# Freedom, technology and surveillance: everyday paradoxes on the EU-Morocco border

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**Abstract:** The Schengenland-Morocco border is frequently venerated for its humane and efficient controls, thanks in part to hi-tech surveillance technologies. It is also a border receiving an increasing amount of 'traffic' from the Arabian Peninsula due to routes to Europe being blocked further East. This article works with the idea that the 'balancing' of freedom of movement and surveillance within Schengenland is an inherent paradox which has multiplied, circulated and manifested itself at a human level, played out in the lives of people forced to enter Europe through irregular means. Inspired by moves within feminist research (Enloe, 1989), appropriated within critical security (Huysmans, 2016), I put this idea of paradox to work by fashioning it as a *curiosity*. An epistemological device allowing me to see in particular ways, paradox as a curiosity places *analytical supremacy* on the everyday paradoxes in which migrants are embedded, stemming from their entanglements with bordering technologies.

**Keywords:** border; surveillance; Morocco; Schengen; ethnography; migration.

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## 1 Introduction

Technological borders, in various ways, are now common place and accepted as a way to protect our 'security'. Studies of freedom of movement and its relation to security have, for the past decade or so, examined the impact of such technological approaches to border management. The so-called 'practice approach' to border security (Côté-Boucher et al., 2014; Squire, 2011), has drawn attention to the significance placed on dataveillance and biometric data (e.g., Amoore, 2006; Muller, 2010; Van der Ploeg and Sprenkels,

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2011), ‘technopolitics’ at the border (Hecht, 2011) and the anticipatory governance of ‘risky travellers’ (Bigo, 2010; Jeandesboz, 2016). These approaches have raised important questions regarding how regimes of control of migrants’ mobility are both enacted (Basaran, 2015; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Magalhães, 2016, 2018; Tazzioli, 2017), and evaded (de Genova et al., 2018; Scheel, 2013). These types of analyses have served to complicate and obscure ideas of the border are and what it represents (Jones and Johnson, 2016).

Read together, these studies illuminate what is fundamentally a *paradoxical* coupling of surveillance technologies and ‘freedom’. Freedom of movement is contingent on specific technologies which govern and manage its supposed insecurity. Using the example of Europe, particularly the area of free movement, Schengenland, this paper interrogates the way this initial paradox has manifested itself in what is often labelled an exemplar or ‘poster-child’ of a successful technological, and hence ‘humane’ border; the EU-Morocco frontier. Seen, not as a single case study, but as a particular instance of the inherent contradictions at play on the Schengen border, Morocco is interesting both with regard the increasing number of travellers passing through it on the way to Europe, as well as its status as ‘exemplar’ of efficient and humane external border practice.

Aiming to add living texture and distinctive thickness to this problematique of borders as a ‘freedom, technology, surveillance paradox’, this paper looks at how this paradox multiplies, travels and comes to the fore at a *human level*, in the everyday lives of migrants[1] attempting to enter Europe. Taking the concept of ‘freedom, technology, surveillance paradoxes’ present within Schengen-land and the broader field of EU internal security, I reframe and put to work this idea to introduce the concept of a *paradox as a curiosity*. Fashioning paradox in this way means opening up to ethnographic enquiry the way in which the interplay of freedom of movement, technology and surveillance form paradoxes within intimate relations, in the everyday and within the seemingly insignificant (cf. de Certeau, 1988). It means developing a sensibility and curiosity to be able to tune into what is paradoxical in the lives of migrants travelling to Europe as a result of their (and our) freedom being contingent on specific configurations of surveillance and border technologies.

In doing this, the article will argue that surveillance technology does not simply displace people along the way, obliging them to take longer and riskier journeys. Surveillance technologies, far from keeping people as far away from Europe as possible for as long as possible, hardens their resolves and desires to come to Europe simply because the blockade exists. And lastly, surveillance technology used as a ‘balance’ to more coercive and overtly violent techniques of control; so-called ‘humane’ and ‘distant’ technologies in fact intimately intertwined with killing and maiming.

This paper will thus examine the effects and impact of all of these transformations from the point of view of those who these industries and practices target. It will unfold in the following way. Firstly, I contextualise my particular case; that of the Morocco-Spain border. Next, I expand my idea of paradox as a curiosity and link it to a core tenet of what Bigo and McCluskey (2017) have labelled an IPS-PARIS approach to the study of practices of (in)security. Here, an emphasis on the everyday lived experiences of the targets of (in)security practices and an attention to the situations and relations in which these individuals find themselves embedded – is crucial in the co-production of knowledge with interlocutors.

In the turn to the ethnographic, I begin to sketch out some of my various encounters with travellers stuck in Morocco on their way to Europe and the way in which the

paradoxes brought into being by the framing of freedom in relation to technology and surveillance-manifest themselves at a very human level. Not only the necessity of longer, riskier journeys and the paying off of an increasing number of traffickers, criminals and thugs, but also changes in the subjectivity of the travellers themselves. For the Arab migrants from Syria and Yemen, keeping 'under the radar' becoming a way of life, evasion of anything 'official' an imperative until one reaches where one wants to go. For the Africans without the 'luxury' of being able to hide, positive desires for Europe becoming transformed and hardened into rights claims and counter-insurgency strategies. In this sense, this multiplicity of bordering practices is creating the very problem it seeks to 'solve'.

## 2 The Spain-Morocco border as exemplar of Schengen paradoxes

Since the so-called 'refugee crisis' peaking in 2015 and 2016, the increase in number of people arriving on European shores looking for protection has propelled the issue of migration to the top of the European agenda. As has been recently reflected upon however, one can by no means see this 'crisis' as over from the perspective of people on the move if one looks to the restabilisation of the European 'border regime' (Hess and Kasparek, 2017) and the increasing criminalisation of acts of solidarity with refugees (Tazzioli and Walters, 2019). In this context, the Spain-Morocco border has been an important site for two main reasons:

Firstly, according to Frontex, the EU border and coastguard agency, the so-called western Mediterranean route has seen a dramatic increase in the number of migrants; whilst the central and eastern Mediterranean routes, though witnessing higher absolute numbers, have in fact seen these numbers decline (Frontex, 2018). Frontex recorded migrant arrivals in Spain from North Africa in 2017 as 23,143, compared to 9,900 in 2016, an increase of more than double.[2] In comparison, the central Mediterranean route, via Italy, has seen numbers drop from 181,376 in 2016 to 118,962 in 2017 and the eastern Mediterranean route, via the Greek islands, has seen a reduction in numbers of people crossing in 2017 to a quarter of the amount making similar journeys in 2016 (Frontex, 2018).

