



BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

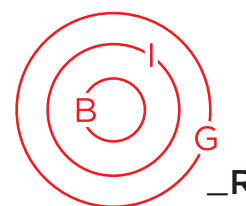
Academic and artistic
explorations of borders
in the 21st century

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Construction
abstraite:
Frontière
By Laurent
Reynès

BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

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The editors wish to acknowledge with respect the lək'wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territories the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. The BIG team is grateful to be able to work and live on this beautiful land.

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Scholarly submissions should engage with the research literature on borders, including, for example, bordering processes, borderlands, and borderscapes. We encourage studies that go beyond the 'land image' by exploring borders as non-contiguous, aterritorial, mobile, electronic, biometric, functional, etc. We are especially interested in explorations of borders and global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, migration, and economic shocks. We also seek border studies that break new ground by integrating Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and practices. We encourage innovative theoretical work as well as empirical and quantitative research. Articles should be between 7,000 and 10,000 words in length. Book and film reviews should be between 500 and 1,000 words, and essays between 1,000 and 4,000 words. Academic submissions must be previously unpublished and not simultaneously under other publishers' consideration.

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Policy submissions should translate research and scholarship into clear, accessible language, avoiding jargon and theory. Policy briefs (2,000 words) and policy reports (4,000 words) should inspire and enable non-experts to incorporate the findings into their policy frameworks pertaining to the governance of borders.

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NEW **BIG_BOOK** IN OPEN ACCESS

HISTORY AND NORTH AMERICAN BORDERLANDS

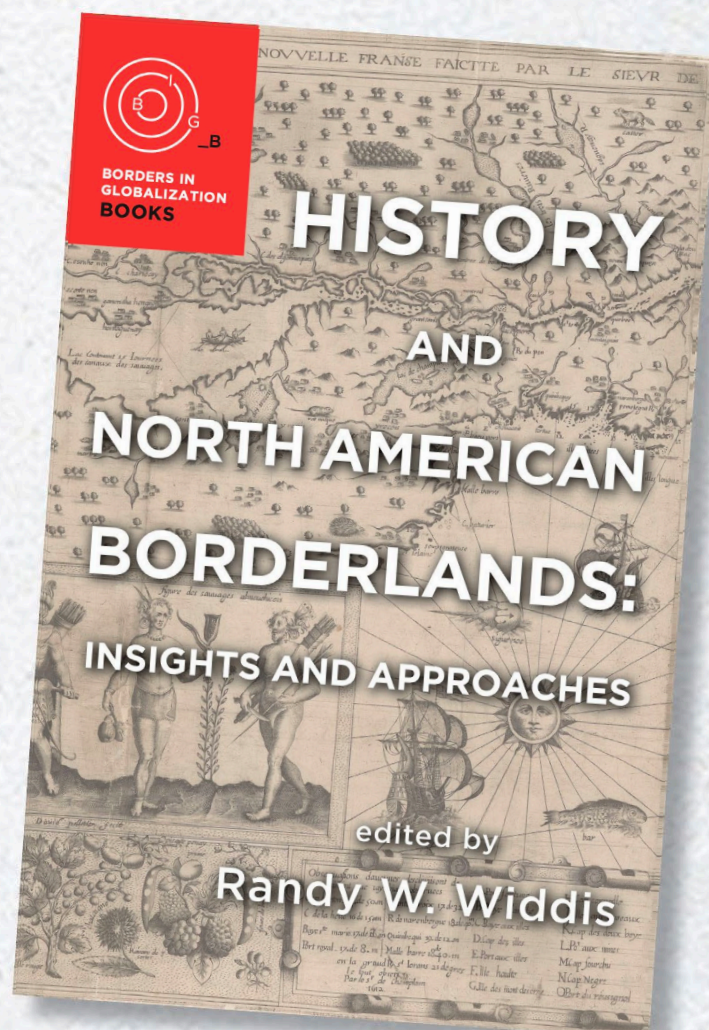
Insights and approaches

Borders are historically contingent and evolve through processes of bordering. Their meanings are constantly changing along with political, economic, and social developments taking place both externally between and internally within states. Like borders, borderlands must also be situated in their temporal and geographical contexts in order to investigate the relations between territory, identity, and sovereignty. The chapters in this collection present selective historical interpretations of borders and borderlands that focus primarily on North American borderlands, emphasizing flows, sovereignty, and indigeneity, three key themes of the Borders in Globalization program.

Featuring chapters by Randy W. Widdis, David C. Atkinson, Yukari Takai, and Ana Lilia Nieto Camacho, Marcela Terrazas y Basante, and Michel Hogue.

About the Editor

Randy W. Widdis, a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Regina, served as lead for the Historical Theme section of the Borders in Globalization Project. Much of his theoretical and empirical work uses historical geography and border theory to expand our understanding of spatial and temporal bordering processes.



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The **Borders in Globalization Books** series (**BIG_Books**) provides a forum for in-depth scholarly explorations of borders in the 21st century. We publish high-quality academic works in the humanities and social sciences that explores various aspects of borders in an increasingly globalized world.

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BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

CONTENTS

Letter of Introduction	
Michael J. Carpenter and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly	9
ARTICLES	
Narratives of Agency: Understanding the Refugee Experience through Paintings at the EU's External Borders	
Berfin Nur Osso	11
<i>Les mobilisations familiales pour le départ migratoire à partir de la Casamance (Sénégal)</i>	
Abdoulaye Ngom	26
POLICY	
Customs Revenue in the Renewable Energy Sector: Evidence from South Africa	
Jean Luc Erero	40
Franco-Italian Mont Blanc Dispute and Climate Change: Policy Perspectives after the Quirinal Treaty	
Paola Malaspina	49
The Effect of World Customs Organization's AEO Programme on Trade Facilitation in Zimbabwe	
Rwatida Mafurutu	60
Customs Laboratories and the Prevention and Detection of Customs Fraud: Two Case Studies	
Mihail Secu	68
Green is Gold: Creating a Gold Standard AEO Program through Green Initiatives	
Jamie Ferrill and Allanah O'Hanlon	78
PORTFOLIO	
<i>Construction abstraite: Frontière / Abstract Construction: Border</i>	
Laurent Reynès	87

