Why? According to Butler, our moral reactions, which at first take the form of emotions and perceptions, actually, just as is the case with our bodies, never fully belong to us[346], they reside somewhere else, outside our bodies[347]. In Butler's perspective, the current crisis scenario and growing sense of insecurity affecting our lives, lead us to view our existence as something closely dependent on others with whom we share a national and cultural affinity through which we recognize and legitimize the existence of other bodies, but we remain indifferent to the loss of others[348]. These reactions function as marking a difference between those peoples on whom "our" existence depends and those peoples who instead pose a threat to our lives. At this point it is interesting to reflect on the following: what are limits to conceptualizing this state of social interdependence without which we cannot we can survive? And again, what is the role of the state in all this? Is it the nation that guarantees my (or our) survival? Or conversely, is it precisely the nation that puts us in danger? If we look at the way neoliberal rationality operates, the answer is both. To delve exhaustively into such a broad and complex issue would lead to an excessive departure

[343] Dal Lago, A. (2006).
[344] Butler, J. (2004, 57)
[345] Ibid.
[346] Butler, J. (2004).
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.

from the topic that this thesis seeks to address however, an attempt will be made to provide some useful insights into understanding the importance of states in structuring perceptions that justify and broaden forms of protection or abandonment. The nationalism of the United States constitutes in my view a good example through which to show how in order to ensure protection for its citizens, the rights of "other" individuals can be suspended by virtue of a supposed threat to the Unted States' security. Such an example, among other things, also works very well with respect to the current migration regimes, both in Europe and as we shall see in Tunisia. Following the 11/09 terrorist attack, the U.S government implemented the well-known maximum-security prison in Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba. Shortly after its opening, the Guantanamo prison became the symbol of atrocious torture and the continued violation of the Geneva Conventions, perpetrated on prisoners believed to be connected to Islamic terrorism. The detention, rather than being based on evidence or indications of guilt, concerned subjects deemed "dangerous" merely because they were Muslims. Moreover, as Butler notes, Guantanamo detainees were not even being tried, creating a kind of indefinite detention. Such a situation shows an unprecedent, nowadays widespread, combination of governmental strategies which operate in an extra-legal sphere, within indefinite detention, law is illegally exercised allowing the state to reaffirm its sovereignty. Infinite detention is then not configured as an exceptional circumstance but the means by which the exception becomes a commonly accepted norm[349]. A further anomaly lies in the fact that sovereignty is exercised by bureaucrats who do not have any legitimacy, belonging to that apparatus of governmentality that allows them even simply to "assume" that certain individuals are dangerous to national security and thus endowing them with extraordinary life-or-death power[350]. To understand instead how the state can act in reverse as a persecutor, implementing forms of abandonment and social death on its own citizens, an interesting point of reflection would come in the analyses of the concept of *naked citizenship* introduced by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai[351] who attempts to question the concept of citizenship in the time of globalization. Citizenship as Lazzarini argues, names the relationship that subjects establish with the political-legal order whereby they fit in, and defines the ways in which individuals belong to the political collectivity[352]. Nevertheless, the forms of precarization and de-humanisation produced by the "entrepreneurial governmentality", has determined a hybridisation of citizenship which do not work anymore in dichotomous forms of inclusion/exclusion, citizen/foreigner. Rather, as Mezzadra and Neilson note, within contemporary capitalism, citizenship is thickened through a multiplication

[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Cfr. Appadurai, A. (2013, 147).
[352] Lazzarini, S. (2018).

and fragmentation of statuses and different positions that identify partial forms of citizenship[353] who find themselves included in certain spaces of the society, such as precarious labor, while at the same time, they're excluded from others such as the right to housing and urban services observed in Mumbai's slum by Appadurai. The slum dwellers of Mumbai, as well as those referred to in the Nairobi slum are naked citizens that is, subjects whose "set of rights are more limited than a citizen", they are sub-citizens. As Standig argued, "the world is filling with sub-citizens[354]", not by work and grace of a transcending power, or by a combination of devilish forces, truly unspeakable, but because the "State is more and more converting citizens into sub-citizens[355]". As can be seen, therefore, neo-liberalism sets forms of hierarchisation that do not only concern migrants, non-citizens (in the legal sense) but any subjectivity. However, as Arendt recalls in *Revolution, Violence, and Power*, acting as citizens in today's public sphere, means recognising oneself as subjects who are *entitled to claim rights*[356]. From this point of view, it will be observed how mobility can be used as a form of resistance through which to fight for the demand for a *"good life*[357]". In order to fully understand women's intimate labour, it is now necessary to look at how neo-liberalism has produced a new international division of labour and, above all, what this new dimension entails

2.3 Move or Die. Neoliberalistion of the body and migrants' intimate labor.

2.3.1 International division of labor and bio-capitalism: a genealogy

It is of fundamental importance to analyse the concept of the international division of labor in order to understand the roots of the commodification of migrant labor and thus the reasons behind the unequal distribution of labor that the global market generates, and of which capitalism and its evolution, is the cause. In 1979, Wallerstein wrote: *We have defined a world-system as one in which there is extensive division of labor. This division is not merely functional—that is, occupational—but geographical. That is to say, the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world-system. In part this is the consequence of ecological considerations, to be sure. But for the most part, it is a function of the social organization of work, one which magnifies and legitimizes the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labor of others, that is, to receive a larger*

[353] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013).
[354] Standing, G. (2014, 177).
[355] Ibid p. 275.
[356] Arendt, H., & Benedict, H. J. (2009).
[357] See Butler, J. (2012).

share of the surplus[358]. In order to theorize the unequal division of labor, in his 1974 work entitled *The Modern World-System*, Wallerstein introduced the concept of semi-periphery, adding it to the centre-periphery system, and describing it as a kind of compensation chamber that articulates and mediates the more brutal relationships of domination and dependency between core and periphery. As Mezzadra and Neilson point out, 1974 Wallerstein's work was of particularly relevant for introducing the concept of the system-world through which the author laid the groundwork for an innovative sociological perspective that also had the merit of renewing the basis from which Marxism arose. According to Wallerstein, the entire history of man can be read through the idea that each social system is metaphorically a world of its own, independent of others since it is self-sufficient in the supply of essential goods and thanks to its social division of labour. In this perspective hence, the archaic societies are nothing more than mini-systems, later incorporated by world-empires that, starting in the 16th century, gave way to the single world economy, capitalism, which has produced a complex network of relationships and interdependencies stretching across the entire planet[359]. Although this perspective shares with Marxism the centrality of the capitalist mode of production, the unity of analysis of the two theorists is different. Indeed, while Marx focused on the socio-economic dynamics within states, Wallerstein instead made a pioneering contribution to the analysis of the changing global geographies of capitalism. Such a difference has important implications at the theoretical as well as the political level: the history of class struggles at the national level, is in Wallerstein's eyes, a poor national solution to a problem that is actually global. Moreover, from a strictly micro-sociological point of view, the emphasis placed by Marxist theories on the objective conditions of the proletariat is widely criticised in Wallerstein who considered it more useful to analyse social and economic dynamics at the level of household aggregates[360] rather than on an individual basis. This point of view is important because it leads to a renewal of that Marxist reflection on wage labour, inviting us to also reflect on those informal economies such as domestic labor, useful to capitalism in its goal of cost minimisation and profit maximisation. Although Wallerstein's contributions are considered particularly important and influential, some scholars afferent in post-colonial studies in particular, such as Walter Mignolo and Anibal Quijano, have criticised the Wallerstein's tripartition of the world-system into core, semi-periphery and periphery as a rigid

[358] Wallerstein, I. (1974, 349) in Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 75).

[359] Ibid.

[360] The household aggregate is that structure in which workers are linked to other people in aggregate structures, many of which can be defined as households. These are people who in the long run pool multiple sources of income in order to survive collectively by pursuing different varieties of income such as income from a capital whose income, however, is provided not by labour but by property, transfers within the household aggregate such as loans or gifts, the small production of goods produced within the boundary of the aggregate but sold for money on a wider market, etc.

system which overemphasize (even from a historical point of view) the stability of the global geographies produced by the expansion of capitalism on a planetary dimension. In doing so, as Mignolo argued, "colonial difference'' is not sufficiently acknowledged by Wallerstein who rather *understand the modern world-system from the point of view of its own imaginary, but not from the angle of the conflictive imaginary arising with and from colonial difference.*[361] In attempting to build a genealogy of the international division of labour, Mezzadra and Neilson note that already in the classical age thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato and Xenophon, although not yet using the term "division of labour", had already identified some relevant elements – which were later taken up by the classical political economists – such as the implications of the gender division of labour, or how the specialisation of labour brought an increase in profits or still, how the growth of the city and barter between households led to a professional merchant class and the emergence of the institution of money[362]. In the 14th century, the writings of Ibn Khaldun already contained the first observations on how the division of labour, made possible by a larger market, led to cheaper products and higher productivity. Central to the evolution of the concept of the division of labour in the classics of traditional political economy was the interplay between national and international markets and the intuition that the division of labour is not only the extension of the market, but is itself a key factor in determining its expansion[363]. Although it is believed that it was Bernard Mandeville who first used the expression "division of labour", it was actually Petty, in the mid-1600s, who anticipated all the essential considerations useful for understanding what Adam Smith later intuited with respect to the connection between the size of markets and the division of labour. In *Political Arithmetic* (1676) William Petty, while not referring to the internationalisation of the division of labour, lays the foundations for the idea that will relate the division of labour to the rise of capitalism, the conquest of foreign markets and the gradual emergence of a global market for the commodity labour-force[364]. As Mezzadra and Neilson point out, in analysing the dominance of Holland's maritime trade over its neighbours, William Petty had intuited the link between the benefits of mastering the maritime trade and the technical division of labour. Indeed, in *Political Arithmetic* the author stated:

> *Those who predominate in Shipping and Fishing have more occasions than others to frequent all parts of the World, and to observe what is wanting or redundant every Where; and what each People can do, and what they desire; and consequently, to be the Factors and Carriers, for the*

[361] Mignolo, W. D. (2000, 57).
[362] Mezzadra, S., Neilson, B. (2013, 75).
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid. p. 76

whole World of Trade. Upon which ground they bring all Native Commodities to be Manufactured at home; and carry the same back.[365]

According to Petty, maritime hegemony on a global scale allowed for diversification in the construction of ships and basement, speeding up and making the transport of goods cheaper. With the ban on the import of cheap cotton from India – established by the Calico Act of 1721 – Petty argued the evidence that the mix of free trade and protectionism would become the rule once Britain had taken over from the Netherlands as the hegemonic power of maritime trade and more generally of the capitalist world system. Once again, there is no explicit reference to the international dimension of the division of labour, despite the initial awareness of the need for mediation between the global market and the emergence of capitalist social formations within delimited territories. This is not a distraction on Petty's part, but rather a vision of a world not yet conceived as "international". However, a turning point in the theorisation of the division of labour in the capitalist system is offered by Adam Smith during the second half of 18th century[366]. As a matter of fact, with Smith the division of labour became a theoretical tool for deciphering not only productivity within industries, but above all a useful and strategic means of enforcing capitalist discipline. In his 1776 fundamental work *The Wealth of Nations*, the British economist argued that the division of labour is one of the first stages of a country's economic development because it would allow for faster and thus optimised production times and consequently productivity itself. His deduction would derive from the idle times (and thus the slowing down of production) that would be created if the same worker had to perform several tasks. If, for example, a production process consists of two stages: turning screws and tightening bolts, the worker will create two downtimes in that process: the first (t1), in which after turning the screws, he will have to move to the bench where the bolts are to be tightened; the second (t2) involves returning to the initial position after tightening the bolts, to start the cycle again. This sum of delays (t1 + t2) doubles if there are two workers and even more if the work areas are unique for all workers as it would cause queues. According to Smith, this lost time could be saved through specialisation of work, not only because the movement of workers would no longer be necessary, but because by specialising on a single task, each worker would become faster in performing it. Specialisation would thus create greater productivity both for the individual and – by extension – for the entire production.

However, it is in Marx's writings that one can trace the first uses of the expression "international division of labour" in close relation to his analysis of the global market. According to Marx, the advent of the machinery in manufacturing played a key role in the internationalisation of the

[365] Petty, W. (1888) in Mezzadra, S., Neilson, B. (2013, 77)
[366] Ibid.

market[367]. As Marx himself wrote in *The poverty of Philosophy* (1847), *Before the invention of machines, the industry of a country was mainly based on raw materials*[368]. However, with the invention of machines, *the spinner can live in England while the weaver dwells in India*[369]. Industry thus distanced itself from the state and became dependent on the world market and international trade. In the decades that followed, the controversy over the international division of labour and its implications for the centre-periphery separation were translated into discourses on development, underdevelopment, unequal exchange and dependency. Within the current debate about the processes of division – and as I shall now observe, the multiplication of labour – finance has played a particularly prominent role. In *The violence of financial capitalism*, Christian Marazzi has persuasively discussed the pervasiveness of financial economy in it is ability to spread "across the entire economic cycle, co-existing with it, so to speak, from start to finish[370]". Marazzi in particular, referring to the widespread use of credit cards in shops or the increasing dependence of large industries on credit mechanism, states that *finance has become "cosubstantial" to the very production of goods and services*[371]. However, this does not imply that the production of goods and services is in decline. On the contrary, As Marazzi points, it appears to be on the rise. Rather, the new element would lie in the role of finance in articulating and directing this production and the very division of labour – which is necessary for it – in ways that are somewhat discontinuous from the accumulation and valorisation processes that had characterised industrial capitalism at its peak. According to Marazzi, this change is to be identified in the turning to the financial market of companies that were *no longer able to "suck" surplus-value from living working labor.*[372] The results, as Mezzadra and Neilson highlight, are widely known: the reduction in the cost of labor, automatization and robotization of entire labor processes, the precarization of work, and diversification of consumption models and the delocalization in countries with low wages[373]". The relocation of production processes has, more than other aspects, dominated the discussion on the international division of labour. Indeed, among the main issues discussed regarding the transitions of capitalism under the pressures of an increasingly pervasive finance, the notion of a *new international division of labour* emerged. As pointed out by Mezzadra and Neilson, the arguments on a new international division of labor may be seen in many ways as a continuation of the dependency theory as it postulates that the expansion of the export-oriented manufacturing in Developing Countries (DCs) will keep them more dependent

[367] See Marx, K. (2008)
[368] Ibid. p.152
[369] Ibid.
[370] Marazzi, C. (2010, 28).
[371] Ibid. p.29
[372] Ibid. p.31
[373] See Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 82).

on the developed ones, thus re-echoing the importance of strong commitment to an analysis that works through core-periphery binaries. Nevertheless, what is worth highlighting about the new international division of the labor-market, is that differently from classical economics – which tended to focus on the specialization of workers' tasks within and between companies –, the new international division of labor suggest that the most important contemporary trend is the division and the distribution of different processes in the production of goods within a business network. According to Mezzadra and Neilson, however, what the approach to the new international division of labor is missing, it is its being primarily a theory of capital mobility rather than a theory that accounts for the how divisions, processes, mobilities and labor struggles relate to transitions of capitalism under pervasive financialization and the deep heterogeneity of the global space[374]. More specifically, building on Robin Cohen, who criticizes the new international division of labor approaches because of their focus on *the migration of capital to measure changes in the division of labor*[375], Mezzadra and Neilson argues that a more appropriate approach would be to place labor mobility at the core of the debate[376], since the measurements of the movement of labor would better indicate changes in the division of labor.[377] As it has been partly anticipated in the previous chapter and as will emerge in the following pages, the issues of mobility within the international division of labor take on a leading role by adopting a gender approach, and more particularly within domestic labor. Before moving to this topic however, it is particularly important analyses another aspect related to the new international division of labor, that of its *multiplication*. After all, the division of labor has always been aimed at the multiplication of productivity, wealth, scale and, today more than ever, mobility. Going back to Smith, already in the second half of the 1700s, he wrote that *It is the great multiplication of the productions of all the different arts, in consequence of the division of labor, which occasions, in a well-governed society, that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people.*[378]

In his reflection on machinery and on large-scale industry, Marx referred to an "absolute contradiction" between the tendency of the industry itself to continuously and masterfully transforming *not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labor process*[379]''. Interestingly, this contradiction was recognized and managed by capital after the general crisis of the 1970s. While financialisation, as Marazzi had

[374] Ibid. p. 84
[375] Cfr. Cohen, S. (1987, 230)
[376] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 84)
[377] Ibid.
[378] Smith, A. (1976, 22).
[379] Marx, K. 1(977, 610).

intuited, opened up new continents for the valorisation of capital in the face of the limits set by the working class within the factories, capital itself managed to go beyond these walls, externalising labor both socially and geographically. Through these processes, labor multiplied, according to Mezzadra and Neilson, in three different ways: first of all, work has *intensified* in the sense that it has developed a tendency to absorb the entire life of the subjects, becoming even more permeating than ever before. Secondly, it has *diversified*, moving beyond the simple division of labor and toward *the development of a constantly expanding and more comprehensive system of different kinds of labor, different kinds of production, to which a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs corresponds*[380]'. Moreover, labor was heterogenized in terms of the legal and social regimes of its organization. To understand, however, how labor has changed and intensified with the crisis of the 1970s, it is useful to compare contemporary labor regimes with those that Marx described in *The Capital*. Marx distinguished three main factors affecting the creation of surplus value: i) the extension of the working day, ii) the rate of productivity and iii) the intensity of labor. Although these three factors can vary at the same time, there is a limit to the extension of the working days while increasing its intensity. The limit is represented by the workers' bodies since, as Marx points out, they will be able to work only for a limited time span, beyond which they will begin to exhibit inefficiencies resulting from exhaustion, illness or the inability of labor to reproduce itself on a daily basis. Against this limit, upon which capital exerts steady pressure, a number of interventions are applied on the division of labor in order to make it productive (think trivially of the introduction of shift work). Just as capital is driven to ensure higher levels of productivity and profit, labor not only assumes higher levels of risk, but is also subjected to higher productivity demands, greater hourly flexibility and lower wages. An increasing number of *precarious* workers are therefore unable to maintain a household, making the ability of work to reproduce uncertain. Work becomes increasingly divided between those who maintain the household and those for whom subsistence is an unknown. In both cases there is multiplication of labour that is either realised in the management the financialised household or juggling the different repositionings of the precarious labour market. The "biopolitical mobilisation of life", resulting from the above-mentioned combination of the contemporary trends – intensification, diversification and heterogenisation of labour –as Mezzadra and Neilson argue, provides a key for interpreting the changes in the composition of living-labor in contemporary capitalism, regardless of the divisions between North and South world[381]. Indeed, given the unprecedented characteristics that capitalism has assumed over time, it is no longer possible to analyse it as theorists of the past did. Whereas, for example, previously it was possible to identify a

[380] Marx, K. (1973, 409).
[381]Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013)

single hegemonic production cycle within capitalism (such as automobile or textile production), and map its spatial distribution, today such an operation is much more difficult since one of the most evident characteristics of contemporary capitalism is its *flexibility*, which manifests itself in the extreme variety of consumer goods, in the unprecedented consumerist modalities of these goods, and in the high degree of adaptability required of workers.. In *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870*, Beverly Silver argued that there are four emerging industries that could be candidates to take over the role of the automobile in the hegemony of the product cycle: the semiconduct or industry, producer services, the education industry, and personal services[382]. Each of these sectors would build its own economic space on a global scale with peculiar geographical imbalances and hierarchies; there is no coincidence of spatial organisation between the four sectors[383]. However, it is important to emphasise how a specific combination between them contributes to characterise, in very different proportions, contemporary capitalism across heterogeneous geographical scales and far beyond any division between centre and periphery. As Mezzadra and Neilson note, echoing Kaushik Sunder Rajan, if to these four sectors we add another one – that of bio-capital – the hierarchisation and spatial division that contemporary capitalism produces becomes even more evident and easily discernible[384]. For the theorists of bio-capitalism (or cognitive capitalism), the advent of neoliberalism marked the demise of industrial labour, the expansion of service sector labour, and, at the same time, the increasing centrality assumed by *immaterial* labour, or, a labour-force that becomes monetisable and disposable not by virtue of its physical qualities, but of its human, affective, intellectual, creative and communicative capacities[385]. According to Hardt and Negri[386], who brought a feminist vision within the reflections on the transformations of the economic and productive system, immaterial labour can be distinguished into three categories[387]: the first includes the sectors of industrial production that have been digitalised [...]. The second kind of immaterial labour is that applied to analytical and symbolic activities [...]. Finally, the third type of immaterial labour, particularly relevant here, is that of the production and manipulation of affects involved in some form of human contract, be it virtual or real, a labour performed in the dimension of corporeity[388]. Domestic and care work, given its capacity to produce and reproduce relationships, affectivity, as well as social life itself, has become emblematic of the biopolitical nature within contemporary work. Such a scenario gives rise to new political subjectivities that are no longer

[382] Silver, B. J. (2003).
[383] Ibid.
[384] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 86).
[385] Casalini, B. (2013).
[386] Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2001).
[387] Ibid. p. 293
[388] Ibid. On cognitive capitalism and feminisation of labour see also Morini, C. (2007).

represented by the working class, but by *the multitude of a new, mobile and migrant proletariat, made up of all those whose labour is exploited by capital.*"[389]

2.3.2 Intimate labor in the global economy. The Ethics of care.

From the late 1980s to the present day, studies on the ethics of care have taken on and continue to take on a fundamental role in investigating the unequal distribution of intimate labour and, more generally, the perpetuation of the uneven distribution of care between men and women in contemporary societies. What is new, as seen in chapter one, is that today (paid, or almost paid) intimate labour is carried out predominantly by millions of women on the move. The importance of analysing intimate labour in the feminisation processes of migration also lies, as Butler stated, in the fact that within it, all historical forms of discrimination are simultaneously maintained and nurtured[390]. The ethics of care, offers a *powerful analytical lens*[391] by which we can better understand the forms of precarization in women's migration processes. As will now be shown, since the 1980s, there has been a shift within feminist studies on the ethics of care, which has increasingly shifted the focus from "care" as an intrinsic characteristic of the human being, to care as a social and political practice. This shift, besides marking the split between the first and the second generation of studies on the ethics of care, is paramount considering that the distribution of care work is now an integral part of a neoliberal political and economic system that promotes the *feminisation of survival circuits*[392]. In different areas of the globe, including Tunisia, the struggles of women's emancipation and the entry of women into productive work have been extremely important processes of social renewal. However, irrespective of the achievement of a status of legal equality between the two sexes, care work, and especially domestic work, continues to encumber women, both because of a certain ambiguity with regard to motherhood and because of the assumption of care as a female, private, affair. One of the most relevant writings on the subject is certainly *In a Different Voice* published in 1982 by Carol Gilligan and whose merit was to raise a strong interest in the ethics of care not merely within her disciplinary field, moral philosophy, but also in very diverse disciplinary frameworks[393] such as sociology, developmental psychology, bioethics, nursing, philosophy of law and political philosophy. Gilligan's aim was to deconstruct the hegemony of male-centred discourses on the development of morality, through which several scholars also attempted to provide answers about female behaviour. Until then, research on the development of morality in individuals had considered

[389] Casalini, B. (2009, 48-9), my translation
[390] Butler, J. (2004). J. BUTLER, *Precarious life. The powers of mourning and violence*, Verso4
[391] Casalini, B. (2014).
[392] Cfr. Sassen, S. (2000).
[393] Casalini, B. (2014).

female conduct as a deviation from male normativity. This type of study was promoted by scholars such as Piaget and Kohlberg, who, following Freud, had attributed to women a lesser sense of justice caused by their inability to detach themselves from the sentimentalism that characterises them. Both Piaget, in the 1920s, and later Kohlberg in the 1950s, had conducted studies on the development of morality in human beings starting from the behavioural analysis of children because it is in childhood that one begins to develop that sense of morality through which one learns to discern right from wrong. Both scholars had come to the conclusion that the development of morality in the female sex stopped at a level where morality remained linked to interpersonal relationships, and that the kindness that would characterise them should be understood as a devotion to others rather than as a full understanding of the rights and universal principles[394]. A tendency that in the Kohlbergian female model found full support in the idea that kindness was functional to a woman's very life, since her existence was mainly within the domestic sphere. Gilligan strongly criticises these theories on the grounds that, having taken only male children as the object of study, the results would be excessively impartial. Through Heinz's dilemma (already used by Kohlberg), Gilligan shows that there exist not one but two models of moral judgement, depending on the children's gender and their specific experiences of socialisation and which would better explain what had hitherto been described as female inferiority[395]. Following the theory of moral development that was outlined in 1978 by Nancy Chodorow in *The reproduction of Mothering*, Gilligan attempts to analyse moral development by analysing the different relationships that children establish with their mothers. According to her, since girls do not need to detach themselves from their mothers early on, they are able to develop a greater sensitivity to relationships; boys, on the other hand, having to cope with such detachment, would develop a greater sense of autonomy and separation; a behaviour that, according to Gilligan, would lead them to develop an ethic of rights rather than an ethic of care, which therefore remains, for Gilligan, typical of girls. Jake and Amy, the two preadolescents subjected to the study, are asked how they would behave when faced with the posed dilemma: a man named Heinz, goes to the pharmacy to urgently buy a medicine for his severely ill wife but does not have enough money to buy it and the pharmacist is unwilling either to cuff it for him or to come to any agreement with him. What could be the possible solution for Heinz? Should he steal the medicine or not? Gilligan shows that the divergent responses given by the two children would reflect their different conceptions of the self; indeed, while Jake chooses robbery to avoid confrontation, thus relying on the law to mediate the conflict, Amy, on the contrary, substitutes the-self defined through separation (between a hierarchy of values and power, that of Jake) with the-self characterised by human contact and relationship. Amy

[394] Ibid. p.4
[395] Gilligan, C. (1987).

enacts a narrative process, for her it is impossible that there is no other way to persuade the pharmacist or to leverage the help that Heinz can find in the network of relationships that constitutes his existence. The contrast Gilligan poses between the ethics of care and the ethics of rights and justice, proposing the former as "feminine morality" and the second as "male morality", has exposed her to numerous criticisms. However, it must be considered – as Selma Sevenhuijsen[396] notes – that although liberal feminist movements had already been denouncing for decades how the supposed naturalness of women's care hindered their full personal fulfilment, when Carol Gilligan wrote *In a Different Voice,* studies on care were still insubstantial in relation to their political scope. Gilligan however makes it clear that there is no possible opposition between care and justice in a subject who has reached moral maturity and understood *the connection between integrity and responsible care.*[397] For the author, ethics of care and ethics of rights appear complementary. In fact, while the ethics of rights is founded on the concepts of equality, fairness of judgement and is therefore an expression of the recognition of equal respect between everyone, the ethics of care is founded on and intertwined with the ethics of responsibility from which the concepts of distributive justice and the recognition of the needs of the other derive; from this recognition arise the feelings of compassion and care. In 1995, Gilligan felt the need to answer one of the questions she was most frequently asked, namely whether the ethics of care should be understood as a feminine ethics. The scholar responded by distinguishing between a *feminine ethic of care* and a *feminist ethic of care*[398] where the former indicates a variant of the traditional theme that naturalises women's propensity towards attitudes of care towards others, while the latter expresses a critical point of view both towards a specific conception of male autonomy and towards the idea of self-sacrifice as a female disposition. On the other hand, the scholar highlights an important paradox regarding the sacrifice of the self in women's caring activities: renouncing the relationship with the public in order to provide wellness in the private sphere would produce a malaise in them caused by the loss of their autonomy. Although Gilligan presents a perhaps opaque viewpoint between care and femininity that characterises her early studies, the specificity of her contribution was to firmly establish the importance of the nexus between politics and psychology in contemporary societies. As Maria Pia Paternò[399]observes, this insight is not entirely new. Already in the 1950s, in *Eros and Civilisation,* Marcuse had attempted a political study of Western society through the use of psychological categories[400]. Gilligan's peculiarity however, was that of using psychological

[396] Sevenhuijsen, S. (1991).
[397] Gilligan, C. (1995/1987, 160).
[398] Ibid.
[399] Paterno, M. P. (2014).
[400] Ibid. p. 108

categories and politics by focusing on relational dynamics[401]. A new perspective compared to the one put forward by Gilligan, and worthy of attention, is certainly that of Seyla Benhabib[402] whose contribution was to combine universalist and particularist perspectives, i.e. ethics of rights and ethics of care. Indeed, in liberal thought, the disjunction between justice and the good life created a dichotomy that placed these issues in two different domains: that of generality and equality and that of the particular and the private. Benhabib declines this dichotomy in terms of a tension between the position of the *generalized Other* Benhabib and the *concrete Other*, through which it would be possible to delineate an ethics able to fuse together the two points of view, conceived alternatively throughout the tradition of Western thought[403]. The position of the generalised other – observes Benhabib – has historically been applied to questions of justice and therefore insists on the equality of all men; here the "me-you" relationship is governed by the norms of reciprocity and equality of duties and rights, which is why the two parties involved in the relationship hold the same expectations. The concrete Other, on the other hand, is linked to affectivity and thus the me-you relationship is governed by norms of equity and complementary reciprocity[404] whereby each member in the relationship expects to be recognised as a concrete human being, endowed with specific needs; thus, in this type of relationship, the moral categories at play will be those of solidarity, care and love. Banhabib's proposal therefore does not consist of a moral or political theory consistent with the point of view of the concrete other, but a universalist moral theory that defines the moral point of view in the light of the reversibility of perspectives and an expanded mentality that takes the perspective of pluralism seriously: a moral theory, in short, that allows us to recognise generalised Other's dignity through the recognition of the concrete Other' s moral identity[405]. Among the most severe critiques of the feminine ethics of care is certainly that put forward by Susan Okin at the end of the 1980s. While distancing herself from difference feminism, Okin denounces the lack of reflection on family and care work within contemporary theories of justice.[406] According to Okin, a fair society for both men and women can only be achieved through a fair division of the work of care and social reproduction, which until now has been borne by women[407].

The role of this scholar was fundamental to that shift mentioned at the beginning of this section, which led to analysing the theme of cure from the psychological and moral level to the political and sociological one, and which was most widely reflected in authors such as Joan Tronto and Eva Kittay.

[401] Ibid.
[402] Benhabib, S. (2014).
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid., 750.
[406] Cfr. Okin, S. M. (1987).
[407] Ibid.

As Olena Hankisvky pointed out, J. Tronto paved the way for second-generation of the ethics of care[408] at a time when the production of such studies seemed to have become bogged down in the justice/care opposition[409]. Tronto more specifically warned scholars against theorising an ethics of care that aims to be representative of the female gender as it would risk confirming the widespread stereotypes of women's caring responsibilities, relegating the dimension of care to the private sphere. In addition, according to Tronto, the research carried out up to that point had nevertheless remained squeezed into an ahistorical and unchanging dimension of the female condition, failing to even managing to take into account the differences in class and ethnicity of the women themselves. Care, according to Tronto, must instead propose itself as *a basis for the political achievement of a good society*[410].The key point of her studies consists of a number of strategic moves. These and other fundamental reflections, will be expounded within two important writings that have spanned a two decades of research, of which the most recent and most elaborated work is *Caring democracy* (2013). To affirm the importance of caring within public discourse, Tronto first notes the need to depart from the historical terrain, approaching rather to the political one; second, she incorporates into her discourses on care those of justice, thus affirming the complementarity of the two spheres that had long been denied; third, she offers a definition of care as a social practice, leading finally to consider those fundamental moral dilemmas that can arise in a relationship between those who provide care (*care giver)* and those who receive it (*care receiver*). A relevant aspect of Tronto's thought concerns the analysis on the attribution of care functions to women. The response, elaborated in *Moral Boundaries,* moves substantially away from theories that had argued for a natural inclination of women toward such a labor, and argues rather that this practice was the outcome of a specific political move aimed at eliminating women from the public space[411]. The recognition of the non-natural character of such a process represents in Tronto's perspective the first fundamental step enabling us to take the ethics of care beyond the realm of the private and to legitimize its inclusion in public discourse[412].

Perhaps even more interestingly, Tronto suggests that different perspectives should be adopted when analysing the subjects' role involved in the care relationship. Indeed, with the aim of focusing on issues concerning care and individual rights in asymmetrical care relationships, she points the importance to clearly identify and distinguish the sphere of needs for both care givers and care receivers. Nonetheless, while focusing on care receivers, Tronto warns about the impossibility of

[408] Hankisvky, O. (2004, 21).
[409] Casalini, B. (2012, 226).
[410] Tronto J. C. (1998, 9).
[411] See Casalini, B. (2012).
[412] Ibid.

totally disengaging from the dynamism that characterizes the give-and-take of this relationship, By this standpoint thus, in Tronto's interpretation, care should be understood more as a complex practice comprising different stages and moral dilemmas that concern competence, responsibility and attention to the other, rather than as a mere affective expression[413], care thus is *a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.*[414] Care, in Tronto's formulation, breaks away from the dyadic formulation between mother and child that had characterized early theories on the ethics of care, taking on different meanings and forms depending on the cultural context in which it is embedded. Taking a further, significant step forward, in *Moral Boundaries* Tronto identifies four different dimensions of caring[415]: the *caring about* which implies the recognition of a need and requires a capacity for *attention;* it involves *assuming the position of another person or group to recognize the need*[416] hence, caring about is culturally and individually shaped[417]. The next step of care dimension is represented by the *taking care of* which involves taking *responsibility* with respect to the need to be met and determining the strategies to respond to it; the *care giving*, is the dimension of the direct fulfilment of the need for care that requires specific skill; lastly, the dimension in which those who needed care can *benefit* from it through the *care receiving*. While in the first two stages, "caring about" and "taking care of", those who decide what needs and what strategies are to be meet are represented by individuals from the dominant classes, those who are involved instead in the other two dimensions, *giving and receiving care,* are usually represented by ethnic minorities or marginal social classes[418].