This rapid increase in the number of people arriving in Spain has obliged Frontex to reconsider where it classifies as the EU front line regarding this 'refugee crisis'. Fabrice Leggeri, head of Frontex, stated that the agency anticipated the number of migrants arriving in Spain to increase in 2018 and 2019 and would consider diverting funds from Italy or Greece to Spain if needed, with an increased use of air surveillance along the western Mediterranean route (Reuters, 2018).

Secondly cooperation between the EU and Morocco on border surveillance and control is often one which is cited as an exemplar or model to be applied to other third countries; framed as a 'humane' way to manage movement of persons (see Carrera et al., 2016). In this vein, the multiplicity of Schengen border practices at play in relation to this frontier are highlighted as a success story.

Examining the background to this state of affairs brings to light some of the circumstances which have placed Morocco in this position of poster child. From the mid-2000s, Morocco became widely recognised as a 'transit' country – one from which migrants aim to reach Europe, either at Spain's North African enclaves (and EU/

Schengen territories) of Ceuta and Melilla, or the Spanish Canary Islands after the 'crises' at these entry points in 2005 and 2006 respectively, which were widely reported in European media. Externalisation policies which have aimed at transferring the migrant 'risk' to third countries have however been in operation between the EU and Morocco since the 1990s in various forms, including the European Neighbourhood Policy/European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (EMHRN, 2010); the global approach to migration and mobility (GAMM), and the wider 'external dimension' of justice and home affairs (see Andersson, 2016; Infantino, 2017; Jeandesboz, 2007).

Spanish enticements for collaboration in the realm of migration have centred on aid, trade, fishing rights and the diplomatic status of occupied Western Sahara (Andersson, 2014). These processes have been reinforced by various EU 'action plans' and 'mobility partnerships' with Morocco which also incorporate questions of illegal migration. The EU and Spain have invested heavily in a multiplicity of surveillance programmes as well as more coercive forms of control along the Spain-Morocco border and Spain's southern maritime border (see also Andersson, 2016).

As López-Sala (2015) points out, most funding for surveillance technologies takes place at the member state level. In the Spanish/Moroccan case, Spain has funded an advanced radar system along the Moroccan coast, called Spanish Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior (SIVE), which the EU supports through additional financing. A great deal of technologies are however increasingly being put in place at the level of the European Union as discussed in this issue vis-à-vis 'SMART Borders' (Jeandesboz, 2016; Bigo, 2010), and calls for 'interoperability' between the specific discrete databases Eurodac, VIS, and SIS, as well as the new exit-entry control system and the forthcoming European Travel and Authorisation System (ETIAS), all managed by The European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems, EU Lisa (Meijers Committee, 2018; Carrera et al., 2018; Bigo, this issue).

Aside from these proposed 'interoperable' databases, more diffuse technologies are also at play here. Seahorse; a project managed by the Spanish civil guard for example, is a network of border authorities across the Mediterranean and West African coast constructed to exchange information. With the aim of preventing 'illegal migration including trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants' (European_Commission, 2013). Spain, Portugal, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Morocco are all signatories to this initiative, which has received over 1,800,000€ of EU funding since 2005 (Jones, 2017). Designed with the objective of increasing police cooperation between these states, the system is underpinned by a network of satellites which is designed with the aim of tracing migrants on their journeys through various nodes and junctures and thus developing the capacity to intercept the migrants as close to their point of origin as possible. The rolling out of the programme accelerated in 2005 as the result of increasing casualties at the Ceuta and Mellila fortified fences and the 'border spectacle' of migrants storming the walls in an attempt to enter the Spanish enclaves (de Genova, 2010). The rationale of seahorse was one which was supposedly more humane; a 'softer' deterrent than the stark barrier of the fences, themselves re-jigged to be made more hi-tech and laden with surveillance technology (López-Sala, 2015).

EUROSUR, another system of surveillance widely criticised for its effects on the human rights of migrants (Follis, 2017; Tazzioli, 2015) is also in operation in Moroccan seaports. This technology is comprised of a network of national maritime surveillance systems in conjunction with information from various other agencies operating in coastal

regions such as the European Maritime Safety Agency. Developed by the EU after the Spanish could no longer finance SIVE, EUROSUR has been pointed out as not simply a policing and border guard tool, but linked also to military and navy satellite communications (Morales-Serret, 2015). The essence of Eurosur is an information exchange framework, synthesising a variety of data into a 'situational picture' of the border region of the EU (Tazzioli and Walters, 2016) as well as a 'common pre-frontier intelligence picture (focused on areas beyond the Schengen area and EU borders) [Jones, (2017), p.52]. Rationalised partly on a humanitarian basis by EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom, Andersson (2014) has pointed out that this legitimisation for the information exchange network came much later and the initial impetus for the technology was to prevent people from making the journey to Europe in the first place. The 'humane' argument however was one which could be seen to have developed some traction in the legitimation of the system to the public (Follis, 2017) and was one which was heavily deployed in internal Frontex communications themselves (see Aas and Gundhus, 2014).

As has been shown by Martin Mazé (this issue), the very actors involved with the defence of the external border, the ones who have produced these technologies at the European frontier, are also the same actors who have generated a so-called 'demand' for technological solutions. This has been argued to create a simulation of a market, which in fact operates against the logic of a free market and more as a type of monopsony. In this way, the socio-technical imperative pre-empts the logic of law making. This has been especially apparent for example when examining the development of the EUROSUR information sharing framework, where the security industry played a major role in participating, with very little parliamentary examination of this project (see for example Hayes and Vermeulen, 2012).

The result of this so-called EU 'security-industrial complex' (Jones, 2017) in Morocco is a border with Spain that has been highly technologised, surveilled and monitored. A great deal of money has been spent by the EU in keeping the 'problem' of the migrant at a distance, away from European shores.

