

# 1 *Bordering the Western Mediterranean*

I visited the Spanish enclave of Melilla for the first time in the summer 2019, while on a stopover before my last research stay in Morocco. There, I spent a few days conducting interviews, looking for books on the history of the city in the local library, and visiting the general archive. During my short stay, I met Rafael, a young Spanish photographer from the *peninsula* (mainland Spain) at the beginning of his career. When I asked Rafael why he had decided to take up a job in Melilla, he told me that being in the North African enclave would give him a chance to take pictures *de los migrantes que saltan la valla*, of the migrants that jump the triple fences dividing Spain from Morocco (see Figure 1). But that summer, Rafael complained, there had been no attempts of irregular border crossing. What Rafael did not seem to know, however, was that the reason why the number of migrants crossing the fence had decreased so dramatically that summer was that Morocco had been conducting an extremely harsh deterrence campaign on the other side of the border. Since August 2018, Moroccan police forces had been arresting and dispersing migrant people living in the North of Morocco, not only in forest camps, but also in Tangier and, at times, also in Casablanca and Rabat (Gazzotti and Hagan 2020). In a report released in the fall 2018, the Moroccan NGO Groupe Antiraciste d'Accompagnement et de Défense des Étrangers et migrants (GADEM, in the French acronym) estimated that at least 6,500 people had been victims of these arrest-and-disperse campaigns between July and September 2018 alone (GADEM 2018a). "When nothing happens here [in Melilla] it's because a lot of things are going on in Morocco" (Díaz 2018) Spanish activist José Palazón declared in an interview to the Spanish press in the summer 2018.

The escalation of arrest-and-disperse campaigns recorded in 2018 constituted the culmination of the long-term securitisation of the Western Mediterranean. Started in the 1970s, this process unfolded



**Figure 1** The fence dividing Melilla (on the left) from Morocco (on the right), summer 2019. Photographed by the author.

in three stages: the securitisation of European borders; the externalisation of European migration control; and the emergence of autonomous migration control strategies in African countries. The different sections of this chapter will provide a historical overview of the bordering of the Western Mediterranean, and will begin to introduce the main actors inhabiting the migration industry.

### **The Rise of the Southern European Border**

European countries started closing their borders in the aftermath of the 1973 oil shock, and more decisively after the signature of the Schengen Agreement in 1985 (De Haas 2007). The creation of an area of free circulation within signatory states displaced the border of 'Fortress Europe' southward (Geddes 2000, 2008), increasing pressure on Southern Mediterranean countries to monitor their frontiers and prevent the entry of undocumented migrants into the Schengen area (Boswell 2003). After Spain became an EU country, the Spanish-



**Figure 2** Crossing the border between Ceuta (Spain) and Fnideq (Morocco), summer 2014. Photographed by the author.

Moroccan border became the *Frontera Sur*, the Southern border of the European Union (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008).

By the early 1990s, European countries had started tightening their migration policies, with the aim to ensure the dissuasion, interception, and removal of irregular border crossers (Boswell 2003). Both Spain and Italy reformed their immigration law between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s (Arab 2009). Legal amendments went hand in hand with infrastructural bordering. Since 1995, Spain has repeatedly reinforced the fences surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Ferrer-Gallardo 2008), largely benefitting from the financial support of the EU (Zaragoza-Christiani 2016) (see Figure 2).

Spain and the EU have also tried to seal the Mediterranean and Atlantic maritime routes by equipping their sea borders with technological systems of interception able to track the movements of boats. In 2002, Spanish authorities launched the Integrated System of External Vigilance (SIVE, in the Spanish acronym), which was first activated in the Gibraltar Strait and later off the shores of the Canary Islands to

detect boats coming from Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal (Vives 2017a, 2017b).

European leaders quickly realised that this unilateral strategy of border control would not produce the desired effects in terms of management of irregular crossings. For this reason, they soon started soliciting ‘sending’ and ‘transit’ countries to cooperate in migration control (Boswell 2003). This approach has been implemented both at the bilateral level, with individual European countries trying to negotiate migration-related agreements with ‘sending’ and ‘transit’ countries (see Paoletti 2011 for the Italian–Libyan case; El Qadim 2015; Zaragoza-Christiani 2016 for the Spanish–Moroccan case), and at the multilateral level. After the signature of the Tampere Agreement in 1999, the EU formally adopted the “external dimension” of its migration and asylum policy, giving way to the Commission to incorporate discussions over migration in the foreign policy of the EU (Lavenex and UçArer 2004).<sup>1</sup>