More recently, Tronto further expands her analysis towards an ethics of caring that is based on the sharing of common goals and by appealing to the qualities of pluralism, trust and solidarity. In *Caring Democracy*, she introduces the fifth dimension of care that she defines "caring with[419]". This is a further move through which Tronto, having succeeded in establishing a link between care and politics, creates a further fundamental intertwin between politics and democracy. As she, herself argues *what*

[413] Tronto J. C (1998) in Casalini, B. (2012, 127).
[414] Ibid. p.103
[415] Ibid. p. 106
[416] Ibid.
[417] Tronto indeed does not merely refer to the private sphere of the household, hence the individual dimension of recognising fragile peoples' need. Rather, her thinking is broader, and refers to collective and social forms of responsibility. The example she cites in her writing is that of AIDS patients, the recognition and the responses given to their possible difficulties which may consist of a number of service-providing agencies.
[418] See on this topic, Parreñas, R. S. (2002).
[419] Tronto, J. C. (2013).

it means to be a citizen in a democracy is to care for citizens and to care for democracy itself. I call this practice "caring with"[420]. Indeed, if politics ultimately has to do with to do with the way in which care responsibilities are allocated, a discourse around this activity, must necessarily find a place in democratic political theory. The content of a democratic policy should focus on the question of the distribution of care responsibilities and should be determined through a process that ensures the widest possible opportunity for citizens to participate in the definition of their allocation. As anticipated, another outstanding contribution on the study of the ethics of care in its political and social dimension is offered to us by Eva Feder Kittay who, building on the theme of dependency, criticises the liberal conception of equality. A reflection set out in one of her most important and well-known studies *Love's Labor. Essay on Women, Equality and Dependency* that stems not only from her interest in the subject but from the personal experience of her daughter Sesha's severe mental disability[421]. More specifically, Kittay develops her theory of dependency – which, it should be noted, concerns not only those who need care, but also those who provide it – building on a critique of political philosophical thought, central in John Rawl's theories, wherein the society is conceived as "a cooperative venture for mutual advantage[422]". According to Kittay, the picture of society as a cooperative venture hides the reality of inequal relation of dependency. As she affirms:

> *The conception of society seen as an association of equals masks or conceals unjust dependencies, related to childhood, elderly age, illness and disability. As long as we are dependent, we are not in a position, in terms of equality, to compete for the goods of social cooperation. And those who take care of the dependent ones, who have to set aside their own interests to take care of those who are totally at their mercy, enter this competition disadvantaged. From the perspective of the critique of dependency, it is evident that women have not achieved equality with men - because how could they ever abandon their children, their elderly parents, husband or sick friend on this side of the watershed*[423]*?*

Hence, like Tronto, Kittay points to the strong asymmetry of power that characterises care relationships both in terms of social equality for the people who build the dependency relationship, and in terms of gender equality. By this stan point, Kittay argues that a social order that fails to recognise the relevance of dependency work is an unjust social order[424]. All individuals indeed

[420] Ibid. p. 9
[421] Kittay, E.F. (1999, 150).
[422] Moon, J. D. (2014).
[423] Kittay E.F. (1999, 180).
[424] Ibid.

experience in life some phase of dependency of greater or lesser length, hence the right to receive and provide care should be part of the basket of primary social goods. This shows, according to the scholar, the failure of the liberal theories to come to terms with human vulnerability, relegating it to the sphere of private morality. While during the 20th century, the state was still promoting forms of welfarism that in the specific case of care had allowed certain dimensions of dependence to be transferred outside the family, with the advent of neo-liberalism, care and inter-dependent relations have undergone exponential "privatisation". Privatisation in its double meaning: economically and humanly. Particularly interesting in this regard is the study offered by Robinson on the global dimension of the ethics of care, and the aforementioned role of development in spreading the "new governmental reason". In *The Ethics of Care: A Feminist Approach to Human Security,* Robins analyses the link between care and the development paradigm known as "human security" whereby the issues of responsibility for the security of a population have shifted from the nation-state to an individual dimension[425]. A shift that, as observed by many, represents a political move which does nothing more than leverage the concept of resilience[426] discussed in the previous pages and which, indeed, does nothing but increase the vulnerability of the individuals, particularly women, involved in intimate work and more generally in global bio-labour.

2.3.3 Global bio-labour. Some reflections on immateriality

As mentioned in the first chapter, in the strand of studies on global care chains, the type of work performed by women workers has been differently defined in order to highlight its peculiar scope, its being "affective", "reproductive", "emotional", "intimate" etc. Nevertheless, I would rather dwell on the dimension of immateriality often referred to in the literature when speaking of bio-capitalism. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri argue that "affective" work, which they place in a broader category of *abstract work* is "immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion". However, I believe that theorising bio-capitalism or cognitive bio-capitalism as characterised by immaterial labour makes us lose sight of the scope of neoliberalism and bio-capitalism itself. I rather agree with Cooper and

[425] The concept of human security constituted a major shift in international political agendas on development in the 1990s, in full harmony with the neo-liberal paradigm. It was promoted and outlined by the UNDP's Human Development Report (1994), with the aim of providing useful tools to solve security problems that, as we have seen in the first chapter, with the new and important historical and geopolitical global changes, were no longer local problems, but, indeed, global ones. In such an arrangement, it is no longer the state that is the sole guarantor of security, but it is the population itself that is called upon, through a process of self-responsibility and self-investment, to ensure their own development.

[426] Robinson, F. (2011, 7); For an exploration of human security, see also Duffield, M. (2007) and Marcenò, S. (2018).

Waldby when they ask why analyses that describe the current economy as immaterial continue to proliferate, when it is bodies, whole or in pieces, that are producing value. First of all, if we look at intimate labor, it is not possible to separate affectivity from the body that produces it, just as it is not possible to separate the beneficiary from his or her healed/ cared body. Still, the dimension of immateriality bends in the face of commodification, emptying it of its affective significance and making it almost a hybrid consumer good. Neo-liberalism, with its entrepreneurial self-discipline aimed at self-management and self-promotion[427], has generated a commodification of the body which is unprecedented in human history. The body, particularly the female one, is the centre of production whence everything departs and everything returns. It seems interesting, then, for the purposes of a better understanding of bio-capitalism, to overturn Hardt and Negri's position by arguing that affective labour, and bio-labor in general, is, above all, material despite the intrinsic nature of the produced goods. Indeed, in order to be understood in its biopolitical scope, bio-labor requires calling into question the bodies' materiality and their (re)productive potential in the making of the human being, or within their contemporary assembly chains. By this standpoint, all the components of the human body, both those pertaining to the intellectual and affective sphere, as well as the biological and reproductive ones, constitute the "building blocks" for the fabrication of the various components of a body. These aspects emerge in a disruptive way if, as Waldby and Cooper have done, we look at the new forms of bio-work generated by that Foucauldian knowledge-power nexus, in the context of an evolution of scientific knowledge that is characterising the 21st century.[428] Surrogacy, pharmaceutical experimentation, the sale of oocytes or other genetic material are just some of the newest forms of bio-labour spreading like wildfire in the Global South, for the benefit of the Global North. I find it worth noting, in this vein, that the market for oocytes traces precisely the geographies of global care chains: less wealthy North-European or North American women who, in the reproductive markets of the South-East, buy uteruses and oocytes of women who are precarious, without fixed incomes or completely unemployed[429]. A further form of hierarchization, according to Waldby and Cooper, which strengthens not only gender and class discriminations, but also highlights ethnic ones, differentiating between bodies that deserve to be reproduced – such as those of white Eastern European women whose oocytes are the most in demand – and those that serve as a mere reservoir of biological material, capable of ensuring the survival of the former to the detriment of the latter[430]. As should now be clear, it is a process of neo-liberalisation of the body that, far from remaining on the immaterial sphere, invests the body in its full extent. For this reason, when referring

[427] Cooper, M., & Waldby, C. (2014).
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid. p.63
[430] Ibid.

to care and domestic work, I opt for the formulation "intimate work". Intimacy, in my view, encompasses both dimensions of life, the material one of the body and the immaterial one of the soul. They are both places of (re)production, and, as I will now observe, of exploitation.

2.4. Ancient burdens in modern times. Female labor and contemporary forms of slavery.

One of the main issues concerning women's bio-labour is that it easily opens itself up to forms of labour exploitation. Whether it is in the case of jobs that are largely regulated at a legal level, as in the case of domestic work, or in the case of entirely emerging forms of income that are currently not comprehensively regulated by international law, such as organ sales or surrogacy, exploitation takes unprecedented forms that are based on both consent and coercion and which perfectly fit in the so-called *new forms of slavery.* As Balibar (2001) pointed out, slavery cannot be certainly understood as one of the inventions of capitalism since it has existed for many centuries before its spread[431]. Nevertheless, neo-liberalism, by massively employing the old forms of slavery, has created new ones, generalising and refining them *within the framework of a new world economy of forced labour that has been as essential to it as the market or the industrial revolution*[432]. As Thomas Casadei notes, what multinationals do today is not very different from what European empires did in the 19th century, exploiting the natural resources of other countries and using their cheap labour, but without the need to conquer entire countries this time; Maximum result, minimum effort.

If through a critical analysis of neo-liberalism an attempt has been made to show how processes of dehumanisation of surplus populations are created and justified, I now want to make a further interpretative effort based on the concept of vulnerability outlined above, in order to show its "diagnostic" function for understanding modern forms of slavery of the migrant labour force[433]. It may seem corny, but as seen in the first chapter, classical forms of slavery – at least during the Atlantic Trade – were based on ethnic and religious differences; vulnerability was merely the consequence of being a slave, not the cause. Analysing contemporary forms of slavery through a comparative approach will help us understand the forms of labour exploitation of sub-Saharan women in the Tunisian context. The term "new forms of slavery"[434] refers to the changing characteristics of slaves in the new global economy. A particularly interesting aspect concerns how the current conditions of exploitation have partially decoupled from racial issues. In fact, as Kevin Bales notes, today the question to ask about the "quality" of a slave is no longer about the colour of their skin, rather *are*

[431] See also Balibar, E. (2011) and Casadei, T. (2007).
[432] Balibar, E. (2001).
[433] Casadei, T. (2017).
[434] Ibid.

they vulnerable enough to be enslaved?[435]. For illustrative purposes, table 2 shows the main differences that distinguish the ancient and new forms of slavery I will now discuss.[436]

Ancient Forms of Slavery	**Contemporary Forms of Slavery**
Legal ownership asserted	Legal ownership avoided
High purchase cost	Very low purchase cost
Low profits	Very high profit
Shortage of potential slaves	Surplus of potential slaves
Long-term relationship	Short-term relationship
Slaves maintained	Slaves disposable
Relevance of Ethnic differences	Irrelevance of Ethnic differences

Tab. 2. Main features of ancient and contemporary forms of slavery
Source: Bales,K (2000)

One of the main features distinguishing old and new forms of slavery is that today, for the first time in human history there is an absolute glut of potential slaves. According to ILO's estimate, the number of slaves has increased enormously from 10 to 15 million during the period of the Transatlantic trade from Africa, to about 50 million today, which means about 1 person in every 150 is leaving in a slavery or servile labor condition[437]. Among these, the majority are women (about 71% of the total); In the past, being an institution, slavery was based on legal ownership which, through property contracts, enshrined the right of ownership of one individual over another. Today, we clearly find no deeds of ownership and yet control continues to be maintained with far greater violence than before. Chains are no longer needed, it is enough to seize documents, offer fake work contracts or find oneself in an irregular condition in a foreign country, to become easy prey to exploitation. s is often found in forms of labour exploitation in the domestic sector, which is an ideal place to hide such phenomena, coercion often results in physical violence. Many domestic workers suffer sexual abuse, torture, blackmail. This does not mean that slavery in the past did not involve brutal forms of exploitation. However, the purchase of slaves in the past was considered an important economic investment, so there was all interest in keeping them alive. As noted above, the racial differentiation that characterised historical and legal forms of slavery has today lost its centrality, giving way to vulnerability: victims are often prisoners of poverty, or irregular migrants trapped in conditions extremely difficult social and economic conditions. It is possible then, echoing Simonazzi and

[435] Bales, K. (2000, 17) 7
[436] Ibid. p.15
[437] ILO (2022). Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: forced labour and forced marriage. Accessible through: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/--ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf

Casadei, to argue that while ancient forms of slavery were based on *natural* motivations, the modern ones are instead based on *social* reasons[438] that, as I shall see in the case of Tunisia however, remain intertwined with the rhetoric of race. In the past, slavery did not represent an offence against common morality and indeed found legitimacy in the inferiority of those who were considered "ignoble", "ignorant", compared to the superiority of free men, those endowed with logos and human virtues[439]. Human beings have been enslaved for millennia, in ancient Egypt, in ancient Greece ancient Greece and under the Roman Empire it was precisely part of the social system. Subsequently, during the Middle Ages, slavery began to take on a plurality of forms as slaves, serfs, settlers that could overlap. As Finley argued, slaves were considered *things*, mere tools of labour[440]. The status of slaves began to change in the 1700s, assuming more and more racial inferiority in which skin colour became the discriminatory element. The United States became the great promoter of such a transformation. As a matter of fact, the slave trade from Africa, marked a shift in the conceptualisation of slavery turning slaves into *commodities* that could then be legally traded, lent, sold. Returning to the concept of "property" raised earlier, it must be said that in the past, the established legal ownership of one human being over another, was convenient: the purchase of slaves was such a costly expense that there was the risk onerous that there was the risk of having them stolen, or if they ever tried to escape, it was worth to hunt them down and bring them back. By virtue of this, the investment had to be safeguarded through precise legal acts; moreover, mating between them was favoured because it was cheaper to breed them than to buy them as adults. This implied that the ownership relationship, enshrined long lasting working relationships, sometimes a lifetime, and was passed down from generation to generation. Today the value of slaves, and the relationship master/slaves, has changed profoundly. The new slaves' cost is so low that there is no reason to care for them, when they are no longer needed, when their economic output is no longer productive, simply replace them with new labour-force. This means that modern forms of slavery involve short-term, often short term "contracts". In contemporary slavery then, the slave becomes a *consumer-item*[441], no longer a capital-intensive asset. capital. Reflecting modern economic practice, slavery has moved from forms culturally determined to standardised and globalised forms. Hence, if the legal abolition of slavery did not coincide with the elimination of this phenomenon tout court, one should ask which factors continue to favour and justify it within this troubling invisibility. For this reason, it is important to make an effort that leads to think about slavery in a global way. As Casadei observes, taking up the French historian Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, it is crucial to question not slavery as a phenomenon but the slave, the human being

[438] Simonazzi, M., & Casadei, T. (2018)
[439] Ibid. p.149
[440] Finley, M. (1979).
[441] Bales, K. (2000, 33)

reduced to slavery[442]. According to Grenouilleau[443], defining who is a slave would allow to disengage from those overly vague and broad approaches that lead to include in the definition of slavery any form of exploitation or dependency. Thus, according to the historian, the slave is an object of possession of a master and at the same time, a subject 'Other': an individual emptied of his own human dimension and transformed into something other than himself. The slave then becomes an outcast who encloses within himself the contradiction between "object" and "person[444]". According to the in-depth study conducted by Kevin Bales, one of the scholars who has longest studied contemporary slavery in different areas of the world, there main causes that explain the transformations just discussed would rely on the on hand, in the dramatic global population growth that has taken hold since the 1940s. Indeed, since 1945, the population worldwide has almost tripled, from two billion to eight billion at the beginning of 2024. Moreover, this growth would have occurred precisely in those areas, such as Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa, where slavery is most practiced[445]. More up-to-date estimates[446] suggest that the above trend is likely to increase further bringing the current world population to more than 10 billion by 2100. In economically disadvantaged countries, the sheer weight of numbers trumps the availability of resources. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in a period of environmental emergency such as the one we are currently experiencing, population growth should be considered as a strongly negative element since, according to some scholars, it represents one of the causes of the current climate change. The overexploitation of natural, food and energy resources is the cause of the natural disasters we are increasingly witnessing. Since access to these resources is not equally distributed across the worldwide, it follows that the consequences will mainly affect the weakest and vulnerable populations in poor countries forcing a growing number of people to move. Bales, then identifies in the economic changes and consequent social transformations of many "Global South" countries the second determining factor in the transformation of slavery patterns. Traditional forms of life and subsistence that in many areas of the globe such as Africa were based on relationships of kinship, responsibility and mutual support, have been shattered by the international global economy changings. Coherently with the neoliberal logics, also developing countries governments aim for economic growth, with very little interest in offering sustainable forms of life to the majority of the population whose chances of accessing a good life, are shrinking more

[442] Ibid. p.142
[443] Grenouilleau, O. P. (2010).
[444] Grenouilleau, O. P. (2010). in, Simonazzi, M., & Casadei, T. (2018, 143).
[445] Bales, K. (2000).
[446] See, 26-th United Nations report, World Population Prospect, 2019. Accessible through: https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_Highlights.pdf

and more. In the cataclysm of the "entrepreneurial governmentality," slavery has become one of the options available.

2.5 Choice… A questionable concept.

What Bales lack to observe, however, is how migratory regimes facilitate slavery and servile work. Current mobility regimes can be seen as a governmental practice through which contemporary forms of slavery are implemented and multiplied to such an extent that the dentification of forms of exploitation or, who can be defined as a slave – as Grenouilleau proposed – has become truly complex. Might we, for example, consider prostitution in the contexts of humanitarian crises mentioned in the previous pages as a form of exploitation – or servile labour – even when it takes place on the basis of women's free choice? An even more questionable case. A few years ago, while conducting research on organ trafficking, I interviewed a young Kenyan man who was trying to sell a kidney on the black market in an attempt to leave the country. This practice, although little analysed in the literature, is widespread among migrants in several areas of the world, including Libya. Unlike in THBOR[447] phenomena, the choice is free, representing a strategy – or a form of agency, some would say – through which to expand one's range of possibilities. Since we are not even dealing with some form of "labour" strictu sensu, can we refer here to exploitation or slavery? When women's migration phenomena are then analysed things become even more complicated both on a theoretical and practical level. In an article published in 2019, Elsa Tyszler, aimed to analyse the effects of EU border externalisation policies on sub-Saharan women waiting to cross the Moroccan border into Spain. Building on an intersectional approach, the author shows how the modalities of crossing are

[447] Trafficking in Human Beings for the purpose of Organs Removal (THBOR) should be considered differently from organs trafficking. While in THBOR the removal of organs is forced, that is, it takes place without the consent of the person from whom it is removed and occurs within the phenomenon of human trafficking, in the case of organ trafficking the removal of organs is voluntary and it is aimed at the profit of the donor and above all of the intermediaries. The sale of organs is practically illegal everywhere in the world and can only take place on a "donation" basis. The Syrian crisis seems, from what emerges from a UNODC study, to play an important role in the recorded increase in organ trafficking worldwide and represents, albeit to a limited extent, a strategy deployed by young people to raise money to go to Europe. On this topic, please refer to: United Nations 2009 "Joint Study on trafficking in organs, tissues and cells and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of the removal of organs; Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, (CoE) (search-on-treaties/-/conventions/treaty/216); UNODC 2015 Assessment Toolkit – trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organs Removal; World Health Organization 2010.Guiding Principles on Human Cells, Tissue and Organs Transplantation; UNODC 2019 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons; Istanbul Declaration, 2008.

deeply shaped by an interweaving of factors among which ethnicity and even more prominently gender play a key role. Through her fieldwork in the Nador area, the author shows how the power dynamics played out on women's bodies, between forms of male domination and forms of female resistance, determine the success or the failure of the departure. While Tyszler shows how the securitarian paradigm increases the phenomena of gender-based violence by exposing sub-Saharan women to different forms of vulnerability and exploitation by both security officers and migrant men, she also highlights the forms of resistance put in place by these women to reach Europe[448]. Since men who control departures often prioritize pregnant women, many sub-Saharan women attempt to get pregnant in order to speed up departure[449]. Sexual intercourse is also used to gain a man's protection from potential abuse by other men[450]. In contrast, due to patriarchal cultural legacies, women's travel on period days is prohibited by men, as a consequence, many women attempt to exert more control over their bodies by disproportionately consuming contraceptives to avoid period[451]. The author describes such practices as forms of resistance through which women, by regaining control over their own bodies, can also regain possession of their agency, i.e. their ability to act intentionally in order to pursue their aspiration of achieving Europe. Although I agree with the need to disengage from those theoretical approaches in which women migrants are always described as victims who are "too weak" or "too vulnerable", I believe at the same time that care must be taken not to produce the opposite effect, i.e. to emphasise, in a framework in which coercion is totally blurred, a freedom of choice and an ability to choose where such abilities are reduced to the hook. In fact, the risk of such approaches is to celebrate those forms of neoliberal resilience, that are not good for either women or research. In fact, as Hochschild notes, labour migration is commonly seen as a free and personal choice and, consequently, so are the risks involved. Analysing such practices as forms of resistance does not help to transport migrant women's "personal problems" into public issues, as would be necessary. In an attempt to analyse and predict the origins of female exploitation, in *The subjection of women*, Josh Stuart Mill (1869) had argued that women's acceptance stems from a series of unjust beliefs that women are educated to and end up believing in. Thus, the acceptance of suffering forms of exploitation would be caused by cultural constructions that produce gender-based violence. Although, as Sciurba argues, this interpretive model remains partly relevant today, is not sufficient to understand women's choices. Rather, the acceptance of direct or indirect forms of exploitation by migrant women, both along the border and in the capital space, stems from the forms of vulnerability; there is therefore no self-deception, nor the habit of suffering as women. Acceptance would be based

[448] Tyszler, E. (2019).
[449] Ibid p. 10
[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.

on the absence of alternatives[452]. However, I want to draw attention again before concluding to a dimension that goes beyond choice as "absence of alternatives". I believe in this vein that Hayek's theory of knowledge[453] may offer further insights. In a global space structured around the f-laws of *turbo-capitalism*[454], the new international division of labour does not allow anyone to know everything[455]. The unattainability of human omniscience is well expressed in Hayek's theory of knowledge according to which man is fundamentally ignorant; a rational actor, certainly, but one who needs rules that s/he will follow without thinking too much about it. According to Hayek, it is precisely through rules, behavioural norms and perceptual schemes that individuals know what they know[456]. As Dardot and Laval note, in Hayek's theory of knowledge, the economist refers to a type of knowledge that is not scientific, rather "*a means, a certain type of knowledge directly utilizable in the market – knowledge about circumstances of time and place; knowledge not of the why but the how; knowledge that can be acquired by an individual in practice; knowledge whose value can only be appreciated by the individual, which he can use profitably to outstrip others in competition*[457]". In light of the observations made, and the essential pre-requisite of the market economy that demands total individual freedom, the bio-capitalist economy can also be configured, as Kirzner points out, into an *economy of choice*[458].The all-encompassing dimension of human choices that starts from the economy and expands into every existential dimension is also expressed by von Mises in *Human Action* (1996) where he states:

> *The general theory of choice and preference (...) is much more than merely a theory of the "economic side" of human endeavours and of man's striving for commodities and an improvement in his material well-being. It is the science of every kind of human action. Choosing determines all human decisions. In making his choice man chooses not only between various material things and services. All human values are offered for option. All ends and all means, both material and ideal issues, the sublime and the base, the noble and the ignoble, are ranged in a single row and subjected to a decision which picks out one thing and sets aside another. Nothing that men aim at*

[452] Sciurba, A. (2018,192).See also Sciurba A., Palumbo, L. (2018).
[453] The theory is largely contained in two major texts: that of 1935 entitled *Economics and Knowledge* and one from 1945 entitled *The Use of Knowledge in Society*. Both are reprinted in Hayek, F.A. (1948).
[454] See, Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014).
[455] Ibid. p.126
[456] Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014, 126).
[457] Ibid. p. 127
[458] Kirzner, I. (1992, 30).

or want to avoid remains outside of this arrangement into a unique scale of gradation and preference[459].

Such an order is neither natural nor artificial and arises spontaneously from the free action of individuals, outside any interventionist attempt by the state or the international community. A society that constitutes its own spontaneous order through autopoietic processes, consistently responding to that ignorance that Hayek postulates as original[460]. What happens in borderscapes scenarios, in those who decide to sell a kidney or who opt for hysterectomy in order to work is a process of "learning by discovering". Yet, if in a society structured by the division of labor, "no one knows everything", in a world governed by neoliberism, *no one chooses anything*. However, some choose less than others. Starting from the next chapter, I will critically analyse the role of Tunisia in contemporary migration, arguing that the political and discursive practices that emphasise its role as a transit country constitute a governmental practice that contemporarily enables the West to contain surplus lives, and Tunisia to make such lives economically advantageous. From this perspective, I will argue that transit countries perfectly capture what Mezzadra and Neilson argue about current mobility management practices that, through forms of differential inclusion, act as a device for regulating the relations between capital, labor, law, subjects and political power far beyond geographic border spaces[461].

[459] Mises, L. V. (1996, 3) in Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2014, 124-5)
[460] Marcenò, S. (2018 28).
[461] Mezzadra S. Nielson B. (2013) p.8

CHAPTER III

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF MIGRATION IN TUNISIA

3.1 Looking to the past: historical evolution of migrations in Tunisia.

3.1.1 Pre-colonial Tunisia. 1700-1881

Tunisia has a long history of migration both in pre-colonial epoch and following the establishment of the French colonial regime, officially decreed by the Treaty of Bardo[462] in 1881. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, the country experienced a particularly heterogeneous and intense phenomenon of in-migration composed by tens of thousands of people moving along the Mediterranean towards the coastal cities of North Africa. Unfortunately, however, several scholars pointed out that data on newcomers in pre-protectorate Tunisia is extremely fragmentary and inaccurate. This would explain, according to Clancy-Smith, the increased focus of historians on the colonial period characterised instead by the abundance of documentation[463]. Nevertheless, the use of a *lingua franca*, a mixture of different Italian dialects and Arabic, found in several documents dating back to the 1600s including consular acts, health licences as well as trade documents, shows that migratory flows to Tunisia, particularly from Italy, have ancient origins. As early as 1600, a growing number of Italian Jews began migrating to Tunisia from the cities of Livorno and Ancona[464]. This wave of migration was linked to the expansion of trade between Tunisia and Europe, particularly with Italian harbours, and the role of Jews in this trade. This new community joined an earlier, large community of indigenous Jews who had settled in different areas of Tunisia centuries earlier[465], establishing their own *ḥāra* (Jewish neighbourhood). According to data re-elaboration carried out by Sebag in 1991, during the eighteenth century in the Tunisian capital alone there were between ten and fifteen thousand Jews, half of the entire Jewish population of Tunisia[466]. As Abun-Nasr underlines, however, the coexistence

[462] The treaty was signed in Bardo, the residence of the Tunis court (today the most important museum in Tunisia) where starting from 1705, the monarchy (*beylik*) of the Husainid dynasty had been established under the leadership of Bey Husayn I ibn Ali, reigning almost autonomously within the Ottoman empire. In May 1881, however France which had already occupied Algeria in 1830, expanded its dominance in Tunisia, launching a military operation in May 1881 that in fact gave the bey Muḥammad as-Sadiq no option but to accept the contents of the treaty establishing the indefinite French occupation, considerably restricting Bey's sovereignty.

[463] Clancy-Smith, J.L. (2005, 63). See also Lewis, M.D. (2008).

[464] Abun-Nasr, J. M. (1982).

[465] In *The Tunisian State in the eighteenth century*, J. M.Abun-Nasr (1982), refers to a Jewish community in Tunis whose origins go back to the time of the Arab conquest having their *ḥāra at the end of tenth century. With the arrival of Jewish migrants from the Iberian Peninsula during the fourteenth century the Jewish community in Tunisia grew.*

[466] Please note that the estimates are imprecise. In fact, while some estimate the population of Jews at that time at around 30/40 thousand, other scholars such as Macgill argue that the more correct figure is around 100

between these two groups, apparently linked by a common religious affiliation, was anything but simple[467]. Indeed, while the community of local Jewish (called *twansa)* were mainly living in great poverty, the newcomer Italian Jewish community (called *Grana),* represented a cosmopolitan group of healthy merchants. The tension triggered by social, cultural and religious differences[468] was formally solved in 1741 through the Bey's recognition of the existence of two separate Jewish communities, hence an agreement whereby Jews from a Christian country would become part of the *grana*, while those from a Muslim country would become members of the Tunisian community. Before the establishment of French Protectorate, the "Regency of Tunis" consisted of a semi-independent outpost of the Ottoman Empire controlled by its own Beys (rulers). Although the Consulate Offices of European powers had been established in the Regency for several hundred years, very few "Europeans" voluntarily moved to Tunisia before the mid-1800s. The enslavement of Christians indeed remained a legal practice in the country until 1818[469]. As a consequence, it was only after this period that the number of new foreigners from Europe increased[470]. In the first decades of the 19th century, moreover, the intensification of economic relations with Europe, as well as Tunisia's greater stability, led a large number of impoverished "European" emigrants to seek better living opportunities in Tunisia,[471] and more broadly to other North-African countries. According to Ganiage's estimates - considered by scholars today to be the most reliable once in pre-protectorate Tunisia - between the 1850s and 1860s, there were about 7000 Maltese, 4000 Italians, 250 Greeks and 50 or 60 French families[472]. In this initial phase, Maltese made up 60% of migrant population in Tunisia. It was mainly about an economic and spontaneous migration linked to the island's difficult economic conditions and epidemics that in 1840s, triggered a mass emigration mainly to North Africa[473]. Settled mainly in the coastal cities of Sfax, Souse and Mahdia in figure 10, the Maltese remained the most important European migrant community until the 1970s, when Tunisia experienced a mass in-migration from Italy.

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thousand. In this respect, Abun-Nasr states that Macgill's estimation should be considered as more realistic since it corresponds to the figure calculated on the basis of archival material by J. Ganiage (1966) for the size of the Jewish community in the nineteenth century.

[467] Abun-Nasr J. M. (1982).

[468] Although they were Jewish, the incompatibility between the two groups also led to a differentiation in religious practices: each community had its own rabbi, its own council of notables, its own schools, its own synagogue, its own butcher and cemetery.

[469] Tunisia has been the first Muslim country to abolish slavery. However, in the initial phase, the abolishment only concerned European Christians. The institution of slavery as such was abolished in Tunisia in 1846.

[470] Smith, A. L. (2000).

[471] Ibid.

[472] Ganiage, J. (1960) in Smith, A. L. (2000, 186).

[473] According to data, during mid-1800, 15% of the total Maltese population migrated to Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Costantinopole, Greece and Tripoli. For an in-depth look at the Maltese diaspora, see Smith, A. L. (2000).

Fig. 10. Tunisia: regions and tribes.
Source: Dali, I. M. (2019).

Figures from 1870 estimated at least 9000 Italians residing permanently in the beylik and other 2,000 Italian seasonal workers. From the end of the 19th century onwards, as it will be noted in the next

section, the Italian community in Tunisia became the largest. The Italian migration to Tunisia was extremely heterogeneous[474]. Made up of the impoverished working class from southern Italy, mainly Sicilians, but also Sardinians and Calabrians working in agriculture, miners or fishery. To this economic migration, Tunisia had also become a destination for Italian Freemasons, Garibaldians, anarchists and Carbonarians, who, following the Risorgimento uprisings and the fight for the Unification of Italy, fled there around 1820. In addition, the establishment of maritime lines linking Tunis with the Italian cities of Genoa and Cagliari inaugurated in 1859 by the Rubattino company, and the Palermo-Tunis route launched four years later, not only fostered trade but also increased the emigration of Italians to Tunisia. Despite the size of the arrivals on its shores, Tunisia imposed strict controls on migrants arriving from the European continent. Migrants arriving in La Goulette harbour of Tunis, were subjected to quarantine by both consular and beylical authorities and disembarkment procedures were allowed only following consul's authorization. Indeed, legal and residency rights, as well as freedom of movement for European immigrants in Tunisia, were guaranteed by a series of treaties and agreements (*marsum*) called "Capitulations" (*imtiyazat*)[475] whose main goal were to grant a number of legal immunities, hence to protect, non-Muslim foreigners (*dhimmis*)[476], allowing them to live in *Dar al-Islam*. Greater restrictions were in place for women. As a matter of fact, regardless of their geographical origins or social status, in order to disembark, migrant women travelling alone were required a special permit (*teskera*) from the Bey. As Clancy-Smith highlights, gendered migration in pre-colonial Tunisia cannot be easily traced since women only appear in sources exclusively in relation to a male family member or if widowed after their arrival in Tunisia.[477] Since non-Muslims could not own land until 1870s and the industrialisation phase in Tunisia had not yet begun at that time, most European foreigners in precarious economic conditions were forced to perform the most menial jobs. While men were often employed as port workers or casual labourers,

[474] See Fauri, F., Stangio, D. (2019).

