



## **The Mediterranean Sea as a border: difficulties surrounding the concept of migration**

**El Mediterráneo como frontera: dificultades  
que envuelven al concepto de migración**

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the present article is to face some difficulties that arise from researching the so called “irregular migration”. Focusing on the southern border of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, we capture some troubles and reflections based on other research projects carried out by ourselves and by others. We previously did some conceptual work based on the ideas of migration and border and how these are related to other categories, such as citizenship. Here, we make an exercise of reflection into the sociological field. To this end, we utilise some theoretical tools such as deconstruction, bibliographic review and conceptual analysis. We show and compare several concepts and definitions of the theoretical subject, taking into account its empirical counterpart. We analyse different ways of understanding migration and its dimensions, delving deeper into their weaknesses and strengths. Due to the importance of borders in the study of migration, their dimensions are analysed too. We point out some structural contradictions in borders, both empirical and discursive. We conclude that the best way to refer to our object of study is talking about *candidates to migration* because there is a selection made through a process of bordering. As social researchers, we are presented with the challenge to build the right analytical categories in order to control their performativity, and this category is the one that we think better fits our object among those we have analysed. Also, it has some inertia beyond our work. Contradictions also arise when trying to define the different situations that people who (try to) migrate come across, but we do so with the aim of highlighting the extreme situations that are reproduced systematically, as part of a wider structure.

**Keywords:** migration, border, Mediterranean Sea, epistemology, irregularity

## Resumen

El objetivo del presente trabajo es exponer algunas dificultades a la hora de estudiar la “migración irregular”. Centrándonos en la frontera sur de Europa y el mar Mediterráneo, reflejamos algunas cuestiones que surgen a raíz de otras investigaciones, propias y ajenas. Hemos realizado un trabajo conceptual basado en las nociones de migración y frontera, y cómo estas se relacionan con otras categorías, como la de ciudadanía. En este trabajo hacemos un ejercicio de reflexividad hacia el campo sociológico. Para ello, empleamos diferentes herramientas teóricas como la deconstrucción, la revisión bibliográfica y el análisis conceptual. Exponemos y comparamos varios conceptos y definiciones del sujeto teórico, teniendo en cuenta el empírico. Analizamos diferentes formas de entender la migración y sus diferentes dimensiones, profundizando en sus debilidades y fortalezas. Debido a la importancia de la frontera en su estudio, también analizamos sus dimensiones. En las fronteras podemos observar claramente algunas contradicciones estructurales, tanto empíricas como discursivas. Concluimos que la mejor forma de referirnos a nuestro objeto de estudio es hablar sobre *candidatos a la migración* porque existe una selección que se hace a través de un proceso de fronterización. Tenemos el reto de construir las herramientas teóricas correctas para controlar su performatividad y esta categoría es la que pensamos que mejor se ajusta a nuestro objeto, de entre las que hemos analizado. También, porque tiene algo de inercia más allá de nuestro trabajo. También hay una contradicción en el hecho de intentar definir las diferentes situaciones a las que las personas que migran (o que lo intentan) se enfrentan, pero lo hacemos con la intención de resaltar las situaciones extremas que son reproducidas sistemáticamente, como parte de una estructura más amplia.

**Palabras Clave:** migración, frontera, Mediterráneo, epistemología, irregularidad

## 1. Introduction

The origin of this work lies in the difficulty we encountered when trying to find the perfect analytic categories to frame the reality of a specific group of people: those who want to come to Europe and aren't allowed to, so that their transit is prolonged indefinitely. We faced this difficulty after doing a press analysis of the news which reported on the attempts to reach European coasts through the Mediterranean Sea (including the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla), either successful or not, and the political debate about how to legislate on this topic. The main results and the whole methodological details of the press analysis are already published in Fajardo & Soriano (2016).

Here, we want to make some contributions to the current academic discussion about how to face, epistemologically, the process of migration. In these pages our aim is to focus on some relevant categories in the research about non permitted migration that is located at the border. As Sassen (2015) has observed, there exist mechanisms of expulsion which take people to the edges. The interest of studying the Mediterranean Sea as a border lies in the fact that it is configured as a bordering territory which divides two realities, two continents, two major religions and two economic zones making up a specific geopolitics (Soriano & Fuentes, 2015).