Morocco has always ranked highly in the external migration governance strategy of the EU. In 1998, the high-level working group on migration and asylum identified Morocco, Iraq, Albania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan as countries with which it was necessary to develop action plans on the fight against irregular emigration and border control (Belguendouz 2005; El Qadim 2015). In the following years, the European Commission has rather opted for ‘dialogues’ gathering European and African countries to discuss issues related to migration. It is in this spirit that the Euro–African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development was organised in 2006 in Rabat. This laid the basis for what would later become the Rabat process (Collyer 2009, 2016), a multilateral dialogue grouping European, North African, Central African, and Western African countries as well as IOs (ICMPD n.d.). As part of these border externalisation efforts, the EU, its member states, and Morocco have cooperated in the joint

<sup>1</sup> This approach was further sanctioned in the Hague Programme (Afailal 2016; Collyer 2012; Jiménez Álvarez 2011), which included a section on the “external dimension of migration and asylum” in the part addressing the specific orientations on “strengthening freedom” (Council of the European Union 2005). It is interesting to note that the document lists the provision in matter of migration control right after the first article insisting on the freedom of mobility within EU border for EU citizens, therefore directly opposing the freedom of circulation within EU territory with the need to tighten the external borders (Council of the European Union 2005).

implementation of migration control measures. Morocco has signed a number of bilateral agreements to facilitate the return of Moroccan irregular migrants from different European countries, including Italy, France, Germany, and Spain (Cassarino 2018). In practice, the implementation of these legal instruments has been patchy. As an example, in 1992, Spain and Morocco signed a readmission agreement which would facilitate the repatriation of Moroccan nationals and non-Moroccan migrants that had allegedly ‘transited’ through Morocco before reaching Spain (El Qadim 2015). Morocco, however, generally refused to honour the readmission of this second group of migrants, and their official return to Morocco has always been conducted as an exceptional measure (Zaragoza-Christiani 2016)<sup>2</sup> – as happened, for example, in August 2018, when Spain summarily deported 113 migrants from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta to Morocco (GADEM 2018b). Since 2003, the EU has tried to negotiate a readmission agreement with Morocco, so far unsuccessfully due to the resistance of Moroccan authorities (El Qadim 2015). The refusal of Morocco to sign the readmission agreement with the EU testifies to the country’s capacity to prioritise its geopolitical priorities over European border externalisation pressure, and to formulate a selective involvement in migration control cooperation (Benjelloun 2017a; Natter 2014).

Countries on both banks of the Mediterranean have also cooperated on border surveillance and the interception of irregular border crossing attempts, either through data exchanges on migratory events or through direct collaboration in border patrol. In 2007, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) started operating off the Mediterranean coasts of Morocco (Vacchiano 2013). Morocco is part of the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC), a working group created in 2010 by FRONTEX to strengthen information exchange with African partners (FRONTEX 2017). Spanish and Moroccan authorities carry out joint patrols over maritime and land borders (Zaragoza-Christiani 2016), and some members of the Moroccan Royal Gendarmerie are trained in Spain (GADEM et al. 2015). Spanish and Moroccan police have also collaborated in the implementation of unlawful border control practices, such as the summary expulsions of “sub-Saharan” nationals from the Spanish enclaves

<sup>2</sup> El Qadim signals that this readmission agreement has been “partially applied,” but just after 2004 (El Qadim 2015, 62).

of Ceuta and Melilla. Conducted since the early 2000s, summary pushbacks breach international law, and have been condemned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2018; UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2015) and the European Court of Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights 2017). Despite strong opposition from human rights bodies, Spanish authorities have continued returning migrants illegally at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla. In 2015, the Spanish immigration law was updated in an attempt to 'legalise' these violent border control practices in open contradiction with international law (Caminando Fronteras 2017; Migreurop & GADDEM 2015). Despite early declarations made by Pedro Sanchez vis-à-vis the need to 'humanise' border control when he became Spanish Prime Minister in 2018, recent developments suggest that Spanish authorities do not seem intentioned to repeal this amendment and to discontinue pushbacks (Sanchez 2018).

### **Migration Policymaking in Morocco**

Morocco has not been a passive recipient of European border externalisation, but has rather developed its own art of migration governance. Until the late 1990s neither migration, nor the presence of 'sub-Saharan migrants' were matters of public concern in the country (Benjelloun 2017c; Natter 2014). In the early 2000s, this attitude changed. In 2002, the Moroccan Ministry of Interior formulated its own border surveillance strategy, aiming at "controlling borders, dismantling human trafficking networks and disrupting irregular departure attempts" (MCMREAM 2016, 78) (see Figure 3). In 2003, the Moroccan parliament approved Law 02–03, which has become widely known for its repressive tone and for the clear stigmatisation of 'sub-Saharan' migration. Replacing former colonial Immigration Acts, the new legislation criminalises irregular entry and exit from the country. It introduced fines and detention sentences for Moroccan and foreign undocumented migrants and for people enabling irregular emigration (Khrouz 2016b). This migration policy shift is part of a broader regional trend. In the span of a few years, Tunisia (2004), Algeria (2008), Libya (2010), and Mauritania (2010) modified their migration acts or introduced law criminalising undocumented migration and smuggling (Perrin 2016). This migration policy turn has led to the construction of a "securitarian