[475] Although the practice of producing written protective agreements can be dated as early as the 12th century, it reached its peak in the Ottoman Empire. The *imtiyazat* included provisions concerning the security of persons and property, the exercise of consular jurisdiction and exemption from collective liability. As Gianluca Parolin (2009) points out, rather than prescribing restrictions, the capitulations became an instrument through which foreign Europeans (*les protégés*) could gain important advantages, to the detriment of the natives. See also Clancy-Smith, J.L. (2005, 64). See also Lewis, M.D. (2008).

[476] The capitulations, which formed the basis on which the concept of nationality was developed in the Arab world from the latter half of the 19th century, were used strategically by foreigners in order to negotiate a more favourable jurisdiction. Clancy-Smith, for example, observed that while coming under British protection by Treaty, the Ionian Greeks residing in Tunisia or Algeria, could claim the French protection, if they could get a 'better deal'. With the onset of colonialism, the issue became even more complicated as also the subjects of the beys, particularly Tunisian Jews, attempted to put themselves under the flag of a European nation. However, changing one's jurisdiction by switching consular protection was, for the most part, an available option only to males. Women were legally under the same national or imperial protection as their husbands, fathers or male head of household. Divorce, abandonment and widowhood complicated jurisdictional matters.

[477] Clancy-Smith, J.L. (2005, 70)

Christian women worked mainly in domestic and care labour as laundresses or nurses for rich Muslim families. Although an analysis of the sexual division of labour at that time is needed, Clancy-Smith emphasises that the conditions of poverty in which many migrants lived, had also generated alternative and illicit subsistence systems, such as the smuggling of firearms, gunpowder and tobacco between Algeria and Tunisia or North Africa and Europe, of which women were also part[478]. Since maintaining harmony among a heterogeneous, multicultural and multiethnic population was a great concern for Muslim and European authorities, incarcerations and repatriation were widespread[479]. The most common transgressions led by poverty among European immigrants – currently not analysed because of the prevailing and false idea that they occupied relatively high places in the social hierarchy"[480], were public drunkenness, street fights, assaults, robbery or fraud which were males-related. Women migrants instead were more frequently charged, expelled or enclosed in convents for gossip, quarrelling and more dangerously for misconduct and prostitution. With the increase in migration flows witnessed during the 1800s, consular authorities with the support of the Tunisian one sought to place women in situations where their honour would not appear compromised which meant for example finding lodges for single women or expel women deemed social dangers. Poor women, widows or unaccompanied females were regarded as the most prone to shameful behaviours[481]. Alongside this voluntary European male and female migration, pre-colonial Tunisia has been characterized either by another, almost completely unknown, migration phenomenon coming from other African sub-regions. If, as mentioned, scholars lean towards focusing mainly on colonial history, it should be stressed that they either tend to analyse pre-colonial migrations in Tunisia following the trajectory of a single national[482] and not the complex whole[483]. In fact, following Goikolea-Amiano recommendation, it ought to be remembered and specified that if it is true that the proximity of southern Europe has shaped (and still shapes today, as we shall see) the cultural history of Tunisia[484], it is equally important to recover, where possible, the relations and history that the country has had with the rest of the Continent it is part of, and with Sub-Saharan Africa in particular.[485] Migration from Sub-Saharan Africa in pre-colonial Tunisia was exclusively forced, linked to the

[478] Clancy-Smith J. L. (2012).
[479] Clancy-Smith, J.L. (2005)
[480] Ibid. p.75
[481] Ibid. 77
[482] See for example Fauri, F. (2015; 2019) or Montalbano, G. (2019) for Italians in Tunisia or Libya; Abun-Nasr, J. M. (1982) or Smith, A. L. (2000), for Maltese etc.
[483] Clancy-Smith, J.L (2005, 65)
[484] Goikolea-Amiano, I. (2020).
[485] Understanding and analysing the sub-Saharan diaspora in Tunisia would, among other things, provide a better understanding of the origin of Tunisia's black community.

practice of slavery. According to Dali's findings, the majority of black slaves brought to the Regency of Tunisia came from the "Central Sudan" corresponding to the area including Niger, Nigeria and Chad, belonging mainly to the Hausa ethnic group[486]. As mentioned, on the basis of the documentation available today, it is not possible to distinguish between the black population that forcibly arrived in Tunisia as a result of the slave trade, and the new voluntary arrivals in the 20th century[487]. However, according to estimates made by Larguèche (1990), around mid-19th century, there were around 150,000 black people in Tunisia, including both enslaved and freed individuals.[488] Yet, in a quantitatively poorly analysed and explorable context, Goikolea-Amiano's study (2020) on the slavery-related forms of resistance of the sub-Saharan diaspora in pre-colonial Tunisia, is my view, particularly interesting. The scholar's study indeed, not merely sheds light on the presence of sub-Saharans in Tunisia, but also allows us to draw some considerations on the management of mobility in the pre-colonial Tunisian era, from a gender perspective. By analysing the writings dating back to 1808 by the West African scholar Aḥmad al-Timbuktāwī entitled *Unveiling the Infidel Religion of the Blacks of Tunis,* Goikolea-Amiano points out al-Timbuktāwī's attempts to warn the Bey Hammuda Pacha and the ulamā'[489] of the country, including Susa, Sfax, Qayrawan and others, about the dangerous and un-Islamic practices carried out by women from the sub-Saharan diaspora in Tunisia, and complaining about the beylik's excessive tolerance of these rituals; thus, calling for their banning[490]. Already in West Africa, with the advent of Islam during the Fulani War and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1800, the jīhād leaders took steps to ban these rituals as polytheistic. Indeed, according to Ismail H. Abdalla, in the aftermath of the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate, Hausa women *found themselves the economic and jural minors of their male relatives […] and as a consequence the rituals became an important avenue for women to deal with a male-dominated, male-oriented world*[491]. In al-Timbuktāwī's view, the sub-Saharan community of "infidels" was even more of a danger because of the participation of Muslim women. On this basis, Goikolea-Amiano pointed out that in reality, al-Timbuktāwī's request to ban the rituals was not only religiously motivated, but also wanted to prevent the sexual and gender dynamics on which the rituals were based. The rituals would have facilitated the leadership and intimacy of sub-Saharan women

[486] Goikolea-Amiano, I. (2020, 4)
[487] See Dali, I. M. (2005; 2019).
[488] Larguèche, A. (1990). See also Scaglioni, M. (2020, 61).
[489] *Ulamā* are, in Islam, religious experts. The word derives from the arabic *'ilm*, meaning "to know".
[490] The healing rituals, known as zār (or ṭumbura in the Nile Valley), not only gave great power to the women, guides of the rituals, but also encouraged sexual promiscuity among the women themselves.
[491] Ismail H. Abdalla, "Neither Friend nor Foe: The Malam Practitioner - Yan Bori Relationship in Hausaland", in al-Safi, Lewis, and Hurreiz (eds), *Women's Medicine: The Zar-Bori Cult in Africa and Beyond*, *op. cit.,* p. 41

and also of Tunisian women taking part of them, undermining males' role. Within the text the author stated *Do you not see that [Muslim] women (al-nisā') have exchanged their men folk for black women (al-khidm)?* The sentence, as Goikolea-Amiano put it, further qualifies the emasculating risk of female homosociability; Admonitions thus involved both femininity and masculinity. Despite al-Timbuktāwī's claim, the rituals were not banned in Tunisia, unlike the Western sub-Saharan Africa. This situation would *unveil the fact that the politics of gender and sexuality in early nineteenth-century Tunis were tolerant regarding sub-Saharan women's leadership and authority.*[492]

The control of women's bodies and female sexuality is historically one of the cornerstones of patriarchy. Looking at non-black women, the legal pluralism that animated per-colonial Tunisia served to control female (im)mobility. Indeed, together with Muslim authorities, European Consular justice – usually analysed as a mere diplomatic institution – operated as a "social (and cultural) welfare bureau[493]" facilitating the control of non-black women's body according to a shared common (religious) view about women sexuality and morality. However, the sexual behaviour of black women from the sub-Saharan diaspora appears to have been widely tolerated. The reason may lie in the fact that at that time (and to some extent still today) "Black bodies were considered to be a catalysing vector which absorbed negative elements, preventing them from afflicting white" bodies[494]. In part, however, as will be noted in the last chapter, despite the legacy of slavery in Tunisia, the concept of race as understood in the West has had very different connotations in Muslim countries, unrelated to skin colour.

3.1.2. The colonial transition. Migratory movements in Tunisia (1881-1956)

The beginning of the French colonial rule in Tunisia marked the onset of a further, growing phase of migration to the country. Although the data and scholarly investigations currently available, both on a qualitative and quantitative level, do not allow for an exhaustive exploration such as that undertaken on north-south flows, it worth noting that the very beginning of colonialism triggered a further, voluntary, migration phenomenon from other areas of the African continent. Indeed, as Inès Dali noted[495], from the early 1890s, Tunisia experienced "des arrivées massives"[496] (massive arrivals) of black foreigners identified as "Tripolitans". Such an inflow, together with the European one, constituted first and foremost an indispensable portion of cheap labour-force to be employed in the

[492] Cfr. Goikolea-Amiano, I. (2020,11)
[493] Clancy-Smith, J.L (2005)
[494] Cfr. Scaglioni, M. (2020, 83)
[495] Dali, I. M. (2019)
[496] Cfr. Dali, I. M. (2019, 28). It is not clear however why the author, in the absence of the quantitative data, uses the expression "massive".

main economic investment sectors of the French colony including agriculture, public infrastructure (such as the construction of a new railway network or the opening of new shipyards in Tunisian ports) and the development of mining activities namely those launched in the Gafsa area, which is still particularly important for phosphate extraction. In Dali's view, the promulgation of a second decree on the abolition of slavery by the French Ministry of Affairs in 1890 encouraged the arrival of black "Muslim foreigners"[497] from the Continent. Unlike the administrative management of pre-colonial Tunisia, which did not impose tax burdens on *Barrânia*, (foreigners), French authorities renewed the social and financial organisation of Tunisian society extending the payment of taxes to non-Tunisians either. As Dali noted, while it is true that the tax records "*des indigènes tripolitains*" reflect the existence of a complex social structure made up of different non-indigenous identities "some of which had the particularity of being black (…), these identities remain undefined or indeterminate, especially from the point of view of their territoriality[498]". In the colonial administration's tax documents kept at the National Archives of Tunis, in fact, the black migrant population in Tunisia (of which, however, it is not possible to distinguish between 'newcomers and freed slaves) came from three distinct regions, namely the Tripolitania, Fezzan and Cyrenaica. More specifically, Dali's reconstruction, refer to three different areas: Ghadamisia, Edaradja and El Fezania, identifiable in figure 11. Several documents however, report a fourth group of individuals referred to as "*Assoudanioûn"* (Sudanese) which is doubtful[499]. Despite the group of "*Assoudanioûn"* is included in that of "Tripolitans", it hardly indicates individuals from present-day Sudan[500]. More likely, the expression indicates a population from sub-Saharan Africa according to the Arab word "*Assoudân*" meaning "black" or "*Bilâd Assoudân*" (Lands of black people).

[497] Ibid.
[498] Ibid. p. 22
[499] Ibid. p. 24
[500] Indeed, it is important to remember that a national identity, as we understand it today, can be traced back to the birth of nation-states. In the case of Sudan, legislation defining who was to be considered Sudanese (*qanun tacrıf 'al-sudani*) did not occur until 1948 during Anglo-Egyptian rule. However, once independence from Britain was achieved in 1956, the Khartoum parliament passed a Sudanese Nationality Law in 1957 (Law 22/1957). See Parolin, G. (2009).

Fig. 11. Libya and the sub-Saharan region
Source: Dali, I. M. (2019).

As can be seen from a letter sent by the French Resident General to the Prosecutor of the French Republic in Tunis on 22 March 1901:

> *Depuis longtemps déjà, cette Résidence générale est saisie par les indigènes du centre de l'Afrique compris couramment sous la dénomination générale de 'Soudanais', et originaires pour la plupart de pays englobés dans la zone d'influence française […].*[501]
>
> *For some time, this General Residence has been occupied by the indigenous people of Central Africa, commonly known as 'Sudanese', most of whom come from countries in the French zone of influence […].*[502]

As it clearly appears hence, the term "Sudanese" is a general one and includes not merely Central Africa but also the 'countries that are part of the French zone of influence' which, although not specified, certainly include Western sub-Saharan Africa. As a consequence, it is not possible to establish the territorial origin of this black population[503]. Despite the lack of quantitative analysis, the

[501] Dali, I. M. (2019).
[502] My translation
[503] See Scaglioni, M. (2020).

presence of these new in-migrants can be deduced from a letter dated 1892 in which the French Vice Consul in Sousse informed the Resident General of:

> *La présence dans son contrôle, d'un nombre considérable de nègres venus tout récemment » et dont on ignorait la provenance. C'est principalement à Sousse et dans l'Enfida que ces indigènes ont trouvé à s'employer soit chez les agriculteurs, soit sur les routes en construction ou en réparation, dans les huileries, les dépôts d'alfa, sur les chantiers de toutes natures. A Sousse on en compte en ce moment plusieurs centaines et il n'est pas rare de les rencontrer sur les routes et les chemins par troupes de vingt ou trente […].*[504]

> *The presence in his control of a considerable number of negroes who had recently arrived and whose origin was unknown. It is mainly in Sousse and the Enfida that these natives have found employment, either with farmers, or on roads under construction or repair, in oil mills, in alfa deposits and on building sites of all kinds. In Sousse, there are several hundred of them at the moment, and it's not uncommon to find them on the roads and paths in groups of twenty or thirty […].*[505]

Settling themselves mainly in the southern Tunisia, near the surroundings of Gabes and Tataouine,[506] during the 20th century, the black population constituted an *urban sub-proletariat*[507] wherein men worked as *bread-sellers, peddlers, masseurs in public hammams, while women could, of course, become (or remain) domestic workers, sweet-sellers, or employees in public hammams*[508]. Yet, in early 1930s, as a consequence of Italy's invasion of present-day Libya[509], a growing number of "Tripolitains" moved to Tunisia. It was still a different kind of in-migration, mostly made up of "refugees" fleeing the extremely violent repression used by Italy in the conquest of Cyrenaica, hindered by the anti-colonialist leader Omar Al-Mukhtar. According to Dali however, many of these unspontaneous new arrivals were also linked to the role played by the mining companies which, with the support of emissaries, tried to attract new cheap labor-force from the Sahara areas. The need to rely on foreigner workers was a consequence of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 which during its lifespan caused the need to recruit young north-Africans soldiers to participate the war in Europe. Along with the reinforcement of their own armies, both France and Britain sent tens of thousands of North Africans to Europe in order to support the Allied economy during the war. As a

[504] Cfr. Dali, I.M. (2019, 30).
[505] My translation.
[506] Dali, I. M. (2009). In Scaglioni, M. (2020).
[507] Cfr. Botte, R. (2020. 90).
[508] Scaglioni, M. (2020, 81).
[509] The Italian invasion of present-day Libya took place in 1911 when the country was still divided into its three provinces, Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzen, under the Ottoman Empire, triggering the so-called Italo-Turkish conflict. The unification of the three regions took place in 1934, leading to the birth of the "Governor General of Italian Libya."

matter of fact, with so many French national workers enrolled to fight against the Central Powers, the French colonial administration authorised the deployment of North Africans to France with the aim to replace them. Hence, the war years marked the very first (albeit involuntary) migration from North-Africa to Europe, a trend that would intensify, as we shall shortly observe, from the 1960s onwards. Due to the economic inflation and the resulting economic crisis that affected Tunisia in 1930s, only a small proportion of the newcomers from Sahara Desert could be employed in the mining companies. As a result, many of them remained displaced near the Libyan border, finding in smuggling their only source of livelihood[510]. Alongside the south-south flows, those arriving from Europe continued to increase throughout the mid-20th century due to the economic opportunities flourished within the protectorate. However, in 1905, twenty years after the beginning of French domination, the number of French settlers was only 35 thousand compared to 90-100 thousand Italians[511] and about one and a half million Tunisians. The ancient and massive presence of Italians as well as British in-migrants, posed a great challenge to the hegemony of France in Tunisia. Indeed, while symbolising Italy's international powerlessness[512], Tunisia effectively remained a country where both Italy and Great Britain were able to maintain a certain influence by virtue of the high number of their expatriates living there. Yet, if on the one hand the "uncontrolled Italian migration to Tunisia[513]" represented a threat to French ruling power, on the other hand these minor settlers, constituted a "useful auxiliaries of colonization[514]". Such a situation shows that in the colonial (Tunisian) context, "imperial rivalry, labor migration, racial categories and colonial capitalism[515]" played a crucial role in the power dynamics and processes of social hierarchisation that, beyond the classic colonised/coloniser dichotomy, also extended to an unbalanced European settler population. It is worth pointing out that Tunisia, unlike Algeria, has never been a settlement colony but only an exploitative one[516]. Thus, a massive demographic increase, usually encouraged in the annexed territories, has never been a goal in Tunisia as well as in the other French colonies in Africa.[517] Nonetheless, it was deemed necessary

[510] Dali, I. M. (2019).
[511] Montalbano, G. (2019, 6). See also Choate, M.I. (2010, 6).
[512] Ibid. p. 1
[513] Saurin, J. (1900) in Montalbano, G. (2019)
[514] Montalbano, G. (2019, 5).
[515] Ibid. p.3
[516] European colonial empire, as Bigon and Njoh(2018) recall, was characterized by two main forms: it could be either in a form of exploitative colonies, whose main function was simply to extract resources like in the case of most sub-Saharan Africa (and Tunisia or Morocco), and which were not hence considered French territories; or it could assume the typology of settlement colonies, like Algeria, which meant that the colony was occupied for the purpose of permanent occupation by European citizens and thus fully integrate in France's territory.
[517] French colonial efforts in Africa culminated in the creation of seventeen colonies: twelve in sub-Saharan Africa, grouped into two blocks: the Federation of French West Africa (FWA), which included eight territories: Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, French Sudan (now, Mali), Upper Volta (now, Burkina Faso), Niger, Côte

to at least balance the demographic weight on the one hand and economically marginalise the non-French Europeans in Tunisia on the other. Since Tunisia was not French territory *strictu sensu*, the Bey continued to retain part of his sovereignty in Tunisia, as stipulated in the Treaty of Bardo. With the Convention of La Marsa in 1883, the Bey had also succeeded in maintaining the trade agreements concluded decades earlier with other European powers while retaining his capitular rights. As Lewis points out however, *the maintenance of the capitulations meant that each consular court of every European power exercised a form of sovereignty in the protectorate*.[518] In order to limit the sovereignty of other European states, in particular Italy and the Great Britain, the French Foreign Minister set about convincing European governments to close their consular courts. The process took over a year but it allowed French authorities to increasingly intervene in an effort first to impose a single (French) jurisdiction on all "Europeans" while setting a single Tunisian nationality on all Muslims and Jews, hitherto mere "subjects" of the bey. Nationality, thus, became an important biopolitical device of power through which managing social control, while at the same time, allowing France to maintain its hegemonic role in the wider North African regional context[519]. As the 1921 colonial poster in figure 12 shows, *Il faut franciser* (we need to Frenchify) became the motto of the French propaganda in Tunisia.

FIG. 12. Propaganda poster for the naturalization of Italians in

d'Ivoire, and Dahomey (now, Benin); and the Federation of French Equatorial Africa (FEA) that incorporated four countries: Gabon, Middle Congo (today, Democratic Republic of Congo), Ubangi Shari (present-day, Central African Republic) and Chad. Other two colonies in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, and Djibouti (known as Somaliland at that time); and the three colonies in North Africa, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco.

[518] Lewis, M.D. (2008, 803).

[519] On the role of nationality during the colonial period, see also Montalbano, G. (2019); Reestman J.H. (1999); Urban, Y. (2009).

In order to increase its presence in Tunisia, in 1923, the French administration enacted the naturalisation law, which included the possibility for Europeans to obtain French citizenship by gaining a series of advantages such as the facilitation of bureaucratic procedures, the lowering of taxation costs, increasing wages etc. In reality, however, as noted by many authors, although not presented as compulsory, naturalisation had become the only possibility to evade the restrictions placed on other European settlers[520]. Consequently, European foreigner's naturalisation increased, particularly among Italians, impacting on the rise of the French population which for the first time overcame Italians in 1936[521]. The naturalisation process, however, became soon a double-edged sword for the French colonial administration. Indeed, Tunisia's peculiar position in the broader African colonial context with Italian Libya on the West and the French colonies of Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa on the East and South, caused that naturalisation, particularly between 1930s and 1940s became an instrument through which non-European foreigners, in particular Algerians, Libyans and "Sudanese" could claim to possess the citizenship of one or another European power by virtue of birth in a territory controlled by Europeans[522]. Such an opportunity, triggered tensions both on an international level and on a domestic one. The unification of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in the 1930s represented indeed a major challenge for the French protectorate both within Tunisian borders and for diplomatic relations with Italy and the Bey Ahmad II ibn Ali (1929-1942). According to the same imperialist logic adopted by the other European powers within their own settlement colonies, in 1939 the Italian government granted a special Italian citizenship to the Libyans subjects. In this fashion, Libyan migrants who arrived in Tunisia in those years, as noted in the previous pages, could claim to be recognised as Italians and consequently being protected from French jurisdiction, thus enjoying the many advantages granted to Europeans. If, for the Italian government the arrival of Libyan migrants represented a way to counterbalance the demographic decrease of its population following the naturalisation laws, for the bey and the French government itself, this claim represented a threat. As Lewis points out, French administration in Tunisia could not very well concede that the categories of "European" and "Tunisian" overlapped because doing so would have undermined the entire premise of colonial domination which posited a hierarchical and incommensurable relationship between civic (European) laws and native (Islamic) one[523].

[520] These include the imposition of French diplomas for the exercise of legal professions, the exclusion of foreign entrepreneurs, Italians in particular, from tendering procedures, Or a series of restrictive measures on the entry of foreign workers into the territory only if they were in possession of specific requirements such as an employment contract.
[521] See Fauri (2019, 8)
[522] See, Lewis, M.D. (2008) and Parolin, G. (2009).
[523] See Lewis, M.D. (2008, 816).

In addition, the inclusion of Libyans in the French jurisdiction would have meant for the local Arab Muslim authorities, a significant loss of *majba*[524] taxpayers, a taxation from which European settlers were exempt and to which Muslims were instead subjected to. The dispute was solved through the 1914 Franco-Italian agreement which established that only Libyans who arrived in Tunisia after 28 October 1912 and in possession of an Italian documents would be recognised as "*Italian colonial subjects*"; those arrived earlier, had to be naturalised as Tunisians[525]. It is worth, albeit briefly, dwelling on the expression "colonial subject". The categorisation "colonial subject"(or "indigenous Muslim") was a central node in the French colonial legislation[526] and its civilisation project; as emphasised by Laure Blévis, in fact, colonial laws, while undergoing modifications over time and differing significantly from one colony to another, has been instrumental in creating everywhere the opposition between "*subject*" and "*citizen*[527]". Indeed, whilst being French by *nationality*, the colonial subject was denied from French *citizenship*. Accordingly, *Italian colonial subjects* who moved to Tunisia after 28 October 1914 were protected by French jurisdiction,[528] as French nationals. Nevertheless, the situation turned even more complex with the regulation of Algerian "indigenous subjects" in Tunisia. Indeed, as long as France maintained – at least theoretically – that Tunisia was not part of its territory, it was compelled to provide consular protection to all French nationals living in Tunisia, hence also Algerians[529]. Yet, before the 1946 Lamine Guèye law that granted French citizenship to all the subjects of France's territory and overseas department, the French administration in Algeria bestowed Algerians French nationality but not citizenship: as Muslims indeed, they were subject to the Islamic laws. In Tunisia, thus, although Algerians were French nationals, they did not - except few specific cases - come under French jurisdiction but under Tunisian one. Such a situation shows, as Lewis recalls, that "as France extended its imperial reach into Africa, the consolidation of

[524] The collection of the Majba, which constituted an important part of the regency's revenues, was entrusted to the figure of the *qaid* already existing in Tunisia, as well as in Algeria and Morocco, in the pre-colonial phase. This was a man temporarily in charge of collecting taxes from the tribes in rural areas. With the beginning of colonialism in Tunisia, as we have seen, the local administrative system was left almost intact. Instead, the figure of the *Qaid*, who had become permanent, assumed a fundamental role in ensuring on the one hand the sovereignty of the Bey and on the other hand the maintenance of order in colonial Tunisia. See, Perrier, A. (2021, 655).

[525] See Dali, I. M. (2019, 37). See Urban, Y. (2022, 316)

[526] Blévis, L. (2003, 26).

[527] Blévis, L. (2014).

[528] Italian citizenship in Libya was granted, albeit limitedly, in January 1939 by Royal Decree no. 90. See McLaren, B. L. (2022); See also Parolin, G. (2009, 92-3).

[529] Algerian subjects indeed were considered to be French national according to the well-known promulgation of Senatus-Consulte of July 14, 1865, in force down to the end of the Second World War, which defined the native Algerians Muslims as a French subjects but not a French citizen unless they did renounce to their rights and duties under Muslim law. Indeed, as Parolin (2009, 95) notes, the possibility to acquire French citizenship for Algerians was allowed through the 1919 Jonnart naturalization Law of 1919 which however, involved the loss of Muslim personal status (an act entailed of apostacy according to the 1937 Fatwā).

laws in one place contributed to new legal complications in another[530]". Furthermore, as several scholars argued, French authorities increasingly relied on "religious affiliation as a proxy for nationality, even when doing so meant contradicting its own policies in neighbouring colonies[531]". In *Les Avatars de la citoyenneté en Algerie coloniale ou les paradoxes d'une catégorisation*, the historian Laure Blévis highlighted that religious affiliation, and more specifically the term 'Muslim' was used to indicate the status of the colonial subject, a social condition seen by France as an alterity, rather than a mere religious belief[532]. Thus, as it clearly appears, the indigenous French Muslim has never been recognised as a full-fladged person but the "Other", the antonym of the Frenchman the sole rights holder:[533] *the* citizen. A number of scholars of colonial law, has extensively remarked that in order to mark this contraposition, French legislation increasingly resorted to the dichotomy between the "*sujet*" (subject) and the *citoyen* (citizen). From a historical point of view, the two terms were already in use before the French Revolution without any opposition.

In *Citizenship, subjecthood, Nationality. Concepts of belongings in the Age on Modern Nation States,* Gosewinkel argued that in abstract terms, back to the days of the First Revolutionary Constitution of 1791, the two expressions both referred to a concept of equality in terms of the individual subjection to the unified power of the state[534]. Nevertheless, the colonial expansionist drive that characterised the Third French Republic (1870- 1940) marked a clear separation between subject and citizen. In this perspective, as Saad points out, colonial laws far from being a mere instrument of domination or legitimisation of the colonial order, have deeply shaped the social identities of the groups subjected to them[535], playing an important role in the violent forms of exclusion and hierarchisation in which *The [colonial] subject is defined both by his submission to France's sovereignty and by his non-participation in that same sovereignty: the subject (le sujet) is a French national who is not a citizen.*[536] *Nationality* and *citizenship* increasingly emerged as two distinct conditions[537]. During the first half of the XIX century, characterised by the growth of national ideas and movements throughout the West, the concept of nationality came to be associated with a principle of membership of a defined cultural community according to a common history, language

[530] Cfr. Lewis, M.D. (2008, 816).
[531] Lewis, M.D. (2008, 86).
[532] Blevis L. (2001, 577).
[533] Blévis, L. (2003, 29).
[534] Gosewinkel, D. (2003).
[535] Saad E. (2003). Citoyens et sujets de l'Empire français. ISSUE 4 53 PP.4-24
[536] Cfr. Saad E. (2003, 17), my translation.
[537] In Western democracies, the concept of citizenship and nationality are often used as synonyms and merged together emphasising that the nationals of a state are also the full members of the political community that is organised within that state, i.e., that state's citizens. However, the two terms have been officially distinguished with the Treaty of Maastricht which introduced the notion of EU citizenship to be enjoyed automatically by every national of a Member State. See Cantle, T. (2008).

and customs. Accordingly, citizenship was configured as that set of legal - but also cultural – norms and duties that defined, on the basis of an idea of national homogeneity, who is French. The denial of citizenship on the one hand and the granting of nationality on the other, show the pervasiveness of the colonial project. Indeed, as Fanon remind us, Western settlers have never limited themselves to a merely physical constraint, rather, their main goal was to "invade the mental universe of a people, destabilizing them from what they used to know, into knowing what is brought in by colonialism, committing 'crimes' such as *epistemicide* (the killing and displacement of pre-existing knowledges), *linguicide* (killing and displacing the languages of a people and imposing your own), *culturicide* (where you kill or replace the cultures of a people)[538].

As a matter of fact, the process of deprivation and racialisation that underpinned European colonialism led to a gradual, sometimes violent entrenchment of independence sentiments across the African continent, especially since the 1960s. Anti-colonial movements in Tunisia began to spread as early as the 1920s, going through various phases of acceleration and slowdown. In 1912, a small number of youthful Tunisian intellectuals created the first, albeit marginal, independence movement called "Young Tunisians"[539]. Influenced by Western liberalism, they called for the principle of national self-determination and for the equalization of rights and freedoms between Tunisians and French settlers. Along this modernist movements, another initially separated group of religious traditionalists emerged. As Revlin recalls, the so-called "Old Turbans" were antithetical to the modernist tendencies and ideals of the Young Tunisians whom they viewed with suspicion. However, the enactment of the French law of 1923, which provided the possibility for skilled Tunisians to obtain French nationality, constituted a first fundamental moment of cooperation and integration between the two movements. As in Algeria, French naturalisation was considered in the eyes of many Tunisian Muslims as heresy since it involved the acceptance of French laws and the jurisdiction of French courts in place of Islamic law and courts**.** The climax of mass protests, the first of their kind in the country, were generated by the burial of naturalised Tunisians in Muslim cemeteries. To resolve anti-French sentiments, the colonial administration was forced to create cemeteries reserved for naturalised Tunisians as burial in Muslim cemeteries was forbidden for them[540]. In this initial phase of enthusiasm for decolonization, the first Tunisian political party, the Destūr, was established under Sheikh Abd-el-Aziz Taalbi's leadership. Inspired by the liberal Tunisian constitution of 1857, which remained in force for a short period of time and was based on the equality of all before the law, the Destūr (meaning constitution) called for "the emancipation of the Tunisian people from the bonds of

[538] Omanga, D. (2020, 2).
[539] Rivlin, B. (1952).
[540] Ibidem p.170-171

slavery”, implementing a programme of several points including equal pay for Tunisian and French officials performing equal work; compulsory primary education; participation of Tunisians in the acquisition of crown lands and of lands for colonization; freedom of press and assembly[541] etc. In spite of Destūr’s success in evoking anti-French sentiments, the programme and the political strategies put in place to realise it, failed. Moreover, the repressive policies implemented by the French against Destūr led to a period of inactivity and weakening of the latter. Internal divergences within the party, declared illegal by the French authorities in 1933, also led to a split within Destūr and the subsequent creation, the following year, of the Neo- Destūr led by Habib Bourguiba. As Revlin argued, the Neo- Destūr managed to gain supremacy over the Old Destūr through an intensive mass education campaign: organising youth groups, holding demonstrations and creating a party organisation throughout the country. Thus, managing to appeal to a greater anti-colonial consciousness throughout the country[542].