POETRY

Selected Border Poems

Loris Ferri 95

A Random Selection

Chad Norman 100

ART & BORDERS

Manifeste: Navire Avenir / Vessel of the Future: Manifesto

Collectif du Navire Avenir 104

FILM REVIEWS

The Good Postman: Romanticizing Refugees and Absolving States

Sinem Arslan 112

Separation and Resilience in 200 Meters

Murat Çemrek 114

BOOK REVIEWS

Book Review/Commentary: Geo-politics in Northeast Asia by Iwashita, Ha, and Boyle

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly 117

Review of Robert L. Nelson's Frontiers of Empire

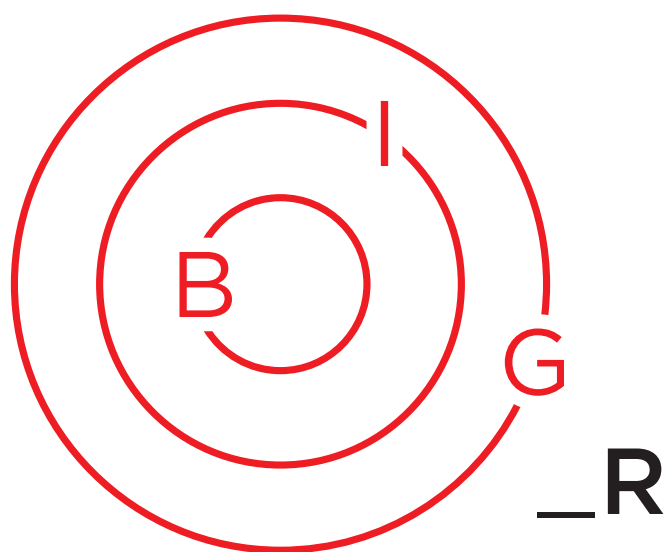
Victor Konrad 119

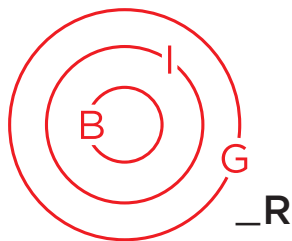
EDITORIAL MATTER

About the Journal 122

For Contributors 125







Letter of Introduction

Dear Readers,

Concluding our fifth year of publication and our tenth issue of *Borders in Globalization Review* (*BIG_Review*), we are delighted to have reached 18,000 downloads in the last 12 months!

Now—as we are preparing our next number, Volume 6(1) Special Issue on Temporality and Borders, plus new Indigenous internationalisms—we are eager to share the present issue with you. In the 100-plus pages that follow, you will find cutting-edge research in border studies, extensive policy analyses, border artwork, film reviews, and book reviews. We hope you enjoy it!

Leading the issue are two innovative research articles. First, Berfin Nur Osso integrates critical analysis of European Union migration policy with artistic expressions of refugees and other migrants on the move, featuring their narratives and their paintings. Then, for our French readers, Abdoulaye Ngom presents a case study of a Senegalese family arranging for one of their sons to undertake a precarious journey to Europe, chronicling the complexity of the dilemmas and trajectories they face.

Our readership has expanded to include policy makers in various border management organizations, customs and immigration, and border regions world-wide. So in this issue's policy section, you'll find policy papers from South Africa, Italy, Zimbabwe, Moldova, and Australia that reflect this newly expanded scope. We are grateful for the important contributions of Jean Luc Erero, Paola Malaspina, Rwatida Mafurutu, Mihail Secu, and Jamie Ferrill and Allannah O'Hanlon. If you are reading *BIG_Review* and work in a border organization, your policy research is of interest to us. Do contact us—this indeed is a call for papers! This opportunity has been made possible thanks to the support of the World Customs Organization and Korea Customs.

The new issue is also rich with artwork engaging with the contradictions of borders. In the Chief Editor's Choice Portfolio, featured on the cover, artist Laurent Reynès shares an innovative sculpture of border lines, conceptualizing the

connections and hardships they engender. The work is the product of civil society collaboration with students from the University of Strasbourg, at the Center of Excellence's 2023 Castle-talks on Narratives on Borders in Europe. In our poetry section, readers will find six poems grappling with borders, four poems by European poet Loris Ferri and two by Canadian Chad Norman. We then present a bold project of activism and artwork, the *Navire Avenir*, or, the Vessel of the Future, a campaign to conceptualize and actualize an appropriate life-saving response to the crisis of migrants lost at sea, brought to you by the *Collectif du Navire Avenir*.

Once again, our issue closes with two film and two book reviews. Sinem Arslan and Murat Çemrek recap recent cinema that dramatizes life struggles against closed borders in Turkey and Palestine respectively. Finally, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly and Victor Konrad review recent academic publications in border studies.

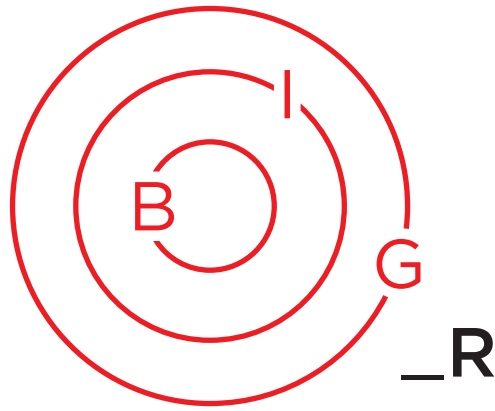
Print editions are now available for purchase, and electronic copies are available for free online in Creative Commons open-access licensing. We hope you not only enjoy *BIG_Review* but share it as well!

BIG_Review is made possible by its team of editors, board members, blind reviewers, and other colleagues who contribute the labour of reviewing, editing, and producing the work, supported by funding grants from SSHRC and Erasmus+. We are grateful to be at the University of Victoria, located on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Lekwungen, WSÁNEĆ, and Esquimalt peoples. We are also grateful for the hosting and support provided by the Centre for Global Studies and by University Libraries.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Carpenter,

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly



ARTICLES

BIG_Review articles are long-form explorations of borders in a globalized world, presenting original research from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. All articles undergo at least two double-blind peer reviews, drawing on the expertise of our Editorial Board and a wider network of borders scholars, subject to the discretion of the Chief Editor. Like all *BIG_Review* publications, articles are available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing.