**Figure 3** Member of the Moroccan Auxiliary Forces patrolling the coast beside the entry to the port of Tangier, summer 2018. Photographed by the author.

belt” surrounding Europe (Jiménez Álvarez 2011, 105). The introduction of Law 02–03 fulfils three main functions, as it seeks to control the mobility of Moroccan nationals, of Maghrebi nationals seeking to reach Spain through Moroccan shores and of migrants coming from West and Central Africa ‘in transit’ through Morocco (Jiménez Álvarez 2011). The media treatment that irregular migration received in Morocco (Natter 2014) and the legal distinction that Law 02–03 makes between transit and settlement (Perrin 2008) framed undocumented migration as a phenomenon concerning mainly migrants from West and Central Africa (Natter 2014).

Scholars have foregrounded different hypotheses as to why Morocco decided to adopt such a restrictive migration law in the early 2000s. Early analyses highlighted that European pressure over migration control was pushing Morocco to play “Europe’s gendarme” (Belguendouz 2003, 2005). Later works, however, suggest reading Morocco’s enlistment into Europe’s “war against migrants” (Migreurop 2006) as an expression of Morocco’s capacity to develop a “migration diplomacy,”

(Wihtol de Wenden 2010, 13), or a tactical capacity to use migration as a bargaining chip in their unequal diplomatic relations with European actors (El Qadim 2015; Zaragoza-Christiani 2016). Morocco has not always smoothly complied with European pressures on border control cooperation, showing a fierce capacity to transform migration into a “geographical rent” (Bensaâd 2009, 274). As Natter highlights, Morocco’s initial repressive engagement in migration control cooperation still allowed the country to challenge the diplomatic isolation to which it had been confined in the 1980s and 1990s. The approval of Law 02–03 should therefore be read not only as a result of European pressure, but also of Morocco’s ambition to become a precious partner for the EU (Natter 2014).

The securitisation of migration in North Africa has resulted into the emergence and normalisation of institutional and criminal abuses against migrants, especially at border crossings. In fact, the approval of Law 02–03 inaugurated a decade marked by a securitarian approach to migration governance. Identified as ‘potential border crossers’, West and Central African migrants started being tracked by the Moroccan police. Security forces widely employed coercive deterrence measures to discourage people from crossing the border with Spain and from settling in Morocco (Escoffier 2006). The ‘Ceuta and Melilla events’ have become the symbol of this dark escalation of border control. The night between 28 and 29 September 2005, around 500 people tried to cross the fence surrounding the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. Spanish and Moroccan border guards reacted by teargassing and shooting both in the air and on border crossers, as reported by witnesses. At least five migrant people died as a result. Between 5 and 6 October 2005, at least six migrants died in similar circumstances during another attempt to cross the fence in Melilla (Migreurop 2006). Hundreds of people were then raided and forcibly displaced south of Figuiç, in the desert at the border between Morocco and Algeria, where they were subsequently found by a team of MSF. Left without water or food, many of the migrants were injured and many of them were women and children (Jiménez 2005; Peraldi 2011), all categories of people which are entitled to legal protection.

Moroccan civil society did not remain silent vis-à-vis the brutal treatment of migrants at the hands of both Spanish and Moroccan security forces. Some of the most important human rights groups advocating for the defence of migrants’ rights emerged in the 2000s



(Natter 2014, 2018). Moroccan and migrant-led civil society organisations joined INGOs and transnational human rights movements, like the Migreurop network, to denounce the effects of border, and the human rights violations committed by Moroccan authorities (Alioua 2011a). The presence of a vibrant network of civil society actors has been essential to monitor and denounce the behaviour of Moroccan authorities, characterised by an exclusively security-oriented approach to migration governance (Natter 2018; Norman 2016), with peaks of violence in moments of heightened presence of migrants in the borderlands (CMSM and GADEM 2012; MSF 2013c).

A decade after the approval of Law 02–03, Moroccan migration policy underwent a further, seemingly decisive shift. After a year of heightened border violence and humanitarian critique, on 9 September 2013, the CNDH released a report entitled *Foreigners and Human Rights: For a Radically New Immigration and Asylum Policy*. The CNDH recognised that the implementation of border control by Moroccan police forces had resulted in the open violation of migrants' rights and in the infringement of national and international legislation.

[The CNDH] does not contest in principle the rights of Moroccan authorities to control the entry and stay of foreigners and their duty to fight against trafficking in human beings. However, the CNDH considers that public authorities cannot, in the accomplishment of such missions, avoid constitutional obligations in terms of [respect of] human rights and the right of aliens, the international engagements taken through the ratification of the ensemble of instruments on the protection of human rights.