In a broader perspective, as Perrier (2021) stressed, the two Desturian factions differed in three main aspects. On a political level, unlike Taalbi's strategy, Bourguiba and Neo-Destūr’s leaders adopted a more pragmatic approach based on a policy of collaboration with colonial power. Furthermore, the cultural differences between the Old Destūr exponents, adherents of the Islamist reformist current (*iṣlāḥ*), did not coincide with the positions of the Neo- Destūr leaders, who were instead inspired by the ideals of democracy and the French Revolution. This discrepancy is in fact indicative of a social difference that characterised the old and the Neo-Destūr. Whereas the Old Destūr, originated by the nationalist ideals of the Young Tunisians, was made up of a bourgeois elite, the Neo- Destūr was composed of the emerging Tunisian middle class. At the end of 1930s, with the outbreak of World War II, Bourguiba and other nationalist leaders were arrested and the Neo- Destūr was dissolved. However, the dismantling of the party did not put an end to anti-colonial activism in the country. Rather these movements operated underground, keeping their organisations intact. As several scholars pointed out, the more French government strengthened its measures against the Neo-Destūr, the more incidents of violence grew. After a brief period of increased leeway caused by the German occupation of Tunisia from November 1942 to May 1943[543], France’s repression increased even more. Indeed, besides the reimposition of the state of siege rule through which Bourguiba was sent back to exile, France deposed the popular Tunisian reigning ruler, Moncef Bey. Such a removal

[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid. p. 172
[543] For strategic reasons, the Nazis granted the nationalists full freedom, overriding the French laws that had relegated the movements to a condition of clandestinely. For this reason, Bourguiba, who had been sent into exile, was able to return to Tunis from where he was exiled again with the end of the German occupation and the restoration of the French protectorate, in May 1943.

was alleged to be pro-Axis sympathies detected during the German occupation. However, as Revlin put it, the real reason was the Bey's pro-nationalist position[544]. Security issues also became a guise in relation to possible fascist infiltration of the Italian community in Tunisia. As a consequence, France put in place further measures to get rid of the Italian settlers. Between the end of World War II and the attainment of independence in 1956, a gradual exodus of Europeans to their countries of origin began in Tunisia. Mass expropriation of properties (justified on the ground of public security), bans on fishing activities, the closure of Italian schools, newspapers and cultural centres, and even expulsion, represented some of the strategies employed by the French authorities to encourage Italians to leave. As it will be argued in the next pages, in the name of decolonization independent Tunisia continued to pursue a policy of removal of foreigners (especially of Italians and French). Despite Bourguiba's absence from Tunisia due to his exile that lasted from 1943 to 1949, the Neo-Destur was nevertheless able to strengthen his influence thanks to international support of the Arab Legue[545] and the important alliances that Ṣāliḥ Ben Yūsuf, the party's secretary general, forged with the *Union Générale Tunisian du Travail* (UGTT) whose presence amongst the working classes allowed the party to enlarge its social base. In 1950, Neo-Destūr had 231,000 members in 260 local organisations[546]. In the wake of Libya's independence in 1951, having returned to Tunisia, Bourguiba and the Neo-Destūr leaders began an increasingly militant, demanding and less and less open to compromise nationalism. Indeed, following the failure of negotiations with the French government in 1952, armed resistance and a hardening of positions in both sides began. Nonetheless, the situation was smoothened by the reforms initiated by the new French Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès France, who, in 1954 agreed to the establishment of a new "Government of negotiations" that included the participation of the Neo-Destūr represented by Ṣāliḥ Ben Yūsuf as Minister of Justice, and Mohamed Chenik an independent nationalist who had been close to the deposed Moncef Bey, as Prime minister. Such institutional modifications were "required to lead Tunisia, by successive stages, toward internal autonomy[547]". By means of a convention in 1955 it was agreed that France would retain control of

[544] Rivlin, B. (1952, 174).

[545] The Arab League (*Al-Jāmiʿah al-ʿArabiyyah*), known also as League of Arab States (LAS) was created in Cairo on March 1945 by its seven founding members: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, later joined by Libya, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco, Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Somalia, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Djibouti, and Comoros. The League's objectives are to strengthen and coordinate the political, cultural, economic and social programmes of its members and to mediate disputes between them or between them and third parties. The signing of an agreement on common defence and economic cooperation on 13 April 1950 also committed the signatories to coordinating military defence measures. The League, however, was weakened by internal disagreements over political issues, especially those concerning Israel and the Palestinians. With the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in October 2023, disagreements within the League have been rekindled with four countries rejecting the proposed measure against Israel.

[546] Perrier, A. (2023).

[547] Cfr. Rivlin, B. (1952, 179).

the army and foreign policy while guaranteeing the country's autonomy. The failure to fully proclaim independence generated a split within the party. In fact, while Bourguiba advocated a more cautious strategy towards independence to be achieved peacefully and in stages, and with the cooperation of France, according to Ben Yūsuf, an advocate of pan-Arabism and the armed struggle for immediate and total independence, the agreement represented a bankruptcy. Indeed, in the Yusufian perspective, Bourguiba had adopted an overly lenient stance in negotiations with France especially with regard to the Algerian war, started in 1954. The disagreement was resolved within the party with the approval of Bourguiba's moderate line and the expulsion of Ben Yūsuf from the Neo-Destūr[548]. On the 20th of March 1956 Tunisia gained full independence from France, with Bourguiba as President of the new Tunisian Republic in 1957. The major political, social and economic transformations brought about by the decolonisation process in Tunisia, as well as in the whole regional area, have deeply impacted the Tunisian migratory context.

3.1.3 Turnings points: Tunisia (1956- 2011)

As extensively noted in the first chapter, the triumphant process of decolonisation that swept across the African continent since the second half of the 20th century, marked the beginning of the process analysed by de Haas and Frankema (2022) that I referred to as *the beginning of outward-African migration.* In the specific case of Tunisia, in the half-century between independence and the 2011 uprisings, flows towards Europe have increased in the country, nevertheless, as it will now be argued, Tunisia's role as a country of in-migration has never really come to an end.

Two years after taking office, Bourguiba began to enact a series of increasingly stringent laws against European foreigners in Tunisia, leading as anticipated to a veritable mass exodus. In 1959, Tunisian government enacted a labour law aimed at protecting Tunisian workers, triggering a progressive substitution of foreigner workforce with Tunisian nationals to tackle high structural unemployment. Shortly afterwards, with the 1961 decree the government also stipulated that only Tunisians could operate as merchants and, by the law on the nationalisation of agricultural land, repealed in 1964, thousands of Europeans, mainly Italians who had been working for decades in the agricultural sector, left the country. As Francesca Fauri highlighted, these decolonization operations also coupled with work permit regulations for all foreigners generating panic among Europeans. In view of the economic difficulties that hundreds of thousands of Italians began to face in Tunisia, the Italian government set up an evacuation plan to facilitate their repatriation. Some headed for Italy, others, many of them naturalised French, chose France. However, having lived in Tunisia for

[548] While continuing his political activities in Southern Tunisia, where he originated from, Ben Yūsuf was condemn to death penalty in 1957 managing the following year to escape Tunisia, and fleeing to Egypt.

generations, European countries represented foreigner lands for most them.[549] Whilst in the immediate post-war period the rate of repatriations was around 1000/1500 individuals per year, with the restrictions placed on foreigners during the first half of the 1960s,[550] repatriations increased to 6000/6500 per year. As Sean Haley pointed out[551], also Tunisian Jews undergone to an emigration process. According to data, it is most likely safe to assume that the number of Tunisian Jews in 1954-1956 was around 100,000[552]; of these, on the basis of French records, 25% chose to emigrate either to European countries or to Israel. As Haley points out, in the very early years of the decolonisation of Tunisia, the governmental action arguably posing the greatest difficulties for the Jewish community was the promulgation of the Tunisian Constitution on 1 June 1959 which beyond affirming the plain sovereignty of Tunisia, posed Islam as official religion of the State.

Despite Bourguiba's openness to Tunisian Jews, the pan-Arabist ideology adopted by Bourguiba and reflected in his close relations with newly independent Algeria's leader Ben Bella and the resumption of relations with Nasser in Egypt, somewhat crumbled the identity consciousness of the Jews who had lived in Tunisia for centuries.[553] Indeed, Bourguiba's closeness with the other Pan-Arabist leaders, openly anti-colonial and therefore anti-Israeli, generated a strong sense of insecurity in the Jewish community in Tunisia. The Bizerte crisis in the early 1960s acted as a catalyst for the strengthening of the Tunisian Arab identity, and consequently for the emigration of Jews to Tunisia. In fact, despite Tunisia's independence, France had retained control of the city of Bizerte until 1963 by virtue of its strategic port position during the war in Algeria (1954-1962).

In an attempt to block the widening of the French naval base, Tunisian forces attempted, in vain, to carry out a naval blockade in 1961, forcing France to leave the country permanently. The crisis brought to the expulsion of several Jews (mainly holders of French passports), accused of active collaboration with France against Tunisian military force.[554] Jewish population having pro-French sympathies provided that they were perceived as outsiders within the new Muslim, Arab Tunisian Nation. Building on Memmi, one of the most influential Tunisian Jewish authors, it must be remembered that although recognised as Tunisians, the Jews in Tunisia experienced a hybrid identity consciousness, never fully French nor Tunisian. Nonetheless, from a cultural perspective the Tunisian Jewish community, particularly the upper-middle and upper classes, increasingly identified with the French settlers choosing to use the French language, to dress in the Italian style, and joyfully adopt

[549] Fauri, F., Stangio, D. (2019)
[550] Ibid. p.13
[551] Haley, S. (2012).
[552] Ibid. p. 22.
[553] Ibid. p. 66.
[554] Laskier, M. M. (1987, 213).

every idiosyncrasy of the Europeans.[555] As a matter of fact, between 1961 and 1967 the emigration of Jews increased. Alongside these early migratory outflows from Tunisia, in the period immediately following independence, the country had to deal with the massive arrival of people fleeing the Algerian War of Independence. It was, as Natter and Funk note, the first largest case of forced migrants' arrivals in the contemporary history of Tunisia[556].

Several scholars have shed light on the important role of the politics of forced migration within the process of postcolonial state-building formation, as well as during post-revolutionary regime transformations. Indeed, as just seen in the case of the Tunisian Jews, the phase of decolonisation (and, as we will see, the phase of democratisation triggered by the 2011 uprisings) marked, in the country's history, two turning points in the redefinition of the self and its approach to "the other[557]".

Around 1960, the conflict in Algeria had already caused more than two million internal displaced people, and the fleeing of about two hundred thousand Algerians to Tunisia who remained mainly in the South-West of Tunisia, near the Algerian border.[558] In the 1950s and 1960s, framed in a supportive pan-Arab spirit, Tunisia redefined its national identity and political institutions in open opposition to Europe. By this standpoint, the open and proactive approach to the arrival of Algerian migrants fleeing a war of independence that Tunisia had managed to avoid, served as ideological assets[559]. Nevertheless, aware of the Tunisia's reduced economic capacities, Bourguiba and the political leaders of the new state decided to respond to the large-scale of arrivals by involving the international community and emphasising the humanitarian nature of the crisis. Consequently, on May 1957, with the spreading of these new flows, President Bourguiba requested UNHCR's support which resulted in the first UNHCR intervention outside Europe since its creation.

By the end of the Algerian conflict, and the subsequent declaration of Independence in 1963, many Algerians returned to their country of origin, closing, as Natter states, the Tunisian's chapter of refugee reception for the next decades. As partly anticipated, however, the phase following decolonisation, and in particular between the 1970s and 1980s, was mostly characterised by a phenomenon of emigration from Tunisia – and more generally from North Africa to Western, mainly European, countries. In figure 13 it is noteworthy that during the period under consideration, Tunisian emigration to Europe increased progressively[560].

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[555] Memmi Colonizer

[556] Müller-Funk, L. and Natter, K. (2022

[557] Ibid.

[558] Many Algerians also fled to Morocco

[559] Müller-Funk, L. and Natter, K. (2023,11)

[560] The data refer to 2014 Natter's study of 8 OECD countries: the Netherlands, USA, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium and Canada, the main destination countries for flows originating from the Maghreb. See Natter, K. (2014).

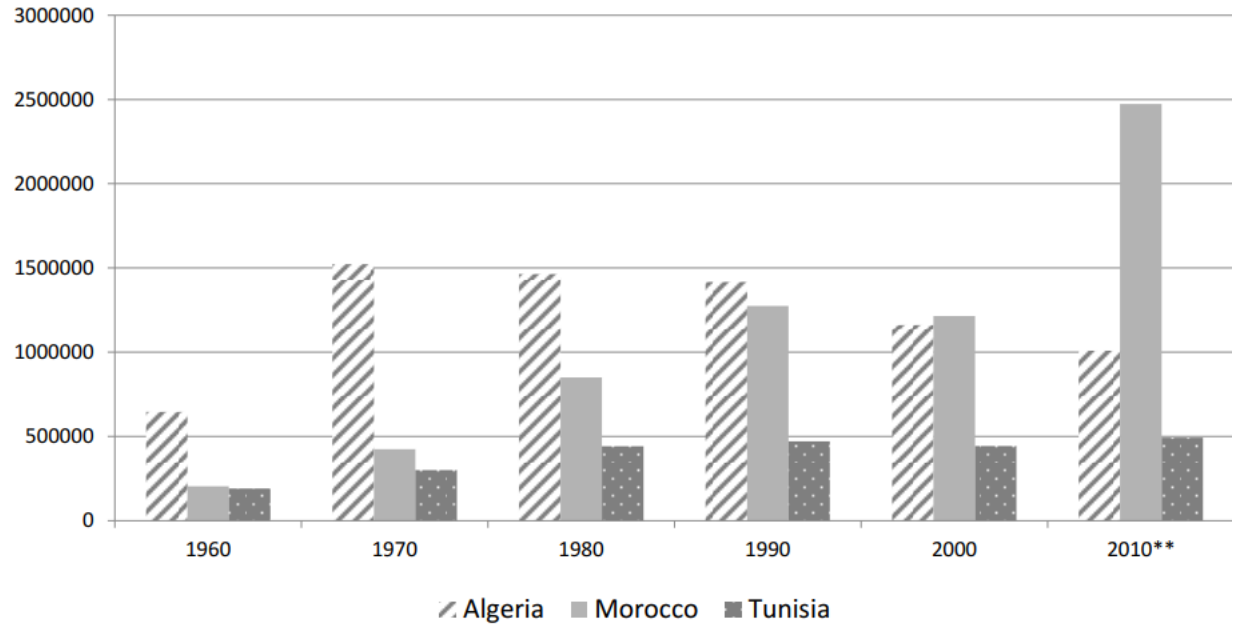

FIG. 13. **Maghreb migrant populations in eight OECD countries 1960–2010**
Source: Natterer, K. (2014)

The geographical proximity to Europe, as well as the colonial and post-colonial links of the Maghreb with France and the labour recruitment agreements that these countries signed with Europe since the 1960s, have made the Maghreb the region of extra-continental African emigration *par excellence*[561]. In analysing the phenomenon of Tunisian emigration[562], Alice Mensard identified four main waves of flows. The first period, dating back to the early 1960s, involved a flow of Tunisian workers who migrated to Europe – mainly to France – in response to a growing need for low-skilled labour during the reconstruction of European economy. In this vein, as Boubakri and Potot highlighted, the rapid economic growth that characterised post WWII European countries, especially France, Germany and Belgium, had generated an increased demand for cheap labour force to be employed in agriculture, industry and construction.[563] Compared to the later flows, as Pouessel points out, this initial phase was less regularised, mainly temporal and male dominated. Nonetheless, the historical cultural bonds between Italy and Tunisia, as well as the growing economic gap between the South and North that characterised the development of the Italian economy in the post-war phase, increasingly attracted Tunisian migrants. During this second wave of Tunisian emigration, from mid-1960s to mid 1975s, Southern Italy and the Sicilian area of Mazara del Vallo specifically, became an important destination for several Tunisian[564] who fulfilled with their presence the need for repopulation and human

[561] Flahaux, M.L., De Haas, H. (2014)
[562] Mensard, A. (2004) in Pouessel, S. (2017).
[563] Boubakri, H., Potot S. (2013).
[564] IOM (2020b, 15).

resources for Sicily's rural economy, which had deteriorated after the 1968 Belice earthquake. In addition to the agricultural sector, fishing, a sector abandoned by the local population in favour of other more lucrative activities in Northern Italy, also needed a new workforce which was filled by the fishing community from the coastal areas of Sfax, Mahdia and Chebba. In order to regularise these temporary emigration flows, Tunisian government signed several bilateral agreements with the main European destination countries, particularly with Italy, France, Germany and Belgium making emigration regulated. At that time indeed, Tunisia as well as Morocco encouraged, through ad hoc policies, emigration to Europe assuming a return migration that would benefit the country through newly acquired knowledge, experiences, and financial resources to reinvest in the country[565]. As a matter of fact, in 1967 the Tunisian government created an agency called "*Office de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle*" that organised the direct recruitment of unskilled Tunisian workers for industry and building sectors in Western European countries. Although northward flows constituted the main pattern for Tunisian migrants, in the same period and since the 1970s, emigration from Tunisia also took place sub-regionally, in particular to Libya[566]. Due to its booming oil industry and vast employment opportunities, Libya became an important destination country for Tunisians but also for migrants coming from the MENA region, as well as other African countries such as Sudan, Chad, Niger. The emigration of Tunisian workers towards Libya, started in 1969, expanded consistently until 1977[567]. Indeed, as Findlay & Findlay have thoroughly analysed, the initial phase of flows from the areas of Medenine, Gabes and Sfax grew pushing new Tunisian workforce coming from other areas (such as Tunis, Sousse and Kasserine) to move in Libya[568]. Such an increase, can be explained by the important economic and geopolitical shifts that took place at that time, ushering in the third wave of emigration from Tunisia during the period 1975-1985. In the wake of the oil crisis of 1973-74 and the subsequent economic recession that severely hit Europe, many Western countries began to introduce more restrictive measures on mobility, increasingly imposing a visa regime[569]. As several

[565] de Haas, H. (2007). See also Pouessel, S. (2017).

[566] In 1969, under the leadership of Muammar Gaddafi, a military coup in Libya led to the fall of the monarchy (accused of corruption and excessive pro-Western views). As it is known, Gaddafi remained in office for 42 years, until 2011, when the Libyan civil war broke out. According to IOM (2020) estimates, prior to Gaddafi's death, high employment rates and a strong economy have made Libya an important destination country for some 2.5 million migrant workers mainly in the health and construction sectors, services and, to a smaller extent also the agriculture and oil industries. Migrants were attracted, among other things, by the "open door" migration policies implemented by Gaddafi himself. See IOM (2020b); Kuschminder, K., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2020). Morone, A. M. (2016).

[567] Morone, A. M. (2020).

[568] Findlay, A., Findlay, A. (1982,42).

[569] de Haas H., (2007). On the implementation of European visas regime, see also Lavenex, S., & Uçarer, E. M. (2004); Bigo, D. (2010; 2016).

scholars highlighted, if, on the one hand, the beginning of the restraints on the northward mobility of North-Africans began to encounter the first obstacles, on the other hand the economic boom enjoyed by the Gulf countries generated a new, albeit modest outflow – mainly from Tunisia and Morocco – which, nevertheless, continued for geographical and political reasons to favour Libya until the late 1970s[570]. However, Tunisian emigration toward Tripoli came to an abrupt halt from the mid-1980s when Libya faced a severe economic crisis due to the collapse of the oil price[571]. Given the country's dependence on oil revenues, Libya had to face an important economic crisis which was followed by the mass expulsion of many of the foreign workers who had previously settled in Libya, including more than 100,000 Tunisians. The new restrictions imposed by Gaddafi at that time, led many Tunisians to prefer Europe in their migration plans. Interestingly, despite Europe's implementation of increasingly restrictive measures on mobility, Tunisian emigration towards Europe doubled over the fourth emigration wave, from the mid-1980s to 2000. Paradoxically indeed, the gradual introduction of visas for the entry of non-EU citizens into Europe during this period meant that many migrants who had come to Italy and Europe in the previous decades decided to stay there rather than return to their countries of origin due to fears of being unable to re-enter the host country. As a result, many Tunisians were able to take advantage of the new family reunification policies introduced in Europe to allow other members of their families to join them and settle[572].

It is not a case hence if from late 1980s Tunisian emigration experienced a process of feminisation. Although still mainly linked to the role of husbands and families, as Hassen Boubakri notes, the feminisation of Tunisian migration increasingly began to take on the role of the breadwinner, following the global trends already analysed. According to the scholar, three main reasons may explain the augmentation of these flows. First, the gradual increase in the educational level of women in Tunisia, who, according to Ministry of Education estimates, accounted for more than half of university students in 2007. One of the main features of the migratory phase that characterised the 1990s and early 2000s, was a gradual replacement of low-skilled migrants with one made up instead of highly skilled young people, to which Tunisian women began to gain increasing access. In the second place, a shift in the role of women within Tunisian households, and in particular a greater involvement of women in the labour market; lastly, an increase in the average age of women for marriages.[573] Meanwhile, towards the end of the 1980s, Tunisia was undergoing major political

[570] See de Haas, H. (2007); Pouessel, S. (2017); Morone, A. M. (2020).
[571] Since mid-80s in fact, there had been a decline in world oil consumption with a huge subsequent price collapse from $27 per barrel in 1985 to just $10 in 1987. See Altunisik, M. B., & Altunisik, M. B. (1996).
[572] Pouessel, S. (2017); Boubakri, H. (2011); Fargues, P. (2004)
[573] As will be discussed in the next chapter, these factors are particularly important for understanding the intimate work performed by sub-Saharan migrant women. Hence, I will return in detail in the issue by

transformations with the famous "medical coup d'état"[574] implemented by Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali in 1987. Ben Ali's regime, which lasted until the 2011 uprisings, was characterised by its pro-Western and anti-Islamic approach[575]. In terms of migration management, the neo-president leveraged the transformations of the Western securitarian paradigm to increase restrictions on mobility. Ben Ali's migration management in Tunisia confirm the already mentioned Hahonou & Olsen's analysis on the role of migration as a tool for shaping the power relations between the "Global South" and the "Global North". By this standpoint, Tunisia's participation in the global fight against Islamist extremism from early 2000s allowed then-President Ben Ali gaining EU's support, while increasing control over the population, hence turning the securitarian paradigm into the justification for a repressive police state and a greater control over the population[576].

In a geopolitical context strongly shaken by the 11/09 attacks, the need for the EU to strengthen border's externalisation policies, further grew during the new millennium due to the increase of migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa to Tunisia. According to Manzella and Boubakri,[577] the phenomenon may be understood through an interpenetration of different factors: following the spread of many private universities in the early 2000s, the country became a pole of attraction for several foreign students, particularly from sub-Saharan states where Tunisian higher education system benefits from a good reputation.[578] However, a major migration flow then swept through the country

analysing it in relation to the transformations of contemporary capitalism and the important role that feminist movements had in Tunisia in shaping women's status, roles and responsibilities. See section 4.2 of this thesis.

[574] The coup, strongly pushed by Ben Ali, was carried out by exploiting the alleged mental incapacity of the then 80-year-old Bourguiba. Supported by the Italian secret services, Ben Ali, who had a military background, succeeded in pressurising the medical commission in charge of judging Bourguiba's health condition, thus obtaining his deposition. This manoeuvre was called a "medical coup d'état".

[575] Ben Ali's political activity was strongly influenced by the ideologies of his predecessor with whom Ben Ali collaborated for a long time within the Neo-Destūr. When Ben Ali became president following the coup d'état, the country was going through an unprecedented economic crisis since independence. In addition, the country was facing internally increasing affiliations with Islamist terrorism. Extremist fringes were very active in the North African country and many groups took part in the fighting in Afghanistan during the war against the Soviet Union.In 1988, Ben Ali dissolved the Desturian Party, founding instead the Constitutional Democratic Grouping: this was a political formation that took up the legacy of the party founded by Bourguiba, while maintaining a strongly secular identity.

[576] Cfr. Meddeb, H. (2012, 389). On the role of Ben Ali in strengthening Western securitarian devices in domestic policies, see also Akrimi, Y. (2020).

[577] Boubakri, H., Manzella, S. (2005).

[578] In this vein, it is worth noting that between 2004 and 2017, the number of foreign students enrolled in Tunisian universities increased from 4,000 to 31,000 (Terre d'asile 2018), with the majority (75%) of foreign students coming from SSA. Indeed, while the good reputation of Tunisian higher education system plays an important role in attracting foreign students, the phenomenon is part of a broader one related to an increase in intra-continental migration related to higher education in recent years, particularly toward South Africa, Ghana, Morocco and Congo (ibid). See, Terre d'Asile(2018), accessible through this link: MergedFile (terre-asile-tunisie.org); see also, Manzella, S.(2009); Boubakri, H., Manzella, S. (2005).

in 2003 when the escalation of the Ivorian crisis brought the provisional relocation of the *Banque Africaine de Développement* (BAD) from the Côte d'Ivoire capital city Abidjan, to Tunis. The consistent flows of Ivorian refugees, as well as the transfer of the BAD's staff (which contend about 2000 employees) with their families resulted – as it will be argued in the next pages – in a long-standing permanence in Tunisia. Nevertheless, 2011 Libyan crisis played a crucial role in shaping Tunisia's migratory scenario. About a decade after the oil crisis that had plagued Libya indeed, Gaddafi had again implemented a series of migration policies that incentivised the arrival of foreign labour from African countries. These incentives represented a strategic response for the Libyan president to the economic isolation caused by the UN embargo in the late 1990s and 2000s[579] most of migrants – including Tunisian workers – who migrated in Libya during that period permanently settled there. However, when the 2011 uprisings against Gaddafi's regime escalated into a civil war first and subsequently into an international conflict for Libyan state and resources control, hundreds of thousands of Libyans as well as sub-Saharan migrants fled to Tunisia through the Southern Ras Jadir border-post which, by the end of 2011, was crossed by one million individuals[580], making Tunisia the country that received the largest number of fleeing migrants from Libya (43% of the total)[581]. The mass arrival of migrants from Libya represented in the modern history of Tunisia, the second largest case of forced migrations after Algerian war of Independence. Yet, the Libyan migration crisis coincided, like the Algerian one, with a delicate turning point for the country, the fall of the Ben Ali regime[582] and the beginning of the democratisation process.

[579] United Nation posed an embargo on Libya during 1990s. Sanctions foreseen among other things, the ban the export to Libya of a wide range of oil and gas equipment, banned transactions involving Libyan airlines, and imposed an asset freeze on the Libyan government, with the significant loophole of permitting the repatriation of Libyan oil and agricultural revenues.

[580] Tazzioli, M. Garelli, G. (2016)

[581] Ibid.

[582] Starting in December 2010, due to high unemployment, rampant government corruption, increasing poverty and the strong repression that characterised Ben Ali's government, Tunisia was hit by a wave of violent uprisings in which the population demanded an end to the regime. The repression through which Ben Ali tried to quell the protests resulted in the deaths of dozens of protesters, attracting international attention and condemnation. Nevertheless, the protests continued. In an attempt to quell the tension - both internally and domestically - the president appeared on national television on 13 January 2011, promising that he would reduce the price of food and loosen restrictions on the internet until the end of his term in 2014. However, protests continued in a violent manner, and on 14 January a state of emergency was declared and the government was dissolved. Ben Ali left the country to avoid arrest. A new government was formed with the Prime Minister, Mohamed Gannouchi, at the head of the government, replaced as interim by President Fouad Mebazaa. The fact that both were members of Ben Ali's political party (the Democratic Constitutional Rally), did nothing to dampen social tensions, so that in February the new government suspended all party activities. The transition led in 2014 to the promulgation of a new constitution and the election of a new president, Beji Caid Essebsi, who remained in office until 2019. The apparent success of the uprisings, known in the Western press as the "Jasmine Revolution" has famously inspired and triggered similar movements in the MENA region, destabilising some of the region's longest-standing regimes.

Unlike the emergency response of the then President Bourguiba to Algerian refugees, the post- Ben Ali democratic government's relief to the Libyan crisis was characterized by a policy of "no policy[583]" or, to use a philosophical-political expression, by a governamental practice of *not governing too much* (Tazzioli, M. 2020). With the very first arrivals, the Tunisian government set up the famous Choucha camp located in the desert area between Ben Guerdane and the Libyan border, under the authority of the Tunisian army and managed by the Red Crescent, UNHCR, and IOM. Despite the arrival of more than 500,000 Libyans, the Choucha camp was mainly used to hold sub-Saharan migrants who had arrived from Libya[584]. For the Tunisian government, the Libyans were not refugees but *brothers or neighbours whose de facto protection was guarantee because freedom of movement between both countries theoretically existed since a 1973 bilateral agreement between Libya and Tunisia*.[585] In this vein, the newly democratic state, accommodated the presence of Libyan citizens granting them children access to schools, by not enforcing laws related to overstaying and irregular stay and by easing regulations on purchasing property[586]. The camp instead hosted more than 18.000 sub-Saharans[587] mainly coming from Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia. Although Tunisia responded to the Libyan crisis by opening its borders to refugees, regardless of their nationalities, it limited the involvement of international actors[588] such as the UNHCR. Starting in 1992, during Ben Ali regime, the government signed an agreement with the UNHCR making it the sole authority responsible for determining refugee status. However, despite being a signatory to the Geneva Convention on the Refugee Status, Tunisia has never adopted an internal law granting international protection to asylum seekers. As a matter of fact, sub-Saharan refugees, who fled Libya remained mostly "rejected refugees[589]". As will be observed, the apparent lack of control that has characterised the Tunisian government's management of migration since the Libyan crisis, responds to a precise technology of power that uses partial control in order to gain control. In an interesting study recently published by Katharina Natter entitled *The Politics of Immigration Beyond Liberal Staes: Morocco and Tunisia in Comparative Perspective*, the author questions the methodological Western centrism when it comes to analysing migration policies in Global South. According to Natter indeed, *Southern states are often assumed to be either powerless, or, less frequently, all powerful. Public policies in non-Western states are considered largely irrelevant, either because their implementation is considered as limited*

[583] See Natter, K. (2022, 1516).
[584] See Tazzioli, M., Garelli, G. (2017, 2014)
[585] Müller-Funk, L., & Natter, K. (2023,9) See also, Ben Hamida 1, A., & Ben Khalifa 2, R. (2012).
[586] Ibid.
[587] As several scholars and civil society actors highlighted, these estimates are not accurate because the government has never undertaken registration practices.
[588] Müller-Funk, L., & Natter, K. (2023, 3).
[589] Tazzioli, M. (2014).

by widespread corruption and a lack of administrative capacity, or because migration is seen as being driven by economic factors and individual or household strategies[590]. In a nutshell, the role of states policies in Southern counties, is often disregarded[591]. Research on migrations in Tunisia, both (as we have seen) in past historical eras and in the contemporary phase, fit in this Eurocentric perspective. Indeed, while it is true that Tunisia is a strategic analytical lens for *understanding the politics of mobility in the Mediterranean*[592] , most of the current literature and data continue to emphasise *its different roles as a country of origin for migrants, as a country of transit for migrants and refugees coming from other countries and directed to Europe*[593]. Yet, changing perspective, that is, shifting the focus along intra-African routes, Tunisia represents an important analytical lens for understanding the governance of mobility far beyond the Mediterranean, a research topic which remains fairly new within the literature. The Southern perspective proposed in the following pages is twofold: on a political level, as mentioned earlier, it allows a disengagement from paternalistic views wherein the Tunisian government is a pawn of the European technocracy. As I will show, not recognizing itself as a destination country, indeed, is not due to the inability or failure of the Tunisian government, rather it is a governmental practice of "not governing too much[594]" that relies on this withdrawal to get rid of institutional responsibility towards migrants as subjects of rights. Additionally, as I have already partly anticipated, on a biopolitical level, a Southern perspective is particularly relevant for two main reasons. On the one hand, it contributes to showing the outcomes of contemporary border regimes in the countries in which these practices are implemented. Such a perspective, it is worth specifying, offers an unprecedented view of analysis as it breaks away from approaches that, although critical, continue to examine the outcomes of migration governance only in northbound flows. Academia's focus on the Mediterranean routes is an example of this. Accordingly, and for sake of completeness, after providing a general overview of Tunisian emigration in the post-2011 phase, I will start addressing – in line with the objectives of this thesis – solely the country's role within inter-African migration routes.

[590] Cfr. Natter, K. (2022
[591] Natter, k., Thiollet, H. (2022)
[592] Tazzioli, M., Garelli, G. (2016, 5).
[593] Ibid.
[594] Tazzioli M., (2020)

3.2 Ungovernable spaces. Contemporary migration in Tunisia.

3.2.1 Between North and South: the phenomenon of emigration from Tunisia.

As already discussed, migration from North Africa, particularly Tunisia, to Europe has a recent history. Since 2011, Tunisia's poor economic performance and political uncertainty have been fuelling feelings of disenchantment and frustration about the change that the 2011 revolution was expected to bring, especially among Tunisian youth[595]. With the instability caused by the collapse of Ben Ali's regime, 2011 marked a year in which flows from Tunisia to the European shores, Italy in particular, spiked significantly with the unauthorised arrival of 22,000 Tunisians[596]. As outlined by the *Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Économiques et Sociaux* (FTDES), after a decline in departures between 2011 and 2016, a further spike in departures was recorded in 2017[597]. The decline between 2011 and 2017 must be ascribed to an increase in the restrictions placed by the EU on Tunisia during that period[598]. As a matter of fact, both the increased mobility from sub-Saharan Africa towards Tunisia and the geopolitical instability generated by the 2011 Arab uprisings on the on hand, and the 2015 Syrian "refugee crisis" which resulted in the arrival of refugees also on Tunisian soil,[599] led the EU to see the Tunisian migratory space as increasingly out of control. As a consequence, between 2011 and 2015 the "ungovernability" of Tunisian space brought the EU to reinforce its bordering devices in Tunisia.

