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Islands and undesirables

Introduction to special issue on Irregular maritime migration in Southern European Islands

Abstract

This introduction sets out the challenges to studying irregular migration in Southern European islands. After presenting the debates over the category of irregular migration and the recent history of irregular migration to Southern European islands, we argue for a need to contextualise the islands' situation within the broader scheme of Euro-Mediterranean irregular migration. This outlook is however found wanting and is replaced with one that considers islands as remarkable 'places of condensation' of the Euromediterranean situation. The paper introduces two themes that will be developed throughout the special issue: analysing and challenging narratives of islandness; policing and bordering the islands.

Keywords: border, islandness, irregular migration, Mediterranean, places of condensation, policy.

Introduction: Conceiving of undesirables on Southern European Islands

This special issue aims to contribute to the expanding interdisciplinary literature on the Euro-Mediterranean migration system by addressing the issue of irregular migration in Southern European Islands. On the margins of Southern and Southeastern Europe, islands form emblematic places within the dynamics of migration. In the past, they were points of departure for the islanders, who left for other lands, consequently sketching the outlines of powerful diasporas (Liauzu 1996). Today, they are interstitial spaces where people come and go, points of convergence for the island's return migrants or economic migrants drawn by the new opportunities for work, new European residents seduced by their sun-belt qualities, and other international migrants who sometimes use these places as stepping stones on the way to a mesmerising continental Europe (King and Thomson 2008; King 2009). Such island spaces, which historically were places to leave, have since become host territories and confluences of both regular and irregular migratory flows. As such, they contribute to the increasing diversification of migratory flows in the European Union (EU) and to the blurring of migration categories (King 2002).

This special issue is focused on the situation of irregular migrants, and more particularly on irregular maritime migrants in Southern European islands. It should be said that any attempt to define irregular migration that overlooks the complexity of contemporary flows would be misguided. The opposition between regular and irregular migration may also be more confusing than enlightening: migrants may legally enter a country, but become illegal by remaining after residence permits expire. To the contrary, migrants arriving without any authorisation may quickly regularise their situations by obtaining protected status. Thus, the oppositions between regular and irregular (or undocumented) migrations, while permitting us to understand the legal circumstances surrounding the entry of the migrants in the territory, are not always relevant, as there may be strong porosity between the two categories. A further dimension of complexity may be found in any attempt at definition by conjuring notion 'migration/asylum nexus' (Castles 2003; Koser 2001). This concept aims to surpass the strict oppositional dichotomies between economic migrations and political migrations by opening up the field of refugee studies. In this special issue, we refer to irregular migration in southern European Islands not as a homogeneous or single-faceted phenomenon, but rather as a historically specific fact produced by 30 years of European migration policy and management. In other words, following Düvell's analysis of clandestine migration, we see irregular migration as a social, political and legal construction that embraces a variety of situations, motives and migration patterns (Düvell 2008, 480; see also ***** in this issue).

Migrants' legal situations and their modes of entry, like the ways in which they are categorised, have an undeniable impact on their living conditions, status, plans and prospects. Nevertheless, the diversity of legal protocols and modes of entry cannot eclipse the growing homogenisation of the treatment and representation made of migrants upon their arrival on the islands, whether they are asylum seekers or not (Schuster 2011; on the increasing "criminalisation" of "would-be asylum-seekers" see also Oelgemoller 2011). From this perspective, the term "undesirables" proposed by the anthropologist Michel Agier (2011) seems particularly appropriate to describe the condition of these new, unwanted and unaccepted migrants: perceived as a threat to society and very often relegated to the margins of cities and islands, the presence of these intruders is never conceived of in any term other than "temporary" or "in transit" (Collyer *et al.* 2012; Falzon 2012; Oelgemoller 2011). This attitude is not just a prerogative of islands, as all countries affected by immigration pass

through a phase of rendering the presence of migrants invisible on their territory, as described by Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) for France. In the context of the EU, the social construction of ‘undesirables’ has to be connected with the emergence of new ‘politics of fear’ in public opinion and discourse that targets the marginalised and the powerless, thus reinforcing power relations and inequalities in society (Shirlow and Pain 2003; see also **** in this issue). Irregular migration appears to some extent to be a form of criminality that might jeopardise Europe’s sovereignty and integrity (Vollmer 2011). Using the metaphor of skin, Düvell provocatively asks if this fear corresponds to an emotional reaction that equates the individual body with Europe, mistaking the external borders with the human skin (Düvell 2011a: 246).