## 3 Morocco as a 'destination' country for migrants

Within this context, and following the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, King Mohammed VI of Morocco instituted constitutional reforms. These were followed, in 2013, by the announcement of plans to develop a new national policy on migration and asylum, and in 2013, the creation of a (partly EU funded) exceptional 'regularisation program' (the only North African country to offer this), with a second and third wave of regularisations then launched in 2015 and 2016 respectively (Human Rights Watch 2016). The Moroccan Government actively tried, and continue to try, to transform Morocco from a 'transit' to a 'destination' country.

A consequence of these controls and polices is that an increasing number of migrants now find themselves stuck in Morocco, sometimes for several years, with their route to Europe blocked. Though the regularisation programmes have attempted to address the reality of migrants stranded in Morocco, as will be further discussed below, the challenges inherent in implementing actual permanent mechanisms and structures for international protection in Morocco however means that many migrants live in extremely

poor conditions, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Carrera et al., 2016; López-Sala, 2015).[3]

The UNHCR operates in Rabat only and is responsible for carrying out refugee status determination interviews (as the national authority within Morocco designed to deal with refugee and asylum issues is not yet operational). Obtaining a refugee card from UNHCR however in practice has qualified people for some form of residency in Morocco under the new regulations. As the UNHCR provide only 800 MAD (around 80 euros) per month per person for housing, food, bills and all other expenses, the majority of refugees (and indeed migrants not recognised as refugees) are reliant on donations from NGOs, begging, working in the black economy or in very low paid unskilled jobs such as shoe shining or selling jewellery, even if they have Moroccan residency (interviews with migrants in Rabat; January 2018).

## 4 An IPS-PARIS[4] approach to studying effects of Schengen practices: paradox as a curiosity

Examining the EU border as a set of practices, enacted far from the actual physical EU frontier both spatially and temporally – is now commonplace. Viewing the border as 'elastic' in this way (Mezzadra and Nielson, 2013), 'semi-permeable' (Van Houtum, 2010) or encompassing solid, liquid and gaseous elements (Bigo, 2014) is rooted in the crafting and development of the Schengen free-travel area within Europe and the argument for so-called 'compensatory measures' (Oelgemoller, Ansems de Vries and Groenendijk, this issue). The birth of Schengen saw tensions and contradictions were at play from the very conception of the lifting of EU internal borders. For some architects of the agreement, Schengen was about 'freedom of movement', whilst for others 'Schengen' was always about control; a situation 'reconciled' by technological 'solutions' (see Bigo and McCluskey, this issue). The host of agencies, actors, technologies and databases associated with the area for freedom, security and justice can be linked to this agreement for 'compensatory measures', which has served to render the physical border as a heterogenous set of diffuse practices which extend to Africa and Asia.

Within these sets of EU bordering practices, as well as the rationalisations of tutelage and pastoral logic that border guards adopt (Bigo, 2014) and the supposed 'humane' element of surveillance technologies (see Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Jumbert, 2013), there also exists more aggressive practices of 'containment' and 'deterrence'. Border guards, police and IT analysts, in the management of this 'liquid border' are of course operating alongside high fences and razor wire, use violent and coercive methods to prevent entry of migrants into European territory, which is accepted by the majority as a common-sense approach to enable 'our' freedom (Bigo, 2007).

This framing of freedom of movement as contingent on technology and surveillance, we have elsewhere labelled a 'paradox'. The so-called refugee crisis has indeed illuminated this paradox further and it has been well documented how EU border policies have actually exacerbated the situation for refugees (Follis, 2017; Albahari, 2015; Mountz and Loyd, 2014; Weber and Pickering, 2011; Spijkerboer, 2007). Taking as a point of departure the fundamental absurdities, contradictions and disjunctures present within EU border practices, I put forward the conceptual apparatus of *paradox as curiosity* as a way to add texture and thickness to the multifarious effects of bordering at the human level.

Taking inspiration from feminist research (Enloe, 2014, 1989), cleverly appropriated within critical security studies by Huysmans (2016), seeing through the lens of paradox as curiosity is used as an epistemological device which allows me to see in particular ways, illuminating and placing *analytical supremacy* on the everyday paradoxes in which these migrants are embedded, as a result of their entanglements with particular bordering technologies.

This links to a core tenet of what Bigo and McCluskey (2017) have relabelled as a 'PARIS' approach to studying processes and practices of (in)securitisation; placing ontological and epistemological primacy on the significance of liveable lives and experiences of the 'subjects' of these security practices, be they "direct or indirect victims, be they amateurs of security, or just indifferent to the debates but affected by them."

Basaran and Guild (2016) speak of the 'traps' of a great deal of research on mobilities and migration in that it privileges statist visions of movement of people, thus valorising certain legal orders. Instead of speaking of focusing on 'state, movement, control', they therefore focus instead on 'people, journeys and ruptures'. de Genova (2005, 2010) argued in a similar vein that focusing on 'migrants' as objects of study reduces a heterogeneous group of people to a state-centric vision bent on control of populations. Anthropologists of Humanitarianism have too criticised the study of 'refugees' as such, arguing that such a focus confuses categories of practice with categories of analysis and reproduces subjectivities imposed by 'humanitarian government' (see Fassin, 2012; Agier, 2011). Basaran and Guild (2016) are thus correct when they call for the idea of the 'migrant' to be reinscibed into our everyday social relations and its multiple configurations of mobility, power and inequalities. Setting up paradox as a curiosity is thus one way to shed light on these multiple, dispersed acts rather than unifying them with one singular narrative.

Instead of conceiving of the EU frontier in Morocco as a single 'case study', this paper instead conceives of this site as a 'conjuncture of social relations'; a 'conjuncture of the national and the transnational' [de Genova, (2005), p.7; Appadurai, 1996). In this way, going 'local' is never ignoring the international or national, but recognising that any form of national and international is simultaneously always a form of 'local'. Feldman (2011) is most similar to this approach when he speaks of 'non-local ethnography' as a way to study the connections and relations within what he labels a migration 'apparatus'; practices exactly like the risk estimates, database entries and statistical profiling we have spoken about, connected also to high-scale moral narratives, and interpretative paradigms – which channel the global circulation of migrants.

In this sense, my ethnography is also multiscalar (Xiang, 2013; Williamson, 2015). My story is not one of migrants trapped in one geographical location, be it Fez or Rabat, but also about the place of Morocco as a nation within the EU externalisation of borders, the sets of relations which enact Schengen and its functioning, as well as the very meaning of Europe as a continent and set of values.