As showed by FTDES in 2020, during the five-year period 2011- 2016, EU funding to Tunisia increased to more than EUR 2 billion. Since 2015, more than half (53.50 per cent) of EU funding has been allocated to the management of migration flows in Tunisia[600]. More recently, between 2016 and 2019, the EU invested EUR 58 million in Tunisia[601] through three different funds aimed at managing migration flows: the already cited EUTF created in 2015 in order to promote greater stability and remedy the causes of irregular migration in Africa, and representing 94% of investment; the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) renewed for the period 2022-27; and the Regional European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI). However, amongst the several EU-funded projects in the country, the Border Management Program for the Maghreb (BMP Maghreb) has been the most

[595] Mercy corps–REACH (2018 Tunisia, country of emigration and return. Migration dynamics since 2018. See also See Boubakri H., (2013).

[596] However, according to the FTDES these figures are underestimated and claimed that the number of Tunisians who left in 2017, not considering the missing persons and those who died during the crossings, would amount to around 35,000.)

[597] See, Akrimi, Y. (2020).

[598] Mercy corps- REACH. 2018.

[599] Tazzioli, M., Garelli, G. (2016)

[600] FTDES (2020, 17).

[601] Ibid.

expensive, with 20 million of euros intended for the equipment and training of Tunisian border control operations aimed at reducing irregular departures[602]. Despite pressure from Tunisian civil society, to date a total lack of transparency persists with respect to what funds, programs and funding actors are mobilised to what aim[603] (FTDES 2020). On February 2022, the EU and Tunisia adopted the "Joint Communication on the renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood" establishing the "New Agenda for the Mediterranean."[604]

The document's introduction states:

> *Twenty-five years ago, the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean partners committed to turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity. (…) A strengthened Mediterranean partnership remains a strategic imperative for the European Union, as the challenges the region continues to face require a common response, especially ten years after the Arab Spring. By acting together, recognising our growing interdependence, and in a spirit of partnership, we will turn common challenges into opportunities, in our mutual interest*[605]*".*

Despite restriction, departures from Tunisia have not stopped. In 2022, according to UNHCR figures, 31% of arrivals in Italy along the Central Mediterranean Route[606] (CMR) came from Tunisia[607]. In 2023, 62% of sea crossing departed from Tunisia overtaking Libya[608]. This data confirms what I pointed out in the first chapter concerning the failure of externalisation policies in stopping flows in

[602] Ibid.
[603] Ibid.
[604] European commission (2021, February, 9). Document accessible through the following link: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf
[605] Ibid. p.2
[606] Migration flows crossing the Mediterranean Sea from the African continent are usually analysed along three directional axes. The central route is the one involving Tunisia, as well as Libya, Egypt, partly Algeria with flows to Italy and Malta. The Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) instead involves flows coming from Algeria and Morocco, and directed towards Spain. In addition to the westbound flows, there is the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands, which involves those flows originating in western sub-Saharan Africa such as Senegal, Guinea, Gambia and Mali going up to Mauritania, to the Western Sahara Republic or Morocco and from there to the Canary Islands. The Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) involves those flows to Turkey and Greece which, although mainly involving Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan migrants and refugees, affect the routes originating in the HOA, particularly from Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, following the itinerary described in chapter one to Khartoum (Sudan), the main hub of the EMR, or to Egypt. See Idemudia, E.S., Boehnke, K. (2020)
[607] UNHCR 2022, Italy sea arrivals dashboard: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/98376 (accessed January 2024)
[608] UNHCR 2023, Italy sea arrivals dashboard: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/107239 (accessed January 2024)

countries of origin and transit in Africa. As several scholars and IOs highlighted, the result of the current migration policies between the two shores of the Mediterranean consists rather in an alteration and proliferation of routes and a consequent increase in risks in crossing both land and sea borders. In fact, while governments claim to be committed to "fighting human trafficking" and "protecting human rights", what they actually produce is an upsurge in smuggling, or the increasingly lucrative business of irregularly crossing state borders; in a nutshell, as Maddrell et. al point out, a dramatic intertwining of migration and death.[609] The thanatopolitical outcome of mobility devices appears through the missing bodies floating at the bottom of the Mediterranean or through those returning, lifeless, to the shores from which they had departed. As the IOM has been pointing out for at least 10 years, the CMR has become the most dangerous migration route in the world[610]. For the purposes of this research, it is worth emphasising that at least until 2023, in the flows crossing the CMR out of Tunisia, Tunisian nationals accounted for the majority of migrants[611]. The deteriorating economic and social conditions of many young people in post-revolutionary Tunisia is among the main causes of the departures, which are mainly male-dominated.[612] However, looking at the data on unauthorised arrivals in Italy, Tunisia has only recently become one of the main countries of origin in respect to other nationalities[613]. One of the main responses that the EU – and Italy in particular – have come up with in agreement with the Tunisian government to respond to irregular arrivals on European shores, has been repatriation. The agreements on repatriation date back to the late 1990s, when Italy – with the Turco-Napolitano law (1998) – signed the first readmission agreement with Tunisia, inaugurating one of the very first attempts to externalise borders in Africa[614]. Readmission procedures can be

[609] Maddrell, A. (2023)

[610] According to IOM estimates, between 2014 and 2024, about 30 thousand migrants were reported dead and/or missing in the Mediterranean Sea. Of these, 78.7% had undertaken the CMR. (data of Missing Migrants Project- MMP). The same figures, albeit limited in quility and coverage, indicate that during the same period, migrants who died and/or went missing along the inter-African routes numbered approximately 14,386. The data can be accessed via the following link: https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean For further analysis on the situation in the Mediterranean, see Black, J. and I. Urquijo Sanchez (2017); Dearden, K., M. Sánchez Dionis, J. Black and F. Laczko (2020); Robins, S. (2019).

[611] According to UNHCR data, indeed, in 2020 and 2022, Tunisians made up 87% and 56%, respectively, of the migrants disembarked in Italy from Tunisia. (Document - Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard - December 2020 (unhcr.org) ; https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/98376). This trend changed in 2023, when for the first time since 2015, among the flows to Italy from Tunisia, corresponding to 50% of the total debarks for that year, Ivorians and Guineans made up around 77% of the arrivals. See, https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/107239 . See also 3.2.2)

[612] FTDES, (2017) https://ftdes.net/rapports/fr.omm3.2017.pdf

[613] Indeed, according to UNHCR figures, in 2017 the year in which there was a peak in arrivals of Tunisians, these made up only 5% of newcomers. The most represented nationality that year was Nigeria (15%). Most arrivals of sub-Saharan migrants via the Central Mediterranean route, however, came from Libya. Not from Tunisia. See https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/61547

[614] Together with Italy, during the same period, Tunisia signed readmission agreements with other five European countries. Please refer to Cassarino, J.P. (2012).

defined, using Jean-Pierre Cassarino's words, as *a process through which individuals who are not allowed to stay on the territory of a country are expelled or removed, whether in a coercive manner or not*[615]. In addition to the deportation procedures, the decrees allowed for the implementation of technical support for the control of outflows such as the creation of reception centres in the Tunisian territory for persons readmitted under the agreement itself, with a contribution of 500 million lire and close police cooperation between Italy and Tunisia aimed at patrolling Tunisian territorial waters. From a purely legal point of view, repatriation is envisaged for those migrants who, after careful assessment, are not eligible to apply for international protection. Eligibility for international protection does not depend on the migrants' country of origin, but on the contrary must be assessed on a case-by-case basis, according to the applicant's personal history.

Nonetheless, the entry of Tunisia in the list of "Safe countries of origin[616]" in 2019 has allowed for a significant reduction in the time and guarantees provided for the ordinary examination of applications for international protection. Hence, what actually happens is that the Italian authorities, together with the other operators in charge in various capacities of, managing the migrants' stay in the centres, exercise discretionary power in authorising or denying access to the asylum application, often operating an ex-ante selection based on the person's country of origin[617]. As revealed in a 2022 joint study conducted by the *Avocats sans Frontières* (ASF), the *Forum tunisien des droits économiques et sociaux* (FTDES) et the *Association d'études juridiques sur l'immigration* (ASGI), in order to speed up repatriation procedures, the Italian government would prevent most migrants of Tunisian nationality who have arrived irregularly in Italy from applying for asylum despite meeting the requirements, in total violation of international law[618]. As a matter of fact, looking at the most recent data available (2021), between 2016 and 2020 the number of Tunisian migrants repatriated from Italy increased[619]. The following year, in 2021, Tunisia was the main destination of Tunisian nationals repatriated from Italy accounting 73.5 % of the total number of migrants repatriated[620]. As argued by several scholars, in contemporary migration governance, deportations, repatriations and

[615] Cassarino, JP. (2010,1)

[616]For the Italian government, countries defined as "safe" are those areas of origin where the country's degree of stability is such that their citizens are not considered to be at risk of persecution or at serious risk to their lives. In general, therefore, such countries are able to guarantee a certain level of respect for the protection of human rights. Consequently, by means of the Decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 7 May 2024 updated the previous decree (art. 2-bis d.l. n. 25 of 28/01/2008), Italy considers the following countries as "safe countries of origin": Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Sri Lanka and Tunisia.

[617] See, ASF, FTDES, ASGI (2022, March) accessible through: https://ftdes.net/rapports/rapatriesitalie.pdf ; see also Raach, F. (2024).

[618] Ibid.

[619] Ibid.

[620]See Bove, C. and Romano, M. (2021).

imprisonment have become ordinary biopolitical practices that find in detention camps the place of application *par excellence*[621]. There is a long and ambiguous genealogy of the internment of unwanted others, whether enemies or (im)migrants. However, as Mezzadra and Neilson highlight, during the recent decades, the network of detention structures has enormously increased[622]. These places, as the case of Tunisian migrants shows, represent the sites of exception where regimes of police prevail over regimes of rights[623]. As a matter of fact, the ASF study pointed out that within the centres where migrants awaiting repatriation are held, in Italy called Centri per il Rimpatrio (CPR), most Tunisians state that they do not have access to showers and hot water, nor enough food. More than half of the Tunisians interviewed stated that they did not have a bed to sleep in and more than 80% said they had been mistreated by centre's staff. In 2020, in a CPR in the province of Potenza, an investigation was opened against some officers for violence against detainees and misuse of sedatives. In analysing the role of camps, Andrijasevic argued that far from a governmental practice that makes immobility its main biopolitical instrument, repatriation, as well as the proliferation of migrant detention centres and deportation represent a tool whereby to govern the dynamism of migration flows in spatial and temporal terms. Hence a sort of "decompression chamber[624]". Put in these terms, however, it would seem that dampening the dynamism of migration flows – made up of a chaotic coming and going, *interruptions and discontinuities such as hiding, waiting, unexpected diversions, settlements, stopovers, escapes and returns*[625] is precisely the object of governmental power. On the contrary, building on Martina Tazzioli's analysis on "how mobility is used as a disciplinary technique for managing migration and which hierarchies of lives are structured around it[626]", I stress that the empirical analyses emphasising the appeal of immobility and suspension in current migration governance practices, are misguided. Rather, by critically analysing Tunisia's role as a transit country in inter-African migration, it emerges that (hyper)mobility – being kept on the move – functions as a device of power producing "economically needed" and exploitable flows out of the ''turbulence'' of ''unwanted migration.[627]"

[621] See Andrijasevic, R. (2010); Campesi, G. (2020); Tazzioli, M., & Garelli, G. (2020).
[622] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013).
[623] Cfr, Fassin, D. (2011, 218).
[624] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 192).
[625] Andrijasevic, R. (2010).
[626] Tazzioli, M. 2020a, 106).
[627] Cfr. Geiger, M., Pécoud. A. (2010, 3)

3.2.2 A southern perspective: sub-Saharan Immigrants in Tunisia

Within the quantitative *vacuum* characterising intra-African migration research, Tunisia is not an exception. Although there has been a very recent increase in quantitative analyses on the presence of sub-Saharans in Tunisia, data remain scarce and very fragmented. In 2021, the *Institut National de la Statistique Tunisien* (INST) published one of probably the most reliable and comprehensive studies on in-migration in Tunisia. According to their findings, from 2014 to 2020, the presence of foreigners in Tunisia increased by 14%. However, comparing the 2004 population census data with those collected by the INST in 2021, the population of migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa increased from 3.017[628] to 21.466.[629] Among the main countries of origin of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroon, the DRC and Sudan, together constituting 75%; other nationalities include Eritrea, Gabon, Somalia, Mali and Nigeria, Benin and Senegal.[630] In general terms, according to INST's estimates, the number of foreigners in Tunisia (both regular and irregular) is about 58.990 individuals (about 0,5% of Tunisian population). Among them 37% are from the Maghreb; 36,4% are from "other African Countries"[631]; those from Europe make up 18%, while foreigners from the Middle East[632] account for 6,5%. However, the majority of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia come from Côte d'Ivoire (accounting for 35% of total arrivals from SSA)[633]. Although, in general terms, Côte d'Ivoire is an important destination country for inter-African flows, especially at the sub-regional level[634], the presence of an important Ivorian community in Tunisia would have originated, according to Boubakri and Potot, in the BAD relocation[635] in Tunis some two decades ago[636]. Adopting a functionalist approach, based on the analysis of pull-push factors, it could be argued that there are at least three main factors favouring emigration from Côte d'Ivoire to Tunisia. It would seem that among the drivers of Ivorian emigration to Tunisia two major cultural factors play a key role. It is well known that language is an important criterion of choice by which migrants tend to prefer one country over another. Although Tunisian Arabic is often a barrier for many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, hence also for Ivorian nationals, the French colonial domination that ties the history of these two countries together, allows them to rely on French. A further important cultural factor in such a flow

[628] Tunisian population census 2004.
[629] INST (2021,59). Tunisia's population is around 12 million. This means that the sub-Saharan migrants surveyed in the study constitute a very small percentage. However, given the large presence of irregular migrants, the data are hardly reliable.
[630] Msakni, F. (2019).
[631] The INST includes in this category the whole African continent except for Maghreb and Egypt.
[632] It includes Egypt.
[633] See INST (2021)
[634] Fargues, F. and M. Rango (2020). See also IOM (2020b)
[635] The BAD headquarters was moved back to Abidjan in 2014, at the end of Ivorian civil War.
[636] Boubakri, H. Potot, S. (2013, 6).

relates to religion. Both the Côte d'Ivoire and even more predominantly Tunisia are Muslim country[637]. Alongside cultural factors, the economic ones are a further boost. As a matter of fact, in the context of a major political crisis that has dragged Côte d'Ivoire into two civil wars, together with low wages and the precarious nature of work, many Ivorians started to seek better working conditions abroad transforming Côte d'Ivoire, albeit to a lesser extent, also into a country of origin of flows. On the other hand, Tunisia, besides being perceived as a freer and more politically stable country than its neighbours, is increasingly favouring the inclusion of sub-Saharan migrants in informal labor. Considering that the exchange rate is particularly favourable, it constitutes a suitable country for remittances[638]. Lastly, but perhaps more importantly, the legal framework regulating the issuing of visas, and thus the possibility of entering Tunisia, would play an important role in determining the choice to migrate to Tunisia not only from Côte d'Ivoire but also from other African states. According to African Union Development Program (AUDA-NEPAD) data, entry to Tunisia with a tourist visa, with 90 days validity, is allowed for citizens from Côte d'Ivoire and other 21 countries on the African continent.[639] Yet, the research work carried out in the field revealed that among the factors favouring migration from the Côte d'Ivoire to Tunisia, the phenomenon of human trafficking plays an important role, particularly in domestic and care labour, as the case study analysed in chapter four will show. The hypothesis is that while the visa regime between the two countries facilitates entry into Tunisian territory, the growing process of multidimensional marginalisation to which sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia are exposed is fomenting the need to resort to illicit trafficking, such as human trafficking, in order to find better means of subsistence than those accessible in Tunisia. At the same time, the presence of a significant Ivorian community in Tunisia would facilitate the trafficking network operating between the two countries. For the sake of clarity, it is worth emphasising that in addressing to human trafficking, I refer to the phenomenon broadly defined by the 2000 Palermo Protocol, or the UN Protocol to Prevent Suppress and punish trafficking in human beings, especially women and

[637] According to the International Religious Freedom Report, data collected in Côte d'Ivoire (2021) shows that about 43% of the Ivorian population is made of Muslim (mainly Sunni) and another part 33,9% is Christian. According to figures of 2022, in Tunisia, 99% of the population would be Muslim either. It should be noted, however, that data both for Tunisia and Côte d'Ivoire, are fragmented and in any case not totally reliable. For the case of Côte d'Ivoire please refer to this link: https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/cote-divoire/ ; for Tunisia, access through: https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/tunisia

[638] Cfr. Mohapatra, S., Ratha, D. (2011).

[639] Tunisia's visa regulations, apart from being based on bilateral agreements, are under Law No. 40/1975. This is a rather rigid visa regime that covers only 40% of the continent's countries. However, as noted by the AUDP- NEPAD, this rigidity mirrors the visa regulation system across the continent if one considers that citizens of African states on average need visas to travel to more than half (55%) of the other African countries. See, AUDA- NEPAD, (2016) accessible through: https://www.visaopenness.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Africa_Visa_Openness_Report_2016.pdf

children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, where trafficking in human beings is defined as: *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.* As it clearly emerges hence, trafficking in human beings is not to be confused, as is frequently the case, with smuggling although these often overlap. Smuggling indeed, consist in the *procuring, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a citizen or permanent resident.*[640] Hence*,* whereas smuggling necessarily implies the crossing of borders that the individual(s), by virtue of the legal regime, is not authorised to cross, human trafficking – which represent the most widespread contemporary form of slavery[641] – is aimed at the exploitation of the individual(s), irrespective of whether or not this form of exploitation involves the crossing of international states' borders. Although not a new phenomenon, human trafficking in Tunisia is boundless both internally and internationally. It is also arguable, although currently not fully verifiable, that smuggling is becoming particularly widespread and profitable for traffickers. Such an assumption, is based on the worrying deterioration of the already precarious political, social and economic balance that Tunisia, at the time of writing is going through and which could trigger a new migratory flow, reopening routes such as the one to Turkey, whose importance had declined in recent years. Indeed, on 25th July 2021, Kais Saied, the ruling president currently in office, issued a decree through which he assumed all executive authority by suspending parliament and revoking the immunity of its members[642]. Additionally, the judiciary's independence has been compromised, and

[640] See UNODC (2000) https://www.unodc.org/documents/middleeastandnorthafrica/smuggling-migrants/SoM_Protocol_English.pdf

[641] Since human trafficking is always aimed at exploiting its victims, it is always related to contemporary forms of slavery. However, the opposite is not necessarily the case, i.e. slavery does not always occur within human trafficking. In fact, to simplify, for there to be a crime of trafficking, one of the fundamental requisites is the existence of a "structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes". The Convention also points out four characteristics that a group must exhibit in order to qualify as an *organised criminal group*: a) the presence of at least three persons; b) the element of continuity; c) the planning of actions aimed at committing serious offences; d) the intent to obtain material or financial benefits. Moreover, in order to be transnational – as in the present case – the offence must be: i) committed in more than one State; or ii) committed in one State but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State; or iii) committed in one State but involves an organised criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State; or still, iv) committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State.

[642] This decision, described by many as a coup d'état, was the result of political discrepancies within the country and was allegedly aimed at eliminating the opposition and in particular the main opposition leader, Rached Ghannouchi, head of Ennahda party (the main Islamist Party) who was arrested shortly after Saied's political

the electoral commission is now under the president's control, raising doubts about the fairness of the upcoming elections due in November 2024. As Amnesty International and several other observers highlighted, since Saied's coup d'état, the country seems to be sliding back towards a new authoritarian turn[643]. Starting from 2023 and at the time of writing, Tunisians are increasingly witnessing mass arbitrary arrests on charges of "conspiracy against State security." Indeed, in the lead-up to the 2024 presidential election, Saied's administration has intensified its crackdown on dissent. This includes imprisoning journalists, activists, and political opponents under the pretext of combating fake news and cybercrime. According to Human Rights Watch, by mid-May 2024, at least 80 activists, journalists, and members of civil society organizations had been arrested[644]. Notable arrests included prominent lawyers, members of legally registered NGOs, and journalists who were vocal against the government's policies. The repression against NGOs working in the field of migration and offering direct support to unauthorised sub-Saharan migrants is dangerously increasing. The office of the NGO France Terre d'Asile, present in Tunisia since 2012, for instance, was recently closed and its former director Sharifa Rihai arrested despite having recently given birth. In this degrading context, human rights violations are dramatically increasing against sub-Saharan migrants, whether refugees or not. In May 2024, Al Jazeera documented the mass expulsion of more than 500 refugees, many of them minors, at the Algerian border following a round-up in two temporary camps in the capital. Others, taken from informal camps in the Sfax area (almost 300 km from Tunis), were reportedly picked up and abandoned at the Libyan border. Since February 2024, a permanent and peaceful protest of migrants, mainly Sudanese asylum seekers and refugees, has been held in front of the UNHCR headquarters. On May 3, multiple police forces – including anti-terrorism and special riot control units, dismantled the protest and deported these people towards Algeria[645]. Given the already mentioned severe humanitarian crisis in Sudan, the expulsion of these people constitutes a very serious violation of international law by the Tunisian government.

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manoeuvre. In order to justify this decision, Saied relied on Article 80 of the 2014 Constitution, in which he attributed extraordinary measures to the president of the republic in the case of an *an event of imminent danger threatening the nation's institutions, its security or independence* (Tunisian Constitution, 2014, art. 80, my translation).

[643]Amnesty International (July 2023, February 2024). Accessible through: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2023/07/human-rights-under-assault-two-years-after-president-saieds-power-grab/; https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/tunisia-release-and-drop-charges-against-opposition-activists-arbitrarily-detained-for-a-year/ both accessed April 2024.

[644] Human Rights Watch (2024) https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2024/05/17/tunisie-la-repression-de-la-societe-civile-sintensifie

[645] See Al Jazeera: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/10/tunisia-the-migration-trap ; https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/3/children-infants-missing-after-tunis-police-clear-makeshift-refugee-camps

Despite data very clearly suggest that the majority of migrants leaving Tunisia are Tunisian nationals, the EU, the Tunisian government and even the UNHCR (2019) continue to define Tunisia as *primarily a transit country for most migrants, refugees and asylum seekers [...] intending to reach Europe.* However, the field-work researches recently carried out by different Organisations and institutions would suggest otherwise. Indeed, the quantitative study published by Msakni in 2020 shows that 65% of respondents chose Tunisia as their country of destination[646]. Similarly, back in 2018, Mercy Corps noted that more than 80% of the sample considered Tunisia as the destination country for their migration path[647]. However, figures collected by the INST in 2021, while not analysing pre-arrival intentions in Tunisia, noted that unlike migrants from other areas (Europe, Maghreb, and the Middle East), those from SSA countries, mostly intend to leave Tunisia (65%)[648]. Whereas it would seem that the reasons for leaving the country are related to the difficult conditions of access to the labour market or simply the completion of studies, most intend to return to their country of origin[649]. Similar figures emerged among people profiled by UNHCR at least starting from 2019 thereof 64% expressed the intention to seek asylum in Tunisia; such an estimate increased to 77% in 2020[650]. Transposing the analysis from a purely statistical to a theoretical-political perspective, the mass protests that spread in 2018 in Tunis and Sfax following the killing of the young Ivorian Falikou Coulibaly[651], allow us to further question the role of Tunisia as a transit country in contemporary migration. The mobilizations were not limited to a request of greater security measures, whose urgency emerges from the frequent harassment on black people, rather the streets of many cities in the country became part of a collective action aimed at advocating for the regularisation of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia. Hence, a mobilisation not aimed at the demand to move to Europe

[646] Msakni, F. (2019, 30).
[647] Mercy Corps/ REACH (2018, 23)
[648] INST (2021, 70-72).
[649] Ibid.
[650] Please note that individuals profiled by UNHCR include people "rescued at sea, intercepted, or arrested on the grounds of irregular stay or attempted irregular departure." See UNHCR 2019b; UNHCR 2020a
[651] On December 23, 2018 Falikou Coulibaly who has been a prominent figure of the Ivorian community in Tunis and also president if the *Association des Ivoriens en Tunisie* (AIT) was killed in La Soukra, a neighbourhood in the northern suburbs of Tunis. The Ministry of the Interior commented on the murder, treating it as a trivial case of petty crime whose motivation was related to the theft of the man's phone. However, Coulibaly had already been denouncing the racial violence suffered by Ivorians in the neighbourhood for months. In an interview with France24 on racism in Tunisia he had stated that "The police tell us that the violence is a result of the high rates of crime in the neighbourhood. However, only Ivorians are targeted. So, these attacks definitely have a racist element. The young people who carry out this violence target our community because they know they won't be punished". His murder triggered an unprecedented mobilisation among Ivorians living in Tunisia. On 24 December, several hundred demonstrators gathered in front of the Mongi Slim hospital, where Coulibaly died, and marched towards the Ivorian embassy. The protests continued the following day in the heart of the capital, in Avenue Bourguiba - the symbolic place of the 2011 uprisings - to protest against the violence against the black population in Tunisia and to denounce the Tunisian authorities' silent consent.

but at the right to stay in Tunisia. As Judith Butler suggested in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, looking at the migrant body in its public dimension, in its being both a mean and an end of politics, allows the move back to a fundamental aspect to the centre of the governance of mobility: In claiming the "right to appear" in Tunisian public space, sub-Saharan migrants do more than affirm their desire to remain in Tunisia. Through the body and in name of it (its protection, recognition, mobility and existence), they challenge the differential forms of power that govern their bodies by determining, through them, new forms of appearance and citizenship. Such a request must push a rethink the Tunisian migratory space as a destination area in order to improve migrants' spaces of liveability and a greater protection of human rights.

Chapter IV

THE TUNISIAN DEVICE

Disciplining bodies in African migration.

4.1. Hyper-mobility or, the governmental production of Tunisia as transit state.

Building on a critical approach to the evolution and enforcement of the Western securitarian paradigm in international migration, in the first chapter I was concerned with observing how the process of targeting Transit countries in the African continent has turned North Africa into a *buffer zone,* a securitised area between Europe and Africa. However, it is now worth deepening the analysis by looking at the effects of such a process on migrants' bodies along South-South migration. Indeed, as I will now argue, similarly to the already mentioned buzzwords of *Developmentspeak*,[652] whose migrations are a central pivot, the expression "transit country" is arguably not interesting for its meaning (or lack thereof), but rather for its performative use, i.e., its capacity to produce, through enunciation, normalising and hegemonic effects on migrants' bodies and their spaces of liveability. Hence, not simply its political use but also its biopolitical dimension. Language is *fundamentally about ordering reality and creating categories that enable its perception*[653] and thus, can be understood as an operation of intelligibility. In political terms, attempts to define the transitory dimension of migration consist of proposing an interpretation of reality as unpredictable and turbulent

[652] See Cornwall, A., & Eade, D. (2010).
[653] Pécoud, A. (2015, 78).

with the purpose of subsequently transforming existing reality in this direction[654]. However, all things are subject to interpretation; whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not of truth[655]. Indeed, from being a new phenomenon, transit migration, and thus the identification of transit countries, functions as a governmental discursive and political practice through which unwanted migration is managed. My main argumentation is precisely to show how the supposed role of Tunisia as a transit country, is produced and tactically used in order to govern the "bad circulation" or the surplus lives. The philosophical-political reflection proposed here about the *governmental production of transit states* is currently under-theorized in scientific research but it is considered to offer interesting and necessary contributions in the critical analysis of the current border regime and on the role of Tunisia in contemporary migration. In light of the now clear understanding of the Foucauldian concept of *government* as an activity through which to govern the conduct of people, I refer to the *governmental production of Tunisia as a transit states*, meaning that set of practices and apparatuses that determine ways of disciplining sub-Saharan's lives in motion. In a nutshell, the Tunisian device. The need to question Tunisia's role as a transit country has matured in the course of this research as a result of the evidence observed during the extensive fieldwork. Indeed, it is believed that the presence of sub-Saharan migrant women employed in intimate labour in Tunisia is an important indicator that Tunisia is a destination country that at best only becomes a transit country at a later stage, that is to say, when these women come to terms with disillusioned expectations. An appropriate starting point hence, is to begin with the simplest questions.

What is a transit country? What criteria characterise them? As Düvell highlighted, despite its widespread use over the past thirty years, there is to-date no commonly accepted definition of a "transit country" nor an official list of states targeted as such[656]. Consequently, the use that is often made of it by various IOs, NGOs, political actors and even academia, is simplified and arbitrary[657]. Whilst the expression "country of destination" is simpler and more intuitive, indicating the *place where a subject, or a group of subjects, intends to go regardless of their legal status,*[658] the expression "country of transit", by contrast, seems to evade any unambiguous definition. One of the first definitions was proposed in 1993 by the United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which referred to transit migration as *migration in one country with the intention of seeking the possibility there to emigrate to another*[659]. A few years later, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

[654] Ibid.
[655] See Cornwall, A., & Eade, D. (2010).
[656] Düvell, F. (2012).
[657] Ibid. See also Collyer, M., Düvell, F., & De Haas, H. (2012).
[658] IOM, (2004)
[659] See, Pécoud, A. (2015)

Assembly referred to transit migrants as *aliens who stay in the country for some period of time while seeking to migrate permanently to another country*[660]. The urgency of addressing the threats posed by the role of transit countries in international migration, fuelled by the Council of Europe (CoE), the IOM, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has also prompted academia to contribute to these efforts by framing transit migration as *a short-term temporary stay of a migrant on his/her way from a country of origin to a country of destination*[661] or *the stage between emigration and settlement.*[662] As it can be noticed, all these definitions are characterised by, and emphasise at the same time, a certain degree of vagueness both in respect to the time span within which it would still be possible to refer to a transitional phase of the migration project, and in relation to the impossibility of identifying *ex ante* a person's, or a group of persons' intentions during their migration paths.[663] The unpredictability of flows both in terms of time and space reinforce the interpretation of migratory phenomena as out of control. Such uncertainties however should not be intended as an intrinsic characteristic of migration: migrants may have a clear idea about their paths.[664] Rather, as Tunisia and other African countries would suggest, the need to change migratory trajectories should be attributed precisely to the outcomes of the current border regime that hamper and continually alter migration flows, hence producing further mobility and paradoxically, new transit areas[665]. In the history of migration in Tunisia, 2023 marked, in my opinion, the most dramatic year. Indeed, in the wake of the Tunisian president authoritarian and repressive drift previously mentioned, on February 2023, on the occasion of the Security Council meeting, Kais Saied stated that the arrival of "hordes of irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa" is affecting Tunisia "with all the violence, crime, and unacceptable practices that entails". According to Saied, migration flow from Sub-Sahara Africa to Tunisia is part of a criminal plan aimed at modifying the country's "demographic make-up" and turn Tunisia into "just another African country that does not belong to the Arab and Islamic nations any more". Despite the outraged reaction of Tunisian civil society and the international community, Saied's speech triggered an unprecedented wave of social hatred throughout the country which resulted in acts of violence against black people, police abuses and mass expulsion procedures, spreading the terror not only among the sub-Saharan migrant community but also among black Tunisians, who today make up around 15% of the Tunisian population[666]. Black population who was

[660] Ibid.
[661] Ivakhniouk, I. (2004, 20)
[662] Papadopoulou, A. (2005, 2)
[663] Düvell, F. (2012).
[664] Düvell, F. (2014).
[665] Analysing the perverse effects of border controls in the Maghreb, H. de Haas (2008) noted they have altered and diversified trans-Saharan migration routes and trans-Mediterranean crossing points, forcing migrants in Morocco to move southwards to the Western Sahara in order to get to the Canary Islands.
[666] Abdelhamid, M., El Fargi, A., Elwaer, M.A. (2017).

not subjected to expulsion, fled *en mass* through the support of their ambassies or through the IOM's "Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program", or, still, leaving the country through the CMR which explains the increase in sub-Saharan desembarking in Italy from Tunisia. As mentioned, despite entering Tunisia regularly, for the majority of sub-Saharan migrants it becomes almost impossible to extend the stay on legal basis. As a matter of fact, according to the law no. 07/1968 and laws no. 96-62/1966 foreigners' access to the labour market is strongly restricted on the basis of national preference[667]. The inability to obtain an employment and therefore a residency permit, produces a process of mass irregularisation which forces sub-Saharan migrants to work mainly in the informal sector where working conditions are highly degrading[668]. Paradoxically, the process of irregularisation also concerns refugees and asylum seekers. As seen in the previous pages with the case of the mass arrival of people from Libya in 2011, Tunisia has never complied with the requirements of the Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and Asylum Seekers with a national law. Victims of trafficking (VoT) for example, according to the Palermo Protocol, should be recognised as refugees but since the Tunisian legal system does not allow it, foreigner VoT in the country remain undocumented migrants. Such a situation greatly increases the people's vulnerability condition, exposing them to abuses, violence, and extreme forms of exploitation. Nonetheless, among these terminological approximations, the Latin root of the word "transit", may offer a more comprehensive perspective. *Transitu* means the act or fact of passing or crossing something, hence it gives the idea of a passage.[669] Contemporary border regimes, with the support of advanced technological systems aimed at sorting good and bad circulation, have in a sense altered the sense of fluidity of movement we witnessed until the 1970s, transforming possible areas of passage into suspension zones, areas where it is no longer possible to turn back or continue the journey (if that was contemplated). Oddly, although entering Tunisia regularly, many sub-Saharans, unable to regularise their situation, become unauthorised migrants after just 90 days on Tunisian soil. Moreover, according to the law no. n. 40/1975, if they exceeded the 90-day period, they have to pay,

[667]The preference for workers of Tunisian nationality in particular is expressed in article 258-2 of Law No. 96-62, which states: *Le recrutement d'étrangers ne peut être effectué lorsqu'il existe des compétences tunisiennes dans les spécialités concernées par le recrutement* (Foreigners cannot be recruited if there are Tunisian skills in the specialities concerned – my translation). As noted by Nasraoui, M. (2017), as there is already a large availability of skilled labour in the country, it is very difficult for sub-Saharans to find employment in the formal sector. Moreover, the law has become an excellent loophole for employers who take advantage of the irregular status and national preference to hire sub-Saharans off the books, thus facilitating forms of exploitation. The case of intimate labour analysed in the next pages of this chapter is emblematic in this regard.