As we shall see in this special issue, *island features* and *islandness*ⁱ have a central role in the social construction of geographies of fear: rhetorics of crisis and invasion are constantly invoked in order to legitimate fencing and gate-keeping policies, in a context where islands appear as ‘indispensable enforcers of EU controls’ (see **** and **** in this issue). In this introductory paper we lay out our motivations for developing this special issue on irregular migration to European islands, and we introduce some of the key themes that will be developed in the following articles. In the first section we introduce the chronology of irregular migration to Southern European islands, in order to understand how and why the issue has become salient. Then we argue for the need to contextualise these islands’ situation in the broader scheme of irregular migration in the Euro-Mediterranean context. In particular, we propose that islands be considered as ordinary places, with features in many ways comparable to North African and other Southern European situations. In the last section, we explain why we see islands nevertheless as remarkable ‘places of condensation’ from which to observe the Euro-Mediterranean migratory situation, and introduce the main themes addressed by the papers of the special issue, that is: analysing and challenging islandness; and policing and bordering the islands.

1. Irregular migration and islands in the context of European migration

As European migration regulation becomes increasingly restrictive, irregular migration seems to evolve toward new schemes connected to different kinds of ‘bypass strategies’. European islands are often used as stepping-stones by irregular boat migrants on their way to mainland Europe. Most often migrants do not intend to settle there permanently and are merely in transit. However, as we shall see in this special issue, there is likely much more settlement in European islands than is generally recognised (see **** in this issue).

The changing geography of irregular migrations to European islands

When did islands start to be important places for irregular migration? If maritime migration in the Mediterranean is as old as Mediterranean societies, Irregular maritime migration from Africa to European islands is also not as recent as is commonly thought: ‘illegal sea crossings of the Mediterranean by North Africans have in fact been a persistent phenomenon since Italy and Spain introduced visa requirements in the early 1990s’ (De Haas 2008: 9). However, the geography and composition of the flows of illegal crossing evolve constantly according to institutional factors such as the implementation of EU neighborhood policies, the enlargement of the EU and the Schengen space, and the externalisation of border control and asylum policies (see part 3 below, on the position of islands within multi-level migration policies, see also **** and **** in this issue). Thus, far from being independent, migratory trajectories to Europe are constantly reshaped according to the geography of border controls.

Initially, migrants irregularly came to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla or crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain in rickety boats called 'pateras' (De Haas 2008). Other migrants crossed from Tunisia to Lampedusa, Linosa, Pantelleria, or Sicily (Barros *et al.* 2002; De Haas 2008). Since 1999, however, the reinforcement of controls at the Strait of Gibraltar provoked a reorientation of these flows elsewhere, such as the eastern Moroccan coast, Algeria, or even Libya for those wishing to get to Italy and Malta (Carling 2007a, 2007b; De Haas 2008; Andrijasevic 2006). An increase in migrations from the Western Sahara to the Canary Islands was also observed. This flow reached its peak with the so-called 'Cayuco crisis,' which brought about 30,000 irregular migrants to the Canary Islands in 2006. Here again, gatekeeping policies have been successful in containing the flows, since irregular migration to the Canary Islands has decreased appreciably thereafter (see **** in this issue). Another major change to be observed in the evolution of migratory flows during this period is the increasing number of migrants originating from West Africa and the Horn of Africa, who have overtaken North Africans as the largest category of boat migrants in the late 2000s (De Haas 2008).