(CNDH 2013, 3, translation by author)

The report listed a series of recommendations to Moroccan authorities. Policy advice included, among others, the respect of current legislation on migrants', refugees', and asylum seekers' rights, the formulation of a law on asylum, the review of the legislation regulating the fight against human trafficking, the launch of a regularisation campaign, the creation of an integration policy, and a broader consultation with civil society organisations (CNDH 2013). These events were followed by a rapid sequence of reforms. On 10 September 2013, King Mohammed VI announced his High Royal Orientations for the new migration policy during a working session with various members of the government (MAP 2013b).

At least initially, Moroccan authorities radically changed their attitude towards migrants in the country. The state shifted from firmly denying that Morocco could become a country of settlement and asylum for ‘sub-Saharan’ migrants, to a more tolerant approach towards migrant presence in the country. This transformed integration, rather than security, into a key strategy of migration governance (Alioua et al. 2017; Cherti and Collyer 2015). In December 2014, the government elaborated the SNIA (MCMREAM 2016). The policy reform included three main components. First, a process of legislative reform had been put in place. The Moroccan authorities announced three new laws on migration, asylum, and human trafficking. Second, Moroccan authorities formulated an integration policy. Since the launch of the new migration policy, Morocco has run two regularisation campaigns in 2014 and 2017 respectively. Moroccan authorities had also taken some timid steps to facilitate the social and economic integration of immigrants in the country. In October 2013, the Ministry of Education issued a circular allowing foreign students “from the Sahel and sub-Saharan countries” (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, Royaume du Maroc 2013). The authorities also discussed measures to facilitate migrants’ inclusion in the Moroccan labour market and in the main instruments of social insurance for vulnerable populations (PNPM 2017b). Third, in the initial phase of the policy reform, there was a decrease in violence against migrants in cities far away from the border. Moroccan police forces discontinued mass arrests in most cities. This halted the generalised harassment of black migrants in the country (Cherti and Collyer 2015). Deportations of migrants to the desert at the border with Algeria were also discontinued between 2013 and the summer of 2018, when police repression against migrants reappeared strongly in the Moroccan borderscape (GADEM 2018a).

Whereas the launch of Law 02–03 allowed Morocco to gain geostrategic leverage, the new migration policy magnified a broader diplomatic exercise, for it speaks to multiple possible allies and constituencies. On the one hand, Morocco’s more benevolent attitude vis-à-vis African migrants symbolises its will to strengthen its diplomatic ties with the rest of Africa (Cherti and Collyer 2015; Natter 2018).<sup>3</sup> On the other

<sup>3</sup> As the Moroccan sociologist Mehdi Alioua put it in an interview to the Moroccan press, the new migration policy aimed to build a link between migration governance and foreign diplomacy, because “if Morocco wants to be in Africa, Africa must be in Morocco” (Ait Akdim 2016, translation by author).

hand, the new migration policy was also a reaction of Moroccan authorities to international shaming (Norman 2016). In March 2013, MSF published a very critical and negative report on the situation of West and Central African migrants in Morocco. The INGO denounced the precarious living conditions suffered by migrants in the country, and violent abuses inflicted by Moroccan, Spanish, and Algerian police forces. That same year, MSF closed its mission in Morocco and left the country after sixteen years of operations. As the 2013 report had highlighted, the NGO had acknowledged that the cases treated by its staff were not the result of sporadic crises, but the victims of structural border violence (MSF 2013c) (Chapter 7). Chronologically, the release of the CNDH report overlapped with the evaluation of Morocco's compliance with the International Convention for the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families (CMW) (Jiménez Álvarez et al. 2020). The UN Committee responsible for the Convention considered six reports: one written by Moroccan authorities, and five critical reports authored by civil society organisations. One of these reports, written by a coalition of human rights groups led by GADEM, minutely detailed how the Moroccan strategy of migration control infringed many of the points stipulated by the Convention, highlighting the systematic ill-treatment of black migrants by the security forces of the Alaouite state (GADEM 2013a, 2013b). These strongly publicised criticisms risked undermining the public image of a modern, stable country on its way to democracy that Morocco had projected internationally (Norman 2016).

The new migration policy allowed Morocco to address some of the reputational damage produced by international shaming. From the very beginning, Morocco has framed the policy reform as part of a wider strategy to uphold its international commitments on human rights respect. The authorities also actively involved civil society organisations into policy formulation and implementation. This move has been fruitful and allowed Morocco to gain further international consensus. European leaders, as well as the local IOM and UNHCR mission staff, tirelessly applaud Morocco for its political engagement in migrant integration. At the same time, civil society co-optation allowed the government to reduce the criticism and credibility of its most radical internal observers (Natter 2020; Norman 2016).