[668] Almost all of the male and female sub-Saharan workers surveyed in Akrimi study (2020) believe they are exploited by their employer. In 2017, out of a total of 5470 work permits issued by the government, only 4% were directed to sub-Saharans compared to 40% of workers from Western European countries and 31% from other Arab countries.

[669] Bredeloup, S. (2012).

upon departure, a sum corresponding to 20 Tunisian dinars (TND), about 6 euros, for each week of unauthorised stay[670]. Hence, as a matter of fact, Tunisia turns into a dead end whereby suspension should not be merely interpreted as a material condition of migrants' bodies in space and time, but rather as a subjection process encompassing migrants as a whole, hence an existential condition. From this perspective, echoing Agamben's work, Christina Oelgemöller suggests considering transit countries as "zones of indistinction" where migrants, who are assumed to be illegitimate migrants, are suspended from their juridical-political status[671]. In other words, relying on a *legal production of illegality*[672] in and through Tunisia, migrants are turned into *bare lives.*[673] It is the well-known Agamben's recourse to the concept of *homo sacer,* a figure from archaic roman law who designates an individual who is deprived of its political dimension (*bios*) and is reduced to its natural existence (*zoé*). Finding themselves out of government jurisdiction, *homines sacri* are nothing more than "living deads", bare lives.[674]

Yet, in order to better understand the biopolitical dimension of transit states, hence of Tunisia as a device of power for disciplining migrants' bodies, I propose to analyse suspension practices in terms of the Butlerian concept of abandonment analysed in chapter two. Indeed, as abandonment, suspension works as an *active form of subtraction*[675] that does not function in direct forms of death – *make die* – but in life*,* producing forms of dehumanisation and derealisation – *let die*[676]. Such a reading allows a move beyond Agamben's emphasis on the dispossession of rights and the sovereign exception. By this standpoint, rather than understanding Tunisia as *dead(ly) ends*[677] like the application of the Agambenian reading would suggest, we have to conceptualise it as spaces of struggle and reappropriation wherein governmental practices of abandonment and suspension are challenged by forms of recognition that migrants put in place as forms of resistance which force us to rethink to contemporary forms of citizenship beyond dichotomous scheme "inside-outside", "citizens-foreigners", "life-death". Indeed, *constituted by power relations such as those that operate in processes of dispossession and exploitation, [the subject-migrant] is always constitutive or characterised by a moment of excess that can never be fully expropriated.*[678] If, by appearing in the

[670] In order not to increase the cost of the penalty excessively, the Tunisian government through two new provisions, one of September 2017 and one of 2018, has applied changes to these requirements, setting a ceiling on the penalty for overstaying at 3,000 TND (about 900 euros).
[671] Oelgemöller, C. (2011).
[672] De Genova, N. P. (2002).
[673]Agamben, G. (2005).
[674] See Lamke, T. (2005).
[675] Tazzioli, M. (2020a, 60)
[676] See Butler, J. (2004).
[677] Cfr. Oelgemöller, C. (2011).
[678] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 252)

Tunisian public space sub-Saharans show us the "simultaneity of being precarious and acting" turning vulnerability into a form of activism, Tunisian government attempts to conceal them. Indeed, as a "transit state", Tunisia shirks its legal obligation to protect migrants' rights and dignity, finding in that shirking the justification for what Martina Tazzioli defines as the *will not to govern*[679]. As anticipated, besides irregularisation another form of such a deliberate subtraction – to borrow Tazzioli's words – lies in non-recording practices[680]. The paucity of reliable quantitative data on the phenomenon of immigration in Tunisia more than being the result of the government's forgetfulness is a strategy that reinforces the rhetoric of ungovernability. Hence a biopolitical device that as Zachary White interestingly argued, relies on the concept of *myopticon* which, unlike the Foucauldian panopticon[681], *relies more on uncertainty than on accurately knowing or disciplining its subjects*[682]. Therefore, the governmental construction of Tunisia as a transit State implemented both by the EU and the Tunisian government itself, while increasing the deterioration of sub-Saharan migrants' living conditions, also boosts the urge to leave, producing a sort of *forced hyper-mobility.*[683] In this perspective, by forcing the movement itself, helps reinforcing the *government of the crisis* and of the *crisis as a technology of government*[684]. In other words, within contemporary migratory scenario, Tunisia is the device whereby the crisis is kept alive. As will now be argued, such a governmental practice allows Tunisian state to produce a racialised and hierarchised mobility in order to *produce governable mobile subjects from ungovernable flows*.[685] In Tunisia, and more particularly in the country's urban areas, the archetype of this subjectivity is represented by sub-Saharan women. Consistent with the studies on global care chains, and more generally on the feminisation of migration outlined in chapter one, indeed, women from sub-Saharan Africa in Tunisia embody the object of surplus-value extraction. An object-body which is (de)valued for both its material and immaterial

[679] Tazzioli, M. (2020)
[680] Ibid.
[681] Foucault's concept of the Panopticon, as detailed in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977a/1975), is an important element in his analysis of modern disciplinary societies. The Foucauldian concept of the panopticon, expresses the metaphor of prison architecture that Jeremy Bentham had previously described at the end of the 18th century in which prisons were characterised by circular building with a central watchtower surrounded by cells. Each cell is visible to the watchtower, but inmates cannot see the watchtower's interior. Similarly, extending far beyond the prison institution, to schools, hospitals, factories and the military, the panopticon is a disciplinary power that operates through surveillance, normalizing judgment, and examination, fostering self-regulation among individuals; hence it must be based on the will to know. By this standpoint, panopticon exemplifies a shift from sovereign power, which is exerted through visible, dramatic displays of force (such as public executions), to disciplinary power, which is subtle, continuous, and pervasive, inducing a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.
[682] White, Z. (2011, 18)
[683] Puar, J.K. (2017).
[684] Tazzioli, M., Garelli, G. (2016, 76)
[685] Panagiotidis, E. and Tsianos, V. (2007, 82) as cited in Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 149)

features, or its being black, women and socially, legally and economically marginalised. As a matter of fact, if we genuinely want to understand the biopolitics through mobility within the feminisation processes of migration, and more particularly in global care chains, we must consider, as Parreñas argues, the culture of the workplace which takes place not in a vacuum but in the forms of biopower within a larger socio-economic context whose governmental practices are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, nationality, and gender hierarchies[686]. What I am interested in, in this regard, is to analyse how the intersection of these factors implements the hypermobility practices of the Tunisian device. To this end, in the following pages I propose to further analyse the forms of precarisation of sub-Saharan women in Tunisian relying on an intersectional approach[687]. Indeed, looking at the way mobility practices are shaped by "race", class and gender allows to conceptualise mobility as a technology of government through which sub-Saharan women while being included into certain areas of society (primarily the labor market), they are denied from the participation and the access to others (such as welfare system, citizenship, political participation)[688]. Within this process, defined by Mezzadra and Nilson as *differential inclusion*[689], mobility must be promoted in a continuous and never stable process of inclusion and exclusion that allows the Tunisian device to produce and discipline the hierarchies that characterise the organisation of labor under bio-capitalism.

4.2 The Other Women. Gender, "Race" and Class in Tunisia.

4.2.1 Gender equality and labour in Tunisia. An overview.

Although not currently observable on a quantitative level, one of the reasons why Tunisia is assuming a growing role in intra-African female flows is related to intimate labour. As elsewhere in the world, intimate work is a key economic sector in Tunisia. To understand its significance, an important starting point, as Parreñas stressed, is related to the analysis of the gender dynamics that characterise it[690]. After all, as argued at the beginning of this study, the relationship between domestic workers

[686] Parreñas, R. S. (2021).

[687] Migration studies have increasingly recognized the importance of intersectionality to understanding the complexities of migration experiences and dynamics. More particularly, intersectionality, term notoriously coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, refers to the way in which social identities and systems of oppression intersect and interact to shape individuals' experiences and social outcomes. Applying an intersectional approach to the the analysis of feminisation of migration and global bio-labour may offer hence a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis, highlighting how different axes of identity such as gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality etc. intersect and influence migration processes and outcomes. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the processes of hierarchization of human dignity along the lines of gender, class or race or any other form of subalternity vary both spatially and temporally;

[688] See Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013).

[689] Ibid. p. 159

[690] Parreñas, R. S. (2009).

and the employers is an all-female relationship shaped by an asymmetry of power in which the "dirty" work that the employer does not want to do is dumped on another woman. The Tunisian migratory scenario shows that the "other women" is increasingly embodied by a foreign woman. However, in order to understand intimate labor within the Tunisian context is necessary to understand the evolution of Tunisian women's movement and its interaction with other forms of power such as politics, religion, nationality, class and "race", as well as the extent to which such movements have played a key-role within a process of renegotiation of women's identities and status in post-revolution Tunisia. The status of women in Tunisia – and in the Middle East in general – is one of the most debated and controversial issues both within and outside the MENA region. In 2018, on the occasion of the 37th meeting of the Arab Women's Commission entitled *Women for safe societies in the Arab region*, the Arab League proclaimed Tunis the "capital of Arab women" in recognition of the efforts and achievements in strengthening gender equality in the country through the evolution of a legal apparatus that, compared to its neighbours in the Middle East and Africa, showed Tunisian government's capabilities to put gender policies at the centre of its political agendas[691]. As the AFTURD pointed out, with the post-revolution democratisation process, the Tunisian government proclaimed in its new 2014 constitution the adherence of its people to the universal principles of human rights by stating that the state guarantees the protection of human rights, equality in rights and duties among all citizens and among all social groups and regions[692]. As a matter of fact, the principles of equality and social justice are enshrined in the 2014 Constitution, as is the state's engagement in the elimination of gender-based violence. Among the main commitments of the new post-Ben Ali government was the adoption of law No.58/2017 on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, in the wake of the 2014 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the adoption of the Law No. 61/2016 by which the government met the criteria set out in the Palermo Protocol to combat human trafficking, and protect women and children in particular. Moreover, following the fall of the Ben Ali regime, thanks to a new electoral law which required candidate lists to alternate their members between men and women, the percentage of female parliamentary representation exceeded the minimum critical mass of 30% recommended by the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2014, guaranteeing Tunisia the highest representation of women in parliament in the MENA region for that period[693]. Despite such important achievements, as the INST data (2023) show, an important gender gap persists in Tunisia. Indeed, in an already economically and politically critical framework in which the

[691] Voorhoeve, M. (2021). See also AFTURD. (2017)
[692] AFTURD (2017, 3).
[693] Chellali, S. (2022, November 2).

unemployment rate among the working population is high (38,1% for the second half of 2023), women are at a distinct disadvantage with 21% unemployed compared to 13% of men[694]. Moreover, the study conducted in 2017 by the Institut Arabe des Chefs d'Entreprises (IACE) showed that Tunisian women earn on average 14.6 % less than men for the same roles in some professions, meaning they would have to work 37 days more per year to equal a male salary[695]. Yet, the time management that men and women devote to domestic chores is a good indicator of gender equality parameters. Consistent with the global trends where women spend, on average, three times as much time caring for the family or home compared to males[696], the Tunisian context shows that even in households where both spouses work – whether in formal or informal employment – women are willing to sacrifice much more free time in caring for the home (around 5 hours per day) than men (39 minutes per day).[697]. If we consider that in Tunisia care work represents 64% of GDP[698], one can understand the enormous contribution that the domestic sector, and therefore women, make in economic terms to the country. While in rural and inland areas of the country, the home and the work performed by women inside of it retain in some cases the characteristics that homes had in pre-industrial societies where the home was also the centre of economic production[699], in urban areas, where *paid* domestic labor is more widespread, domesticity practices include activities that would not be necessary *per se*. Indeed, as Hochschild e Ehrenreich observed, while actual care work, or, taking care of dependent persons is often considered to be necessary, the care of domestic environments such as cooking, doing the laundry, grocery etc. consists of activities that would not really need to be relegated to someone else[700]. Therefore, hiring a maid, preferably a black one, is often more a way of asserting a certain social status than a matter of necessity[701]. As I intend to show, this is also the case of Tunisia. Nevertheless, in this regard, it is worth reconstructing the evolution of feminist movements in Tunisia in order to understand current forms of bio-work and the intertwining of gender and class issues.

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[694] See INST (2023), accessible through the following link: https://www.ins.tn/sites/default/files-ftp1/files/publication/pdf/Note%20Emploi%20T2%202023.pdf
[695] IACE (2017)
[696] See, Oxfam (2020)
[697] OXFAM (2017, 33-34)
[698] Ibid. p. 50
[699] In rural areas, in fact, the sale of home-made products resulting from the various domestic activities carried out by women such as baking bread, or raising livestock or growing vegetables or processing alpha fibres constitute important means of subsistence that in fact make the home a typically pre-industrial workplace typical as Angela Devis (1983) also notes of Western pre-industrial societies before the advent of the "housewife"
[700] B. Ehrenreich, & A. R. Hochschild (2003).
[701] Ibid.

4.2.2. Gender and bio-labour. The harmful dialogue between neo-liberalism and feminism in Tunisia from Bourguiba to the present.

The very first feminist movements in Tunisia appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, at the height of French colonial rule, immediately becoming important players in the independence movements that, as we have seen, were beginning to appear in the country at that time[702]. As Debuysere pointed out, the emergence of the early women's unions and collective organisations such as the conservative *Union Musulmane des Femmes de Tunisie* (UMFT, created in 1936) and the communist *Union des femmes de Tunisie* founded in 1944, emerged as a consequence of the accelerated introduction of capitalism by French colonialism which altered gender relations and women's relationship with labor.[703] As elsewhere in Africa, the importation of capitalist logic by European colonists made women invisible, with domestic and educational work judged as non-productive labor[704]. In a controversial but influential writing of 1930s entitled *Our Women in Sharia and in Society,* Tahar Haddad – a distinguished lecturer at Zaytuna University, the most prestigious theological institution in Tunisia – supported women's role within society while emphasising the relevance of education as a means to improve women's autonomy. The centrality of education, which influenced the early feminist movements in the country, represented in Haddad's vision a tool aimed at improving women's role as wives, mothers and citizens. His writings triggered a certain enthusiasm among Tunisian women who wanted to play an increasingly active role in society. Nevertheless, similarly to what was observed in other countries on the African continent such as Algeria, Egypt[705], Morocco, Camerron, Mozambique, Tanzania, Ghana etc., in the run-up to independence, the activism of leading Tunisian feminists, including the UMFT's founder Bchira Ben Mrad, was not focused on gender equality issues but on colonial oppression, thus on the importance of fighting together with men to achieve independence[706]. A turning point for women in the country came with the achievement of independence and by means of the reforms put in place by Bourguiba in an attempt to pursue an ideal of a modern, semi-secular state. One of the new president's main objectives, concerned the condition of women. As highlighted by Murphy, through the recognition given to the role of women's organisations in the decolonisation process, Bourguiba argued that a "healthy" and functioning society must necessarily be based on the collaboration between men and women within families rather

[702] El-Masri, S. (2015).
[703] Debuysere, L. (2018, 4).
[704] Ibid.
[705] With the founding of the ittihād al-nisā'i al-Miṣrī (Egyptian Feminists Union, EFU), according to historians, Egypt was the first country in which the Arab world's first explicitly feminist organisation was created in 1923. As Lucia Sorbera (2013) noted, the writings of the movement's founder, the Egyptian Hudā Sha'rāwi, were highly influential in Bchira Ben Mrad's thinking.
[706] Debuysere, L. (2018).

than relegating women to the domestic space[707]. The laws enacted in the 1956 Personal Status Code (PSC), as Debuysere notes, represented the first step towards an unprecedented process of women's emancipation in the country[708]; it is worth mentioning in this regard, the abolition of polygamy, the revision of divorce legislation through which the right to repudiation exercised by men was abolished while allowing women the right to take the initiative on divorce; the PSC had also raised the minimum age for marriage to 17 and in an effort to encourage more education, enshrined the right to free education for both sexes. In general terms, hence, the goal of the PSC was to establish social and moral equality between men and women[709] , especially in the domestic sphere in order to push women to move from the private and intimate 'territory' of the home, to the public sphere, as active and productive members of the society[710]. As V. M. Moghadam argued, the laws enacted during this period enabled Tunisian women to gain equal and full rights, and to define the PSC as "one of the most progressive family laws in the Arab world today[711]" . In 1957, for the first time in the history of Tunisia women were granted the right to vote, first in municipal elections and thereafter in the national once. Within the Tunisian Constitution of 1 June 1959, it was the full freedom of women to exercise their political, social and economic rights, and among these rights, was the right to participate in the productive sectors of the country, in any public office on an equal footing with men. While the pre-independence period was characterised by a flourishing of women's unions, in the post-independence phase, Bourguiba outlawed women's union activities in the name of "national unity " and the former women's group were replaced by the Union National de la Femme Tunisienne (UNFT), formally established in 1961, with the aim of promoting women's emancipation through the education of women on their new rights. However, not all that glitters is gold. Indeed, analysing the situation more closely it is evident that the UNFT was tactically used in order to gain greater consensus by mobilising a large number of women who supported the Bourguiba's political projects and his Neo-Destour party[712]. The President's instrumentalization of feminist movements proved to be effective during the elections to the National Assembly in 1959, during which the UNFT, managed to mobilise large numbers of women in support of the Neo-Destour. The result, as many scholars pointed out, was the control of women's interests within the organisations, rather than real freedom of expression. As it clearly appears hence, post-independence feminism in Tunisia was characterised by a state feminism since women's question in those years was strongly conditioned - and to some

[707] Murphy, E. (2003).
[708] Ibid. p. 172
[709] Ibid.
[710] Ibid.
[711] Moghadam, V.M. (2005).
[712] Ibid.

extent controlled – by the state, which used it to serve the needs of Bourguiba's regime[713]. As mentioned in the previous chapter, starting from the 1970s, in fact, Bourguiba began to change his policy moving from a socialist state to one marked by a semi-liberal economy by which the government began to implement a series of decentralisation policies in agriculture and industry[714]. The laws of April 1972 and 1974, which encouraged foreign investment in the country are an example. This political and economic shift led to a boom in female employment, particularly in the textile sector. Indeed, data showed that between 1966 and 1975, the number of women employed in this sector tripled[715]. Moreover, from the 1970s onwards, women began to represent an important agricultural workforce, replacing the male one that had hitherto been predominant. This shift, on the other hand, became necessary given the unequal economic development between coastal and inland areas and the consequent impoverishing conditions of underpaid seasonal agricultural labour which pushed men from rural areas to migrate to the cities in search of better working conditions. As Ferchiou (1998) has observed, however, the male urban migration phenomenon has deteriorated women's living conditions as they accessed the productive agricultural work more as "unpaid family helpers" in the service of the breadwinner,[716] clearly males. In such a degrading context, according to Labidi, both the State and the UNFT failed to recognise and value the needs of the most marginalised women[717]; at the same time, the UGTT[718] (*Union Géneral Tunisienne du Travail*), excessively focused on the formal textile sector, obscured the criticalities encountered by informal women workers in the same sector. Thus, despite the entry of women into the public space and the labour market, they remained strongly marginalised both by an increasingly profit-oriented economic system and by a social system still tied to patriarchal values. A crucial turning point directed towards greater precariousness of the female labor-force occurred with the advent of the full neo-liberal regime initiated in the country in 1986 with the implementation of the first Structural Adjustment

[713] The co-optation of elites and groups in order to reinforce their power by crystallising dissent, is certainly not a new strategy. It was used extensively by European settlers in North Africa and the Middle East to gain the consent of the potentially belligerent elites and demonstrate their commitment to important ethnic groups and tribes. The co-optation was also used on women: in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, women have been co-opted through state-run women's organisations, not only because of the authoritarian systems that in themselves instilled fear of dissent, but also because women, as the case of Tunisia shows, often favoured state-run organisations for better funding and access to resources.
[714] Debuysere, L. (2018, 5).
[715] Schürings, H., & Lamari, M. (2000).
[716] Ferchiou S. (1998).
[717] Labidi, L. (2012).
[718] The UGTT, was founded in Tunis in 1945 and it remains to this day the largest and most important trade union in the country. It comprises 24 regional unions, 19 sectoral organisations and 21 grassroots unions. However, due to the excessive centralisation of its decision-making centres, the UGTT has been strongly accused of failing to have a strong representation of women, a lack of interest in the private sector and also seemed to neglect the problems of certain areas of the country such as in Tunisian Sahel.

Plan. As trade agreements increased, the first privatisation plans began to be implemented, which within a few years, and from 2000 onwards, accelerated further in various areas from telecommunications to banking. As happened in so many other countries of the "global south" and the African continent such as Sudan, Morocco, Algeria and Egypt - just to name a few - the neoliberal economic manoeuvres implemented by the WB and IMF contributed, with the complicity of the Arab governments, increased aggressive competition by lowering labour costs[719]. The retreat of the welfare system, with cuts in funding for schools and hospitals, together with the re-orientation of the Tunisian economy towards the free market, began to exacerbate the problems that had already emerged during Bourguiba, so unemployment rates in the public sector rose, while part-time and low-income precarious work increased. As a result, as noted by several scholars, social and economic inequalities began to increase vertiginously within the country[720]. The economic crisis of 2008, which started in the West and spread globally, has further precarised workers in Tunisia, generating social tensions and increasing the dissatisfaction of the population. In order to mitigate the potential social conflicts given by inequalities, Ben Ali was concerned with launching new social programmes mainly aimed at alleviating poverty[721]. As Paciello pointed out, Ben Ali's government played a key role in reinforcing the IMF's diktats, dragging over a twenty-years period, the country into severe economic instability and increasing poverty among the Tunisian population[722]. The advent of neo-liberalism has had a very strong impact from a social point of view, not only increasing the feminisation of poverty but also disrupting the family structure and its organisation especially among the young. Indeed, the data on the significant increase in the age of marriage from the 1960s to the present[723], is probably the outcome of the neo-liberal reforms that have made - and still make today - young people less economically independent and therefore unable to settle dawn, leading, among the other things, to an increase of migratory outflows to other countries, particularly the European ones. From a gender standpoint, Ben Ali's regime did not diverge much from that of his predecessor. Indeed, soon after

[719] On this topic see Bond, P. (2011); Pfeifer, K. (2016); Yaghi, M. (2018).
[720] Paciello, M. C., Renata, P., & Daniela, P. (2016).
[721] Ibid.
[722] The IMF had already been the cause of the first "bread revolt" in Tunisia. It was 1984 and Bourguiba was still in government; the reasons for the protest were related to the 100% increase in the price of bread. The increase had in fact been requested by the IMF as part of Tunisia's Structural Adjustment Programme. The elimination of food subsidies was in fact a condition of the loan agreement with the IMF. The protest resulted in the death of fifty people and people and Bourguiba announced in a radio and television broadcast that he would bring back the price increase. Despite the refusal to bow to the Washington Consensus, neo-liberalism had nevertheless begun to have its effects, leading to skyrocketing inflation and high unemployment. See Paciello, M.C. (2011;2023).
[723] According to OFPRA data (2017, 7), the average age for marriage in Tunisia has increased significantly over the years: whereas in 1966 the average age was 19.5 for women and 26.3 for men, in 2001 it was around 26.6 for women and 32.3 for men; in 2016, the average age was 29 for women and 33 for men.

Ben Ali coup d'etat, a series of positive amendments to the PSC were introduced[724]. For instance, in 1993 the need for the mother's consent, in addition to the father's, was established for the consent of marriages between minors; the wife's duty to obey her husband was replaced by the right to be treated with care and concern; women gained the right to participate in the management of the family's affairs such as children education, travel or financial matters. The PSC also included the right of child born out of the wedlock to carry the father's name, as well as to receive the father's support until reaching adulthood. Ben Ali's interest in improving the status of women in the country, as argued by several authors, was actually a strategic move to attract foreign investment, particularly from Europe and the United States, which, for their part, used debt, development aid and the promise of greater access to the international market to consolidate the neoliberal trajectory in the country[725]. Among other, the textile and agricultural sectors were those sectors of greatest interest for Western countries and were therefore those in which they intervened the most. Representing the main labour force in both sectors, women proved particularly useful for the extortion of surplus value, as well as for achieving the expansionist goals of bio-capitalism[726]. As Debuysere noted, under Ben Ali regime, neoliberal restructuring has had various effects on women's lives in both the productive and the reproductive spheres. While some consider the increased integration of women in the labor market as a potential feminism achievement, it is important to understand to what extent their participation in the market has improved their living conditions. As a matter of fact, women's *productive* labor, was mainly in the export industry sector jobs in low-paying jobs and with poor working condition[727]. Since the production of these sectors is typically labour- and production-intensive, in order to create profit, labour costs must be low. The large wage gap between man and women in Tunisia, as well as in the whole region, explains why hiring women in more beneficial in economic terms[728]. In Tunisia, due to their flexibility and availability, women represented the ideal workforce to fulfil the desires of an increasingly precarious, temporary and underpaid labour market. The need to enter into productive work, on the other hand, was caused by the lowering of men's wages and the rising cost of services. This situation further increased the flexibility of women who had to combine productive and *reproductive* work, with a double burden on their shoulders[729]. As in other geographical contexts, therefore, Tunisian women experience a double form of precarisation brought about by neo-liberalism. On the one hand, they often remained in extremely flexible and underpaid jobs, and on

[724] Moghadam, V. M. (2018).
[725] Debuysere, L. (2018, 8).
[726] Ibidem.
[727] See Hanieh, A. (2013); Bargawi, H., Alami, R., & Ziada, H. (2022).
[728] Ibid.
[729] Debuysere, L. (2018, 8).

the other they are stucked in the roles of a patriarchal system that keeps them relegated to unpaid domestic work. In such a context, similar to Bourguiba, it should come as no surprise that since the 1990s, Ben Ali has fostered a further and unprecedented spread of women's organisations[730]. Analysing their evolution remains important for understanding the current gender dynamics in Tunisia and the "conflict of interest" between women themselves in the unequal distribution of care work in the country. For instance, in 1990s, the Association for the Promotion of Women's Economic Projects (APROFE), was established in order to improve women's participation in the labor market, as well as to increase their involvement in financial investment. Alongside the APROFE, however, other two very important and still influential feminist organisations arose in the country: the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates* (ATFD) and the *Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche et le Développement* (AFTURD). Since their establishment, both ATFD and AFTURD, declared themselves independent associations; as Debuysere noted, that was the first time since independence that a women's association obtained, albeit to a limited extent, an autonomous and multiple political representation. The ATFD, for example, from its very foundation in 1989, declared itself an organisation disengaged from any political agenda and refused to adopt a specific political ideology. It thus comprised members from different and sometimes opposing political and ideological alignments. However, as several scholars pointed out, notwithstanding the important role played by both the AFTURD and the ATFD in giving more space to gender issues in the country contributing to decoupling feminism from state control, both movements were characterized by a certain ambiguity with respect to their activities[731] focused an excessive attention for "cultural recognition" rather than "economic redistribution[732]". A shift that occurred in Western countries, when second-wave feminist movements, in the wake of anti-capitalist struggles aimed at an expansive social solidarity, placed at the core of their struggles the economic system as the main cause of phenomena of class, gender and "racial" discrimination. However, as Nancy Fraser[733] states, second-wave feminism burst onto the scene just when post-Cold-War state capitalism was about to give away to something else: a new form of "financialized", globalizing and neoliberal capitalism which brought feminist movements to aspire to the mere recognition of women values, the availability of equal opportunity of labor access and therefore the promotion of an individual autonomy which delated class and ethnicity from the core of their struggles, contributing to a hierarchization process typical of neoliberalism. According to Debuysere, the origin of this

[730] See CEDAW, Tunisia (2000, 70-5) pp. 70- 75
https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw27/tun3-4.pdf
[731] Ibid. See also Labidi, L. (2007)
[732] Ibid. p.34
[733] Dahl, H. M., Stoltz, P., & Willig, R. (2004).

biopolitical hierarchisation of women's lives in the Tunisian context, can be traced back - broadly speaking - to three main aspects. First of all, Ben Ali's authoritarian regime, through tight control of civil society, made mobilisation and movement throughout the country difficult. The result was the exclusion of the poorest women in rural areas and a concentration instead of those women belonging to the middle class, educated and economically advantaged in the capital[734]. Moreover, the strongly secularist stance of the main associations such as the ATFD, did not sit well with the religious and conservative sentiments of many Tunisians in general, and of the female working class in particular. A further explanation for the shift in the feminist agenda in the country lies in the growing and festering presence of the neoliberal system. A climate that privileges individual empowerment and responsibility, rooted among other things in a discourse of liberal democracy and human rights, has had an enormous impact on feminist agendas in the country[735]. Notoriously indeed, during the 1990s, Tunisia saw a boom in the proliferation of NGOs with which feminist movements increasingly began to interact indirectly forced by the adoption of the neoliberal agendas proposed by the international (Western) donors in order to obtain funding. Hence, also in Tunisia, women, permeated by the logic of neoliberalism, would seem to have adopted an individualistic vision of the entrepreneur-woman. As a result, both AFTURD and ATFD activities were unlikely to meet the values and needs of women in rural areas of the country and the working class more generally. Even when the feminist movements in the capital intervened in support of women's protests in rural areas, their authentic and genuine support was nevertheless interpreted by other women as top-down feminism designed by an authoritarian president[736]. By way of example, in 2004, a group of women employees of a textile factory owned by a Dutchman in the town of Moknine, Monastir governorate, began a strike and occupied the factory following the owner's decision to close the company, causing nearly 300 female workers to lose their jobs. In order to show these women their solidarity, the ATFD, together with other CSOs, sent a delegation in Moknine (ATFD 2008, 72-72). Something similar happened four years later in the Gafsa area when in January 2008 protests broke up among mine employees, including many women[737]. Both the ATFD and the UGTT supported the protest movements. Yet, their outreach was never perceived as genuine, nor useful, by the working class. Indeed, in on the one hand UGTT was characterised at least from 1980s by an inability to include gender issues within the union and the exclusion of informal workers from its struggles, the ATFD's outlook as a "middle-class, elitist and secular association has not helped to attract women workers to its ranks." [738]

[734] Debuysere, L. (2018,33).
[735] Ibid.
[736] Ghanmi A. (1993).
[737] Gobe, E. (2010).
[738] Cfr. Debuysere, L. (2018, 34).

The 1989-born AFTURD, despite being research-driven, also maintains an elitist attitude that hardly grasps the values and needs of women "other" than the hegemonic figure of the educated, independent contemporary Tunisian woman[739]. The AFTURD has repeatedly shown a hostile attitude towards those women who choose to wear the veil, portraying them as unemancipated women crushed by a patriarchal system of which they are unwittingly victims. The impossibility of dialogue has sometimes been so strong among these women that cooperation projects for women's empowerment in rural areas have been difficult, sometimes impossible. It is the legacy of a liberal feminism that leads to assume as a model of emancipation that of the woman-entrepreneur that aims to impose an emancipatory individualist concept, and strongly linked to economic competitiveness. As noted earlier, the fall of the regime marked the beginning of a democratization process in which human rights pivoted to further improve the status of women in the country. Yet, analysing the Tunisian context from a more careful gender perspective, and especially in relation to and in opposition to liberal feminisms, some important critical issues emerge in my opinion. Indeed, the gender policies that developed within post-independence state feminism and the influence this had on both feminist movements and development agendas have contributed to the strengthening of a non-intersecting and inclusive approach able to embrace class and ethnic-based discriminations. The problem hence, remains related to an excessive focus on "recognition" rather than "representation" and "redistribution[740]", according to that inclusive approach that according to Nancy Fraser is the recipe for an equal feminism[741]. Even in Tunisia, therefore, women, permeated by the logic of neo-liberalism, seem to have adopted an individualist vision of the woman-entrepreneur[742]. The neoliberal project under underway today, an inherently patriarchal project, telling a story of women's empowerment actually places severe limitations on the improvement of women livelihoods. Which women exactly? It may be answered: "all of them". However, shifting the reflection even further, it then becomes evident that by virtue of a feminism that renders invisible women who are not part of that specific elite or dominant culture (like being secular rather than Muslim or being Arab rather

[739] Ibid.
[740] In contemporary feminist thought, recognition, representation and redistribution are considered as three key-concept seen as strongly interrelated and mutually reinforcing. While through recognition the goal is to affirm the dignity and worth of all individuals, addressing the different forms and dimension of oppression, representation seek to promote the political and social inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making processes so that everyone have a say in shaping the structures and policies that govern their lives; redistribution on the other hand, involves addressing economic inequalities and ensuring a fair distribution of resources. Among these three dimensions, the one relating to recognition is probably the most problematic because in the wake of neo-liberalism, questions of recognition have become increasingly marked and universalised by a single model of female emancipation, namely that typical of the neo-liberal subject.
[741] See Dahl, H. M., Stoltz, P., & Willig, R. (2004).
[742] Debuysere, L. (2018).

than African, for example), other women, such as sub-Saharan , are forced to suffer multiple forms of discrimination since they are unable, due to natural characteristics (such as skin colour) or due to the lack of material means, to conform to the one model considered "correct" or "healthy" for every emancipated, empowered and independent woman.