In 2010, the Western Mediterranean witnessed an interruption of flows to Sicily and Malta, mainly due to the strengthening of the long-lasting cooperation between Italy and Libya (Cuttita 2012). Such agreements between Italy and Libya were integrated into the European Commission's cooperation agenda, signed with Libya in October 2010 despite the protests of NGOs and international organisations. At that time one might have concluded that the EU's control policy in the Western Mediterranean was a success. Yet the situation changed dramatically with the Tunisian revolution and the war in Libya, exposing the fragility of EU externalisation policies. Since then, flows to Sicily and Malta have increased again. In 2011, around 45,000 migrants – first Tunisians, then Sub-Saharan Africans fleeing violence in Libya – landed in Lampedusa. The same year Malta witnessed an influx of 1,577 sub-Saharan boat migrants fleeing Libya. In 2012, 15900 migrants were apprehended at the sea borders of Italy, while in 2013 30000 maritime migrants have already been apprehended, of whom 3,000 are Somalis, 7,500 Eritreans - and, above all, 7,500 Syrians (Del Grande 2013). In Malta nearly 2000 migrants have been apprehended at the borders in 2012. From January until August 2013, they were 1335 (<http://www.crimemalta.com/frontexwatch.htm>, in Triandafyllidou 2013). Last but not least, the most recent tragic events of Lampedusa and Malta, with 500 boat migrants sinking into the sea in October 2013, remind us again the importance of the strait of Sicily as a migratory route.

Let's now take a look at the eastern Mediterranean. The situation is slightly different and certainly less documented than what was described above. Since the early 2000s, Greek islands gained in importance in the overall flow of irregular migrants aiming for the EU, in tandem with the strengthening of controls on western Mediterranean borders. Boat migrants originating from central and eastern Asia, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa used the Aegean islands as the main entry point to Greece. In 2009 irregular migration to the Aegean islands decreased and the land borders of Greece – in particular the Evros area – became the main gateway (see **** in this issue). In the last few months of 2012 however, irregular flows started to pass through the islands again. Between January and August 2013 5579 migrants were apprehended at the Greek-Turkish sea border (Triandafyllidou 2013).

Both the Western Mediterranean and the Greek border situation perfectly illustrate trajectories' instability, making any speculation towards the future of irregular trajectories rather difficult.

Further east, the role of Cyprus in the EU migratory context deserves particular attention due to its specific situation. First of all, part of the Cypriot territory is occupied by the army of a candidate country to EU (Turkey) and the island is not yet part of the Schengen area. In addition, it seems that, compared to other islands such as Malta or Lampedusa, Cyprus is as much a settlement island as it is a transit island (King, Thomson 2008; Clochard 2008; Clochard/Migreurop 2012). Despite these particularities, Cyprus' case should be compared with the other islands we study. As a boundary of the EU, it shares many issues with them. Moreover, it shares several characteristics with Malta, being a relatively small state that has recently been integrated into the EU (2004). As we shall see, this has many implications for the spatial mobility and management of migrants (see **** in this issue).

2. Islands as ordinary places

Why look at islands? Focusing specifically on islands - rather than looking at migratory routes and networks, for instance - could produce spatial myopia by thinking about them as exceptional spaces (see King 2009: 56 on the 'danger of exceptionalism'). In many ways islands are not specific places within the European migratory context, but rather pieces of a larger puzzle. In this section we look at some of the arguments that may be made against the thesis that, within the dynamics of migration, European islands are exceptional.