ARTICLE

Narratives of Agency: Understanding the Refugee Experience through Paintings at the EU's External Borders

Berfin Nur Osso *

Despite a burgeoning interest in “visual” migration and border research, refugees’ own representations of their experiences of struggles with/against borders through paintings remain underinvestigated. In this article, I provide a close and contextual understanding of refugee perceptions and their first-hand experiences of struggles with borders, while highlighting the political significance of refugee-produced artworks in borderlands. Inspired by critical border studies and visual approaches, I draw on qualitative analysis of 70 paintings produced by en route refugee artists at the Hope Project on the Greek island of Lesbos, dissecting the emerging visual narratives and refugees’ creative practices. Analysis exposes three common narratives of the paintings: the perilous journeys of refugees from their homes toward the European Union, their everyday life constrained in Lesbos, and their future aspirations in a tide of freedom and uncertainty. These common narratives illustrate a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future of refugee experience, interrupted by the European border(ing) regime. The narratives reveal that even seemingly depoliticized spaces, namely art workshops and paintings, can become hyper-politicized, recounting how refugees as socio-political agents challenge the state borders constructed to manage refugee mobility and defy the symbolic borders targeting their identity and political subjectivity.

Keywords: refugee artworks, migrant agency, European border regime, bordering, Greece, Moria

Introduction

“Seeing comes before words” (Berger 1972, 33). In contemporary society, our perception concerning refugees may be altered when we see their images on newspapers, social media, or television, portrayed as the victims of migrant smuggling, people in need, criminals, or potential terrorists (Malkki 1996, 377; Fassin 2005, 373; Chouliaraki & Georgiou 2022, chap. 4). Indeed, “the modern individual is usually trained to pay attention to what is visible to the eye or the camera” (van Houtum et al. 2005, 2). More than ever, that is the reason why we need to attend to the narratives told

by refugees themselves, such as in the artworks they produce, to make sense of their lived circumstances as “experiencing subjects” (Eastmond 2007, 249) and to make these experiences visible. In particular, visual artworks can tell us something about the lived experiences of their producers, namely artists, for purposes of research. Though not transparent windows to the realities of the world (Rose 2001, 6; Eastmond 2007, 252; Catalani 2019, 19), the visual narratives told in the artworks can shed light into the hidden contextual corners of manifold borders that affect refugee lives.

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In this article, I turn to visual artworks produced by refugees¹ “on the move” through reflecting on a study I conducted between May and August 2022 with the Hope Project Greece, a British non-governmental organization operating on the Greek island of Lesbos. I explore the narratives emerging from refugee-produced paintings representing their experiences of the European border regime, which has been reinforced after the summer of migration in 2015, and refugees’ visual practices to understand migrant political agency vis-à-vis borders, from a bottom-up perspective (see De Genova et al. (2018); Hess and Kasperek (2019) on the European border regime).

In the past three decades, migration, border, and legal scholars have paid considerable attention to the ubiquitous construction and enforcement of borders through the tools of migration management, namely bordering practices. These tools—including border fences or walls, visa policies, carrier sanctions, readmission agreements, safe country concepts, and the “hotspot” approach—aim at controlling the mobility of certain people and their access to asylum before, whilst, or after they reach their destinations (see Moreno-Lax 2017; Cantor et al. 2022; Osso 2023). In the European Union (EU) context, a great amount of this scholarship has focused on how and why restrictive laws and policies are operated, by whom, and at whose cost, mainly from the perspective of states or private actors (see Gammeltoft-Hansen 2011; Moreno-Lax 2017; Cantor et al. 2022). While this scholarship has provided immense insights, from this viewpoint, people affected by the operationalization of restrictive laws and policies, mainly refugees, appear as passive targets—or, to use Amigoni’s and Aru’s words, “objects to be governed” (2023)—and their perceptions and experiences are largely overlooked. Conversely, a burgeoning scholarship on migrant agency has endorsed refugees as active political subjects, highlighting their struggles and perspectives vis-à-vis omnipresent borders in Europe (Vaughan-Williams 2015; Mainwaring 2016; Georgiou 2018; Chouliraki & Georgiou 2022) or elsewhere (Nyers 2006; Janmyr 2022). Yet, refugees’ representations of their experiences with/against borders through artworks, particularly paintings produced by refugees outside research, have not received considerable scrutiny, except by a handful of scholars (Lenette et al. 2017; Catalani 2019; Amigoni & Aru 2023).

Inspired by critical border studies (CBS) and visual approaches, in this article, I provide a close and contextual understanding of refugees’ perceptions and their first-hand experiences of their struggles with and against borders, particularly emphasizing the role of art as a medium through which refugees assert their agency and voice. The article contributes to a nascent body of research on the intersections of art, migrant agency, and bordering by highlighting the political significance of refugee-produced paintings in borderlands with an innovative case study in Lesbos. Lesbos has become

a space of simultaneous depoliticization and hyper-politicization for refugees (see Turner 2015, 145) due to its transformation into “a critical location of migration and border enforcement” since 2015 (Wagner Tsoni & Franck 2019, 8), and thus offers an interesting context to examine the narratives emerging from refugee-produced paintings. My analysis draws on the images of 70 paintings produced by 33 refugee artists at the Hope Project between 2018 and 2022, triangulated with a semi-structured interview I conducted with the Hope Project’s founders in May 2022,² written testimonies of three artists, and other contextual information regarding the situation of refugees in Lesbos after 2015. I respond to two questions: *What narratives emerge from the paintings produced by refugee artists en route regarding their experiences and perceptions of borders? What do the visual narratives emerging from refugee-produced paintings reveal about refugee political agency vis-à-vis borders?*

As the author of this paper, I am a migrant-artist myself. However, significant mobility inequality and a gap of privilege exist between me and the research subjects, who were compelled to confront multifarious bordering practices because they were denied “safe and legal routes” or could not get visas to countries where they intended to claim the recognition of their refugee status. As the experiencing subjects of these exclusionary structures, refugees and migrants are the protagonists, hence rightful narrators, of their own stories. Artists at the Hope Project intend to make their voices heard, and this article is a medium to convey their message to a wider audience. Of course, as Eastmond (2007) asserts, “[i]n all stories, the personal voice is always interwoven with those of many others, and in narrative analysis it necessarily includes that of the researcher” (261). Regardless, “we need to continue seeking ways of listening to and representing refugees’ experiences, in their great diversity” (261).