4.2.3 Racism in Tunisia.

Along with gender and class issues, ethnic discrimination, as pointed in chapter 1, plays a particularly important role in understanding the biopolitical dimension of the domestic labor performed by immigrant women. By this stand point, the Tunisian context seems to be no exception. Indeed, ethnic preferences regarding the hiring of foreign domestic workers have been, albeit to a limited extent, emphasised by the ILO in a study on the recruitment of workers in Tunisia wherein, in an interview conducted in Tunis in 2016, a woman expressed her preference for non-Tunisian women as follows:

> *Ma grand-mère ne s'entend pas avec les femmes de ménage et dames de compagnie tunisiennes. Elle a eu des mauvaises expériences avec les Tunisiennes. Elle préfère les gens du Sahel. Ils sont des bosseurs et ils sont beaucoup moins revendicateurs. J'ai sympathisé avec une femme de couleur qui travaillait au Factory, à la Marsa. Je lui ai demandé si elle connait des filles qui seraient intéressées à travailler comme dame de compagnie. Elle m'a recommandée Estear. Ma grand-mère qui ne parle pas français, s'entend parfaitement avec elle. Estear c'est notre rayon de soleil.*[743]
>
> *My grandmother doesn't get along with Tunisian maids and carer. She's had bad experiences with Tunisian women. She prefers people from the Sahel. They work hard and are much less demanding. I made friends with a woman of colour who worked at the Factory in La Marsa. I asked her if she knew any girls who would be interested in working as a caretaker. She recommended Estear. My grandmother, who doesn't speak French, gets on perfectly with her. Estear is our sunshine.*[744]

The existence of racist stereotypes in intimate labour would also emerge from social media, and in particular on the numerous Facebook pages where the demand for maids is often for "sub-Saharan " or "Ivorian" women. The Tunisian context shows the presence of extremely widespread forms of racially-based discrimination, which, as it will be now observed, emerge in both ordinary and institutionalised forms of racism. The criticality of incorporating the study of racism in Tunisia within an intersectional analytical approach stems from several factors. As several scholars noted, while a

[743] ILO (2019, 63). Diagnostic sur les processus de recrutement des travailleurs en Tunisie. p.63
[744] Ibid., my translation.

luxuriant scholarly focused on the intertwin between the transatlantic slave trade and the racial question in the post-slavery Americas has developed over time, attention to slavery in the Muslim world and the shadows it casts on the present has remained marginal in academic debate[745]. Furthermore, the analysis of racism in the Arab world would need to contextualise the area of research as much as possible by resorting to interdisciplinary approaches that allow for the consideration of broad and complex issues such as, just to name a few, the history of colonialism and the subsequent political, social and cultural transformations of decolonisation, globalisation, and the role played by religion, particularly Islam, in order to understand whether and how the concept of "race" is conceived inside of it. Aware of the complexity that such an analysis implies in the Tunisian context and in light of the scant literature characterising the study of racism in Tunisia, as well as more generally in North Africa and the Sahel, the analysis proposed here does not claim to be exhaustive. Indeed, I argue that without proper knowledge of Islam and the Quranic text, any analysis would be biased. Consequently, the very hope is that this partial contribution may pave the way for further and urgent in-depth research in order to shed light on a phenomenon that is extremely widespread in the Arab world but on which a "Culture of silence[746]" still prevails today. Trivial as it may seem, an important starting point for understanding racism in Tunisia is the very definition of the phenomenon and the different meaning that the concept of "race" had in the Arab world. In 1970s the French sociologist Colette Guillaumin was the first to define racism as *the exercise of domination based on the act of discriminating, according to a precise biological attribute, apparent or otherwise, that determines the characteristics of a group and not of an individual*[747]. The relevance of such a definition, as the historian Aurélia Michel pointed out, is twofold as it highlights on the one hand the absolutely constructed nature of the concept of "race" and, on the other hand, its very functioning of domination. Through a key historical reading, in "*Un monde en nègre et blanc*, Aurélia Michel (2020) reviews five centuries of slavery in an attempt to reconstruct the definition of the racial order that governs our world. An interesting starting point from which the historian takes off is that while inherently intertwined, the concept of race - as the West build it and developed it - was not the cause of slavery, rather the opposite or, that slavery should be considered as the result of biological racist theories that characterised the West and justified the practice and the institutionalisation of enslavement[748].

[745] Menin L. (2015).
[746] El Hamel, C. (2002). See also Chabe, M. (2007).
[747] Guillaumin, C. (1972).
[748] Michel A. (2020).

As extensively noted in Chapter 1, Tunisian society has made constant use of slavery over the centuries. Indeed, one of the defining features of slavery in Northen Africa was the variety of humanity made slaves by origin, ethnicity and cultural features. Thus, unlike the enslavement practices that characterised the West where slavery and blackness increasingly became inseparable, in Northen Africa as well as in the Southern Sahel region, slavery was not practiced according to colour-based biological reasons. Hence, as Bruce S. Hall points out in *The question of race in the Pre-colonial Southern Sahara,* although there is no doubt that the impact of European ideas, and especially European colonialism, was significant in generating a racial discourse among many people in the Sahel, it is certainly not true, as some have argued, that ideas about "race" were introduced into the area by Europeans and imposed on people who had no conception of it[749]. Indeed, notions of racial difference, were very real in the southern Sahara and the pre-colonial Sahel but it would seem to be linked to other issues such as religious purity[750] or ancestral origins[751]. Some references to skin colour emerged, for instance in Mauritania's case, but as Katherine Wiley observed, rather than being used in a discriminatory manner or within practices of domination, the reference to skin colour functioned as an element of self-identification and as a *linguistic tool to group people for a variety of purposes.*[752] According to Menin, although Islam did not normally conceive any distinction between slaves of different origin and colour, Ottoman societies produced over the centuries profound discrimination in the social status of slaves, determined essentially by the colour of their skin[753]. As a consequence, in the pre-abolitionist Tunisian society where slaves had different origins, skin colour increasingly began to play a determining role. The racial differentiations, indeed, translated into the different price charged for the purchase of slaves[754]. The main distinction was between *mamaluk* (white slave) and *abd* (black slave) an expression that, as will be shortly seen, is still very common in Tunisia, as well as in various North African countries (including Sudan) to refer to black people. As Medici notes, the increased exclusion of black slaves from the economic life of the country would show the emergence of racism linked to skin colour. In fact, with the exception of the creation of a corps of black royal guards, on the Moroccan Alawite model, in Tunisia most black slaves were destined for domestic exploitation[755]. While it is true that slavery played an important role in Tunisia in bringing about a process of racialisation and a racialising discourse based on skin colour, I believe that merely limiting oneself to the historical analysis of slavery is restricting. In fact, in order to

[749] Hall, B.S (2005).
[750] See, Schmitz, J. (2020).
[751] McDougall, E. A. (September, 2021).
[752] Wiley, K. (April 14, 2013).
[753] Menin L. (2015).
[754] Ibid.
[755] Medici, A. M. (2005).

understand the current Tunisian context and, in this specific case, the forms of racial discrimination suffered by sub-Saharan domestic workers, it is necessary to include those aspects that intertwin racism and contemporary capitalism. Indeed, in the light of the internalisation of neo-liberal logics that characterised Tunisia from the 1970s onwards, it is interesting to make some considerations in this regard. Although I have not found any publications on this topic, I believe that a particularly important role on racial issues between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, has been the process of identity re-signification which developed in Tunisia – and probably in the whole of Northern Africa – after the struggles for independence. There was a period, between the 1950s and 1970s, when the African continent, in claiming and gaining freedom from the European invaders, found a very strong element of cohesion. At that time, despite the legacy of black slavery, the factors of commonality probably outweighed those of difference. Nevertheless, the advent of neo-liberalism in Tunisia has, in my opinion, distorted the processes of national identity signification, reinforcing the divisive configuration pronounced by Saied in the February 2023 speech of the "African Others" and an "Us Arabs". Also emblematic is the contempt that a certain class of Tunisians – the affluent ones residing in the areas of La Marsa or Hammamet – pours towards their compatriots.

The refusal to use Tunisian Arabic, resorting only to the French language is the tip of the iceberg of a racial phenomenon that tends to produce forms of denial of one's identity also manifesting itself in spatial terms, through forms of reverse ghettoisation whereby a part of the Tunisian upper class resides in areas where Europeans are also known to reside. These are probably veiled but deep-rooted forms of racism which has re-penetrated and shaped non-Western countries by means of neo-liberal economic doctrine and which extends, as broadly discussed, far beyond the economic sphere through a *global rationality* that claims to be scientific[756]. Such a situation shows what Etienne Balibar stated about contemporary forms of racial discrimination that is to say a neo-racism which is characterised for being a *racism without race*[757]. For Balbar, this is a shift in which the issue of race has moved from a biological, colour-coded connotation, to one rather linked to socio-cultural discriminations. Indeed, as Duffield argued, rather than being based on prejudice and ignorance, to which the old biological racism was hastily, if insincerely, consigned, socio-cultural racism positions itself against such backwardness. The rational optimism of the new era emerges as a response to the narrow-minded violence of the past[758]. Yet, the very concept of race has not vanished completely, it rather remains

[756] Simone, M. (2010).
[757] On the transformations of racism refer to Balibar, E., & Wallerstein, I. M. (1991); Duffield, M. (2006); Balibar, E. (2008); Sivanandan, A. (2001).
[758] Duffield, M. (2006, 71).

concealed and intertwined with capitalist accumulation[759]. Indeed, the discourse of race, with neo-liberalism, has undergone further transcriptions linked to the growing gap between the "Global North" (to which Tunisia is desperately trying to come closer) and the "Global South" (wherein sub-Saharans are placed); one might therefore say that the gap concerns those who are involved in the bio-capitalist processes of (re)production and those who are excluded from it, between those who live in the cities, such as Tunis, and those in the rural areas of Kébili, Gabés or Tataouine, or the blacks crammed into the dilapidated suburbs. In a nutshell between populations and surplus populations. In this vein, far from being a mere contingency in the construction of the neoliberal (dis)order, racism is a strategy of power that, although having taken shape in different ways throughout history, divides a population enabling certain categories of life to be excluded - letting them to die both literally and metaphorically - to purify and strengthen society as a whole.[760] Within the contemporary securitarian paradigm that Tunisia (as well as other countries on the African continent) has made its own, racism guarantees the maintenance of a widespread feeling of insecurity that finds in the foreigner its distinctive feature, reconfirming that the "migrant-life" is the "main danger" not simply because they are black. Rather, as Balibar argued when looking at the Western context, the preferred target of contemporary racism is not the "black" or the "Arab" as such but the "black (as) parasite" or "delinquent" or, the "Arab as rapist" or "terrorist" etc[761]. In a study published in 2017 by Abdelhamid et al. on the racial discrimination suffered by the black community in Tunisia, the scholars highlight two different forms of racism in the country which I believe are also useful in relation to the investigation of racial discrimination suffered by the foreign black community. Racism in Tunisia occurs in both institutionalised and ordinary forms of discrimination;[762] where the former refers to forms of discrimination and exclusion perpetrated by the state, the second refers to that racial contempt which manifests itself precisely in the ordinary, everyday practices of life and which range from insults to physical aggression or, as is more often the case, through the use of seemingly innocent language.

Already the use of language hurts, yet the black minority has found a way to neutralise the pain: internalising such expressions by emptying them of their discriminating significance. By this standpoint, Abdelhamid et al. highlighted that the use of the discriminatory expression *chouchân*[763]

[759] Sivanandan, A. (2001).
[760] See Duffield, M. (2006,69).
[761] Balibar, E., & Wallerstein, I. M. (1991, 49)
[762] Abdelhamid, M., El Fargi, A., Elwaer, M.A. (2017).
[763] Chouchân, is an expression usually used together with a proper name of a person and designates the ownership of one subject, with respect to another: "chouchân Mohammad" means the ownership of Mohammed. One also often hears the expression "patron" often used by sub-Saharans to refer to the "whites".

used by the black community in Tunisia to identify themselves is a form of self-defence that, however, "normalises" discrimination and the of subjugation of the "excluded". Bourdieu,[764] spoke in this regard of *symbolic violence* or an almost invisible, apparently light form of violence that can take place in different aspects. Language is just one of these. According to Bourdieu indeed, through linguistic structures - which are at the same time bodily structures - we instil categories of perception, appreciation, evaluation and thus principles on which actions and symbolic injunctions are based. Symbolic violence hence, is not to be intended as a deliberate action by a dominant power but an unconscious reinforcement of the status quo that is perceived as a norm by those who are part of that social hierachy. Through symbolic violence, the black community in Tunisia internalises domination. It is widespread the use of other discriminatory expressions such as "abd- ("عبدslave) or "sombak", which has a similar translation, and which are used expressly to denigrate black people. According to Abdelhamid and his colleagues' research, however, the forms of resistance put in place by the black community to protect themselves against these incidents are weak, especially on a collective level.[765] One particular form of resistance, perhaps the most important, is the oral narration, from one generation to the next, of the legends of black heroes who fought against white tyrannies and their racism. This is the case in Gahbaya, a neighbourhood West of the city of Gabès - in southern Tunisia - where, as seen in the previous chapter, in the 1960s, first a few groups of blacks began to settle joined by poorer classes of whites following the extractive industrial boom that characterised the area[766]. It is an extremely run-down neighbourhood, forgotten by both national and regional institutions, made up of shacks and ruined streets where even access by car is difficult. Nevertheless, in Gahbaya the black community has found an important space where words build bridges between them and to the cruelty of the outside world. During their meetings, they pass on the stories of their heroes, first and foremost Slim Marzouk - or as they like to call him, General Marzouk - of whom, however, there is no trace in any history textbook on Tunisia[767]. According to tales and testimonies, after completing his studies in aviation between France and the US, Slim Marzouk, a black Tunisian originally from Gabés, decided to return to his country in the 1960s and express to Bourguiba his desire to serve the country and thus asked him to take on diplomatic responsibility as ambassador. The president nevertheless replied: *hence you have finished your university studies, well, I will appoint you ambassador to one of the sub-Saharan African countries so you can feel comfortable*

[764] Bourdieu, P. (2012). 8
[765] Abdelhamid, M., El Fargi, A., Elwaer, M.A. (2017).
[766] Ibid. p. 17
[767] Ibid.

among your fellows.[768] Such was the outrage and disappointment that once Marzouk returned to Gabés, he decided to create a political party made of blacks and for blacks. Concerned by the consensus that such a project might gain, Bourguiba decided to put an end to his propaganda, not by arresting him – thus risking fuelling the man's international reputation – but by locking him up in a psychiatric hospital where Marzouk spent more than 35 years, dying a month after his release in 2001. Talking about characters like Slim Marzouk, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, preserves what they consider a common history, giving a sense of collective strength and resistance. Beyond the use of discriminatory and offensive language, a further form of ordinary form of racism appears in the social practice of marriage. While in some cases the marriage between whites and blacks would seem to be disincentivised by colour-based reasons (e.g. in the area of Gabés, Zarzis and Medenine), in other areas such as Kébili it would seem rather linked to economic issues. Indeed, as noted by Abdelhamid et al., the marriage between a *horr* (white free men or women), and *chouachines* (slaves) is tolerated if the marriage entails the obtaining of a certain economic stability given by the well-being of one of the spouses[769]. However, the use of terms traceable to the historical memory of slavery should be noted. Yet, institutionalised racism plays a key-role in the process of marginalisation and dehumanisation of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia. Indeed, as should be clear by now, the institutionalised racism that characterises the Tunisian government (since Bourguiba's time) is governmental practice whereby the line between life and death – symbolic or real – is a narrow one. It is worth highlighting that through Organic Law 2018-50 of 23 October 2018, Tunisia became the first country in the MENA region to adopt a legal provision to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, complying with the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) ratified in 1967. However, as Maha Abdelhamid highlighted (2024), law enforcement is problematic with respect to black foreigners. Referring to Article 2, for instance, Abdelhamid notes that the law states *the distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference established between Tunisians and foreigners does not constitute racial discrimination*[770]. Although the word "exclusion" does not exist in the Arabic version of the law[771], the article seems to imply that discrimination against foreigners is not a crime. However, the implementation of this article is also to be seen as strategic in not creating a contradiction with the already mentioned law no. 96-62/1966 on national preference in recruitment, which is already discriminatory in itself. Even more problematically, article 8 states that the punishment for crimes related to racial discrimination

[768] Ibid. p., 33 (my translation)
[769] Ibid.
[770] Organic law no. 50-2018 art.2 (my translation)
[771] Abdelhamid M. (March 22, 2024). Access it through: https://www.carep-paris.org/recherche/varia/la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-anti-noir-dans-le-monde-arabe-doit-rester-un-plebiscite-de-tous-les-jours/

double if *the victim is a child [...] or an individual who join the immigrant or refugee status*[772]. Given the process of mass irregularisation, de facto, the law is inapplicable for individuals who are most vulnerable and exposed to acts of racial discrimination such as sub-Saharan migrants. The intertwin of ordinary and institutional racism in Tunisia produces forms of normalised dehumanisation emerging in discursive and political practices, in the legal order and even in the media. In this vein, in a recent study on the representation of sub-Saharans in the Tunisian media, Amal Hlioui observed how the media discourse on migration issues in Tunisia is characterised at the same time by a typically securitarian rhetoric, wherein sub-Saharan migrants are referred as *a collective threat/danger to the social harmony of the country,* [773] and, at the same time, a racialising discourse in which, through the use of expressions such as "Africans", the "Other" is built. As will now be observed with the case study examined, the care work performed by sub-Saharan women in the country's metropolitan areas, shows how the Tunisian device produces a "racially mobilised sub-humanity" made of exploitable women.

4.3 Oui, Madam! A case study on intimate labor in Grand Tunis.

4.3.1 Framing care and domesticity in Tunisia.

As noted in chapter one, the African continent represents an important geographical area where domestic and care work is becoming a growing sector of informal employment for women. In Tunisia, domestic labor represents the second most important informal female employment sector which would include about 40.000 workers[774]. However, this figure is to be considered unreliable given the massive presence of non-regularised foreign women, the widespread practice of child domestic work[775] and the informality of such work which renders most of these workers invisible in quantitative

[772] Organic law no. 50-2018 art.2 my translation
[773] Hlioui, A. (2023,112).
[774] AFTURD (2017, 3).
[775] Although Tunisia has signed and ratified most international conventions and treaties related to child protection such as the International Labour Convention n° 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the International Convention n° 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, child labour remains widespread in the country. Notwithstanding the Tunisian Labor Code in Article 58 sets 16 as the minimum age for work, several researches, including the 2016 ILO study, have shown that the practice of child labour is particularly relevant in domestic work. The International Labor Organization defines child domestic workers (CDW) as children under the age of 18 who do domestic chores in households other than their own. CDW are predominantly females and may live in their employers' house. Although it may be abhorrent to Western countries, child labour is a widespread practice in several countries on the African continent, particularly in Western sub-Saharan Africa, and does not necessarily take an exploitative but sympathetic form. See in this regard the study by Jaquemin, D. (2013), on the solidaristic and parental forms of domestic work of girls that characterised the city of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) in the 1970s. However, the Tunisian context seems to be far removed from such a model and girls domestic labor is often linked, as a study by the UNODC (2018) found,

analyses. According to the INST's study, more than 80% of foreign workers in Tunisia in care and domestic labor are from "African countries outside Maghreb area,[776]" with Ivorian women representing the majority of the employed labor-force among the foreigners[777]. Key contributions on domestic and care work in Tunisia include a 2020 study by the *Association Tunisienne des Femmes Democtrates* (ATFD), the contributions by the *Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développemen*t (AFTURD), which published in 2017 a study on paid domestic work, and another one by OXFAM on unpaid care work (2020); a further recent contribution comes from the study by Abdel-Rahmen El Lahga and Mohamed Amara who in 2020 published a policy brief entitled *The care Economy in Tunisia: Towards Recognising, Reducing and Redistributing unpaid care work*[778]. Although these studies are fundamental in shedding light on the sexual division of labour and the characteristics of care work in Tunisia, they remain mainly focused on the work performed by Tunisian women. As a result, *paid* domestic work performed by foreign women is currently unexplored in the Tunisian context. As already pointed out, one of the main issues concerning the study of domestic and care work lies in defining the activities that such work entails as it takes on different features according to the geographical, cultural and social context in which it is performed. As I will now observe, in the Tunisian scenario, the definition of domestic work as "the work performed *in* and *for* the household" provided within ILO's Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 of 2011 seems to apply properly. Nevertheless, considering the country's substantial differences between the tasks and the demographic composition of domestic labor-force between rural and urban areas, I will focus on the urban area of "Gran Tunis[779]" shown in figure 14 and more specifically in the capital city of Tunis where the field work was carried out.

to the trafficking of human beings within the country. On domestic child labour in Tunisia see: ILO, (2016); UNICEF (2012); Dostie, B., & Vencatachellum, D. (2002); UNODC (2018).

[776] INST (2021, 67).

[777] Ibid.

[778] El Lahga A.R., and Amara, M. (2020). The study can be accessed through the following link: https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English_PolicyBrief_Tunisia.pdf

[779] Grand Tunis is the largest metropolitan area of the country, consisting of four governorates, namely Tunis, Ariana, Ben Arous and Manouba. Accoridng to the Institut National de Statitistique (2023) about 25% of the Tunisian population leaves in the Grand Tunis.

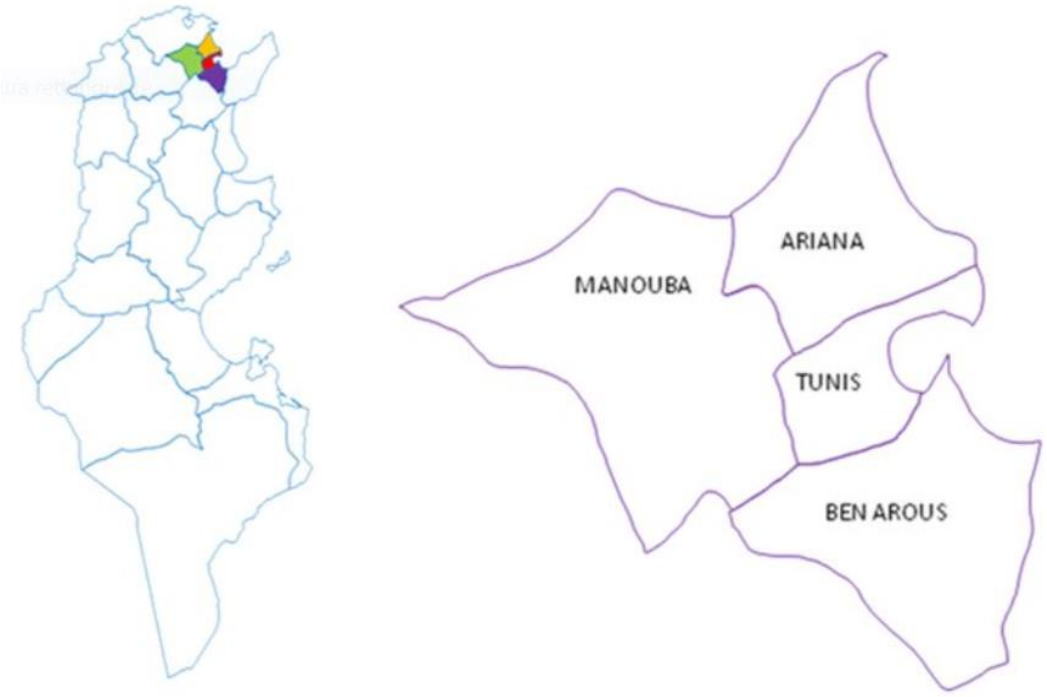

Fig. 14. Grand Tunis area
Source: Ardhaoui M. (2016)

Indeed, while in rural areas most of the domestic and care work is characterised by the *unpaid* labor performed by women in the household, in the urban areas of Grand Tunis and in Tunis, such employment has been increasingly "externalised", taking on the typical characteristics of bio-capitalism. Moreover, as the INS's study on international migration in Tunisia shows, the majority (50%) of migrants living in Tunisia both regularly o irregularly, are settled in the Gran Tunis area and another important portion of them (more than 27%) is instead allocated in the central-eastern area between Mahdia and Sfax[780]. Both in rural and urban areas, domestic labor includes tasks and activities performed within the house and for the household, hence outside the domestic space.

By reviewing the literature and studies currently available on domestic and care work in Tunisia, I have listed the main activities of domestic work in table 3. As can be seen, four main macro-categories of domesticity practices have been identified, highlighting for each of them the main activities performed. An additional "other" category that includes several activities often described by domestic workers as "extra" tasks have been identified.

[780] Besides the Capital city of Tunis, Sfax is another important area for sub-Saharan domestic and care workers. It seems to be particularly true as I will show in the next session, for the phenomena of contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking of women migrant workers.

Main domesticity practices	Activities performed	% of frequency**
CARE AND CLEANING OF THE HOUSE	Taking out the rubbish	NA
	Dusting	NA
	Gardening	41%
	Tidying up the house	NA
	Cleaning the windows	81%
	Mopping the floor	94%
FOOD	Cooking	63%
	Grocery	67%
	Preparing bread*	NA
CARING FOR DEPENDENT PERSONS: BABIES, ELDERLY PEOPLE & SICK OR FRAGILE PERSONS	Babysitting	31%
	School Accompaniment	21%
	Taking care of elderly people	26%
	Buying medicine	NA
	preparing special meals	NA
	Staying home*	NA
	Taking care of sick people	11%
CLOTHES	Ironing	71%
	Doing the laundry	88%
OTHER	Cleaning office	NA
	Cleaning relatives' houses	NA
	Washing the car	30%
	Fetching water*	NA
	Pet grooming	NA
	Cattle care*	NA

Tab. 3. Main tasks found in domestic and care labour in Tunisia

*Activites performed mainly in the rural areas (OXFAM, AFTURD 2022)

** Data reported by ATFD (2020)

As the AFTURD (2017) highlighted, the nature of the tasks performed is an important criterion for assessing the drudgery of the work[781]. Thus, the relevant aspect of this scheme, does not lie in the mere cataloguing the activities that make up the work I intend to analyse. Rather it shows the multiplicity and diversification of often incompatible tasks, thus the flexibility that such work requires. From the outline, it can be noted that most domestic practices involve both household management (grocery shopping, ironing, cleaning and cooking) and activities of caring for dependent individuals, especially childcare. However, the complexity of defining domesticity practices is also linked to the constantly changing nature of the tasks required. While some tasks are performed on a daily basis, others instead are added according to the employers' needs, sometimes greatly extending the working day or making the accomplishment of chores incompatible. While some household chores such as doing the dishes, cooking or taking the children to school are performed on a daily basis, other activities such as washing the car, gardening, pet grooming or preparing special meal for sick family members, may be requested by the employer on a less frequent basis, be it weekly, monthly or incidentally. Moreover, as reported by some sub-Saharan workers interviewed by the AFTURD, employers' requests may include several, unexpected and often unpaid chores. For instance, some of them stated that they occasionally work for their employers' relatives without pay, cleaning the employer's husband's office or the flat of the employer's daughter[782]. Some tasks are described by domestic workers as "humiliating and unconscionable". One sub-Saharan domestic worker stated that she has to "clean the dog's dirt before breakfast[783]". Another one stated that her employer requires her to do the laundry by hand even though there was a washing machine in the house, as it would consume excessive electricity[784]. Both Tunisian and foreign female workers in the Grand Tunis area claim that the most problematic aspect of their work lies in the excessive flexibility and adaptability demanded by employers as the request to carry out an additional activity can come suddenly and at the last minute, such as having to stop after dinner to tidy up the house following a social event. Some of the domestic workers claim that they are often hired as *nounous*[785] only to find out later that they will also have to take care of the house, finding themselves with a huge burden of labor on their shoulders. As Andall noted, and as will now be observed, the domestic workload and the negotiating power that migrant women workers have in determining their work activities and conditions, largely depends both on their legal status and on the organisation of the work performed

[781] AFTURD (2017,14)
[782] Ibid.
[783] Ibid. p.14
[784] Ibid.
[785] The expression "nounou" comes from French and means babysitter. Given the limited knowledge of Arabic among sub-Saharan migrants, requests for domestic workers are quite often made in French.

in the household[786], namely according to the organisation of time and space of the work performed at home. In South Africa, for example while internal migrants and nationals employed in domestic labor do not live with their employers and are mainly placed in full-time or part-time work, foreign women from neighbouring countries, Lesotho in particular, are mainly employed as domestic servants in the "live-in" mode, where work and living space dangerously overlap. Although the data currently available in Tunisia do not allow for an in-depth quantitative analysis of the distribution and organisation of foreign women's care work in Tunisian households, it is possible to outline at least three main forms of organisation of domestic work in the Gran Tunis area which in turn will determine workload, the types of tasks required, wages and working conditions. Domestic labor may be organised on daily basis for multiple employers, making these workers one of the most mobile and precarious group of workers in the capital city of Tunis and the Grand Tunis area[787]. *Multi-employer daily job*, is extremely flexible both in terms of working hours and wages. Indeed, as the AFTURD study shows, the working day comprises approximately seven and eight hours per day, without taking into account the time taken by female workers to move from one family to another and the unreimbursed costs that such displacements require (fuel, public transportation). Given the precariousness of daily jobs, the working time varies from week to week and from day to day (for approximately three to five working days per week), determining a significant instability in already extremely low wages that hover between 10 and 20 TND per day (approximately 3.2 and 7 Euros) for sub-Saharan women[788]; it would instead appear that the daily pay of Tunisian female workers in daily multi-employer domestic labor is higher, ranging around 20 and 30 TND[789] (approximately between 7 and 10 Euros). A further form of domestic labor organisation consists of an employment performed for a single household on a *permanent but non-resident* basis. According to the AFTURD study, working hours vary according to the demands of the employer but in general terms consist of 6-8 hours per day. The salary is between 300 and 450 TND per month (between 107 and 160 euro), for which there seems to be no difference compared to Tunisian women workers[790]. The salary ranges are also confirmed by the ATFD study, which states that in 40% of the cases analysed, the monthly salaries of female domestic workers, regardless of the mode of employment, do not exceed 400 TND (around 118 euros) per month[791], in violation of the law on the Minimum wage rate (SMIG) which in

[786] Andall, J. (2018).
[787] ATFD (2020, 53).
[788] AFTURD (2017, 14). Please note that according to the Tunisian law on the guaranteed minimum wage (SMIG), as of 1 October 2022, the hourly payment for workers in a 40-hour scheme is set at 2.081 TND per hour.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Ibid
[791] ATFD (2020, 112).