We want to talk about the situation of indefinite transition of the people who have started their migratory project but encounter such hard conditions that they find themselves at a standstill. This situation occurs when they have already begun their journey, so they are abroad of their countries of origin, and no other state recognises them as citizens or even as humans. Since there is no full acknowledgement of their rights by any sovereign state, they find themselves in a sort of legal limbo because their status as citizens is normatively guaranteed but in practice this is not the case. Even though borders are the places where it gets more extreme, this situation includes more spaces than the one we examine here. We could say that it starts the moment a visa is denied, but this is a very micro sociological action within a larger structure. It starts in the country of emigration and it might never end because even if a person gets to cross the physical border (say, for example, the Ceuta fence), there are a lot of internal borders in the country of immigration. An excellent analysis of internal borders can be found in Varela Huerta (2013). But there are some spaces, some borders where this situation gets especially hard. The Mediterranean Sea, as we said before, is a dense

border due to all the fields that it divides. This is why it is particularly relevant to study mobility across this border territory.

Here, we want to examine the strengths and weaknesses of some concepts used to define the reality we are talking about. As Onghena (2015) explains, there are concepts that refer to socially recognised issues which are on such an abstract level that they cause the debate about specific situations to be postponed. This means that they help to reduce the uncertainty, but they don't help to make the issues more understandable. In the field of media, we can call this "the iceberg technique" (Van Dijk, 1997), which refers to the use of these general concepts (the top of the iceberg) and then trusting that the audience will fill the rest with the existing social imaginary. This way, they avoid the responsibility of making explicit, possibly controversial statements.

We are aware of the performativity of social concepts and of the academic challenges that are involved in the study of migration and mobility; our goal is to present the difficulties of identifying the terms which could best explain the complexity of these processes.

Following the growing call to revise and set in their proper context the analytical categories used by sociologists (Grosfoguel, 2007; Laraña, 2001; Sassen, 2015), we use reflexivity to face some problems within the field of sociological models. This is a theoretical work that stems from a previous, empirical work. The goal of this paper is to sum up some of the methodological challenges of studying mobility in the Mediterranean, focusing on concepts. In light of this, we use bibliographic review, conceptual analysis and deconstruction (Derrida, 2011) in order to suggest some questions that any researcher should ask herself.

## **2. What do we mean when we talk about migration?**

The main concept we have to think about is "migration". What is it? Well, there is a vast literature about that, but we don't intend to make an exhaustive review of it here. We just need to know that there are several ways to define it theoretically and, as a consequence, there are several ways to manage and measure it. Although it has never been easy to define, currently, it is being especially discussed, and perhaps it is the kind of "migration" we study here that made this concept loses weight. As we will see later, one example of this current discussion is the difference in treatment between "migrant" and "refugee". Both the academic and the institutional fields use it with different

meanings. Demographically, for example, it is quite simple: we just have to look up the register of inhabitants and we can tell whether there have been migrations or not. But it is actually one of the most complicated social processes to measure, and most widely and diversely influenced. One of the common ways to make it more measurable is to use the “one year reference”: that is the standard time accepted to consider that a person has or had the intention to stay, which is one of the most common characteristics in the definitions of migration. Also, it is important to underline that we are talking about international migrations, which are not the only type, even if some authors include it as part of the definition. López Sala (2005: 14), for example, defines “migration” as the “crossing of state borders, a person being transferred from the jurisdiction of one state to that of another, which often comes with a transitory or definitive change in the belonging to a social and political national community”. This is quite a complete definition because she talks about a macro dimension, the state, and a meso-micro one, the belonging to a group.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defines “migrant” as a person who lives temporally or permanently in one country which is not their country of birth and in which said person has acquired significant social links. In this definition there is no mention of the importance of having made a decision, but it would seem that this becomes relevant when a distinction between “migrant” and “refugee” is needed. According to the same source, the root of the decision is what makes the difference. A migrant is supposed to be able to make a decision about when and where to go, even if that decision is conditioned. Peculiarities of migration have led to talk about the migratory space (Faist, 1997: 247): “Migratory space is the sum total of personal projects, perceptions and images, on the one hand, and the structure of opportunities available to potential migrants, on the other, linked by intermediate mechanisms such as networks and collectives”.