Islands within the broader context of irregular migration to Europe

International migration to European islands has been extraordinarily mediatised, most often in strident caricature with the powerful image of 'waves' or 'invasions' of clandestine boat migrants. Yet islands are neither the only stepping-stones to Europe, nor the places attracting the most irregular migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region (Düvell 2008; Triandafyllidou 2009, see also Andrijasevic 2006). The situation of islands thus needs to be contextualised within the broader scheme of irregular migration to Europe. In 2002 the estimated number of irregular migrants residing in the EU-12 was 3.1–5.3 million. By 2008, this number dropped to 1.8–3.3 million in the EU-12 and 1.9–3.8 million in the EU-27 (Düvell 2011a, 2011b). Only a very small proportion of irregular immigrant residents lived or passed illegally through European islands. When possible, in fact, irregular migrants avoid entering Europe by dangerous crossings, so the majority of them enter Europe legally (see the synthesis of Clandestino project: Triandafyllidou 2009).

The largest proportion of irregular immigrants is composed of those who overstay, a situation that doesn't particularly concern islands (Pastore Monzini and Sciortino 2006). Thus, as Düvell observed, clandestine entry (the pattern that raises most public and political attention) turns out to be the least relevant reason for irregular migration and is more the exception than the rule (2011a: 248).

Even in Italy and Spain, probably the countries drawing the most mediatised attention to images of clandestine immigrants landing on their southern shores, estimates are rather low. In Italy, for instance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs estimated that migrants having arrived by sea represent only a small fraction of the population of irregular migrants (13 per cent in 2006). The majority of them were overstayers (64 per cent), while another significant share (23 per cent) entered Italy illegally by avoiding controls at the Northern borders (Ministry of

Internal Affairs 2007 quoted by Fasani 2009; see also Andrijasevic 2010; Ministry of Internal Affairs - Barbagli and Colombo 2011). Similarly, the biblical-scale exodus of hundreds of thousands of Africans by sea that was predicted by the minister of foreign affairs Franco Frattini following the Arab spring and the Libyan conflict never happened.

Looking at the impact of the Arab revolts on Italian opinion and demography, Ferruccio Pastore reminds us how similar reactions of fear of invasion followed the fall of the socialist block in Europe (Pastore 2011): far from what public opinion feared, post-soviet Russia became an important immigration area instead of an emigration area. Pastore also argues for the need to contextualise Mediterranean flows within the history of clandestine boat migration to Italy: he reminds us that the Arab spring brought fewer boat migrants to Italy than the 50,000 that came as a result of the 1999 Kosovo war. In that case, though, the rhetoric of emergency – an important element in the politics of fear – was less present in the political class and public opinion.

Islands in the Euro-Mediterranean context

As recent reports show, most of the migratory pressure following the Arab spring fell on North African and the Middle Eastern countries (see Nando Sigona's blog for the summary of a recent workshop held at Oxford "Migration and the Arab Spring"; see also Bonfiglio 2012, IOM, 2012). Irregular migration to European islands needs to be historicised and contextualised within the broader framework of irregular migration to Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The events of the Arab spring – and in particular the Libyan conflict and its migratory consequences – have brought our attention back to pre-existing migration flows in the North African area. As critical perspectives to transit migration have pointed out, North Africa has long been an area of settlement, especially for sub-Saharan migrants that did not necessarily want to go to Europe (Alioua 2008; Bensaad 2002; Collyer 2007; De Haas 2008; Collyer *et al.* 2012; Mazzella and Boubakri 2005; Pian 2009). As De Haas says, 'it is a misconception that all or most migrants crossing the Sahara are "in transit" to Europe. There are possibly more sub-Saharan Africans living in the Maghreb than in Europe (...) While Libya is an important destination country in its own right, many migrants failing or not venturing to enter Europe prefer to stay in North Africa as a second-best option' (De Haas 2008: 9).

