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Introduction

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Frontiers are not natural barriers, but historical constructions, institutional and political issues that give birth to a specified space (Nordman, 1999). The four chapters in this first section examine the internal and external mechanisms for the political construction of border controls, from the first appearance of the nation-state and of the concept of national identity, in the late 19th century and early 20th century in Europe until now, in the early 21st century, when European identity is being redefined and controls redeployed in the Mediterranean.

Inevitably, the history of changing frontiers includes that of migrants, who are now required to produce identity papers and other documents that will justify the legitimacy of their passage. The installation of frontiers, and their later evolution, not only draws lines around territories but also divides legal travellers from illegal migrants.

The period covered here has been marked by two important changes: the installation of intra- and extra-European frontiers and of the attendant checkpoints; and growth in migratory flows, first of Europeans and later of other nationalities (Withol de Wenden, 2005). These four articles seek therefore to establish connections linking legislation that defines national and territorial affiliations, tighter frontier controls, and the assignation of specific status to migrants that definitively marks them as legal or illegal. Human mobility, a phenomenon much feared by nation-states in the past, has always represented a challenge, but particularly when political frontiers are transformed into barriers separating areas with different economic realities.

In Europe, during the period between the 1880s and 1930, the policy of free circulation was transformed into a regime of permanent controls of identity. From a historical perspective, we can see the emergence of a need to check personal identities and the development of appropriate technology in order to ensure more rigorous controls at border crossings. With these controls, the frontier 'exists' as more than a mere line, barrier or even '*limes*'. Thus, since the 19th century, nationality is now an essential criterion for governments seeking to define social identity. For the historian Gérard Noiriel (2007), this process towards 'nationalization' is indicative of an 'identity revolution'. The real presence of a

frontier becomes part of the population's daily life, as demonstrated by Ilsen About, and is associated with the development of a national identity that confirms the country's unity. The author specifically analyzes the impact of the Circular of 1899 in France and the role played by police officers in establishing a national frontier that is not merely a geographical limit, but also a symbolic place that awakens self-awareness. The situation on the Franco-Italian border, as discussed in this article, offers a good illustration of this phenomenon, as it allows us to observe one of the major waves of Mediterranean migration: Italians fleeing poverty and later Fascism in their country for a new future in America and France.

Since the Second World War, two phenomena have contributed to the debate on migration and frontier controls: the very high numbers of migrants travelling around the Mediterranean in response to strong economic development, notably in France; and, the process of decolonization which changed the nature and quantity of migration flows within and towards Europe (Liauzu, 1996), the huge wave of migrants now composed of Portuguese and Spanish, but most of all North Africans. These phenomena show us the importance of discussing frontier controls as a fundamental feature of Europe's operational structures and as a significant political marker.

Over the last thirty years or so, the need for global controls – which the European Union has sought to harmonize – has become a major issue. Border controls are being placed at the EU's outer edges. Implementation of the Schengen Convention (1995) led to the signature of bilateral agreements between EU Member States and countries in the Mediterranean and outside Europe (de Tapia, 2008). At the same time, the introduction of sophisticated technological innovations (biometric passports, walls, drones, etc.) and new resources, such as the Frontex agency, have facilitated the management of cooperative operations at the EU Member States' external borders. The EU's new frontier regime, which reinforces complex political cooperation, nevertheless sustains asymmetric power struggles between the North and the South in terms of migration controls in Europe and in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Thus, Southern European countries, located at the interface with extra-European and Mediterranean zones, are now expected to guarantee the impermeability of the EU's frontiers.

These Southern European countries, weakened by the economic crisis and traditionally countries of emigration as Sandro Rinauro's article shows for Italy, are being transformed against their will into countries of destination for new migratory flows and are required to become gatekeepers for the European Union. The arrival of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Europe represent a new challenge.

In her article, Laurence Pillant reviews the security arrangements set up at the Greek-Turkish frontier as part of a 'frontier extension area' and the ways that new actors, whether private or public, national or European, governmental or non-governmental are becoming interdependent. The frontier and its controls appear to be diffracted. In response to the multiplication of agencies and the need for different types of controls, there are now numerous places where identities are checked and which are not necessarily situated at the frontier itself. On the one hand, today as in the past, camps where migrants await a decision authorizing their stay or confirming their expulsion represent and symbolize migration control while, on the other, there are more ordinary and banal controls at the boarding gates for ferries. Control techniques have also changed and are no longer limited to a simple identity check: they now contribute an opportunity for analysis by use of personal interviews with migrants. Yet, although the frontier and frontier controls have become more 'widespread' or at least less visible, this should not be interpreted as a weakening of state authority which, while establishing these new procedures, continues to wield its considerable powers behind a screen of reconfigurations and redeployments.

Sylvie Mazzella's article highlights the way that controls of migration flows between European Union and North Africa can now be compared with those established on the periphery of the European Union. On the one hand, North Africa, once a region of emigration like Greece and Italy, is now a region of immigration. This area has become a transit region, because of differences in economic conditions between Africa and Europe and because of the political events that have shaken the African continent. On the other hand, we have seen that the European Union has introduced a twofold process: it has externalized its border controls and required countries of origin to assume responsibility for their nationals. This has led to a transformation in the relations with countries which, during the colonial or post-colonial environment, were often seen as 'dominated' but are now economic and indispensable partners for the European Union in controlling its frontiers.

Although control systems have changed, as discussed in these articles, there are nevertheless several constants. For example, economic and political issues have become more acute since the 19th century, due to industrialization and the movement of political refugees. When these refugees are a source of cheap labour, as discussed by Sandro Rinauro, this form of labour migration is generally well received, even actively encouraged. Yet, generally speaking, taking a tough political stance on the question of national, or European, identity, together with differences in economic development, has generated a certain amount of distrust towards migrants since the 19th century. The 'false' migrant or asylum-

seeker is now seen as a threat at a sensitive period when the nation-state is being redefined and the construction of a European community is in crisis. This distrust reached its paroxysm with the introduction of policies that seek to control or expel peoples who have roamed throughout the continent for more than two hundred years (Asséo, 1994 [2006]). In fact, as these four articles show, criminalizing migrants is not a new phenomenon and changes over time. Introduced gradually during the 19th century, administrative procedures that classify and identify migrants are now taking central stage (Rea, 2000; Palidda, 1999).

Political decisions on control procedures, though diverse and spread throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region, seem nevertheless to be less organized or rational than we might expect and inherent weaknesses are emerging and undermining future actions. Does this suggest, nevertheless, that state sovereignty – with regard to migration controls – is in decline? The authors' reply is no: this is not so much a decline, as a redeployment of the administration's methods for exercising power.

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