This term faces several questions. In words of Giner, Lamo de Espinosa and Torres (1998: 490): talking about migration means talking about “processes of physical-social transition the contours of which are often vague”. We can say that there are four main characteristics at the moment: The crossing of state borders, spending a considerable period of time in the new location (or at least the existence of the intention to remain there), the building of important social links and the decision to make the travel. Let us now talk about the sub-Saharan population in Morocco, Libya, and other areas in Northern Africa: Several NGO’s have been warning for the past few years

about the hard conditions of transit and the systematic violations of Human Rights here<sup>1</sup>. When people feel permanently harassed, what significant social links can they build? Even if they make the decision to migrate (the study of which could be the topic of another work), we cannot say that they decide when or where. They decide when to start, but not how long it is going to take. They can decide where, but this destination can close its doors. Sometimes they are in the register of inhabitants of Morocco, sometimes not. Just by looking it up, we cannot tell which ones among them want to stay and which ones want to leave. This could be considered as a transfer of persons between states but there is a third country, as well as the one of origin and Morocco, which makes it more complex. It is not even a country, it is a supranational institution: the European Union. But if we consider this as a proper transfer, we are forced to say that the decision of the person is not relevant in the definition, as much as they are not in the country they wanted to. And while we're talking about the decision, we mustn't forget that as soon as a decision to migrate involves getting permission, the element of free choice is modified (Ahmed, 1997). The same author writes that both voluntary and forced migration are ideal types and should be seen as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. What's more, referring to the stay, nowadays "it is the fortification or militarisation of external borders of the EU what makes migration definitive in some cases" (Varela, 2013: 39).

Possibly due to the criticisms of other classic notions, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2017) defines a migrant as

"any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from their habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is".

This definition could define our object of study; they fulfil the requirements to be included. Furthermore, having a broad definition is crucial in order to keep track of deaths, because otherwise we would underestimate them even more by trying to be precise. One of the challenges of collecting data on migrant deaths that Brian & Laczko (2014) point out is definitional inconsistencies, the complexity of which is increased by the growing "de-territorialisation of borders", the detachment of national boundaries from sovereign territory (Weber & Pickering, cit. in Brian & Laczko, 2014). But it is so broad that it does not make a distinction between this situation and others.

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<sup>1</sup> See a brief description here: <http://www.sinpermiso.info/textos/ue-libia-un-acuerdo-vergonzoso-a-costa-de-los-refugiados>.

As we can see, there are some contradictions. Furthermore, there is one sense in which we could say that they are “migrants”. Rodrigo & Medina (2013) criticise the use of “migrant” to refer to people who are living in a different country to that of their birth (sometimes even to their children, even though they were born there). They argue that the word seems to indicate a process, something that is not finished. They should be called migrants, then, as long as they're migrating. Otherwise, they should be called “migrated”, because they already made it. Sayad (2010) uses the word “immigrated”, because he points out the importance of distinguishing between a science of immigration and a science of emigration, looking for the conditions of production and reproduction of both. In this sense, the people we are talking about could be considered the extreme case of “migrants”, because they are in a constant process, and we could try to think about the conditions of production and reproduction of transit. What is clear is that they are not “immigrants”, as they are commonly called (especially by the press); because they are not in a place they decided to be in. So they cannot be “irregular immigrants”. This point leads us to the examination of another possible definition.

We have to say that irregularity is not a characteristic of mobility, but rather a result of its treatment (Colectivo Ioé, 2003). That is the reason why we consider that the construction of mobility by the press is erroneous and, what's more, it is causing the population to understand the reality of the border in a distorted way. This is the reason why, while looking for concepts that would allow us to show that irregularity is attributed, we pondered calling it “migration *declared* irregular”: declared irregular by the states and reproduced as such by the media. We faced two challenges at this point: we had to decide if we wanted to keep using “migration” (we still had the same conceptual problems as before) and we had to convincingly explain who declared it as irregular. Perhaps it could be a useful concept for research on law or political discourse analysis. We eventually discarded the term, because we furthermore found that “irregular” was not among the most common words used by the media in our sample. It is much more frequent to simply find the term “immigrants”. However, it is very common to find “irregular immigration” as a label introducing the topic, so we think that “migration declared irregular” can be used as a methodological tool in some cases.