The same misconception about presumed 'transit migrants' applied to Southern European countries for a time. Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece have long been considered as transit countries and it took decades for scholars to question the idea of migrants as 'birds of passage' and to acknowledge patterns of settlement (see Pugliese 2002 for the Italian case). Another argument against the exceptionality of islands lies in the fact that most of the European islands we look at in this special issue belong to what has been described in an extensive literature as the "South European migration model" (see among others Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Baldwin-Edwards 1997; King *et al.* 2000; King and Thomson 2008; Mingione 1995; Pugliese 2002; Ribas Mateos 2004). By South European migration model, the literature refers to a set of countries (Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece) that witnessed mass emigration up to the 1970s, then became countries of great immigration after, especially since the 1990s. Such a shift in migratory dynamics happened at a particular moment in Southern European countries' capitalistic development that featured patterns of labour informalisation and dualisation that created both needs and opportunities for immigrants (Hadjimichalis 2006; King and Thomson 2008; Mingione 1995; Reyneri 2003; Vaiou 2002). Scholars especially highlighted patterns of labour market segmentation along ethnic and

gender lines: men of specific ethnic origins working in niches such as construction, agriculture and trade, and women from other groups finding opportunities in the care and domestic sector (Anthias and Lazaridis 2000; Kalavita 2006; King and Zontini 2000; Zeneidi 2011). Recent economic recession has simultaneously provoked a decrease in the demand for labour and an increase in migrant unemployment – especially in Spain and Greece. However, it still remains challenging to define what the long-term consequences of such an economic crisis will be for immigrants in the labour market, and whether it will bring into question the role of these countries as receiving countries in the long term.

Regarding the composition of immigrant flows, countries of the Southern European model share specific features including a variety of migrant types, a high level of mobility and temporary migration, a high level of irregular migration, and – at least in the Spanish and Italian cases – diverse migrant nationalities (King and Thomson 2008). Other aspects of the Southern European model include the criminalisation of migration paired with forms of racism and discrimination against migrants in society (Quassoli 2000) and relatively weak integration policies (King and Thomson 2008).

Do Cyprus and Malta, two small island states that just joined the EU in 2004, fit into the Southern European Migration model? King and Thomson (2008) concluded that they do, certain specificities notwithstanding. Like other Southern European countries, Malta and Cyprus share a historical pattern of emigration. Relative to their small size, they host a surprising diversity of nationalities and migrant types: returnees and retired migrants, British settlers (both islands are former British colonies), regular and irregular migrants. The situation in Cyprus is even more complex due to its 1974 division, which provoked a wave of migration on the island itself. Both islands face a high level of irregular migration and host a dual labour market, with migrants working in the construction and tourism industries. In that regard, what distinguishes Cyprus from Malta is the importance of the agricultural sector and above all the existence of a gender-specific flow of female migrants entering the domestic sector and the sex and entertainment industry. Just like countries in the Southern European model, Cyprus and Malta lack an integration policy and have witnessed increasing manifestations of racism and discrimination in recent years (**** in this issue; Lutterbeck 2009). Lastly, Cypriot and Maltese national identities are challenged by a variety of factors, such as contradictory globalisation processes and their recent inclusion into the EU: in this context irregular migrants often become the ‘external other’ which they put in opposition to themselves (Pisani, 2011)

3. Why look at islands? Presentation of the special issue

In this last section we explain why, despite the aforementioned arguments, we see islands as interesting viewpoints for regarding the Euro-Mediterranean migratory situation, and present the themes of this special issue.

Islands as places of condensation

In a world where nomadism and connectivity reframe the social and spatial and invite us to rethink the scope of some geographical objects, the island may serve as a synecdoche, the small part that may help us to understand the whole. Some have even assigned islands a function of geographical laboratory (Meistersheim 1999, Connell & King 1999). Yet this notion raises several problems (King 2009). First, the term laboratory, often associated with the image of a cold and sterile place, is not the right metaphor to designate a space where people live and establish various sociabilities. In other words, the island is not a test tube and

island societies are not scientific curiosities to observe through a microscope. In addition, the laboratory has the image of a closed place, isolated from all external influence, whose effectiveness and operational values are precisely related to its isolation and its closure. The island, as part of an increasingly globalised world, is incongruent with the ideal of isolation. The notion of ‘places of condensation’ proposed by Bernard Debarbieux appears to be the most fruitful (1995). The author highlights the heuristic interest of the term, which evokes an analogy with the condensation of water vapor: a densification process (water molecules aggregating in a small volume) that gives visibility (water drop) to that which hadn’t been [*visible*] (water vapour)’ (1995: 100). As a synecdoche of the world, islands are both concrete and symbolic places condensing social and spatial production processes. In particular, they reveal and emphasise emergent migration patterns and their role in the emergent world system (King 2009).