In the following section, I introduce the contextual framework concerning refugee-produced paintings in Lesbos. Then, I explain the research process for analyzing the paintings as a form of data, particularly expounding sampling, the sites of analysis, and the selection of coding categories. In the fourth section, I address the assessment of the paintings, from which I discovered three common narratives that recount the refugees (1) *embarking on perilous journeys with hope and leaving home in the past*; (2) *navigating everyday life despite the spatio-temporal constraints in Lesbos*; and (3) *reimagining a hopeful future within a tide of uncertainty and freedom*. The narratives, I argue, illustrate a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future of refugees’ migratory and life trajectories (Eastmond 2007). This assessment draws on the three elements of migrant agency discussed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Mainwaring (2016). These elements—habit (past), imagination (future), and judgement (present)—epitomize the process of how

refugees negotiate possible trajectories at present to continue their journeys toward desired destinations through reflecting on their past experiences and future projects. This linkage is particularly relevant as it helps to ascertain one type of how refugees' border struggles are temporally represented in their paintings. In the final section, I conclude by arguing that refugees' visual narratives expose that even the most mundane depoliticized spaces, such as art workshops and painting canvases, can become sites of politics and contestation over im/mobility, identity, and political subjectivity (hence, hyper-politicization). For, "politics occurs precisely when the prevailing order is disrupted ... by those who possess no agency according to sovereigntist accounts of the political" (Nyers 2006, 49). While visually narrating their struggles that surface despite and against manifold state borders, including physical/political and legal borders, refugee artists also defy the symbolic borders that revolve around the victim-villain binary.

The Context: Agency and "Hope" vis-à-vis Bordering

Bordering within the European Border Regime

As migration and border scholars have widely discussed, migrants and refugees often find strategies that subvert restrictive legislation and practices of migration management operated within and across the territorial borders of states (Mainwaring 2016; De Genova 2017; Hess & Kasperek 2019). While the mobility of refugees, particularly of those in irregular circumstances, produces and transforms borders, the borders reinforced by states in response engender more innovative ways of subverting these constructs (Mainwaring 2016, 294–295). This continuous, mutually-constitutive, and agonistic interplay between borders and migrant agency creates what is known as a "border regime" (De Genova 2017; Osso 2023). I understand "agency" as the capacity of navigating one's life trajectories in line with their own terms and decisions, involving organized or spontaneous political action against structural constraints, such as borders.³ Indeed, "border controls not only encourage longer and more dangerous migrant journeys, but also higher levels of ingenuity and agency from migrants and smugglers" (Mainwaring 2016, 303).

Such creativity and agency vis-à-vis bordering has become prominent particularly since 2015 at the EU's external borders with the Balkan countries and Türkiye. These borders were tested considerably in 2015 with over 1.8 million "irregular" border crossings, over 880,000 of whom transited through the Aegean Sea from Turkey into the Greek islands (Frontex 2016, 6), including more than half a million into Lesbos alone (Wagner Tsoni & Franck 2019, 18). People fleeing from the conditions in their countries after the Arab Spring,

Syrian civil war, and other conflicts, risks of persecution, and poverty in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa arrived at Europe in search of safety and protection. This was proven by the number of asylum applications in 2015, surging to 1.26 million (Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022, 1–2). The framing of this phenomenon as a "crisis" was mainly due to its occurrence outside legal rules and controlled frameworks, and, indeed, was used as reasoning for a more securitized migration policy agenda and increased criminalization and dehumanization in the EU context (Hess & Kasperek 2019, para. 17; Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022, 4). In order to curb and prevent the arrival of people at the EU's external borders, the EU and its Member States, also in cooperation with third countries, have employed various measures during 2015 and thereafter. Moreover, the portrayal of these people as destitute victims, security threats, or "enemies at the gates" (Catalani 2019, 4) in the European legal, policy, and media discourse has exacerbated their exclusion in host societies by creating an increasingly unwelcoming atmosphere for them.

The 2015 migration phenomenon cannot be explained with conventional theories on borders. While borders have been widely conceptualized as lines and visible objects dividing state territories, a performative concept of "bordering" coined by critical border scholars (van Houtum & van Naerssen 2002) better captures the contemporary tactics of migration management in the EU (Vaughan-Williams 2015, 6; De Genova 2017). Europe's borders are not only material infrastructures of walls, razor wires, or barbed wired fences. They are also practices, such as the implementation of legal rules, or "legal borders" (Osso 2023), and discourses in laws, policies, and the media against certain migrants, or "symbolic borders" (Chouliaraki & Georgiou 2022, 5).

The period after the summer of migration has witnessed multifaceted repercussions of the European border regime for those coming to the EU's external borders, who were indiscriminately framed as "irregular migrants" in the dominant legal, policy, and media discourse (Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022). The EU and its Member States have handled the arrival of "irregular migrants" mainly by focusing on detention, deportation, and containment at the external borders, essentially manifested through the "hotspot" approach and the launch of the EU-Türkiye Statement of 18 March 2016 on the Greek islands (see Council of the EU 2015a, 2015b; European Commission 2015; European Council 2016). The EU-Türkiye Statement aimed to, *inter alia*, reduce the number of "irregular migrants" entering the Greek islands from Türkiye in return for EU funding for Syrian nationals under temporary protection in Türkiye (European Council 2016). The Greek hotspot islands have since become hubs for the spatial segregation and exclusion of refugees based on their nationality (de Vries et al. 2016, 5) and the temporal suspension of refugee lives (Osso 2023). Despite a significant drop in arrivals on the Greek islands through Türkiye

since 2015, the hotspot camps, initially created as a temporary registration and identification zone, have increasingly developed into quasi-permanent spaces of mobility control (de Vries et al. 2016, 5; Hess & Kasperek 2019, para. 20).

In particular, the Greek island of Lesbos, especially its Moria refugee camp, has become a space where refugee lives are stalled indefinitely in dire conditions (De Genova et al. 2018). A series of legal and policy measures implemented by EU and Greek authorities following the EU-Türkiye Statement has triggered the entrapment of refugees on the island. Greek authorities have inflicted a systematic geographical restriction (an obligation not to leave the hotspots for the Greek mainland) on all newcomers, even in cases of vulnerability, while asylum processing has started to take years (AIDA 2023, 41). Amid the progressively inhospitable socio-legal milieu in Lesbos, the material structures of Moria also shattered. The camp has suffered multiple fires and was destroyed with a final one in September 2020, after which most inhabitants were relocated to the new emergency facility in Mavrovouni (Kara Tepe) (AIDA 2023, 176). Both before and after the fires, Moria has hosted its inhabitants in abysmal and unhygienic conditions with lack of medical care and sanitation and significant overcrowding (Wagner Tsoni & Franck 2019, 11; AIDA 2023), with numbers reaching 25,000 at its peak in 2020, far above its official capacity of 3,100 (European Commission 2020).