The fact is that the differing treatment of mobility that makes some of them “irregular” has some consequences that we want to make visible here. And that is why we decided to talk about “non-citizenship” in our work. The situation of people who want to migrate to Europe and find themselves in the North of Africa waiting for the



opportunity to cross is the opposite of being a citizen. We understand citizenship as a concept which is being constructed since the Second World War and that involves political (mainly the right to vote and indirect political participation) and social dimensions (welfare rights guaranteed by public goods and services), in the vein of Alonso Benito (2010). We claim that when a reality ceases to be exceptional, as proven by the fact that at least 30,000 people have died from 1988 to the present in the Mediterranean Sea, the construction of “citizenship” should be investigated in order to understand what is happening from an epistemological level. It is impossible to know the exact number of deaths and we always have to think that they are more than the available data shows because of the tendency to undercount. The above estimate is based on Last and Spijkerboer (2014) and Missing Migrants Project. According to The Migrants Files, however, over 30,000 refugees and migrants have died in their attempt to reach or stay in Europe since 2000. In the words of Arendt (1987), they don't even have the right to have rights.

Zapata-Barrero (2001), writing about this issue, identifies three situations depending on the rights of the migrants that are relevant to the circumstances we want to clarify and conceptualise. The first step he talks about is the one in which not even Human Rights are recognised (such as the one we are talking about). Secondly, temporary residents have their Human Rights recognised, as well as their social, economic and civil rights, though only partially. Finally, permanent residents would have all of them, except political rights. Even if the situation we are talking about could be called “non-citizenship” because they are in the first step, we cannot forget that they are still citizens of their countries of origin. We find this concept useful to report this situation in the global North but it is not the perfect one to describe it.

Bauman (2006) uses the metaphor of a creative process to explain one of the results of Modernity and Globalisation: human waste. In an artistic creation which starts with the design, culmination comes with the separation and elimination of waste. Waste is everything that is not part of the “useful product”. It means that the work is not finished until what is left over is eliminated. So, waste is the dark and shameful secret of all productions (ibidem). People left out of Modernity's design would be its waste. Borders play a crucial role in separating useful product from waste. Nation-states keep defending their right to exemption. States construct threats (migration) and use the feeling of vulnerability to offer their appropriate solution. This is one of the techniques to reaffirm their crisis-stricken sovereignty (Zedner, 2000). The current EU migratory

policy is making an effort to strengthen the distinction between “inside” and “outside”. However, this distinction is systematically broken.

Uncertainty and the anguish caused by it are the main products of globalisation (Bauman, 2006). State powers can do close to nothing to soothe uncertainty, let alone to end it. All they can do is redirecting it to closer objects; they move it from things they can do nothing about to those they can at least boast to manage and control. Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, residual products of globalisation, perfectly meet those requirements (*ibidem*). Human waste is produced by global dynamics of expulsion. Massive displacements, ecological disasters, armed and/or political conflicts and poverty have created levels of social expulsion which have never been seen before. This happens especially in the global South but also now in the global North, though usually in a different way, shaping different occurrences. As Sassen (2015: 237) puts it: “Whatever or whoever, even if it is a law or a civic effort, that stands in the way of profit, risks being put apart, being dejected”.

Actually, emigration from peripheral countries to central countries is just an “escape valve, among others, to face a broader problem, which is the political domination, economic exploitation and ideological exclusion that result from interstate hierarchical organisation” (Colectivo Ioé, 2003: 49). And this is why we don’t find “waste” to be the perfect concept. It is good to make visible that there are people who are problematic to some structures. Even if it makes clear that they are neglected by these structures, “waste” implies the notion that it is something in excess, something that could just be brushed off. It does not help to see, as decolonial thinking makes visible, how migration is indispensable in the capitalist world-system (Espíñeira, 2010).