I have not fetishised any identity markers of my interlocutors. Instead of endowing actors with a pre-conceived subjectivity; refugee, migrant, third country national, this ethnographic approach also enables the 'writing in' of the constantly shifting formations of these subjectivities as the participants tell their stories, engaging with the temporality of this subject formations as it transformed with the ever-changing relations that these

individuals are embedded within on their journeys to Europe. In the same vein, paradox as curiosity, embedded in ethnography, is also a political stance and a responsibility. My intent is not to re-humanise or show the 'native's point of view' (cf. de Genova 2016) – but to try to co-produce a particular story in conjunction with my interlocutors. This story is always one informed by a practical reflexivity (Jeandesboz, 2018), built in to every step, paying heed to my positionality as a researcher and how the activation of different relational positionalities which perhaps had not been anticipated (Blommaert, 2005).

The ethnographic notes I draw upon in the second half of this article are therefore not supposed to be exhaustive, authoritative or have the final word, but instead designed to provoke further interrogation (Jackson, 2002). I also offer no answers, solutions or policy recommendations to the EU Commission. I simply try to begin to add, through the idea of paradox as a curiosity, some living thickness, nuance and texture to the story of freedom, technologies and surveillance within Schengen.

## 5 Ethnographic notes on the effects of the EU border in Morocco: displacement, evasion and racialised claims to rights[5]

Research on migration through Morocco is certainly an 'overcrowded field' (Andersson, 2014), something which many of my interlocutors made me aware of, particularly those who had been there for some time. Since the so-called refugee crisis however, less attention has been paid to this region than, for example the migration routes further east (Rozakou, 2017; Guida, 2018), or the 'hotspots' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2017; Tazzioli et al., 2018; Ansems de Vries and Guild, 2018; Sciurba, 2016) set up within EU territory. People passing through Morocco have different trajectories and very different stories than was the case a few years ago.

Between May 2017 and January 2018, I conducted over thirty ethnographic interviews with migrants specifically attempting to reach Europe, whom I made contact with through two NGOs in Fez and Rabat. Many of these interviews took place in the headquarters of the NGO, one of which operated out of a protestant church in Fez, and the other loosely linked with the UNHCR in Rabat. Similarly, some took place in the homes of the migrants; an informal 'camp' by the railway in Fez and various cramped apartments in Rabat. Many of the Syrian people I spoke to however, I met in Syrian cafes and restaurants in downtown Rabat, introductions being made through a contact in a Syrian community organisation operating in the city, who would vouch for me. Wary of their data being collected, possible repercussions of having an Algerian stamp in their passport, or being traced by the *Mukhabarat* (secret police), keeping under the radar was much more a way of life for the Levantine migrants who, paradoxically, avoided many of the more official organisations set up to help them (cf. Ansems de Vries, 2016).

At the point I spoke to them, the foreigners, the TCN's who are not permitted to cross into Europe by the border guards and police as they were profiled as unwelcome. This was an arbitrary categorisation however; several of my interlocutors had previously travelled, even lived in Europe. Two women even had children living in France. Though this research is perhaps guilty of 'borderological fetishism', re-inforcing the positioning of the migrant on the wrong side of the border (de Genova, 2015), to see migration as uni-directional in my research would be a mistake (see also Picozza, 2017).

# 6 Changing 'the way' to Europe: the displacement effects of the EU border

## *Scene 1.1*

Abou-Bakr was one of the first people I met in Rabat, after a volunteer friend introduced him as 'part of the furniture'. He was immediately protective of me as a lone female in Morocco, informing me, on our first meeting that Moroccan men were 'crazy' and that I should be careful. I was touched by this awkward attempt to look after me and immediately liked him. He became the person I'd WhatsApp every morning on my way to the centre, to see what was happening that day. A man in around his mid-forties from Guinea Conakry, Abou-Bakr had been attempting to enter Europe since 2004; the year in which his asylum claim was rejected in Lanzarote and he was subsequently shipped back to Dakhla. Whilst sitting on a park bench close to the headquarters of a national NGO in Rabat, he explained to me that travelling via the canaries became unfeasible shortly after he made his trip; it's no longer an option to pay people to take you that route. "Nobody can go that way anymore." Concerned that his story was not really representative of most of the travellers passing through Rabat from sub-Sahara nowadays, Abou-Bakr told me to return to the park in a few hours' time, giving him time to contact his housemates to come and tell me about their experiences. This was a kind offer from him. I was cautious of taking the time of people who were busy with work, but Abou-Bakr reassured me that wouldn't come to talk if they didn't want to.

When I returned in the late afternoon, Abou-Bakr was accompanied by two young men whom he introduced as Ibrahim and Soul. Much younger than their housemate, Ibrahim and Soul seemed excited to tell me their stories and remained standing up whilst I unpacked my notepad and pens. Ibrahim spoke first, quietly but forcefully, elaborating in great detail about his life at home and his trip to Europe and didn't stop talking for forty five minutes. I hadn't even asked him a question. At only 17 years old, Ibrahim had been obliged to leave Conakry after his mother died in a car accident and his father abused him. After saving money from his job at a food market and accumulating donations from friends' parents, Ibrahim told me that he had enough money to pay somebody to take him all the way to Spain. This would involve travel overland in a pick up through several countries until he reached Algeria, sometimes enduring very difficult conditions.

The first leg, across the Malian border was relatively easy and the driver of the truck was able to simply pay off officials along the way. Whilst looking for somewhere to spend the night after a few days' driving through Mali however, the group were intercepted by a group of Touareg men.

"At the beginning the Touareg pretended to be hospitable; they led us to their village and showed us two guesthouses where we could stay and we agreed a price. But when we tried to leave in the morning, they came with guns and told us we hadn't paid. If we paid more money, we could leave. Or else they held us hostage there in this village and beat us badly."

As Ibrahim was the only one of the group not to have money, he feared for his life. The rest of his group however offered money to the armed gang to enable Ibrahim to be able to leave with them, however one of their fellow countrymen was shot in the leg during the negotiation.