Tunisia is set at 459 TND in a 48 hours labor regime[792]. Among the patterns of domestic labor in the urban areas of Grand Tunis and the capital Tunis, the presence of *live-in* forms has also been found. Residing with the family one works for could offer non-regularised sub-Saharan women some advantages, as it could allow them to circumvent some of the difficulties and dangers they are exposed to in Tunisia due to their irregular status, such as finding decent accommodation, which, among other things, would allow them to save the money they earn for food and accommodation provided by their employer[793]. Interestingly, it would seem that in live-in forms, the pay for foreign women is higher than that received by Tunisian women ranging around 550/600 TND (approximately 214 euros) for the former, and 250/450 TND (between 90 and 160 euros. The intimate relationship that may characterise domestic labor, especially in live-in forms, has the solidaristic potential through which immigrant women could receive the support they need in dealing with paperwork or accessing services to which even though they are undocumented, they would be entitled but are unaware of. Unfortunately, the picture that emerges about the working conditions of female domestic workers in Tunisia, the overlap between living and working space often seems to be far from any form of solidarity. Indeed, although not directly related, the live-in modality characterising domestic labor is most often dangerous as female workers risk disappearing behind home walls, finding themselves in abusive conditions. As I will observe in the following pages in the case of Ivorian women, the live-in form is particularly prevalent in the slavery and semi-slavery phenomena widespread in the country. The AFTURD analysis confirms the presence of multiple forms of abuse and deprivation among female workers residing with their employer. Among sub-Saharan workers, who are often already economically and socially vulnerable, deprivation of freedom and control by the employer was found to be one of the main forms of abuse. One of the interviewees stated that she had had her mobile phone confiscated for four months, without the possibility of contacting her family[794]. Another stated that her initial permission to go out one day a week was later denied by her employer on the pretext that it was dangerous for her to go out[795]. Verbal violence, sexual harassment, absence of rest

[792] The minimum wage rate is the wage level set for workers in positions that do not require a professional qualification and below which no employee should be remunerated. Both the SMIG and the SMAG (Minimum wage rate for agricultural) are determined and revised by the government in a decree, after consultations with the most representative employers' and workers' organisations. Data reported are those fixed stating from October 1st 2022.

[793] This aspect could be particularly advantageous in the remittances of care chains, which, however, remain unexplored in the Tunisian context at the moment. Yet, considering the high rate (54,3%) of married women among the foreigners living in Tunisia (INST 2021, 61), and considering – as emerges from the AFTURD interviews – that several sub-Saharan domestic workers see their job as a form of family sustenance for relatives left behind, care chains between Tunisia and some SSA countries seem to be relevant.

[794] AFTURD (2017, 18).

[795] Ibid.

hours and lack of adequate space to guarantee domestic workers' privacy were found in several cases and regardless of nationality and type of employment in the families[796]. Both in the ATFD and AFTURD research, the majority of domestic workers reported having suffered some form of abuse. While it is almost impossible for ir-regularised women workers to have guaranteed employment protection measures, the almost total absence of employment contracts makes any domestic worker extremely precarious. In the absence of labor contracts, wages are set arbitrarily[797], thus remuneration is always established through totally asymmetrical negotiation, which makes domestic workers among the most precarious and "lowest paid workers in the entire country"[798]. The precariousness of informal domestic labor also affects female workers of Tunisian nationality who do not enjoy any form of social protection[799]; some of them, as revealed by the AFTURD and FTDES studies, do not seem to be aware of the possibility of being under contract despite the fact that the country has in place a legislative framework specifically developed for domestic and care work that, among other things, has recently been revised by the adoption of Law No. 37/2021[800]. While the implementation of national and international legal frameworks on domestic work is a useful and necessary means of protection to reduce informal work and promote decent work, this is ineffective, as Andall points out, if at the same time governments do not provide themselves with an appropriate legal framework on migration issues. On the "package" of policies required of governments to achieve gender equality in the domestic sector, protect and improve conditions for both paid and unpaid domestic workers, in 2018 the ILO elaborated the *Framework for Decent Care Work* shown in figure 15, based on the 5R

[796] Ibid. p. 18-19
[797] See AFTURD (2017, 14); see also ATFD (2020,109-117)
[798] Oxfam (2020b).
[799] Ibid p. 14
[800] Since 1965, Tunisia adopted a specific legislative framework for the regulation of domestic labor, through the adoption of law no. 25 of July 1st 1965 relating to the situation of domestic employees. However, as Nouri Mzid observed, the law has done little to protect domestic workers. Moreover, at that time, domestic workers were excluded from the scope of the Labour Code promulgated in 1966. As a result, domestic workers remained in a precarious and marginalised situation. The law of 1 July 1965 was partially amended by law no. 32-2005 which raised the age of admission of children to domestic work from 14 to 16 years old. More recently, the Tunisian legislator took a pioneering step forward in this area by banning altogether the employment of children in domestic and care labor under the age of 18, in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law No. 2017-58 of 11 August 2017 on the elimination of violence against women. Overall, however, the status of domestic workers has remained very precarious and far from meeting the standards adopted by the ILO, including in particular Convention No. 189 on domestic workers, which has not yet been ratified by Tunisia. Accordingly, the lawmakers intervened once again with Act no. 37-2021 with a view to adopting a substantial reform of the legal regime governing domestic work. The purpose of this law, as stated in its article 1, is to "regulate domestic work so as to guarantee the right to decent work without discrimination and with respect for the human dignity of domestic workers, in accordance with the Tunisian Constitution and the ratified international conventions". As it shall emerge in the following pages, racial discrimination represents one of the main causes of sub-Saharan domestic workers' labor condition. To access the most recent law on domestic work in tunisia: http://www.droit-afrique.com/uploads/Tunisie-Loi-2021-37-reglementation-travail-domestique.pdf See also: Mzid, N. (2022).

approach[801]: *Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute unpaid care work; Reward paid care work, by promoting more and decent work for care workers; and guarantee care workers' Representation, social dialogue and collective bargaining*[802].

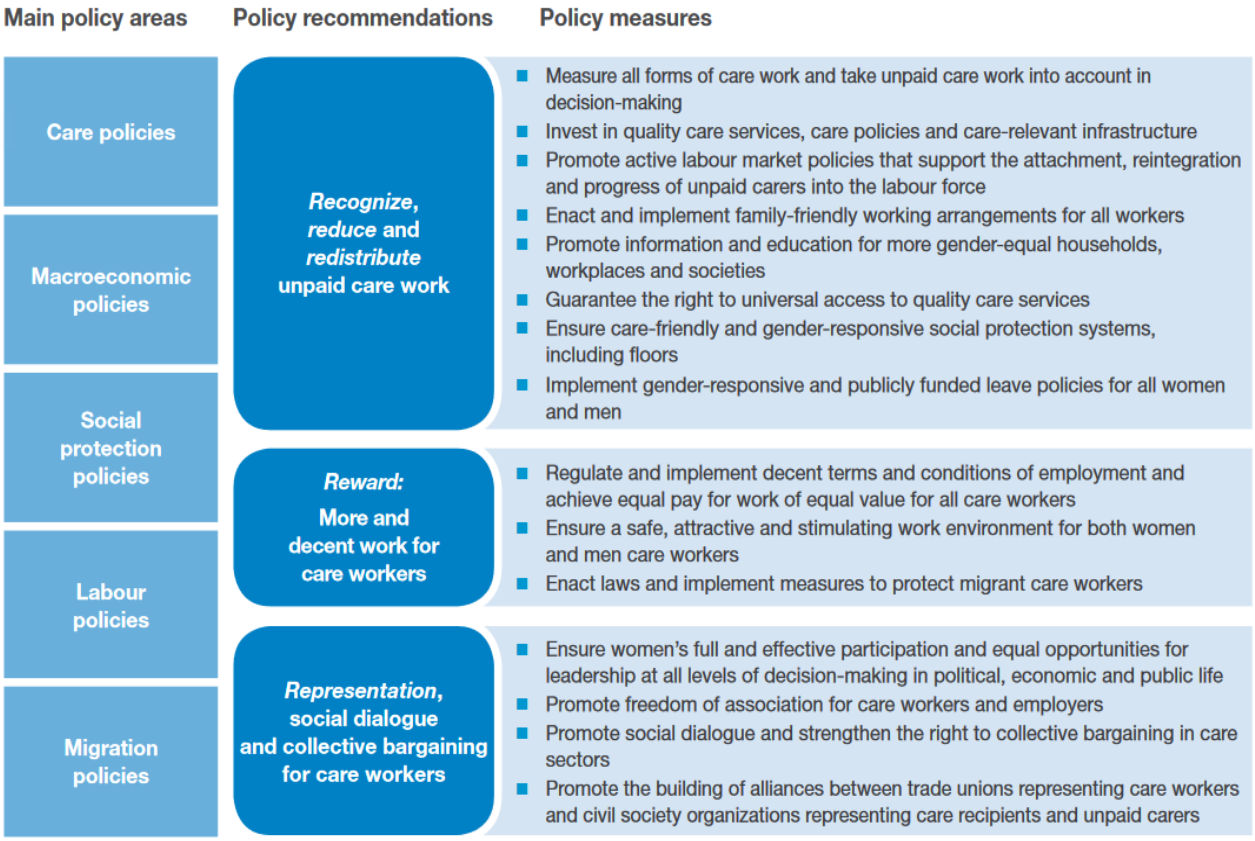

Fig. 15 - 5R Framework for Decent Care Work

Source: Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work, ILO 2018

However, as it will emerge in the following pages, the Tunisian context seems far from achieving these objectives. By virtue of the previously analysed governmental practices in the Tunisian's borderscapes, I will show to what extent domestic labor represents a litmus test in the production of practices of abandonment and dehumanisation that manifest themselves in forms of exploitation.

4.3.2. Essential and Expendable Women. Ivorian maids and "nounous" in Gran Tunis.

By analysing the emotional outfitting involving nannies and children in the care labor performed by Filipina women in the US, Hochschild and Ehrenreich point out that the commodification of domestic and care work characterising our time, represents the emblem of what Marx had called "commodity fetishism." In the first chapter of *Capital: A critique of Political Economy,* Marx uses this concept to

[801] ILO (2018)., Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work, Geneva, 2018
[802] Ibid. p.288–89.

highlight how within capitalism, economic relations of production and exchange are to be intended as relations that exist between things rather than relations that exist between people. Such an operation requires owners of capital to actively ignore or maintain an indifference to the relational whole that produces a commodity. Accordingly, *a car will be seen for the function it possesses; an object independent of its context. We disregard, Marx would argue, the men who harvested the rubber latex, the assembly-line workers who bolted on the tire and so on*[803]. Likewise, as Parreñas put it, in the care labor performed by foreign nannies, "we unwittingly tend to separate the love among the nannies and the children from the global capitalistic order of love to which it very much belongs"[804]. Foreign nannies, indeed, find themselves living a transnational love in which the attention and care they cannot give to their own loved ones or children is redirected to someone else's kids, the only ones who can recognise and reciprocate that love[805]. Nevertheless, while referring to a quite specific aspect of care work, namely that performed by nannies, the same forms of fetishisation also concern domestic work *tout court*, or, that which concerns not just the "*taking care of someone*" rather the "*taking care of something"*. Domestic work on the other hand takes place in and for that quintessential intimate space we all call "home". As Hochschild and Ehrenreich highlighted, from an abstract and historical perspective, the most interesting feature of domestic labor is that it turned the home into a perfect (bio)capitalist-style workplace, facilitating slavish phenomena to emerge. Although the phenomenon of trafficking in the country probably predates the 2011 Tunisian uprisings, as the interviews and fieldwork revealed, the access to data and its collection on the exploitation of Ivorian domestic labor-force in Tunisia is very recent, dating back to 2018 when the *Instance Nationale de Lutte Contre la Traite des Personnes en Tunisie*[806] (INLCTP), established two years earlier, presented the first study on trafficking in human beings in Tunisia.[807] According to the 2018 report, the majority (89%) of VoT in Tunisia are foreigners[808]; among them, migrants of Ivorian nationality account for almost all cases. While Ivorian men make up about 15% of the cases, Ivorian women, on the other hand, account for 84.7% of the cases found[809]. In 2022, the INLCTP published its second report

[803] Ehrenreich, B., Hochschild, A. R. (2003, 26).
[804] Parreñas, R. S. (2002).
[805] Ibid.
[806] The INLTP was created by virtue of the entry into force of Organic Law No. 2016-61 of August 3, 2016, adopted by the Assembly of People's Representatives and related to preventing and combating human trafficking. The body's missions include developing a national strategy for preventing and combating trafficking, establishing coordinated mechanisms for identifying, protecting and taking charge of victims, and prosecuting perpetrators. Thus, in July 2018, Tunisia's first national anti-trafficking strategy for 2018-2023 was launched.
[807] Prior to the INLCTP's foundation, in fact, data on the phenomenon of trafficking in Tunisia were very fragmented. the IOM along with other organizations provided data mainly at the regional level (MENA).
[808] INLCTP, 2018 "التقرير السنوي للهيئة الوطنية لمكافحةالاتجار بالأشخاص" p.17
[809] Ibid.

currently available only in Arabic[810] where the estimates confirm again that most of the victims in Tunisia are women of Ivorian nationality, employed mainly in domestic servitude in the country. Yet, the fieldwork carried out in Tunis allowed me to gain a great deal of information about the exploitation of Ivorian domestic workers in Grand Tunis. A number of Ivorian domestic workers arrive in Tunisia through informal employment agencies widespread in Abidjan that promise support and placement in a well-paid job in Tunis. Such agencies do not exist, there is no legal structure or any form of registration with the Ivorian authorities. Rather, it is about a well-structured trafficking network operating between Tunisia and Côte d'Ivoire that includes mainly Ivorian national traffickers, particularly men[811]. Consistent with the definition of trafficking previously outlined, these agencies base their activities on fraud and deception. "Travel packages" are sold for between 250,000 and 700,000 CFA for the disbursement of documents, such as visas – which, as it is now clear, are not necessary for Ivorian nationals entering Tunisia – and airline tickets from Abidjan to Tunis. On the other hand, Tunisian families looking for a maid or a nanny are required to advance the trafficker of five months' wages, corresponding to about 1000 TND (approximately 300 euros) which the unaware worker will have to repay by doing her work for free. Once in Tunis, the domestic workers are taken to the employing family, their passports are confiscated and they are prevented from leaving home, until they have completed the months of work for which the family has paid the advance. Having exceed 90 days of regular residency required by the Tunisian law, domestic workers often have no choice but to continue working for their employer either for no salary or for a derisory one[812].Those who manage to escape exploitation, however, find themselves in a condition of extreme vulnerability. As well as being unauthorised migrants in Tunisia, hence unable to go back in Côte d'Ivoire, they are often economically insufficient. Moreover, as they lived at their employers' house, often for a lengthy period, they find themselves in a condition of isolation and severe marginalisation whose solution leaves no room for anything but finding another job. The loop begins again. The increased demand in the domestic sector in the urban areas of Tunisia, as the International Labor Organisation (2019) observed, has led to the rise of recruitment agencies[813] that often impose withholding taxes of up to 20-30% on the already low wages of female workers[814]. As mentioned, social networks, Facebook in particular, also seems to play an important role in a dangerous recruitment process that remains

[810] Since I cannot speak Arabic, the report has been translated by an Italian-Arabic translator; See INLCTP (2022) through this link accessed on February 2024; https://www.unicef.org/tunisia/media/6241/file/Rapport%20national%20sur%20la%20traite%20des%20personnes.pdf
[811] Mercy Corps/ REACH (2018).
[812] Ibid.
[813] See ILO (2019). Accessible here : https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/diagnostic-sur-les-processus-de-recrutement-des-travailleurs-en-tunisie
[814] AFTURD (2020,12).

hidden and unreliable[815]. Although the international network plays an important role in facilitating the arrival of female workers in Tunisia, it appears that the regime of precarization of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia, described in the previous chapter, is generating new strategies for recruiting the Ivoirian female labor force that appear to be closely linked to the internal organization of the Ivoirian community in the Grand Tunis area. Indeed, alongside the transnational network, there is a recruitment phenomenon taking place directly in Tunisia and which is closely linked to the process of irregularisation set up by the Tunisian government. On the one hand, several Ivorians who have been living in Tunisia for years, finding themselves in situations of severe economic vulnerability, are beginning to operate independently as matchmakers between compatriots wishing to come to Tunisia or other precarious workers who recently arrived. Even more dramatically, although not currently documented, several Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are witnessing cases in which former VoT become traffickers themselves, acting as intermediaries in the recruitment of other women in Tunisia and Côte d'Ivoire[816]. During an interview at Terre d'Asile office in Tunis, I was told that the services offered by NGOs are often used by some migrants as a means of extortion against exploited victims seeking support. Such episodes show that while the Ivorian community represents an important support for its compatriots, it can also become a further factor of precariousness. In this regard, an IOM official told me that the low percentage of complaints from women victims of domestic slavery and exploitation could be linked to fears of retaliation by members of the community itself. The unwillingness to report acts of abuse emerges, inter alia, from a study conducted by the ILO in 2021 in which, among female workers who claim to have suffered some kind of abuse or form of exploitation, 88.6 per cent said they were unwilling to report[817]. In a precarised and precarising scenario, the spread of COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on sub-Saharan migrants in general, and women in particular. There is currently no in-depth study on the working conditions of domestic workers in Tunisia throughout the pandemic. It is highly probable as UN-WOMEN observed, that while domestic workers employed in the live-in modality may have retained their jobs, all others, particularly the multi-employer daily workers who were more exposed to the infection, lost their employment resulting in increased marginality and a major economic and social vulnerability[818]. Such evidence would be reinforced by the 2021 ILO's brief quantitative

[815] Indeed, in recent years, Facebook pages for recruiting domestic workers have spread like wildfire. Many pages pertain to Tunisian employment agencies that act as matchmakers between supply and demand in both the private and public sectors (offices, restaurants etc.); other pages, on the other hand, are created by individual users and function to post job offers or ads by female workers seeking employment in the Grand Tunis area.
[816] Such a situation emerged during my interviews with: terre d'Asile, IOM, UNODC, EUROMED RIGTHS
[817] ILO (2021, 7). Access it here: https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/enquete-rapide-sur-limpact-de-la-covid-19-sur-les-travailleurs-migrants-en
[818] UN-WOMEN (2020,10)

analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on sub-Saharan workers in Tunisia. Indeed, among sub-Saharan women interviewed, 60% of whom are (or have been) employed in "cleaning activities[819]", declared they had lost their jobs due to COVID-19[820]. As the pandemic spread, individual and collective care became a mantra to which governments around the world attempted to raise awareness among the populations. Vaccination campaigns, the use of protective equipment, and self-isolation aimed at protecting ourselves from infection, while preserving fragile individuals, have become everyday life practices. In different areas of the globe, while many discussions focused on the risks that the disease posed to elderly and sick people, those who take care of them day to day found little space in the public debate. Yet, their absence, whether deliberate or contingent, posed a huge challenge for women from the more advantaged classes who, in addition to having to work from home, had the burden of a "dirty job[821]" that had long since ceased to trouble them. As Parreñas et al. remarked in their analysis the impact of COVID-19 on foreign domestic workers in the cities of New York and Los Angeles, domestic workers embody the contradiction of an essential but expendable body meaning *those performing essential work that is magnified symbolically but devalued materially*[822]. Essential work, as Lakoff defined it, refers to the labor which allows to meet the basic needs for human survival and well-being. It includes a vast array of jobs entailing the provision of transportation, health care, food and agriculture, security, janitorial service, and domestic work[823]. However, according to Lakoff, "essential work" represents a key state strategy for managing national crises with particular individuals put at greater risk for the sake of the overall well-being of the population[824]. As Parreñas et. al pointed out, while being at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis due to their care for the vulnerable population of the elderly, the conditions of their work not only did not improve but worsened. Among sub-Saharan domestic workers who kept on working during COVID-19 in Tunisia[825], almost all of them stated that their wages had decreased significantly[826]. However, a larger proportion stated that their workload had increased[827]. The hypothesis that can be put forward, I believe, is that these workers had to change their mode of employment from non-resident or daily, to live-in basis at the request of their employer. Such a switch, on the other hand, would have been fruitful for both the employer and the worker: the employer can continue to free herself from a double workload to which she is forced by the patriarchal system; the Ivorian woman worker, can continue

[819] ILO (2021, 9).
[820] Ibid. p.8
[821] Parreñas, R. S. (2002).
[822] Pandey, K., Parreñas, R.S. and Sabio, G.S. (2021).
[823] Lakoff A. (2022).
[824] Ibid.
[825] According to the ILO (2021) figures 37,6% of women domestic workers kept working during Covid-19.
[826] ILO (2021,18)
[827] Ibid.

to guarantee herself a salary, hence survival, hiding herself from a bridle police system. As the UN-WOMEN reported, the blatant precariousness of female domestic workers during the propagation of COVID-19 in Tunisia, prompted Asma Shiri, then Minister of Women, Family, Children and Seniors (MFFES) to announce on May 2020 that the government would make funds available from the Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS) and the Tunisian Professional Association of Microfinance Institutions, to support domestic workers who had been left unemployed due to the pandemic[828]. Unfortunately, given the very high percentage of women workers' moonlighting, this measure is almost useless. Domestic work and the distribution of care, both between care givers and care receivers, is a litmus test of a broader *systemic, violent form of social engineering*[829] wherein some individuals are considered to be *expendable,* or *collateral damage in the construction of a neoliberal order*[830]. By this stand point, as Giroux argued, biopower is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility[831]. Thus, in a framework of the *politics of disposability*[832]*,* the Tunisian device through a governmental practice that produces hypermobility implements forms of differential inclusion showing that contemporary biopolitics functions not just to produce and control life in general, or, as Agamben argued, to reduce all inhabitants of the increasing militarized state to the dystopian space of the "death camp," but also to privilege *some* lives over others[833].

Conclusion.

I would take up again the question raised at the very beginning of this study. *Is there a meaningful sense in which we can speak about Africa as a place?* The question, as it emerged, is an improbable one.[834] Africa is an enormous continent, covering one-fifth of the earth's surface, and home to 18% of the global population scattered across more than 50 states connoted within themselves by a wide range of differences: natural environments, historical experiences, religious traditions, languages, livelihoods and so on. Hence no, Africa cannot be talked about in one breath, just as the division into sub-regions or categories such as "sub-Saharan Africa", "MENA region" or "Sahel", which I myself have used, are dubious or in any case should always be used with caution. I apologize if I too have

[828] UN WOMEN (202, 10).
[829] Giroux, H. A. (2015, 10).
[830] Ibid.
[831] Ibid. p.13
[832] Ibid. p.18
[833] Ibid p.22
[834] Ferguson, J. (2006).

sometimes used them inappropriately. However, it seems to me that if there is something in which we can refer to the spatial or geographical dimension of Africa in a generalized way, it is that "Go Europe" paraphrasing Papastergiadis, it' s not the iconic sign of contemporary African migration[835]. African migration, as it has been extensively argued, is historically mainly intra-continental. As the new millennium began, North Africa's greatest political and economic stability, attracted a growing number of migrants from other areas of the continent. While remaining predominantly characterised by increased intra-regional mobility, inter-regional flows (such as those from SSA to North Africa) have become more significant. Today, according to UN-DESA estimates (2020), North-Africa hosts 3.2 million international migrants, nearly 61% of whom were either from other African sub-regions or other Northen African countries[836]. As it was observed through the quantitative analysis, despite an increase of inflows heading to Tunisia from sub-Saharan states, particularly from the Cote d'Ivoire, to date the country's role in intra-African flows remains scanty[837]. Moreover, unlike the Libyan case, earlier than 2023 most of the northbound flows to Europe out of Tunisia along the CMR involved mainly migrants of Tunisian nationality[838]. Yet, Tunisia, like other countries on the continent, has for several decades (even prior to the beginning of the new millennium) assumed an increasingly important role in the flows of young people who, by virtue of the good reputation enjoyed by Tunisian higher education system, head to the country for study purposes. In addition, the provisional BAD's relocation from Abidjan to Tunis that took place from 2003 to 2014, resulted in the settling of an important Ivorian community, particularly in the capital Tunis, which appears to play some role in the current economic migration, especially of women workers, from Côte d'Ivoire to Tunisia. It is thus a question of small flows wherein Tunisia – as found in two different studies conducted in 2018 and 2019 – is indicated, at least in intentions, as a destination country.[839] More interestingly, however, the data collected by the INST (2021) showed that among migrants intending to leave Tunisia, regardless of their initial intentions – which remain unexplored in their study – the majority of sub-Saharan migrants declared that they would prefer returning to their country of origin. A situation, hence that would confirm, consistently with the data provided by the UNHCR in 2019 and 2020

[835] Papastergiadis, N. (2010).
[836] See UN- DESA. (2020).
[837] It is recalled indeed that according to the most up-to-date estimates provided by INST in 2021 (and roughly corresponding to those collected by the UN-DESA two years earlier – See IOM 2020b) the number of regularised and irregularised migrants from SSA is around 21,400 individuals (less than 0.1 percent of the Tunisian population),while those from the other North African states are slightly more. Together, however, migrants from other states on the continent make up more than half of the foreigners. However, data – in itself sparse – should be taken with some caution.
[838] See UNHCR 2023
[839] See section 3.2.2

regarding the population of asylum seekers in Tunisia[840], that only a small part (of an already very scanty number) of sub-Saharans are willing to reach Europe. As it turned out, however, the Tunisian migratory context is much more complex than that. Despite figures yet, Tunisia continues to be widely defined as a "hub for sub-Saharan migrants heading to Europe" within a list that is progressively getting longer including countries ranging from Niger to Ethiopia, considered as "transit" areas for migrants moving towards North Africa and then to Europe. Besides being a profoundly Eurocentric concept based, as Düvell argued, on the supposed attraction of Western countries, implying that middle- or law-income countries South to the EU cannot be destination but only transit countries, the very concept, as extensively argued, is not interesting for its meaning (or lack thereof) but rather for its performative use, its capacity to produce, through enunciation, normalising and hegemonic effects on migrants' bodies and their spaces of livability. Hence, not simply its political use but also its *biopolitical dimension*. The relevance of the Foucauldian knowledge/power relationship of the Tunisian device emerges from here: the use of the expression "transit country" (characterised in its very nature by the impossibility of predicting ex-ante the flows both in temporal and spatial terms), highlights the unpredictability of migration, reinforcing the interpretation of Tunisian migratory space as ungovernable. An interesting aspect of the rhetoric of the transit country – a modern discursive and political practice of the African metaphor of crisis – is that it appeared in international debates on migration precisely in the 1990s that is, in a psychotic phase in which security issues were in the midst of their planetary transformation. As has been observed by many scholars, transit migrations have always existed and indeed, precisely in the case of the African continent in the pre-colonial era and before urbanization, the nomadic populations scattered everywhere did nothing but transit. "Transit migration" is rather a recycled but fashionable term through which to build and maintain turbulent places. The uncertainty regarding the routes to be taken and that would characterise "transit migrants" should not be intended, building on Düvell again, as an intrinsic characteristic of migration. Rather, the need to change migratory trajectories should be attributed precisely to the outcomes of the current border regime that hamper and continually alter migration flows, producing further mobility and paradoxically, new "transit areas" or, more dramatically, transforming destination countries in transit areas. I believe that Libya, a historic destination country for intra-continental flows, could represent more than Tunisia, an emblematic case in this sense. More research should be conducted in the country in this perspective.

While the EU reinforces the metaphor of the Tunisian crisis, the discursive practice of the transit country has been equally strategically adopted by the current Tunisian government, led by Kais Saied.

[840] See p. 138

Indeed, not recognising itself as a destination country, I argued, its not to be attributed to the inability or the failure of the Tunisian government but to a governmental practice that works not in terms of a *biopolitics of mobility* but a *biopolitics through mobility*. The Tunisian device stages a hyper-mobility, not by an *excessive willingness to govern* but on the contrary by *not governing too much*. The non-recording practices, as well as mass irregularisation, through which Tunisian government makes migrants disappear from data and statistics are a technology of power that while emphasising ungovernability and chaos, use partial uncontrol in order to manage control. It is a governmental practice relying on Zachary White's concept of "myopticon" that, unlike Foucauldian panopticon, "relies more on uncertainty than on accurately knowing or disciplining its subjects." Within a securitarian approach that has characterized Tunisia since the post-Ben Ali period, the current government take advantage of EU's support and funding in the management of flows, for the strengthening of its internal policy. Through the governmental (self)production of Tunisia as a transit country, Tunisia shirks its legal obligation to protect migrants' rights and dignity, implementing a "legal production of illegality." As it has been pointed, despite several bilateral agreements on free visa access between Tunisia and some sub-Saharan states – like Côte d' Ivoire – allow migrants to enter the country regularly, for the majority of them it becomes almost impossible to extend the stay on legal basis. The process of mass irregularisation produces forms of suspension and abandonment that are no less violent than deportations or expulsions. As pointed in chapter four, sub-Saharan domestic workers represent an emblematic case in the Tunisian context. Intimate labour in Tunisia indeed, has become an attractive economic sector similarly to other parts of the world. Moreover, it is likely that demand will increase given the decline in birth rate and a progressive increase in the population. Yet, the implementation of a biopolitics through mobility is strategic in the creation of a low-cost and exploitable workforce given the conditions of extreme vulnerability that characterizes sub-Saharan women in Tunisia. I also observed that the process of economic precariousness that affects the Ivorian community, could have a role in the growing phenomenon of trafficking affecting Ivorian domestic workers who appear to be the majority of foreigner domestic workers in the Grand Tunisia area and probably in the area of Sfax. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis on intimate work in Tunisia are currently extremely scarce. However, given the very serious forms of exploitation that emerged there is the urgency of further research. As pointed in the last chapter, both the decolonization process and the neoliberal doctrine contribute however to understanding the contemporary existence of highly racialized practices that extend to every level of migrants' existence, partly affecting also Tunisian "sub-citizens". Through their irregular-ised conditions, sub-Saharan women domestic workers are subjected to a blurred surveillance system wherein movement is not repressed but coherently with the neoliberal regime, it is encouraged and exploited within

contemporary capitalism. On the other hand, by reducing living spaces and freedom of choice, migrants will be forced to find alternative routes with which to aspire to a dignified life.

Yet, there is a thin line between the words *routes* and *roots* which is not merely a phonetic one. In referring to routes I do not mean the material dimension allowing migrants' bodies to cross territorial borders in transit countries through the disciplining tool of a mobile existence. Routes, rather, are a political practice of action that allow unrecognised and suspended individuals to "move" along and across non-spatial boundaries, that is within *the proliferation of hierarchies and internal boundaries within the space of a polity*[841] (Mezzadra, Neilson 2013, 272). In this perspective, routes represent a field of tension and conflict within which mobility — being kept on the move — is a practice of subjugation but also a form of resistance. The requests of recognition claimed by sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia are a good starting point for further reflections about the forms of differential inclusion that allow Tunisian government to include (im)migrants in certain areas of society (notably the labour market) while denying them from the access and the participation to others (citizenship, political participation, legal protection). As it emerged in the analysis of intimate labour, carried out by a currently unknown number of sub-Saharan women, the space of action for moving along (im)material Tunisian routes is strongly racialised, thus it depends on immigrants' (ethnic, social, economic) roots. Differently than other foreigners from Western Europe or Maghreb countries, sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia are exposed to arbitrary detention, mass expulsion procedures, police violence, public harassment, grave forms of labour exploitation which quite often takes on the features of modern slavery. Almost all of the male and female sub-Saharan workers surveyed by FTDES in 2020 believe they are exploited by their employer. In 2017, out of a total of 5470 work permits issued by the government, only 4% were directed to sub-Saharans compared to 40% of workers from Western European countries and 31% from other Arab countries (FTDES, 2020). Paradoxically, Tunisia's "machine of irregularisation" concerns also those joining the refugee status. In fact, despite having signed and ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention, the government has never passed a domestic law, thus Tunisia still lacks a functional asylum system. As a result, also refugees in Tunisia are undocumented migrants. The undocumented presence of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia has rekindled the country's racist fantasies according to a neoliberal process of social engineering where discriminations and exploitation can be understood only through a complex intertwin of race, gender, class, security etc. The advent of neoliberism in Tunisia strengthen by Ben Ali's regime has had as elsewhere dramatic effects. By a gender standpoint, the current neoliberal project, an inherently patriarchal one, while telling us the fairytale of female empowerment, is

[841] Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013, 272)

actually placing strong limitations on improving most of the females' means of subsistence. This is true for both Tunisian and sub-Saharan women. In fact, if on the one hand the adoption of neoliberal policies in Tunisia led to the inclusion of the Tunisian female workforce in the productive sector, on the other hand, there has been the need to entrust other women as care workers. Yet, sub-Saharan permanence in Tunisia has led to the proliferation of several networks and organisations such as the Association des Étudiants et Stagiaires Africains en Tunisie (AESAT), or the Association des Ivoiriens en Tunisie (AIT), the Association des Ivoiriens Actifs de Tunisie (ASSIVAT). Thus, communities that are built in a "transit country" (in its simplistic usage) play an important role in determining the choice to stay or continue the journey. Sub-Saharans presence in Tunisia, as well as their alliances, highlight, I argue, something more than Tunisia's role as a destination country. Indeed, relying on Butler's analysis on vulnerability and corporeity, sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia transform vulnerability in a deliberate and active form of political resistance through which to aspire to a permanent "good life" (Butler, 2015), showing that transit migration, thus transit states, are "a strategic response to the constantly changing control regime and part of the complex interaction between migrants' autonomy and state sovereignty" (Düvell 2010, 422). As it has been shown, sub-Saharans presence in the Tunisian public spaces is a form of "deliberate exposure and persistence, the embodied demand for a liveable life that shows us the simultaneity of being precarious and acting" (Butler 2015, 153). Underlying Tunisia's role as destination country does not mean denying that a part of migrants is willing to leave. Rather, it contributes to critically think about subjectivation practices which are currently marginal in academic research in supposed transit states and in the wider analysis on intra-African migrations.

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