The implementation of the new migration policy, however, does not follow a linear pattern (Natter 2018; Norman 2018). Although the law on human trafficking was adopted by the parliament in 2016 (Legal

Flash 2016), the discussion and approval of the two laws on migration and asylum has been constantly delayed over the past six years and their approval does not seem to be close. None of the measures put in place to facilitate the access of migrants to public services and welfare provision is considered to be fully operational at the moment (GADEM 2018a; PNP 2017b). Moroccan authorities continue to ill-treat migrants in the areas surrounding the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and, even if less systematically, also in Tangier (Human Rights Watch 2014). As I have mentioned in the opening paragraph, the summer of 2018 witnessed one of the harshest arrest campaigns against migrants. Following a (modest) increase in the number of border crossings in the Western Mediterranean route,<sup>4</sup> European countries demanded Moroccan authorities ramp up border control. Arrest-and-disperse campaigns continued throughout 2019 (Gazzotti and Hagan 2020). These forced displacements do not comply with the legal provisions guaranteed by Moroccan migration law, as they also indiscriminately targeted refugees, asylum seekers, people holding a regular residency permit, pregnant women, and children (GADEM 2018a, 2018b).<sup>5</sup> Various high-ranking Moroccan civil servants tried to justify this new wave of violence by resorting to the rhetoric of fighting “against irregular migration and trafficking networks” to justify arbitrary arrests and internal displacement. In August 2018, The Moroccan Minister of Communications Mustapha El Khalfi declared that “these are not forced returns, but operations aimed at transferring migrants to other cities, conducted in conformity with national laws aimed at fighting illegal migration” (Amnesty International 2018). Particularly, worrying is the attitude of the former President of the CNDH, Driss El Yazami, who had been one of the main figures behind the formulation of the

<sup>4</sup> According to data compiled by FRONTEX, 57,034 irregular border crossing attempts were detected on the Western Mediterranean route in 2018, up from 23,063 in the previous year. This increase, however, occurred in the context of an overall decrease of irregular migration in the EU, as 2018 marked the lowest number of irregular arrivals detected at EU external borders in five years (Statewatch 2019). GADEM argues that the increase of police harassment occurred after 602 migrants managed to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on 26 July 2018 (GADEM 2018a).

<sup>5</sup> Emblematic was the fact that one of the earliest victims of the raids was a sixteen-year-old Malian adolescent, Moumoune Traoré, who died ‘falling’ from the bus onto which he had been forced by Moroccan authorities while he was being displaced from Tangier to the South of Morocco (Maleno Garzon 2018).

new migration policy. During a meeting with African diplomats on 30 August 2018, El Yazami stated that the “transfers” of migrants from the North to the South of Morocco were “in compliance with Moroccan law” (Benargane 2018, translation by author). These attempts to represent forced displacements and massive arrest campaigns as complying with Moroccan law expose the tenuous advancement in terms of respect for human rights achieved by the new migration policy, and its vulnerability to international pressures over border control (Jiménez Álvarez et al. 2020).

## **An Introduction to the Moroccan Migration Industry**

Before delving into the slow workings of aid as a border containment instrument, it is necessary to pause and discuss the various actors that inhabit (and overcrowd) the Moroccan migration industry. The implementation of aid projects on the ground in Morocco, in fact, relies on the intervention of a complex set of actors, including donors, IOs, local and international NGOs, and Moroccan authorities themselves. Each actor intervenes at a different scale of the implementation process, and has therefore a different capacity to directly intervene in the life of migrants. The next paragraphs will provide an overview about who the main actors peopling the migration industry are, how they started operating in the migration sector in Morocco, and how their historical trajectory intersects with European and Moroccan pressures for border control.

### *Who are the Donors?*

The **European Union** has undoubtedly been the most prominent donor in the field of migration in Morocco. In fact, the EU already had a long history of economic and technical cooperation with Morocco, starting in the 1970s as part of a broader Mediterranean politics aiming at establishing a dialogue between the North and the South of the Mediterranean in the post-colonial period. Over the decades, this political and economic cooperation has been formalised with the establishment of the Global Mediterranean Policy (1972), the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (2004) and the Union for the Mediterranean (2008) (Bialasiewicz et al. 2013; Collyer 2016). Since the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 – and more firmly after