"You just need more money", Ibrahim's friend Soul, a fellow Guinean explained. There are many people to pay off. For Soul however, this did not appear to be a big problem or even a deterrent at all, and he seemed to relish

> this young adventurer persona and my reaction to it. "You can get jobs along the way", he explained. In Mali, it was easy to find work, washing dishes or cleaning houses. Often he would be paid just in food, clothes or accommodation, but eventually he earned enough to move on, even though this took around three months. Soul explained how many of the people in one town in Mali even had a whip round to help him pay for the next leg of the trip when they realised he just needed very little more money to pay somebody to get him to the Algerian border. His optimism was at odds with Abou Bakr and Ibrahim; "you become friends with people along the way; I have seen so much kindness on my way to Morocco, sometimes you are just lucky."

It is difficult to write ethnographically about 'migrants' experiences' without reproducing dominant narratives about vulnerability and suffering, particularly when these migrants are in a bounded space, exposed to researchers coming to seek their stories (see Picozza, 2018). Or, equally problematic, unreflexively emphasising migrant autonomy which can be too agentive and shift the lens away from the sets of relations within which migrants are embedded, risking romanticisation (Scheel, 2013). Engaging through the lens of paradox as curiosity was one way I attempted to navigate this terrain with my interlocutors and the conversation with Ibrahim and Soul was interesting in that it placed these two narratives next to each other, almost contradicting one other. This taught me a lot about nurturing an intersubjective dialogue amongst ourselves; I was not speaking to them to extract data, but to understand how they made sense of their situations (Kurowska and Tallis, 2013). Tending to paradoxes, in their everydayness and seeming banality brings into analytical play the gravitas of these small disjunctures. 'The way' to Europe simply shifted. It was not like anybody made a big deal out of it. That's just how things were.

Stories of shifting migratory routes to Europe as the result of Schengen bordering practices, routes becoming more expensive as a greater number of people smugglers had to be paid – have been well documented, both relating to the erection of walls in Ceuta and Mellila which forced migrants towards the canaries (see López-Sala, 2015) as well as the implementation of the SIVE surveillance system and the seahorse network regarding what Frontex label the 'West African' migration route (Frontex, 2018). A great deal of scholarship has centred on the displacement which took place as an result of increased surveillance along this frontier, and the way in which migrants instead travelled overland through the Sahara desert (see Andersson, 2014) and on longer sea routes to Spain.

A well documented paradox is how the opening up of new channels and flows towards riskier routes has been argued to precipitate the need for new technologies and solutions, thus enabling the system to keep reinforcing and reproducing itself, as Frowd (2014) has demonstrated in relation to EU border practices in Mauritania and Andersson (2014) has shown in relation to Sub-Saharans in Morocco taking the Canary Island maritime route to Europe after the fortification of the walls in Ceuta and Melilla. Similar to the criticisms directed towards Italy regarding the payment of smuggler networks in Libya to block migrant departures (Tazzioli et al., 2018), people trafficking networks along the 'Sahara route' are increasingly profiting from the more insidious, bordering practices taking place in 'best case' examples, as a result of more humane and technological 'solutions'.

What was interesting was that actors profiting from this displacement, this shifting of the route through the Sahara, included not only people smugglers, but more ambiguously, the Touareg groups who take travellers hostage as Ibrahim mentioned as well as chairmen of 'camps', particularly in Algeria and at the Algeria-Morocco border. These

men had to be paid to accommodate new arrivals, as well as what one interlocutor called 'slave owners'; fellow Sub-Saharan men who operate within these camps, and 'buy' new arrivals to work for them and extract ransom money from them. In this way, what Andersson (2014) has called an 'illegality industry' continuously expands; not only to consume the vast array of agencies, organisations and even NGOs (and academics) to 'manage migration' (see also Feldman, 2011), but also the 'native' actors who profit from the precariousness of the travellers' situations; criminal gangs and thugs who exploit their vulnerability. The diffuse effects of the multiplicity of surveillance technologies at play along this route shift ever further into the fabric of migrants' day to day journeys, attaching themselves to practices of hospitality, generosity and even solidarity.

The increasing number of migrants from the Levantine region and Arabian peninsula; Syrians, Palestinians and Yemenis are a more obvious example of routes shifting, using Morocco as an entry point into Europe to seek refuge and claim asylum, as opposed to via Turkey, Greece or Italy. Technologies in the narrow sense are immediately and obviously intertwined with more coercive policies, such as the EU-Turkey agreement aimed at preventing Syrian people entering Europe (Heck and Hess, 2017). As yet, there is very little research on these groups [an exception is within journalism and the media, especially the Arabic language press (see for example al-arabi, 2016; al-arabiya, 2014) and some very recent research by Tyszler (2019)], however some were willing to meet with me.

## *Scene 1.2*

> Whilst queuing for a seat in the extremely popular Yamal al Sham café in central Rabat, a young couple from Aleppo I had been introduced to the previous day – explained how they ended up in Morocco. They had left Aleppo already back in 2013, but had lived in government controlled Damascus until bombing engulfed the street they were living on at the end of 2016. Shereen had been obliged to give up on her PhD in Arabic literature she was pursuing at the University of Damascus, but hoped to continue once they reached Europe. The young woman explained to me that she had already published three collections of Arabic poetry and handed me a book, her most recent work, which she offered me to keep as a gift. Her husband Mahmoud, also a student of management and administration, explained their plan to me. After deciding to leave Syria, the couple had thought about traveling to Germany, where many of their friends had gone. After enquiring with the various representatives of smuggling networks operating in Damascus at the time, Shereen and Mahmoud found out that the cheapest option available to them was now to fly from Lebanon to Egypt, then on to Algeria, cross the border illegally at Oujda, then attempt to enter Spain from Morocco.
>
> Shereen described the journey to Egypt as very straightforward, but became more distressed when talking about Algeria and the Morocco border; "we did not want to cross illegally; we are not used to doing illegal things." They made the journey at night, accompanied by only one other woman from Lebanon and were obliged to pay 500 dirhams each to a people smuggler to take them across. Their plan for the coming weeks was to storm the wall at one of the Spanish enclaves, which they heard was an easier way than travelling by boat.
>
> "Many Syrians are now taking this route and charging at the wall in large family groups; elderly people, small children, everybody is now obliged to scale the fence", Mahmoud explained. He and Shereen had only recently arrived in Rabat after several weeks living in the forest by Oujda, and had been

> put in touch with a local Syrian organisation based in Rabat. As relatively wealthy travellers through Morocco, the couple assured me however that they had no intention to stay in the country and were organising with people they met through the Syrian organisation a way to travel to Germany and continue their studies.