Another possibility is to talk about “candidates to (im/e)migration”, depending on which dimension we want to emphasise. Ali Bensaad (cit. in Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía, APDHA<sup>2</sup>, 2006: 9) asserts that “most sub-Saharan candidates to emigration move autonomously, exploiting the available possibilities in places of pre-existing marginalisation”. This can be suitable because on the one hand, it means that they are not migrants yet, and on the other hand, the idea of a candidate leads to the idea that there is a selection, that some people are going to be chosen, while the rest are discarded. At this point, it seems to be fair to ask: Does the EU really want to close its borders? There some authors who defend that in fact it is a personnel selection that ensures that only the strongest ones will arrive (Rosa, 2015). And in fact,

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<sup>2</sup> Andalusian Association of Human Rights.

it's nothing new that migratory policies follow cycles of opening and closing borders according to economic needs (Ahmed, 1997, Sassen, 2013).

Le Dantec (2014) argues that the clandestine migrant is similar to the ideal worker for capitalism because he/she lives in constant fear of racist reactions, discriminatory laws and the possible expulsion to their country of origin: “their precariousness blocks for a long time any wish to assert their rights to come and go freely” (Le Dantec, 2014: 269). At the same time that some social and economic rights are extended to some resident aliens and their descendants, irregularity is maintained because it is considered useful to keep the competitiveness of certain economic sectors and to limit the pressure of part of the foreign population on social services (López Sala, 2005). This has also been called “asymmetric permeability” (Basail, 2009).

“Candidates to (im/e)migration” is a category that takes the weight of irregularity off of the individuals and it also allows the researcher to reflect the overshadowing of the situation of wait and struggle lived at the border. We also defend this concept because we believe that the choice of the best term should be a collective process: not just because of our own reflections, but also because it is starting to be common in several different spaces. The concept can be found, for example, in the press (of course, in opinion articles): in “The strength of hunger”, Goytisolo (2014) uses it to talk about people who “group together at the doors of the long-chased European El Dorado”. We can also find it in academic contexts that have the explicit intention of working to cause social transformations, such as the university course “Re-thinking Africa: Global rights from southern epistemologies”<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. Border and bordering**

Candidates to migration are sited at the border. This term also comprises several dimensions. There are three that are especially relevant (Zapata-Barrero, 2012):

- As a primary political institution. Here it is important to mark its historic and non-democratic construction legitimised in the name of stability.
- As a process of construction of an order based on difference: bordering.
- As a functional element which offers security and protection.

The process of bordering applied to EU policies and candidates to migration at the southern Mediterranean seashore is the circle exposed in Lara (2015): (1) preventing

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<sup>3</sup> This course took place in the cities of Granada and Seville in November 2016. It was organised by the NGO Alianza por la Solidaridad and Mbuyi Kabunda, Human Rights researcher, also used the term “candidates to migration.”

these people from leaving port from African coasts (externalisation); (2) if they manage to get on a boat, Frontex tries to intercept them immediately; (3) if they arrive, they are going to be persecuted and put into detention centres; (4) and finally, they can be deported back through readmission agreements. Borders differentiate territories; we must bear in mind that a territory is the space that is appropriated, occupied and dominated by a social group in order to secure its reproduction and satisfy its vital needs, both material and symbolic; so, it has a material and a cultural dimension which are inseparable (Giménez & Héau, 2006). Territory is an identity constructor, it delimits difference and, when it comes with a project of domination, it turns difference into otherness; the border starts where the homeland ends (Rajchenberg & Héau, 2007). The construction of this otherness is especially relevant when it means fewer rights.

Indeed, borders are no-rights zones: they are built as vulnerable spaces where asymmetries of power achieve a special territoriality because of the process of filtering (Ribas-Mateos, 2016). Those filters are established according to moral borders (Buraschi & Aguilar, 2016); this concept points to a moral exclusion built through political and administrative borders which divide highly asymmetric spaces and allow the acceptance of acts that would be completely unconceivable inside our moral space. Filtering and moral exclusion also follow a logic of racialisation, which “indexes the historical transformation of fluid categories of difference into fixed species of otherness. [...] Immigrants in these settings are racialised both in terms of their perceived inviolable cultural difference and in terms of their presumed intimate relationship to mobility” (Silverstein, 2005: 364-6). One of the tools used in this complex process is precisely mass media; as we observed, they actively contribute to the bordering itself (Fajardo & Soriano, 2016).