The tightening of migration management after 2015 has not only affected refugees' efforts to receive international protection and enjoy their rights, but also their everyday lives and experiences in EU's borderlands. Indeed, as Scheel argued, "the European border regime permeates the everyday and intimate lives of both migrants and EU citizens" (Borrelli et al. 2022, 1152, original emphasis). Thus, there is an urgent need to explore the experiences of the Greek borderland, where inhabitants face substantial challenges due to Europe's bordering regime, through a non-conventional and bottom-up approach.

The Birth of Hope Project

In late 2021, I came across the works of a number of brilliant refugee artists who are the residents of the infamous Moria camp on Lesbos and produce artworks at the atelier of the Hope Project. The paintings strikingly illustrate the deep-rooted effects of the post-2015 European border regime, containing visual stories of refugees' migratory journeys toward the EU and their everyday life in Moria. So, I decided to take a deeper look at the paintings to make sense of the artists' reflections of their experiences and perceptions concerning the EU's borders.

Focusing on the empowerment of refugees in addition to providing support and aid, hence uncloaking their

agency, the Hope Project Greece was founded on Lesbos amid the so-called "migrant crisis" in early 2015 by Philippa and Eric Kempson, long-term island residents and immigrants themselves. Their art project, which started in 2018, has become a venue of new beginnings and "political creativity" for hundreds of refugees (see Turner 2015, 144; Brambilla 2021, 100). Refugees subjected to extended waiting times at Moria can "actually find a way to express themselves through art", said Philippa (interview, May 14, 2022). From visual art to theatre to music and dance, "[this] comes in many different forms. The majority of it is painting and drawing" (Philippa Kempson, interview, May 14, 2022). Over the years, the Hope Project, particularly the painting atelier, has grown with the leadership and contribution of refugees. Some artists have had their paintings exhibited internationally, including in London, Berlin, and the Czech Republic, and in an exhibition curated by Norwegian artists in 2021 entitled "A Place in My Mind".⁴

The artists at the Hope Project endeavor to speak their minds through their paintings so that their voices are acknowledged by a broad spectatorship. Refugees leave their countries not only to seek protection from conflict or persecution, but also to live in a place where they can make their voices heard and have their rights respected. Thus, the silencing of refugees in legal, policy, and media discourse and their exclusion from host societies poses the danger of refugee voices going unheard. In this sense, art is the voice of the 'voiceless'. As Philippa said: "[n]ot only is [art] a way of expressing emotions and feelings [for] the people that are in the camp. It's also their voice; because if they speak, no one listens. They're actually afraid to speak because it will affect them" (interview, May 14, 2022).

At the time I conducted an interview with Philippa and Eric in May 2022, the art center had 45 artists with diverse backgrounds and knowledge in art or painting. While artists originated from an extensive range of countries, including Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Congo, most of them came to Lesbos to seek protection in Europe. Thus, the artists share the identity of being a refugee in Lesbos: nearly each painting carries the imprint 'Moria refugee'. The reason, Eric reminded, is that "Moria is worldwide. Everyone knows Moria. And it's the most disgusting camp that has ever existed inside Europe, which never should have existed" (interview, May 14, 2022). This has been the case also after the relocation of Moria inhabitants to Kara Tepe in September 2020 (AIDA 2023, 176-177). Eric continued, "[n]ow, a lot of us called the new camp 'Moria 2,' so still Moria refugee camp" (interview, May 14, 2022).

What the artists want at the Hope Project is more of a mental sanctuary, a serene, safe space away from the turmoil of the camp. This safe zone is also a space where the artists act as agents in their ephemeral everyday

life in Lesbos. One refugee always takes the lead at the workshops, running the routine at the art center. Additionally, the artists are not given any instructions for their paintings and come up with their ideas freely and single-handedly. Eric, an artist himself, refrains from influencing the artists' thought process and art. He only demonstrates to the refugees the basics of painting, such as how to use and mix colors and how to observe things around them in daily life. The rest comes from the artists, who have produced nearly 10,000 paintings so far. Eric and Philippa told me that some artists took their paintings when they ultimately left the island while over 1,500 paintings are physically stored or displayed at the art center. Many paintings are also exhibited on online repositories, such as Fine Art America and Hope Art Project's Instagram and Facebook pages.⁵

Before reflecting on the analysis of selected paintings, I turn to my reflections on data and methods in the following section.

A Visual Approach to Narratives of Agency

Unveiling the Perspective of Refugees through Paintings

Understanding refugee perceptions of borders and their experiences of struggles with/against borders necessitates contextual study that addresses these phenomena from the perspective of refugees. While a large amount of refugee scholarship investigating EU's migration management measures has focused on the perspectives of states or private actors in controlling migrant mobility (see Gammeltoft-Hansen 2011; Moreno-Lax 2017; Cantor et al. 2022), a growing literature has also dissected the effects of these measures on people on the move and their agency, with a focus on their border struggles (see Vaughan-Williams 2015; Mainwaring 2016; Georgiou 2018; Chouliaraki & Georgiou 2022). Inspired by the latter, in this article, I assert refugees as socio-political agents who can resist borders, and whose voices recounting their experiences of border encounters must be foregrounded. Revisiting Philippa's words (interview, May 14, 2022), art can indeed be a refugee's voice and help them express how they view and understand the world they live in from their own perspective.

Although refugee painting projects have thrived in recent years (see for example, Parater 2015; Hayward 2021), paintings produced by refugees inhabiting borderlands have not received sufficient scholarly attention in migration-border research. A significant and insightful body of scholarship has explored the implications of migration-border management through visual methodologies in the past decades, including the representation of borders in images (Amilhat Szary 2012; Staudt 2019; Kudžmaitė & Pauwels 2020; Aru 2023), bottom-up creative reactions against bordering

(Wagner Tsoni & Franck 2019; Moze & Spiegel 2022; Patteri 2022), and the construction of borders through images (Malkki 1996; Georgiou 2018; Chouliaraki & Georgiou 2022). While the existing literature exploring visual narratives of refugees or migrants has predominantly utilized participatory methods (Oh 2012; Lenette & Boddy 2013; O'Reilly 2020; Brambilla 2021),⁶ a number of scholars have also paid attention to refugees' representations of lived experiences through images (mainly, paintings and drawings) created outside formal research and subsequently shared publicly (Lenette et al. 2017; Catalani 2019; Amigoni & Aru 2023).⁷ Contrary to researcher-driven visual methods, attending to refugee-produced artworks without specific prompts and discovered by researchers enables observation of artists' visual reflections and practices in their natural, social setting without external influence.