Paradox as curiosity, through this ethnographic gaze, brings to light interesting dynamics. This young couple, unlike Ibrahim, Soul and Abou Bakr were well educated and wealthy. They charmed me. 'Ethnographic seduction' (Tubaro and Casilli, 2010) meant that I could easier form some kinds of intimacy, however problematic [see Eckl (2008) for a broader discussion], with these Syrian people which in turn affected how I came to see the paradoxes in which they were embedded. All my research with migrants and refugees to date has been with Syrian people as my interlocutors (see McCluskey, 2019), and hence conversations were easier. This was not accidental and based on networks of friends which existed long before the Syrian war. The suffering of this young couple, for me, was thus more relatable, less spectacular and less visceral.

What seeing through the lens of paradox however starkly brought to light was the way in which these more subtle and invisible technologies, seemingly banal, were still underpinned by walls and barbed wires. Even for these Syrians, seen as most 'worthy' of asylum in Europe (Žižek, 2016) and recipient of the whole 'refugee welcome' movement (Picozza, 2018) were caught in this arbitrariness. When we fashion our curiosity in terms of paradox, any distinction between control of movement by 'smart borders' or control by coercion or violence – is muddled. The arbitrariness of whether one's movement is governed through a Schengen visa refusal, an airline carrier sanction or through walls and dogs – is brought to light. These practices exist in a continuum; the surveillance technologies which underpin Schengen, posed as a 'solution' to the insecurity of freedom of movement, can only function because of more overt coercion and violence.

## 7 Advocating for others: 'blackness' as an emerging political subjectivity

As Andersson (2014) has noted, drawing upon Hacking, the process of 'making up people'; in his case 'illegals', 'clandestines' and 'irregular' is a transformative one; individuals with ordinary, rather run of the mill desires become a collective group embodying these personas as a result of interactions with EU bordering practices. As my fieldwork coincided with a changing demographic of travellers passing through Morocco, encounters with other refugees from different regions and with NGOs, who often echoed divisionary discourses, shaped how people came to identify themselves and their solidarities in a profoundly racialised way. Examining EU border technologies through the lens of security devices, which perform or alter specific categories based on the stabilisation of manifold socio-technical configurations – have successfully shown how legal, gender and class boundaries are enacted (Leander, 2013; Bourne et al., 2015; Grove, 2015; Singh, 2015). As Mayblin (2017) points out however, these border technologies are almost overwhelmingly discussed in non-racial terms (see also McKeown, 2008).

Recently, literature from within border and migration studies has been put into dialogue with scholarship on post-coloniality and racialisation, to intervene into the perception that borders are construed and codified in non-racial terms (de Genova, 2016; Mayblin, 2017; Picozza, 2018).

Moving away from a presentist vision and situating practices of asylum-making within a longue duree, Mayblin (2017) points to the colonial histories of racial categorisation which are embedded into the ‘border regime’. The distinctive racialised processes of surveilling, containing, confining and expelling of migrants today are viewed in this way as producing ‘Europe’ as a distinct realm, one in which the figure of the ‘migrant’ is always produced as racialised, even though discourses of migration in Europe do not openly express race as such [de Genova, (2017), p.21].

Relatedly, studies on the intersection of science and technology studies and critical race studies have revealed the ways in which specific surveillance technologies are not race-neutral, and that racialisation materialises precisely *through* the production and use of data (see in particular Benjamin, 2019). Writing particularly on the Schengen technological regimes of border management, M’charek et al. (2014) carefully demonstrate how these technological databases contribute to the enactment of race in particular contexts. Opposed to being grounded in biological differences between bodies, these databases conjoin identifiers such as beard, hairstyle and dress to construct targeted groups; “racial ascriptions do not neatly fit onto groups and individuals but instead rely, discursively and operationally, on complex configurations of the legal, scientific, and cultural” [M’charek et al., (2014), p.471]. In this sense, the violent racial bordering practices I speak about as an everyday paradox – are not simply the result of ‘neutral’ bordering technologies, but are the very condition of possibility for these bordering practices to be enacted in the first place.

What ethnography, and specifically paradox as curiosity can tend to and complement such analyses – is the way in which racialisation makes inroads into the day-to-day fabric of migrant’s lives and indeed becomes a ‘lived in’ category, *beginning* with the lived experiences of these travellers themselves in relation to the multiplicity of border technologies which shape them (cf. Khosravi, 2018).

Walters (2015) is correct in his assertion that “we know…less about how these strategies of control appear from the points of view of the police authorities, border guards, migration bureaucrats, local charities and other agents who belong to the states and societies of the places territorialized as countries of transit and origin.” Paradox as curiosity is thus placed to see how borders are made ‘*on-site*’ in his words.

In Morocco, the presence of Syrians and Yemenis was a source or some animosity for many of the African migrants living in both Fez and Rabat. From their perspective, Syrians had a much easier time of entering Europe thanks to the solidarity shown by the Moroccans to their ‘Arab brothers’. Unlike the sub-Saharans, the Syrians could freely travel by bus or train up to the north of the country and were able to buy food, clothing and blankets in shops by the border towns. The Moroccan police were seen to be a lot less heavy handed with Arabs; they were not beaten to anything like the same extent as the Africans were; they were largely regarded with pity and as much more deserving of support. Though the Africans I spoke to had some empathy with the plight of the Syrians, they articulated their claims to Europe along the same lines to that of the Syrians. They did not see themselves as ‘migrants’ or ‘economic migrants’ and the Syrians as ‘refugees’. They had the same rights to live and work in Europe as the Arabs.

That the Syrians and Yemenis were perceived as having a much easier time travelling to Europe and treated much less harshly than the African migrants by Moroccan authorities was thus conceived of by many in stark racialised terms. The Africans were seen as undesirable because they were black. Their blackness was obvious and clear,

making them targets for more overt hostility and discrimination. In this way, solidarity with the Arab migrants was not possible. The Africans had to pit themselves against them; disdain and contempt for the Syrians a harsh manifestation of the paradoxical border regime which effectively ranked the deserving from the non-deserving although the Syrian and Yemenis too were victims of the same bordering practices, obliged to storm the fence and risk perilous journeys.