The fact that a person’s ability to travel depends on where a person was born means that humans have different rights just because of the circumstances of birth. In the same way that it happened in the medieval world: the equivalent to feudal status nowadays is citizenship (Carens, 1992). The same concept used to give rights to one part of the world population is used to take them away from the rest. Nevertheless, “History shows that, in critical circumstances, the recognition of immigrants’ claims leads to the increase of formal citizenship rights” (Sassen, 2013: 13). We can perfectly see the contradiction between the effort to make some social spheres go beyond the nation-state (the economy, communications) and how in others it is getting harder to do the same (certain migrants). Restrictions to entrance have a limited success because the

amount of control and vigilance that is necessary to make borders impregnable can't be supported at the same time as the trend to increasingly exchange and communicate (Castles & Miller, 2003). Therefore, the symbolic border zone is marked by contradiction and complexity, and we can't neglect sociocultural, historical, ideological, cognitive, psychological, emotional or epistemological elements in its study (Pech, Rizo, & Romeu, 2009).

To sum up: we understand borders as realities with a strong symbolic dimension which is systematically ordered to confer objectivity to social situations and phenomena structured through difference (Basail, 2009). Borders are an accumulation of risks and the empirical reality on which some discursive devices are supported. Borders and migration policies are one of these devices. The «wiring policy» means that the European Union interprets human mobility in terms of conflict and invasion (Zapata-Barrero & Van Dijk, 2007). The southern border of Europe is a space under construction, the strategic site of which is key in the process of economic reconfiguration, the same as the southern border of Mexico (Basail, 2009).

The control of the border is, therefore, a practice of state sovereignty which is expressed in the decision of who and how many have the right to enter the territory (Soriano, 2011). Given that this decision is made from the nation-state standpoint, it usually considers internal impact above everything. This fact causes a liberal asymmetry reflected on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which means, the free right of individuals to exit but not to entrance (Zapata-Barrero, 2012). Due to this asymmetry, massive deportation processes take place and Spain and the EU try to avoid responsibilities by outsourcing their migratory policies. This is mainly achieved through overseas management of migratory flows and the co-responsibility of controlling borders with the countries of origin and transit (Zaragoza, 2012).

Those strategies of outsourcing or “waterproofing” of borders, far from being successful, fail at meeting their goal but divert the flows and open new routes in more dangerous spaces (Alonso Meneses, 2013; Zaragoza, 2012). European regulation on the matter results in the overshadowing of Human Rights, so migrants are put in a vulnerable situation that comes with a potential violation of their rights. Here maladjustment emerges between International Law about Human Rights and the right and practice of border controlling, a right of which some states abuse (Pérez González, 2012). The main EU outsourcing strategies which can be used and may result in the worsening of migrants' situations are (Zapata-Barrero, 2012):

- The increasing control of the external borders and the fight against illegal immigration.
- Measures for repatriation and readmission of immigrants.
- Management of asylum claims outside of the EU.
- Measures to fight against the causes of migrations.
- Measures to promote labour-related and circular migration.
- Different admission policies according to the country of origin.
- The creation of detention fields or centres for migrants outside of the EU borders. To give an example, “Guantanamo” is the informal name of the detention centre of Nuadibú, Mauritania. It is used to imprison immigrants and there is no judicial control<sup>4</sup>.

We find excellent analyses of how several forms of denizenship can be problematic (Benton, 2010), of the problems that surround the link between citizenship and rights (Zapata-Barrero, 2001) and of how some countries with historical responsibilities in their former colonies should recognise special rights to those countries' citizens (Smith, 2014). But it is still necessary to delve into the specifics of how living on permanent transit or uncertainty is added to all those difficulties. This happens in the limboscape: a transitional zone, a threshold or midway territory between two different borders, between the hell of repatriation/expulsion and the heaven of regularisation where the migrants' trajectories towards EU are spatially and temporally suspended (Ferrer-Gallardo & Albet-Mas, 2016). As Naranjo Giraldo (2014) suggests, isn't it a contradiction that one state can multiply its borders?