the signature of the ENP – security has become increasingly relevant in the articulation of the strategic priorities for the EU-Mediterranean partnership. Development cooperation has become perceived as a way to protect EU citizens from the ‘risks’ emerging in the South of the Mediterranean, including by political unrest, drug trafficking, terrorism and, of course, irregular migration (Afailal 2016; Jiménez Álvarez 2011). Development cooperation funding constitutes the backbone of the implementation of the EU “external dimension” approach to migration control. Soon after the 1999 Tampere Council, the negotiators of the EU’s Directorate-General Justice and Home Affairs realised that implementing an external action directed at third countries in the field of migration would have proven very difficult without any specific thematic instrument available (Coleman 2009). Furthermore, the EU also realised that an approach solely focused on the security aspects of migration control would have been ineffective to secure the collaboration of third countries. In response to this “need for a balanced, global and coherent approach” (European Council 2005, 2), in 2005 the European Council adopted the Global Approach to Migration (GAM) – renamed Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) in 2011 – (Collyer 2012; Hampshire 2016). The GAM set on paper the need to frame actions in the field of the prevention of irregular migration within broader cooperation initiatives, tackling also the development of ‘sending’ and ‘transit’ countries and legal migration of the latter’s nationals within broader migration debates (Collett 2007). The ‘balanced’ aspect of the ‘partnership’ between Morocco, the EU, and its member states was publicly reasserted by the Mobility Partnership, which Morocco and the European Union signed in 2013 (den Hertog 2016; Limam and Del Sarto 2015). EU funding on migration and asylum is scattered into a panoply of financial instruments (García Andrade and Martín 2015; den Hertog 2016). In 2001, the EU created B7-667, the first dedicated funding line for migration control cooperation with third countries, which ran from 2001 to 2003 with a budget of €42.5 million. In 2004, the B7-667 was substituted by the AENEAS regulation (Coleman 2009), which ran until 2006 with an overall budget of €250 million. In 2007, the Commission created the Thematic Programme for Migration and Asylum (TPMA), which lasted until 2013 with an overall budget of €384 million (García Andrade and Martín 2015). Since 2016, projects on migration governance in Morocco began to also be funded through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the financial instrument created by the EU to spur migration

control cooperation with African countries in the wake of the so-called migration crisis (Gabrielli 2016). Although initially Morocco was not among the priority countries addressed by the EUTF (Gazzotti 2018), this has substantially changed after the ‘migration crisis’ declared by Spanish authorities in the summer 2018. Between December 2018 and December 2019, the European Commission adopted two different programmes worth almost €146 million in total to support Moroccan authorities in the “integrated management of borders and migration in Morocco” (European Commission n.d.d) and in the “support to the actions of Moroccan authorities against the networks facilitating irregular migratory flows” (European Commission n.d.b) (see Conclusion). Beside migration-specific programmes, Morocco has received migration-related funding also within the framework of other financial instruments, like the MEDA programme (El Qadim 2015), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the ENP (EU Delegation in Rabat 2016, 2017b). Migration and border control, in fact, figured prominently as issues of cooperation both in the 2005–10 EU/Morocco Action Plan<sup>6</sup> as well as in the most recent European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Single Support Framework (SSF) 2014–17, through which Morocco received €807.5 million in development assistance (for all sectors of development cooperation) between 2014 and 2017.<sup>7</sup>

Together with the EU, **Switzerland** is one of the longest-standing donors to have operated in the field of migration in Morocco. After starting work in the country in 2004 in the field of disaster management, Switzerland decided to engage in the migration sector in the aftermath of the Ceuta and Melilla events in 2005.<sup>8</sup> Switzerland and Morocco, in fact, already had a bilateral dialogue over the question of return of irregular migrants. Not being an EU member, Switzerland was not bound by the strategic priorities of the EU in terms of migration control cooperation. This has allowed the donor more space of manoeuvre to operate in the field of migrant protection, including allowing funding to organisations advocating for the defence of migrant rights and humanitarian actors operating in the

<sup>6</sup> See <https://library.euneighbours.eu/content/eu-morocco-enp-action-plan>

<sup>7</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/morocco_en)

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Officer of the Swiss Development Cooperation, Rabat, July 2016.

borderlands.<sup>9</sup> In 2017, the donor announced its intention to stop funding migration-related projects (see Chapter 7).

**Germany** has just recently, albeit rapidly, gained a prominent role as a donor in the field of migration in Morocco. Migration is part of the “governance” operation sector of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), which implements most German-funded projects in Morocco. Between the late 2000s and the early 2010s, the agency had gained some experience in the field of diaspora programmes, and began working more intensely in the field of migration in 2015.<sup>10</sup> Den Hertog identifies three main factors which contributed to the politicisation of migration in German–Moroccan development cooperation: the Arab uprisings, following which German authorities established a series of economic instruments targeting the Middle East and North Africa regions; the 2016 events in Köln, which likely spurred pressure on the German government to accelerate the deportation of Moroccan irregular migrants; and the joint chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The donor has therefore pursued initiatives in the field of immigration management in Morocco, while positioning itself in the field of return of Moroccan irregular migrants (den Hertog 2017).

Although **Belgium** had already funded projects in the field of migration in the past, the donor has recently assumed a more central role in this sector. The most recent cooperation programme (2016–20) signed by Belgium and Morocco listed migration as a strategic field of operation.<sup>11</sup> The five-year-programme includes supporting the implementation of the Moroccan National Strategy on Migration and Asylum, namely on the labour integration of migrants. The migration axe of the five-year-strategy was officially launched in early 2018 (Enabel 2018). The Belgian Technical Cooperation (Enabel) is also managing a €4.6 million programme funded by the EUTF on migrants’ access to justice in Morocco (European Commission 2018a).