Thus we argue in this special issue that islands, as places of condensation, enable us to shed light on several issues connected to European irregular migration. Methodologically speaking, as most European are small places, an island perspective enables us to have an easier overview of the various actors involved in the migratory process: social institutions such as churches or the families, states and regional entities (the EU and its many agencies), NGOs and various organisations, and last but not least migrants themselves and their own enabling networks. Local and migrant populations are very close to each other, at least spatially speaking, which leads to a certain degree of discontent that may compromise migrants’ perspectives on integration. The spatial proximity connected to island features may also, however, lead to original forms of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, making islands interesting sites for the emergence of new forms of cohabitation. We also need to examine the multiple forms and visibilities of migrants’ mobilisation and resistance, such as setting fires and participating in riots (as seen in detention centres of Lampedusa and Malta in 2011) or other, less violent forms of ‘political action without citizenship’ (such as the emergence of anti-racist movements and campaigns). More generally islands may help us to question categories and dichotomies of migration analysis such as the naive oppositions between transit/settlement, irregular/regular and victimisation/agency.

Analysing and challenging narratives of islandness

Even if they are not the only southern borders of Europe, Southern European islands are one of the most important gateway to Europe for maritime migrants, especially for asylum seekers. Moreover, they are socially constructed as bastions of European jurisdiction and identity and become symbolically preminent in the construction of a boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Because they are most often small places, sometimes former colonies engaged in complex nation-building processes, islands may develop very specific narratives of identity and otherness – that is, narratives of islandness.

Narratives of islandness are challenged and reshaped in interesting ways by both European integration processes and the arrival of ‘irregular migrants’. We thus need to look at the interactions between the social construction of Europeanness and Islandness.

The issue of size is particularly relevant within narratives of islandness. For instance mayor of Lampedusa Giusi Nicolini in a letter addressed to the mothers and families of missing Tunisian migrants (July 2013) writes: “Dearest women, I received your petition, and I also addressed it to the Italian and the European institutions that could give an answer to your questions. As the mayor of Lampedusa, the island which saves the life of many people, forced

to journeys of hope or that has mercy upon the corpses returned from the sea, I feel the duty to take your demand of truth; and to give you my little aid, as much little as little are my small island and my voice". Rethorics of smallness are also frequently evoked when trying to defend the specificity of islands within the framework of EU negotiation. Islandness may then turn into insularism, that can be defined as a process of political claim or lobbying aimed to defend the alleged island specificities (Taglioni, 2010). The role of outpost islands is explored by **** in this special issue, in her/his paper on the triangular relationship between Malta and the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), on the one hand, and the EU on the other. She/he shows that some island societies may have a tendency to highlight their specificities to excess to improve the benefits they receive in the name of migration management and European border monitoring. With little material power to influence regional migration policy, Malta and the RoC have devised alternative strategies in order to increase their influence. The author argues that these two states have developed strategies based on soft, non-material power in the forms of symbolic capital, moral authority and networks in order to realise their interests. She/he points at the paradoxes and inconsistencies within state discourses, and shows how these contradictions had concrete negative consequences for migrants and refugees living in Malta and Cyprus. This paper helps us to consider different forms of re-composition of political balances induced by irregular migration on the islands, at a local level (the role of the migration issue in the local political debate or even in the national debate when the island is dependent on a mainland), a regional level (the impact of migration in the islands' reconfiguration of cooperative ties with neighbouring countries) and the European level (tensions, claims or lobbying from island actors to Brussels authorities). This paper facilitates a rethinking of the role of migration and migration controls in defining, questioning and redefining the 'centrality' and/or 'peripherality' of islands with reference to different geo-political contexts.