### *Scene 3.1*

> A footballer by profession, Mamu had been promised a place on a first division Moroccan team by people posing as talent scouts in his home town. His family had raised a relatively large sum of money to enable him to travel to Morocco, with one other colleague from the local team in his town in Ivory Coast. He played the position of striker; able to take free kicks with a ferocious power like his idol Didier Drogba and was already well known in own country. Mamu wore his hair in short dreadlocks and looked remarkably smart and well turned out considering his living conditions and the lack of facilities for washing and laundry. He carried most of his belongings around with him in a small backpack.
>
> Upon arrival to Morocco, the talent scout who had promised the two young men places on the Moroccan team disappeared with the passports of Manu and his friend, leaving them stranded in Rabat. Finding themselves with their hotel only being paid for three more nights, Mamu and his friend suddenly found themselves homeless in a faraway country, without their passports, football licences and videos of their football skills.
>
> Dismissed by the management of the Moroccan football team, who had no knowledge of the player and whose quota of foreign players on the team was already filled – Mamu decided to try to make it to the English Premier League. There was no choice of going back to Ivory Coast, where there was no hope in ever being able to make a career in football, and the Premier League had no such quotas on foreign players.
>
> Mamu likened the effects of the European border and Morocco's role in the border as akin to modern day slavery. The system left him trapped in Morocco, obliged to work as a blacksmith for around five Euros per day, for a fifteen hour day; less than half of what a non-black would be paid for the job. In addition to what is obtained through begging at the traffic lights, the money is used to buy new mobile phones, clothes and blankets after these items are seized and destroyed by Moroccan police at the border. It's also used to pay for the network of people traffickers to transport the Africans from central and southern Moroccan cities to the northern border towns, he explained, as they were often refused train or bus tickets when attempting to buy them legitimately.
>
> For Manu, this system of 'slavery' was what pushed him to continue to remobilise and attempt to reach Europe after every failed attempt. He reasoned that it was better to be killed at the border than to be used as a slave. During the latter part of 2016, Mamu mobilised a group of around eight hundred other Africans to storm the border collectively. Using stark counter-insurgency language, he fashioned himself as the 'chief' and 'lead strategist' of the 'attack'; meaning that he coordinated exactly when the group would charge at the wall; on which day and what particular time of night, as well as the formation that this would take. He admitted to a new strategy of placing minors at the front of the charging gang as the police were less likely to unleash the dogs and horses on the crowd if they could see that children were present.

The story Mamu told me highlights the way a particular collectivity is brought into being. The ‘blackness’ of the African migrants against the Arab refugees was also a discourse echoed by the local NGOs to highlight the vulnerability of the Africans, invoked as a reason why these particular individuals were more in need of care and support than any other groups. One volunteer explained to me how the Syrians had enough help; enough support from the Islamic organisations operating in Morocco. She expressed her surprise that I would even bother wanting to meet or speak to any of them; the black migrants had suffered so much more.

This racialised subjectivity and rights claim did not begin, for many of these Africans, in their hometowns and countries, but came into being in their journeys towards Europe, and as a result of, as I will go onto to speak about later, the shared experiences of suffering which became a sort of currency.

Legacies of slavery and modalities of racism in Morocco were also invoked and the language of counter-insurgency to frame acts of crossing the border was common place. Though the Africans described the Moroccan people as ‘kind’ and ‘generous’ in the Southern cities, they described how it was patently clear in the northern towns that Moroccan authorities were being paid to implement the EU border policies and the way in which this re-inscribed colonial mentalities of oppressor and oppressed (see also Qadim, 2014). The bonds of racialised marginalisation became stronger with the longer the Africans spent living in limbo in Morocco and the increasing number of failed attempts to cross the border into Europe.

## 8 The valorisation of suffering and its currency as a claim to rights

### *Scene 4.1*

> On a Friday morning in Fez, the director of the NGO looking after African migrants had asked me to deliver some clothes and cash one Friday morning to David, the volunteer, so that I could make myself useful. After counting the cash, David told me of his shopping list for the day. Most important was a specific (expensive) medication for a young man living in a nearby apartment who was recovering from injuries sustained whilst attempting to cross the border. Before rushing off, David gave me a brief outline of Michael’s situation. A Ghanian man, who had only left home a few months ago with plans to travel to the UK where his brother already lived, Michael had just had both legs amputated; one at the ankle and one at the knee as a result of being set upon by dogs at the Spanish border with Mellila. This was apparently a new practice of the Guardia Civil after catching those who attempted to storm the border wall; the police would catch them, beat them, confiscate their phones, shoes, blankets and money before releasing dogs or even horses to cause the most injury to the migrants.
>
> “We’re trying to arrange to bring him back to Accra to be with his family but it’s difficult to raise the money.”
>
> David told me how everybody at the NGO had agreed that this would be the best course of action for Michael as he was still in considerable pain and would need a lifetime of further treatment.
>
> “Of course, Michael won’t admit that he should go home, He still thinks he can make it to England and that his brother will sort something out.”

> When I spoke of Michael's situation to other travellers, they were visibly riled. There was agreement that there should certainly be some kind of programme where people who were so badly injured in this way at the border to be safely and humanely transported to Europe to receive treatment. After all, it was the 'fault' of the EU that Michael ended up in this terrible situation. He now had a right to at least receive proper medical attention from the people who'd caused these injuries. Even prisoners got proper medical treatment.

The theme of valorisation of suffering and the transformation of this suffering into some kind of currency through which one could legitimately claim the 'right' to Europe was the most tangible paradox I attuned to whilst speaking to my interlocutors. The arbitrariness, opaqueness as well as sheer brutality of border practices many had encountered made people even more determined to cross, simply because the blockade existed, because giving up would have rendered worthless their struggles so far.

