Preface

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Labels matter. To speak of a "migrant crisis" with respect to what happened in Europe in and since the summer of 2015 is not neutral, as readers of this book will soon realize. It has deep political implications and it also requires and nurtures specific forms of visualization—or a specific set of "image operations," to employ a notion that figures prominently in this book. Shipwrecks at sea and corpses on a beach, ungovernable bodies in motion and scenes of destitution in informal camps: a whole humanitarian visual culture has developed around such images of crisis, with the aim to nurture compassion and engagement from afar. There was no shortage of such images in the summer of 2015. The point is of course not to downplay their relevance as iconic representations of the events, nor is it to simply articulate once again a critique of humanitarian reason. Nevertheless, it is clear that the selection of those images obscures other aspects of the migratory turmoil at the borders of and in Europe in 2015/16. What if we take as guiding thread other images, for instance snapshots of the "march of hope" from Budapest to the Austrian border on September 4, 2015, or of the elementary force with which tens of thousands of women, men, and children on the move swept away border fences and walls from Macedonia to Hungary, across the "Balkan route" during that summer? A different picture of the events emerges. What strikes in those images is not so much "crisis," as rather the sense of an uncontainable movement, of a radical challenge to Europe's borders, of an even joyful practice of freedom. In emphasizing such images, activists and critical migration and border studies called the events of 2015/16 the "long summer of migration."[1]

It is important to recover the insurgent character of the movements of migration in Europe in the summer of 2015. A shift in migrants' routes from the Central to the Eastern Mediterranean as of May of that year made the crossing of the European maritime "external borders" significantly safer for the first time in the recent history of trans-Mediterranean migration.[2] Needless to say, this does not mean that there would be no deaths at sea in the following months. But thousands of migrants were able to get to the European shore of the Greek islands and continue their travel further North across the "Balkan route." I am not proposing a naive celebration or even a romanticization of the "summer of migration." Migratory routes at sea and on land were plagued by any kind of obstacle, threat, and violence; hunger, thirst, and death were continuing to

1 See Kasparek and Speer, "Of Hope."

2 Heller and Pezzani, "Ebbing and Flowing."

haunt migrants. But the subjective dimensions of migration, the search for freedom, and the desire for a better life that so often sustain the dynamics of migration were particularly apparent in the long summer of 2015. The passage across the Mediterranean and the "Balkan route" clearly took the characteristic of a *political* movement, and at least for a moment it was understood in such terms by wide sections of the European public, which mobilized to welcome migrants in countries like Greece, Austria, and Germany.

The encoding of the events as a "migrant crisis" did not merely happen in the framework of a humanitarian discourse sincerely responding to the perceived predicament and pain of migrants. It quickly became the mainstream reaction of EU institutions, national governments, and global media. While the events in the summer of 2015 had manifested a crisis of the European border regime, the discourse surrounding the "migrant" (or "refugee") crisis dramatically shifted the responsibility toward a threat coming from the outside of a supposedly stable and ordered European space. The political dimension of the movements and struggles of migration was thus *neutralized*, and the image of the crisis—with its affective resonances and its visual instantiations—began to be mobilized against the challenges posed by the "summer of migration." Far from responding to those challenges—envisaging a democratization of borders and taking the opportunity for imagining a different Europe as well as different relations between Europe and its multiple outsides—the institutions of the EU and national governments began to work in tandem to reinforce the border regime. The enhanced deployment of Frontex in Greece, the establishment of the hotspot approach of the European Commission, and the crackdown on so-called "secondary movements" of migrants and refugees were among the main steps of a strategy that was crowned by the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016. The externalization of European borders, underway since the 1990s, thus reached a further stage, leaving thousands of migrants and refugees stranded in Greece while maritime crossing shifted again toward the Central Mediterranean, definitely the most lethal border in the world.[3]

"Mediating migration as crisis is a global affair," the editors of this book write in their introduction. Over the last years we have witnessed such a global scope in many parts of the world, in a political conjuncture that is characterized by the rise of old and new nationalisms, as well as by various degrees of combination between authoritarianism and neoliberalism. As far as Europe is concerned, the increasing nationalization of political discourse and processes have led to multiple conflicts and tensions between the European Commission and member states, whose manifestations have been particularly apparent around issues of borders and migration. With the rise of a nationalist right in several European countries, including Hungary, Austria, and Italy, the cooperation between the EU and national governments has become far from smooth in the wake of the EU-Turkey deal. Even the neoliberal version of "migration management," built upon the primacy of "human capital" and advocated by the European Commission and by various governmental bodies around Europe, has become increasingly criticized by nationalist forces and governments. "Migration" as such is the privileged target for such forces and governments, both rhetorically and politically. While this implies an increasing harshness of conditions for migrants and refugees

3 See Bojadžijev and Mezzadra, "'Refugee crisis' or Crisis of European Migration Policies?"; New Keywords Collective, "Europe/Crisis;" De Genova, *The Borders of "Europe."*

living in Europe (often for many years), with an entrenchment of discrimination and racism, a hardening of borders (even of "internal" borders within the Schengen space) is apparent.

Since the summer of 2018 in particular, the Italian government has waged a war not only against migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean (and often escaping from detention centers in Libya, whose dire conditions have been denounced by several organizations, including the UNHCR), but also against NGOs and humanitarian interventions at sea. The criminalization of humanitarianism, parallel to a more general trend toward the criminalization of solidarity,[4] has partially shifted the ground for political conflicts around migration. While humanitarianism had long been considered a constitutive component of the border regime,[5] its criminalization necessarily implies a politicization of the issue of intervention and migrant rescue at sea. Activists and social organizations have attempted to respond to that challenge by establishing a platform that aims at combining rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean with the building of bridges with migrant and social struggles on land, openly defying the government.[6] While the attack on migrants intensifies in many parts of the world, this is just an instance of the multifarious forms of political and social intervention that attempt to prompt a counter-offensive. Cultural and artistic practices as the ones documented in this book can make crucially important contributions to this project.

What is even more important is to emphasize the stubbornness of migration in such a global predicament as the one we are living through. The dynamics of migration continue to be characterized and prompted by elements of autonomy (from the hardening of borders as well as from the imagined equilibrium of "migration management") that are dramatically apparent in the Central Mediterranean no less than along the border between the U.S. and Mexico and elsewhere in the world. It is this autonomy that sustains the "fugitivity" (a notion borrowed from Fred Moten) of migrant movement that—as the editors write in their introduction—this book "seeks to hold open." *La frontera está cerrada, pero vamos a pasar* ("the border is closed, but we will cross"), a phrase from a Honduran song circulating among migrants' caravans across Mexico, effectively instantiates what I call the stubbornness of migration. This is a constitutive feature of global migration today. It crisscrosses what we could term its "political anatomy," and it sheds light on the subjective stakes surrounding contemporary conflicts around borders and migration. Such a stubbornness of migration challenges us to invent a notion of freedom of movement capable of foreshadowing a different society, a different way to live together beyond the asphyxiating "double pincer" of nationalism and neoliberalism. This book makes an outstanding contribution to this project, connecting "moving media" and "mobile positions" and building archives that invite readers to turn them into weapons for struggle.

4 Tazzioli, "Crimes of Solidarity."

5 Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*.

6 Caccia and Mezzadra, "What Can a Ship Do?"

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Allan deSouza, Xing *(2016)*