In this special issue, we also wish to critically engage with the conception of islands as places of transit in order to look at the many forms of migrants' passage, settlement, and involvement in the broader society (Collyer et al. 2012). As explained earlier, European islands often see and represent themselves as places of transit, thus offering few opportunities for settlement and integration. As Falzon says of the Maltese case, a narrative of transience is produced by the state and other actors to respond to what they consider to be a threat (Falzon 2012). Yet many immigrants choose or are constrained to set up residence on the islands. As a matter of fact, European islands have become both places of transit and destination: they are sophisticated nodes in migratory chains and multi-layered networks. Seeing islands as places of transit hides the complexity of the situation. Islands attract a diversity of migrants – not only transit and settlement migrants, but also internal and international, rich and poor, short-stayers and long-stayers, retirees and returnees, tourist and workers (King 2009; see ***** in this issue).

**** paper contributes to challenge a notion of islands as mere transit spaces. While pointing at the impact of borders as institutions in the making of islands as transit spaces, he shows that the narrative of the transitoriness of irregular migrations in island areas is, in the case of the Canaries, challenged by two exceptions: Unaccompanied Foreign Minors and Moroccans who arrived by sea in the Canaries and settled on the islands. These two examples allow his to show the selective impact of border management on migrants' patterns of integration and settlement.

Policing and bordering the islands

Building European borders is not only a symbolic construction, as shown by its concrete and material outcomes such as the building of walls and detention facilities and the increasing numbers of deportations and deaths by drowning during the Mediterranean crossing (Clochard/Migreurop 2012). Islands thus can be seen as compelling places to look at new modes of migration management and the growing complexity of the ordering of bordering. For instance, islands, as borders, are particularly interesting sites for looking at the politics of detention, strengthened by the Return Directive adopted by the European Parliament in 2008 allowing member states to detain migrants for up to eighteen months. The complexities of migration management may be probed by looking at the multilevel governance of migratory flows – which raises the issue of European sovereignty, coherence and solidarity – or by locally observing the concrete social and spatial organisation of control, containment and immobilisation among different actors and agents (see **** in this issue; Gill 2010, Guiraudon and Lahav, 2000). We can also look at the way migrants' subjectivities and bodies are reshaped by these new modes of local government and multiple forms of power (see **** paper).

In this special issue the question of multilevel migration governance will be addressed via several aspects of the EU migratory policy and legal framework. As **** shows, there has been a process of moving border controls and asylum responsibilities toward the external border of the EU, making peripheral member states responsible for more asylum seekers and giving them much greater responsibility for stemming irregular flows of migrants. There are two main legal frameworks for establishing member states' responsibilities in asylum and migration control.

First, the Schengen Agreement (1990), which set up the strengthening of external borders as a compensatory measure in light of weakening internal controls (see Mainwaring in this issue). The October 2005 establishment of the Frontex agency, to assist and coordinate EU border management, has strengthened the EU's role in stopping and monitoring irregular migrations at the external borders. Frontex, for which maritime operations represent a large part of the budget, has since received increased budgetary resources as well as extensive decision-making autonomy (Clochard Migreurop 2012). Since 2012, Frontex European border surveillance system (Eurosur) has been implemented. The implementation of Eurosur involves connecting and rationalising existing surveillance systems at national level, improve surveillance at the EU level by introducing more advanced technologies, creating a common information-sharing environment for all national and EU authorities involved in the maritime domain (<http://www.frontex.europa.eu/eurosur>, accessed 22th October 2013).

Second, the Dublin Convention (1990), succeeded by the Dublin II (2003) and the very recent Dublin III regulation, which stipulates that asylum seekers should apply for asylum in their first country of arrival. This regulation has put the island states at the forefront of asylum applications coming from maritime migrants. Dublin III moreover may worsen the detention conditions for asylum seekers in many states.