As the oldest bilateral partner of Morocco in migration control cooperation, **Spain** had already begun associating its development

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Officer of the Swiss Development Cooperation, WhatsApp, September 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Interview, two GIZ officers, Rabat, August 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Email, Coopération Technique Belge (CTB) officer, 6 October 2016; see also: [www.enabel.be/content/enabel-morocco](http://www.enabel.be/content/enabel-morocco)



and migration policies in the early 2000s, and more ostensibly after the critical juncture between the Ceuta and Melilla events in 2005 and the Cayuco ‘crisis’ in 2006 (Azkona and Sagastagoitita 2011). This approach was institutionalised by the 2009–12 Plan Director, which mentioned “Migration and Development” as one of the priority sectors of Spanish Development cooperation in Morocco (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación, Gobierno de España 2009). During that period, however, Spanish efforts to govern migration through development were mainly focused on controlling Moroccan mobility, especially in relation to the presence of Moroccan ‘unaccompanied minors’ in Spain (Suárez-Navaz and Jiménez Álvarez 2011). Since 2016, Spain has become more directly implicated in the funding and implementation of cooperation projects related to the governance of ‘sub-Saharan’ migration in Morocco. Between 2016 and 2017, the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) and the Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) were delegated the implementation of a €5.5 million project on the fight against xenophobia and discrimination funded by the EUTF. Furthermore, the AECID also provides technical support to the MDCMREAM in the field of migration management (European Commission n.d.a). The FIIAPP is now in charge of the implementation of the €44 million EU-funded project on the “integrated management of borders and migration in Morocco” mentioned above.

Many other state donors have funded projects in the field of governance of ‘sub-Saharan’ migration, but their implication has been more discontinuous. Amongst these are:

- Monaco
- USAID
- Finland
- The Netherlands
- Denmark
- Norway
- Italy
- Morocco
- United Kingdom
- Spanish Decentralised Cooperation
- IOM Development Fund

UNAIDS  
 UNHCR  
 UNFPA

### *Who Implements the Projects?*

#### **UN Agencies**

UN agencies perform a wide range of tasks in the field of migration in Morocco. These include providing capacity building to Moroccan authorities, and replacing the Moroccan state in the delivery of certain social and legal policies, such as determining who deserves international protection. The IOM and the UNHCR clearly represent the most prominent actors in this field. As I mentioned in the previous section, the IOM began operating in Morocco in 2001 (Caillault 2012), before signing the formal mission agreement with the Moroccan government in 2007. Although the agency has its formal headquarters in Rabat, it has other support structures around the country, namely offices in Tangier and Tétouan,<sup>12</sup> and a focal point in Oujda. As I will explain more in detail in Chapter 2, the UNHCR has been formally present in Morocco since the 1950s, but it was not fully operational until 2004, when the number of asylum requests received by the agency spiked (Valluy 2007c). This other UN agency has its headquarters in Rabat but has never managed to establish a formal presence in other areas of the country. Since the late 2000s, the agency has a formal collaboration with the Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights (OMDH, in the French acronym) in Oujda, which refers potential asylum seekers from the border to UNHCR staff in Rabat<sup>13</sup> (see Chapter 7).

Other UN agencies have a more sporadic presence in the field of migration, generally limited to the sector of intervention of each specific organisation. UNWomen implemented a project on the access to legal services for women and children victims of human trafficking (UNWomen n.d.). The UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) led an EU-funded programme on the fight against human trafficking and

<sup>12</sup> These two offices, to my understanding, exclusively implements the USAID-funded counter-terrorism project – see (Gazzotti 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Interview, UNHCR Officer, Rabat, August 2016; Interview, former officer of the UNHCR Morocco, Skype, October 2017.

smuggling, run in collaboration with the IOM and UNICEF (UNODC 2016).

### **International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)**

ICMPD is an IO headquartered in Vienna. It consists of eighteen Member States<sup>14</sup> and provides technical expertise to governments on ‘migration management’ (Hess 2010). In Morocco – as everywhere else, the ICMPD mainly implements projects related to multilateral dialogues on migration and advises Moroccan authorities in the elaboration of migration policy strategies. Most recently, the ICMPD has been tasked with the coordination of a project on border security (see Conclusion).

### **International NGOs**

INGOs include Italian, Spanish, Belgian, and French organisations, some of which converted their activities to the field of migration to better adapt their organisational structure to the Moroccan political and funding landscape. Like IOs, INGOs operating in this sector occupy a grey area, as they often directly manage the capacity-building activities but outsource most direct interventions to local NGOs.

### **Faith-Based Organisations**

Faith-based, especially Catholic, organisations have been at the forefront of the assistance to migrant people targeted by border control in Morocco, like in other countries in North Africa (Robin 2014; Tyszler 2020), the Middle East (Wagner 2018), and Latin America (Slack 2019). These organisations occupy a middle ground between local and INGOs: despite being distributed on the Moroccan territory and having direct contact with migrant people, they are also connected and/or organised in broader networks of faith-based organisations.

