

Part III: The Refugee Boat – Vehicle, Moving Target, Integrating Figure of EU Bordering

In the context of the southern external borders of the EU, migrant vessels stand, on the one hand, for the risks of border crossing by sea, and on the other, for the challenges of border control. Examining EUROSUR's legitimizing narrative, the previous chapter demonstrated that the reference to small boats both works to claim necessity to save migrants' lives at sea and to justify the need for better surveillance. Those dinghies, fishing boats or freighters represent, in a nutshell, risks and challenges from the standpoint of border crossing *and* from that of border surveillance and control. In order to decipher and explain the possibility of this oscillating reference to the vessels commonly used for migration by sea, this part of the book focuses on the vehicle itself.

For the following three chapters, I take up William Walters' impetus to examine "the missing vehicles" in the context of migration and border control, taking seriously "the symbolic work that vehicles do – both incidental and calculated" (Walters 2011: 6) as well as the materiality of the boat as a socio-political and judicial entity. Modifying Latour's "Where are the missing masses?," Walters claims that the vehicles used for migration, have by their "behavior or nature [...] a comparable role" (Latour 1992: 225) to that of humans for the realization and reception of (unauthorized) migration. If true, the socio-technical arrangements aligned to the phenomenon of unauthorized maritime migration could be traced back to its vehicular facilitator. For the purpose of operationalizing Walters' claim, the following chapters examine the vehicle used for migration by sea as a site in its own right.

The intention of the site-specific analysis is not to portray the history of a site, in this case of the refugee boat or migrant vessel, but rather to construct the emergence of a supranational EU border from the perspective of the small boat. The analysis thereby goes beyond emphasizing the impact of migrant vessels on EU border policies. It aims to understand and highlight the difference the boat

makes. Walters' claim to focus on the vehicles of migration corresponds to the methodological premises of this study. It allows tracing the role of the vehicle pertaining to networks of commercialized migration as well as to the technical functioning and legal justification of border surveillance and control.

Chapter 7 starts with an analysis of the vehicular characteristics of boats and ships and their differences. It then explores their very first appropriation in the context of unauthorized and clandestine migration in the context of the Indochina Refugee Crisis.

Chapter 8 examines the appropriation of the vessel in the context of seaborne migration to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea, with the reception of the image of the small, overcrowded and unseaworthy vessel given a discursive analysis. Finally, chapter 9 investigates the role the vessel plays in distinguishing the migrants' legal status. The analysis focuses on those arguments that rely on the vehicle as vessel: as stateless, as in distress, as a suspicious one "that is doing something strange,"¹ and that is thus a target of surveillance. This allows the testing of the hypothesis that a prioritization of the vehicle in legal reasoning (while at the same time bypassing or postponing any need to address the human cargo) facilitates operational practices that otherwise would have been difficult, if not impossible, to justify. To conclude, these trajectories are analyzed with regard to the boats' role in the emergence of a supranational external EU border.

1 EUROSUR Project Manager at Frontex, personal interview (May 15, 2012)].