Border control and law enforcement are strengthened by supra-governmental systems that, using biometric tools, can file and index migrants found to be illegal or applying for asylum within the EU. The Schengen Information System (SIS; then SIS II since 2013), the visa information system (VIS) and Eurodac system - which are now managed by European agency Eu-Lisa - consist of databases that can deal with huge quantity of information. Eurodac, for example, has already collected over 1,700,000 data captures since its creation in 2003

(Clochard/Migreurop 2012). These systems can be interpreted as one of the most advanced features of contemporary bio-political securitisation and control over mobile bodies (Adey 2009; Hyndman 2012).

As said above, islands have become sentinels and play a crucial role in the construction of a new European/Mediterranean *limes*. As such they are crucial actors of the European bordering regime (see **** and **** in this issue; see Cuttita 2012). This section focuses on the issue of policing and bordering the islands both from the perspective of institutions and policy makers, and from those of migrants. Borders are here conceptualised as lived and managed spaces, sites of conflict and negotiation, whose outlines are moving and punctual, rather than fixed and linear (Cuttita 2007, 2012; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009; Clochard/Migreurop 2012; Hyndman 2012; Klepp 2010). The papers of this section also show that, according to their political status (microstate, island at the periphery of a centralised state, part of a semi-autonomous archipelago, etc.) and their relative negotiation power, islands implement the European bordering policies differently. Also they may react differently to the presence of irregular migration. The solidarity of the islanders may depend on the size and status of the island, be it independent - in Malta for instance migrants are actively segregated and there are few expressions of solidarity with migrants from the local population - or be it part of a broader nation state - such as in the case of Lampedusa or Lesbos, where inhabitants are more inclined to express their solidarity (see **** in this issue). Moreover, this section studies the way dominant bordering practices are subverted and resisted by several ways of operating by which migrants re-appropriate space and “manipulate mechanisms of discipline” (De Certeau 1984, quoted by **** in this issue).

The number of detention facilities located on European islands has considerably increased in the last few years, which reveals a process of imprisonment (in the detention centres) as well as a geographical relegation (on the island). The length of detention of migrants and asylum seekers in Malta, Cyprus and the Greek Islands, in particular, are among the longest in the EU. Drawing on an in-depth description of the case of Malta, **** insightfully illustrates the idea of island spaces as sites of securitisation and control. The case of Malta epitomises what can be conceptualised as a “sentinel island”: the island border embodies the performance of being a gatekeeper of the EU through interception and detention. **** uses Foucauldian concepts of ‘biopower’ and ‘dispositif’ as well as a Goffmanesque approach to the ‘total institution’ to show how migrants themselves internalise, perform and reproduce such structures of control. Migrant bodies become docile through disciplinary measures which encompass different scales, actors and moments of the migrant trajectory.

Moving to ***** paper, we operate a shift from the states and EU strategies to migrants’ bodies and practices of resistance. The paper is based on an extensive fieldwork conducted in Lesbos, Greece. Adopting a Lefebvrian stance, the authors argue that borders are no concrete fixed phenomena constituted only through policies from above but rather processes, constructed within everyday negotiations among different actors who have unequal power and positions. They look at two aspects of the constitution of borders: on the one hand control, discipline, and subjugating processes, on the other practices of subversion and resistance. Adopting a different approach with respect to other papers in this special issue, this paper looks at the narratives and practices of migrants who have crossed the border. Thus, the authors see migrants as ‘active agents whose bodies, practices and desires renegotiate the dominant perceptions and functions of borders’.

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ⁱ "Island features" is translated into French by the term "insularité", while the English term "insularity", generally little used by English speaking literature, is pejorative and refers generally to the negative characteristics of the island societies, such as conservative and small minded attitudes. "Islandness" can be translated into French by the term "îléité". It refers to narrative representations and perceptions that island societies have of their island which are connected to a 'particular sense of being in place,' as Stratford puts it (2008; see also Bernardie, 2011; Falzon 2012; Baldacchino 2004, 2005; Hay 2006; Weale 1991)