An analysis of the paintings produced by refugees helps visualize the operation of borders and understand its implications for refugees in their complexities and particularities. This offers an understanding from refugees' viewpoints of the spatio-temporalities of refugee struggles and mobility as a process (in changing spaces, times, and situations) vis-à-vis restrictive laws and policies aimed at managing this process. Notably, "there is no fixed or unitary route that borders take" (van Houtum et al. 2005, 3). Borders are largely invisible and intangible, except when they are illustrated as lines on political maps or delineated through border barriers, such as walls, razor wires, or fences between two states' territories. Nonetheless, certain visual elements and narratives illustrated by refugees in their paintings can be interpreted as representing the borders they encounter. The artists' reflections can elucidate how they view, understand, and challenge the borders operationalized through restrictive legislation and policies, rendering the borders and border regimes visible or tangible (see Wagner Tsoni & Franck 2019, 8; Kudžmaitė & Pauwels 2020, although not directly on refugee paintings).

The analysis of refugee artworks also provides useful insights regarding how the artists engage with practices that defy the symbolic borders constructed against refugee identities and subjectivities. With emphasis on "voices from below", this entails the recognition of refugees' agency (Janmyr 2022, 4; see also Malkki 1996; Amigoni & Aru 2023). In their artworks, each refugee narrates their unique experiences of border crossing and migratory journeys from their subjective, creative, and cultural perspectives. With their storytelling, artists strive to assert their political subjectivities as "counter-narratives" against and despite dominant discourses portraying them as irregular migrants embodied as victim-criminals (Eastmond 2007, 260; Lenette et al. 2017, 56). In the face of growing disbelief toward refugees' stories in the legal-institutional setting (Eastmond 2007, 260; Malkki 1996, 384) and the media (Georgiou 2018, 48; Lenette et al. 2017), exploring the

struggles of art-making refugees promises to expose their lived experiences and the wider socio-political context within which borders have a profound place and impact. As Martiniello (2022, 10) rightly puts, this helps "rehumanize" refugees at the intersection of art and migration. It also enables shifting our focus to the practices of each refugee as a unique individual with agency and voice and as the rightful narrator of their unique story, rather than perceiving them as voiceless and destitute masses managed by borders.

Finally, the analysis of refugee paintings enables access to the "inaccessible" worlds of refugees (Pauwels 2015; Kudžmaitė & Pauwels 2020, 12–13) and elucidate the hidden contextual corners of the operationalization of borders. Indeed, "visual perspectives provide avenues for deeper understandings than what can be offered through textual data alone" (Lenette et al. 2017, 47). Choosing the universal language of art (Catalani 2019, 4) over verbal and textual expressions also helps transcend the communicative and linguistic barriers that often emerge in research processes. Visual approaches enable an understanding of refugees' experiences of borders from their visually and culturally imbued viewpoints, in addition to disseminating their narratives to a wider audience. It is noteworthy that, as Rose (2001, 6) rightfully asserts, images are not transparent windows to truth, and the same applies to the narratives surfacing from images (see Eastmond 2007, 252). Narratives are "a form in which activities and events are described as having a meaningful and coherent order", which can be true or imagined (Eastmond 2007, 250). "They can [reveal] how social actors, from a particular social position and cultural vantage point, make sense of their world" (Eastmond 2007, 250). They enable "one way of understanding [refugees'] interpretations of particular events" (Lenette et al. 2017, 49). Yet, the visual stories refugees recount in their paintings provide valuable insights that "document their lives as told in their own voices" (Oh 2012, 282), such as the feelings, thoughts, and memories they develop through their encounters of displacement and borders. By analyzing refugee paintings, therefore, I access first-hand knowledge that very few scholars can obtain.

Curating and Analyzing Refugee Paintings

For this study, I initially selected the images of the paintings that reflect the visual practices and border experiences of refugee artists at the Hope Project. Overall, I curated 70 paintings produced by 33 different artists (16 male, 16 female, and one collaborative artwork) between 2018 and 2022 from the Hope Project's online repositories on Fine Art America and Instagram. The sample includes 30 of 112 paintings (out of 148 posts available) on Instagram and 40 of 230 paintings on Fine Art America; 70 images in total, representing 20 percent of 342 images available in two repositories (as of November 8, 2022). Other emerging themes in the paintings not included in my

coding sample involve harsh critique of justice and refugee policies, human rights, women's rights, LGBT+ rights; past life, family, and cultural practices in artists' countries of origin; abstract, experimental, and colorful paintings. I selected the artworks which I considered to represent particular moments of refugee agency vis-à-vis various forms of borders, both within and beyond the Greek soil. The patterns in the paintings signify refugees' cross-border journeys toward Lesbos over the Aegean Sea between Greece and Türkiye (physical borders), their everyday life constrained within Moria (the EU's hotspot approach in the Greek islands as legal borders), and their hopes, dreams, and wishes, as well as uncertainties concerning their future. Then, I translated these patterns into coding categories, namely the units of data analysis and interpretation.

Considering two sites of analysis, the site of image itself, and the site of production (Rose 2001, 30; see also Ball & Gilligan 2010; Pauwels 2015), I focused on both what is visible within the frame of the paintings and what is invisible, beyond the frame. Using qualitative content analysis, I identified nine themes and coding categories, and coded each image of the painting accordingly. While the first six categories relate to the site of the image itself, the remaining three categories concern that of production:

- (1) central visual objects, signs, or symbols in the painting: for example, boat, lifejacket, lifebuoy, sea; camp, tent; barbed wire, razor wire, wall; skeleton, skull.
- (2) emerging narrative(s): what is happening in the painting?
- (3) dominant color: colors in a painting may represent multiple meanings depending on the context. In the context of Moria refugees, blue, for instance, is often used to illustrate the sea and their maritime journeys.
- (4) emotions, mood, action, and/or direction.
- (5) elements of borders: yes/no; visible/invisible; object, symbol, or practice.
- (6) elements of agency: past-oriented, for example, destroyed homes, departure, experiences of journey, border crossing; present-oriented, for example, refugees' surrounding at the camp, sea, island, their everyday life, refugee protests in Moria/Lesvos; future-oriented, namely visual elements representing the orientation of refugees' future based on past experiences, including search for safety/protection, hopes, wishes, and dreams, or the loss of those, such as uncertainty, death, despair.
- (7) artist's country of origin.
- (8) artist's gender: male/female.
- (9) artist's previous art education/knowledge: yes/no/no info.