Isin and Saward's (2013) notion of 'acts' and claiming European citizenship can help us to understand the transformations taking place here, together with Rancière's (2004) argument that political agency and citizenship are not fixed predicates but may be claimed by those individuals clearly outside of the political community. The Africans I met developed ways of acting politically within the centrifugal and disperse dynamics in which they were immersed, ways of acting from the limits of the Schengen regime of governance and (in)securitised field of EU internal security. The subject positions enacted from within this particular space; the transformation from individual desires to a collective rights claim based on postcolonial and racialised entitlements, not for individual persons, but for the oppressed 'blacks' as opposed to the Arab refugees or Moroccan citizens themselves. This claim, as we have discussed in the previous section – is rooted in a capacity to speak for fellow 'blacks' mobilising for 'freedom'. The situations and set of relations the Africans found themselves embedded in was likened to a form of 'slavery'. This terminology was used repeatedly to convey the sense of ostensible domination and feeling of being trapped.

What the Africans demonstrate by claiming acts of citizenship is exactly the way in which they constitute themselves as collective political subjects (Aradau and Huysmans, 2009). This transformation of modalities of desire to claims for rights of 'freedom' rooted in racialised and postcolonial imaginaries of collectivity illustrates the instance of the formation of this new political subjectivity. Here the notion of 'freedom' is essential.

In claiming the right to access Europe, to live and work in Europe, and positioning themselves to speak *on behalf* of all the other Africans or 'blacks' who have suffered because of European policies on the African continent – the African migrants assert their presence and political capacity to act as political subjects (as opposed to acting as the objects of policy (cf. Aradau et al., 2010). In addition, their agency is expressed in clear racialised terms, and articulated in terms of advocating for others; fellow 'Africans' or 'blacks' who too experience the same effects of the Schengen border and who too claim political rights.

## 9 Conclusions

We cannot think of Schengen border technologies and their human effects in isolation from the lived experiences of people who feel the governance of these practices most acutely. In this case, so-called TCNs, who have not yet made it into Schengen's territory

(or perhaps have entered previously, but are now blocked) – who bear the brunt. To speak of Schengen technologies without speaking of these people risks abstraction and the reproduction of elite or technocratic narratives. It paints a sterile picture.

Thinking and writing ethnography, and taking the idea paradox as my curiosity, in co-production with various interlocutors on the move, necessarily blurs and adds texture to the narratives of Schengen bordering technologies. It surmounts the notion of divisions between different social universes of border control (Bigo, 2014), with solid, liquid and gaseous borders thought of in abstraction as well as complicates the idea of a 'rearticulation of sovereignty' with increased militarisation of the borders in recent times (Jones and Johnson, 2016). Paradox as curiosity gives accounts of bordering practices their distinctive thickness (Geertz, 1973; Fassin, 2017). When one goes into the field to examine border technologies *as a practice* therefore, in all their multiplicity and contingency, we see a picture which is messy and arbitrary. We see, in a rich and concrete manner – how these practices attach themselves to other routines and processes and become entangled in seemingly far-removed sets of practices – from hospitality to counter-insurgency.

What has been labelled a 'sociotechnical assemblage' or 'border machine' (M'charek et al., 2014) – can also be read even more in terms of emergence and diffusion. We have only particular configurations at specific moments, always subject to radical contingency, whose paradoxes can be traced all the way back to the fundamental paradox of offsetting 'freedom' with 'surveillance' in the Schengen agreement.

When examining the intricate entanglements of freedom, technology and surveillance in bordering practices, it is here in the lives and journeys of migrants attempting to reach European shores – where we are able to engage with the stark manifestations of this paradox in all its everyday practices.

Despite ever increasing funding and investment in surveillance technologies, interoperability and 'smart borders', control of Europe at the borders of Europe still relies on overt and extreme violence; coercion and oppression. Jabri (2006) refers to a 'matrix of war' at play within liberal societies; these 'humane' technologies can only exist because of the overt violence of the barbed wire, dogs, horses and police beatings. Though moves towards datafication and digitisation are at play, these shifts simply displace the violence, as well as 'mithridate' it.

Schengen is less about a 'balance' between 'freedom' and 'security' as some of its architects suggested (Ansems de Vries, Groenendijk and Oelgemoller this issue), but is instead about a *balance between security as coercion and security as speed, surveillance and interoperability*. This 'balance' is however arbitrary; with an unlucky 1% of persons on the move subject to this coercion. For these bodies, a different logic underpins control of movement. No longer are 'data suspects' governed as a population, but physical bodies are detained and beaten. The two exist in symbiosis.

Furthermore, these bordering practices, both 'hard' and 'soft' create the problem they are supposed to solve within this trapped minority, in a never ending cycle, even in terms of the subjectivity of the migrants themselves. Not only are journeys made longer and riskier, new actors drawn in and ever more money given away to criminals and gangs, but what were once positive desires are transformed and hardened.

These bordering practices transform individuals with heterogeneous cultures, stories, aims and careers, into a 'horde', often a racialised 'black' horde. This horde 'attack' the border, they talk of strategy and use counter-insurgency terminology. Their suffering is

transformed into rights claims for Europe, a discourse echoed by NGOs who claim to speak on behalf of all migrants and refugees. 'Freedom' articulated through security, technology and surveillance – reproduces its initial paradox ad infinitum.

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## Notes

1 I use the term 'migrants' throughout this paper, not as a legal category, but as a short-hand to refer to the people passing through Morocco, forced to attempt to enter Europe irregularly, as the result of Europe's 'border regime' (de Genova, 2016). The word is also a category of practice, with many of my interlocutors referring to themselves as 'migrant'.

2 Bearing in mind that Frontex separates the West African migratory route via Spain's Canary Islands as different to the western Mediterranean route, via the Spanish mainland and the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

3 Recent policies, which promote a more inter-African approach to migration built on solidarity, under the auspices of the UN Global Compact for Migration, began to be implemented in 2018 after the period of fieldwork took place. As articulated by King Mohammed VI, this framework is framed directly against the EU 'security' approach (see Alioua, 2019). Future research is needed to examine whether the ways in which these developments impact the lived experiences of migrants, both Sub-Saharan and Arab, in Morocco.

4 IPS stands for the transdisciplinary project known as international political sociology [see introduction of this issue (Bararan, Bigo et al., 2017)]. PARIS in this sense is not conceived of as a 'school' or critical security studies, but an acronym aimed at de-disciplinarising and transversalising studies of (in)security practices (see Bigo and McCluskey, 2017).

5 All research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of my institution, reference REP/13/14-149. I have changed the names of my interlocutors to protect their anonymity.