### **Local NGOs**

Local NGOs – including grassroot organisations and migrant NGOs (see Chapter 3) – are crucial actors in the migration industry, as they conduct most of the work on the ground involving direct interaction with migrants. Most local charities play a subordinated role within the

<sup>14</sup> See: [www.icmpd.org/about-us/](http://www.icmpd.org/about-us/)

funding landscape, as they are integrated within the development cooperation apparatus as project beneficiaries, in the framework of capacity-building programmes seeking to promote the capacity of local 'civil society' in the management of migration<sup>15</sup>; as project partners or subcontractors for bigger programmes managed by INGOs or IOs; or, more rarely, as direct beneficiaries of donors' funding.

### **Moroccan Authorities**

Moroccan authorities play a double role in the implementation of development cooperation projects in the field of migration. On the one hand, Moroccan ministries – and, in particular, the former MCMREAM and now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – constitute the main interlocutors for diplomats seeking to set the development cooperation agenda of the country they represent.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Moroccan national and local authorities are also involved in the phase of project implementation, either as direct aid-recipients or, more often, serving as project partners for programmes implemented by IOs and NGOs.

### *How Is Aid Allocated and Disbursed?*

The way development and humanitarian aid is allocated depends on the donor and on the financial instrument taken into consideration. Donors can decide to allocate development aid directly to a certain organisation (Caillault 2012). Alternatively, donors can launch a call for tenders, to which Moroccan state authorities, NGOs, and IOs can apply presenting project proposals of various lengths – rarely for periods exceeding thirty-six months. This funding option is the one generally used by the EU both for migration-specific and for general programmes.

Both IOs and INGOs generally operate through local NGO partners when it comes to direct assistance to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The UNHCR, for example, directly runs all the duties related to the determination of refugee status, but then outsources the provision of healthcare, professional training, social and legal assistance to Moroccan NGOs. Similarly, the IOM outsources all services related to

<sup>15</sup> This is the case in particular for NGOs formed by migrants from West and Central Africa – see Chapter 3.

<sup>16</sup> Interview, GIZ officer, August 2016; Interview, CTB Officer, December 2016.

direct assistance to local NGOs – except for the Voluntary Return programme, which is run directly by IOM staff in Rabat, although always in collaboration with other NGOs (see Chapter 6).

Over the years, development actors have created mechanisms to coordinate operations in the field of migration, both at the funding and at the implementation level. In 2007, Italy and Spain co-launched an inter-donor working group on migration in development (Gazzotti 2018), which, however, lasted just for a couple of years.<sup>17</sup> Recently, the MDMCREAM has also launched a donor coordination group, led by the Cooperation Direction of the Ministry (European Commission 2016).<sup>18</sup> The EU sometimes organises meetings with its aid-recipients to coordinate actions and avoid project duplication.<sup>19</sup> The UN system in Morocco has a working group on migration, which has been functioning since at least 2007.<sup>20</sup> In 2009, NGOs have created the PNPM, which gathers organisations working in the entire Moroccan territory. The organisations composing the PNPM have changed over the years, as some INGOs have left the country and others have deliberately decided to withdraw from the platform (Rachidi 2016).<sup>21</sup> Small coordination platforms – Protection Working Groups – have emerged in Oujda, Tangier, and Casablanca, although these differ from the PNPM because they also include the IOM and the UNHCR among their participants (UNHCR Morocco 2020). Despite the existence of formal mechanisms of cooperation, coordination between different donors, UN agencies, and also NGOs is hampered by issues of competition over funding, with consequences that I will highlight in more detail in the next chapters.

## Conclusion

Since the late 1990s, Morocco has been on the receiving end of the border externalisation policies implemented by the EU and European countries. The involvement of Morocco into the sealing of the Western

<sup>17</sup> Interview, former officer of the Italian Development Cooperation, Skype, January 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, officer of the MDMCREAM, Rabat, September 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, NGO officer, Rabat, September 2017.

<sup>20</sup> The first strategic document of the UN Migration working group dates back to September 2007 (Groupe Thématique Migrations 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Interview, NGO officer, Rabat, September 2016.

Mediterranean should not be solely interpreted as a consequence of European pressure. Over the past twenty-five years, Morocco pursued its own migration diplomacy, which uses migration as a bargaining chip in its foreign policy, either to reassert its political power with European countries or to open diplomatic avenues in Africa. Aid has been a prominent instrument in the European border externalisation strategy. The implementation of aid-funded projects has always relied on a complicated network of donors, implementing agencies, and subcontracting organisations, with different proximities to the centres of decisional power in migration policy and to migrants themselves. The next chapters will explain how this aid-funded migration industry filters border containment power on the ground in Morocco.