Following the coding process, I interpreted the dominant codes and emerging narratives from the viewpoint of CBS, particularly employing the concept of border regime. This enabled me to decipher how the artists view, understand, and illustrate in their paintings the co-constructive interplay between refugee agency

and borders from their own perspectives. First, I sought to understand how the artists represent in their paintings their perceptions of the EU's borders and their experiences of struggles with/against them. Second, I explored how the artists also challenge the symbolic borders that state actors and the media construct in the bordering of refugee identity. That said, the interpretation of refugee paintings without any texts or speech can be challenging for understanding the experiences of refugees. Thus, I reflexively focused on the selected artifacts and triangulated the narratives emerging from imagery with contextual knowledge, such as my interview with Philippa and Eric Kempson, other information about the context within which the paintings were created, and the written testimonies given by three refugee artists between July and August 2022, whose paintings I selected for exhibition in this article.⁸ Moreover, my positionality as a migrant and a political cartoonist often helped me to address these challenges as it provided useful insider insights and in-depth understanding for artworks that translate their maker's lived experiences. In the following section, I reflect on the findings of my visual analysis.

The Entangled Narratives of Agency

One type of expression in narratives is the linkage between past, present, and future, creating a sense of continuity of the past in the face of the uncertainty of future (Eastmond 2007, 254). This sense of continuity is significant especially for refugees whose lives are radically disrupted due to their displacement from home and fundamental changes in their lives. Because "[r]efugees are in the midst of the story they are telling" (Eastmond 2007, 251), their unfinished stories can provide insights into the future they are imagining in their visual narrations. In the case of the refugees attending painting workshops at the Hope Project, their medium for telling their stories has been painting. In fact, as Philippa (interview, May 14, 2022) said, "some of [the paintings] were very political and slightly edgy" since most of the artists can only voice their struggles by visually narrating them in their paintings. That is why many paintings bear the traces of artists' migratory journeys and become the visual frames representing their lived experiences. Philippa's words were highly apposite: "[these are] people who have been through hell. Some of the stories are endless and heartbreaking. And they didn't flee on a whim to try and get someone's benefit or a nice house. It's not a choice that they would make" (interview, May 14, 2022).

To understand refugee experiences of struggle vis-à-vis the borders constructed and operationalized through the EU's exclusionary laws and policies, I decoded the moments of agency in the paintings of refugee artists and identified three common narratives: (1) embarking on perilous journeys with hope and leaving home in the past; (2) navigating everyday life despite the

spatio-temporal constraints in Lesvos; (3) reimagining a hopeful future within a tide of uncertainty and freedom. Through this analysis, I discovered a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future of refugees' migratory and life trajectories in the emerging visual narratives. This comes in the face of EU and Greek law and policy aiming to contain certain refugees at the hotspots, disrupt their migratory journeys, and create intermittent lives. In visually narrating the refugee struggles with/against multifarious state borders, including physical/political and legal borders, the artists also tackle the symbolic borders constructed by states and the media that center on the victim-villain binary.

Embarking on Perilous Journeys with Hope and Leaving Home in the Past

Memories and reflections about the past journey toward the EU soil and departure from erstwhile home are the most prominent depictions, making 43 of the 70 paintings I analyzed. I considered these paintings as relating to the past because they were created in the premises of the Hope Project on Lesvos while the artists inhabited the Moria camp. The paintings are vibrant and rich in terms of the visual objects, signs, or symbols they accommodate. While 'sea' is a leading visual element in the paintings, the richness of the elements regarding (sea) journey is striking: refugees in these paintings are portrayed on the move (walking, running, sailing) (Figure 1) while they confront manifold material or immaterial challenges—such as a barbed wire, a wall, a push back—and are often in distress, like drowning or dying (Figure 2). These elements are often supplemented with objects representing the tools or vehicles of a sea journey, including (inflatable) boats, dinghies, lifejackets, and lifebuoys that are widely visible in the paintings (Figure 1), or the wrecked remnants of these tools or vehicles which are reminiscent of a (un) successful sea journey (Figure 2).

Each painting reveals "particular moments" of a refugee journey (see Mainwaring 2016, 291). Although it cannot be fully deduced from a single painting that portrays a refugee artist's experience of their journey to Lesvos, the juxtaposition of paintings reveals narratives of the chronology of a refugee journey. While every story concerning refugee journeys is unique, there happen to be several similarities in refugee experiences, such as unfinished cross-border journeys from home to Lesvos, as seen in the paintings. This unidirectional and linear representation of a journey from origin toward destination captures the perceptions and experiences of refugees. Though, as many border and migration scholars argue, "[refugee] movements are often erratic and multi-directional, betraying conventional accounts of migration as linear movements from nation-state A to B" (Borrelli et al. 2022, 10; see also de Vries et al. 2016, 1). Each journey from home toward the EU starts with an involuntary and complex decision of departure despite all the perils (Borrelli et al. 2022, 5), passing through

a so-called transit country, then continuing with an onward movement until destination. Nonetheless, there may be several 'pit stops' throughout a cross-border journey, just like in Lesbos where refugees are contained and prevented from continuing their onward journeys. Waiting times at the stops may vary depending on the opportunities refugees obtain, who may eventually discontinue their journeys and decide to stay in that transit country, such as in Türkiye or Greece. Refugees may be deported to countries of transit or origin if they are found to have entered EU territory in a clandestine manner (Mainwaring 2016, 291) as per legal or policy instruments, such as the EU-Türkiye Statement.