We think that border studies have been disregarded in Europe, with the exception of a handful of works (Ribas-Mateos, 2011, Zapata-Barrero & Ferrer-Gallardo, 2012). We see a lack of concepts and categories which can translate the realities of borderlands, taking the complexity of multidimensionality into account in their study, considering objective and subjective elements. The conceptual construction of the border is important because borders shape social realities which are substantially different from others where real and/or imaginary boundaries are not so present. Borders are like fissures wherein those dark and shameless secrets of Modernity and Globalisation are hidden. In this way, the epistemological model of borderlands would present two levels: “a merely geographic one (dimensional-spatial-temporal logic) and a

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<sup>4</sup> Mauritania viola los DDHH por presión de España y la UE, dice AI (July, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008). *Reuters*. Available at <http://es.reuters.com/article/topNews/idESSAN14291920080701> [last checked 07/10/2017].

conceptual one (charts of content based on networks of meaning)” (Rodríguez, 2016: 19).

#### **4. Conclusions**

We have made this effort of studying in-depth two concepts because we are aware that the same forces which cause the emigration-immigration do not make an exception with science (Sayad, 2010). This means that inertia could lead us to overemphasising the consequences of migration in immigration countries while disregarding those in emigration countries and other neo-colonialist tendencies in science. We can find several structural contradictions when we study the relations between migrations and borders: (1) The universalisation of rights vis-à-vis border controlling (2) The asymmetry in freedom of movement: a) depending on the country of birth and b) between people and other flows (such as commodities) (3) The proliferation of borders (4) The porousness of borders. Therefore, the nation-state denies Human Rights to its non-citizens and claims its sovereignty on its own borders while it delegates part of the responsibility and makes a selection at the entrance. The invisibilisation of this reality is an obvious attempt to keep it out of the public and political agenda.

Despite the importance of looking for the possible biases of the way we are studying a subject and asking ourselves over and over if we are using the appropriate analytical frames, we shouldn't give up the aim of describing and explaining social phenomena in the best possible way. Migrantology is in times of redefinition right now, so it is of great importance not to forget about the fieldwork that has been carried out in the different areas in which migration becomes especially relevant, in order to bring this complexity into the academic field. One of these areas is the border, which we have briefly covered here. In each research, a decision must be made about how to reshape the border (what is going to be studied: Morocco as a country, or just the cities closest to the border, or just the people who have a direct experience of it...). And these decisions will have consequences. The decision of the EU and, specifically, of Spain, is to give priority to the discourse about the security of European citizenship, not to the protection of Global citizenship. In this way, they build a model which legitimizes the invisibility of the global South (Soriano, Trinidad, & Barros, 2016).

After thinking about the respective strengths and weaknesses of different categories, we have concluded that the most suitable concept that can better help us

understand the reality of standstill we are talking about is “candidates to migration”. Even if perhaps it would be advisable to employ a new notion of “migration”, we suggest making a different use of the iceberg technique: not to elude responsibilities, but to take advantage of pre-existing social knowledge, instead of inventing a completely new concept. This kind of challenges, such as defining the best concepts to talk about social situations, should be faced in a collective way in order to give greater strength to the performativity concepts. The term of our choice is utilised in several contexts which reflect different nuances of the reality it attempts to depict, so it fulfils the requirement of helping to better understand what we're talking about without becoming totally endogamic.

Moral borders built around a supposed otherness make possible this reality in which the cost of trying to migrate is so high that it can even lead to death. The selection of the candidates is tolerable because they are out of our space of concern. Even though we focus on the southern border of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, the notion can be applied to other transit zones. Of course, it isn't perfect either because it could still support the idea of “immigration” as a permanent state, i.e., that a person who becomes an immigrant, remains an immigrant forever. This concept shows a part of the truth but we mustn't forget that the ultimate goal is dissolving the border by dividing nationals from non-nationals.

### **Note**

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