Several paintings I analyzed reify what many border and migration scholars have argued, articulating that a decision about departure is not an easy task and requires agency oriented toward one's future. As Mainwaring (2016, 292) puts it, agency is more than a single, one-time choice; it is about constant decision making, risk taking, and room for maneuvering within the restrictive structures of states. Some paintings depict an individual refugee or refugee families fleeing their homes due to war or conflict, with the visual elements representing fallen bombs or rockets, destroyed cities or towns.⁹ Some narrate the challenges encountered on the move: refugees drowning in the sea, refugees illustrated near a capsized boat and/or asking for help while in distress (see Figure 2). These narratives also reiterate that borders can be both visible material constructs or invisible legal or policy decisions, both portrayed as structures that refugees attempt to overcome to reach safety. The paintings that depict encounters with 'invisible' borders usually take place in the sea, often illustrating refugees on a boat journey (Figure 1; Figure 2). This can be interpreted as border crossing over the Aegean Sea, namely the geographical, natural boundary between Greece and Türkiye. The paintings that narrate 'visible' borders clearly articulate visual elements of border barriers. These include the borders between Iran and Türkiye (flags of both countries at a border zone divided by razor wired fences are visible), between the EU or Greece and Türkiye (again, respective flags are visible), or imaginary barbed wires or walls that obstruct individual refugees or refugee families from continuing their journeys.¹⁰

Revealing how the artists perceive and experience border(ing)s, some paintings concerning past journeys also recount how refugees overcome these constructs, such as through border crossing. As these paintings depict, a significant number of refugee journeys are 'successful', articulating that refugees managed to cross various borders and arrive at the EU shores following an arduous voyage (Figure 1). The painting by Najibullah (Najib) Hosseini, an Afghan artist who resided in Moria for nearly two years, realistically illustrates the rubber boats arriving at the shores of Lesbos (Figure 1).¹¹ In this painting, Najib clearly demonstrates the landing

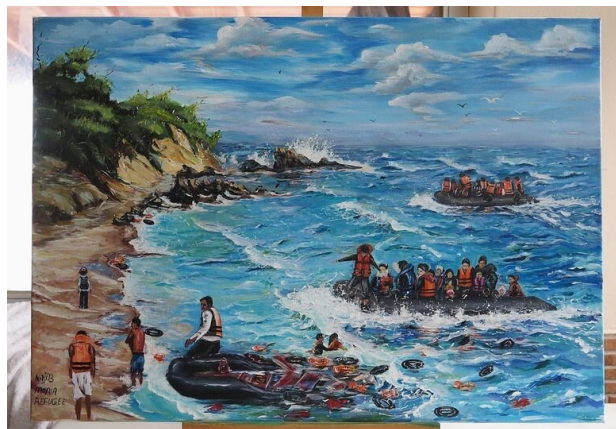


Figure 1. Untitled, painting by Najib Hosseini, 2021.
Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

of boats packed with refugees wearing lifejackets to protect themselves from drowning during their journeys, as well as a number of lifebuoys along the shore as the remnants of earlier successful arrivals. That Najib and other refugee artists are physically present in Lesbos, engaging in creative practices at the Hope Project, manifests the success of their journeys in and of itself.

Najib, who was a third-year arts student at Herat University in Afghanistan but had to discontinue his studies after deciding to leave his country, told me about his decision and experience of coming to Lesbos: "I had to emigrate in the middle of 2018, and it took me three months to reach Greece with many difficulties" (Najib Hosseini, Instagram message to author, July 28, 2022). Taking the initiative, he risked his life by departing from home and covering a long distance to reach Europe. The difficulties he had faced during the journey—including the various borders between Iran and Türkiye and between Türkiye and Greece—did not stop him from continuing his flight, because he had hopes and aspirations for a better future.

Nevertheless, there are also many refugee journeys that were and are 'unsuccessful', as illustrated by an Iranian artist Nazgol Golmoradi in her painting entitled "Mr. Eric", dedicated to Eric Kempson (Figure 2). On the one hand, the painting depicts Mr. Eric, a representative of a humanitarian organization, saving the lives of refugees who decided to embark on perilous journeys with wishes and hopes, seeking help to reach safety. On the other hand, it serves as a testimony to refugees losing their lives alongside their wishes, hopes, and dreams throughout their journeys piercing visible and invisible borders, for instance, the Aegean Sea between Greece and Türkiye (Figure 2). What is common in the narratives of (un)successful refugee journeys is that refugees were indeed able to cross the borders, wherever these borders were located and no matter how their journeys ended. Moreover, refugees embarked on the journeys with the goal of shaping their futures: the search for

safety and protection, as well as the pursuit of hopes, wishes, and dreams for a better life. This is the case for journeys that end successfully by reaching the borders of Greece and the EU or unsuccessfully due to a decision or an external factor resulting in their discontinuation.

Most of Nazgol's paintings carry her own inscriptions, both physically behind canvases and in the form of captions posted on Hope Art Project's social media accounts. In doing so, she endeavors to convey her first-hand experiences and struggles, as well as those of women, migrants, refugees, and LGBT+ individuals, all of whom are marginalized in society in some way. As she expressed in her testimony:

I love painting since I was a child, I painted many styles and various ideas, but I mostly paint about women's rights and immigrants' rights. Some of my paintings are taken from the real life of real people, and some of my other paintings are derived from the lack of rights. I also paint about LGBT rights. I think that women, LGBT people and immigrants do not have their full rights. I try to convey the voice of all those who are deprived of their rights to the world with my art. (Nazgol Golmoradi, WhatsApp message to author, August 6, 2022)

Akin to the narratives of agency she reveals in her paintings, Nazgol also acted with agency, her own decisions, and autonomy in everyday life, such as by continuing painting in Lesvos and thereafter. Through her art, she endeavors to voice her own struggles and those of others who are excluded from the state territories and host societies, and make these voices

heard and recognized by people across borders in the face of dominant, reductive discourses that dehumanize refugees. Furthermore, she challenges these discourses with her paintings, illustrating the reality of arduous migratory journeys, as well as the perseverance and vigilance that refugees demonstrate. Nazgol continued: "[b]ecause I am also an immigrant, I immigrated when I was 17 years old and now I am 22 years old. ... [W]ith my paintings, I will touch the souls of others and lead everyone to a colorful world away from war" (Nazgol Golmoradi, WhatsApp message to author, August 6, 2022).

Navigating Everyday Life despite the Spatio-temporal Constraints in Lesvos

The second most prominent narrative in the paintings produced by the artists at the Hope Project concerns their everyday life in limbo (temporally constrained) and within a "space of exception" (spatially constrained) on Lesvos (Agamben 1998; Hess & Kasperek 2019). This common visual narrative represents the artists' experiences of inhabiting Moria or 'Moria 2.0', the camp that was relocated to Kara Tepe (Mavrovouni). What is striking in these paintings is how refugees perceive Moria both as a constrictive and regenerative space and reflect their imaginations in their visual artifacts and creative practices. Akin to the paintings of departure and journeying, the paintings of limbo and exception contain rich elements that represent refugees' everyday encounters in Lesvos.

In these paintings, refugees conspicuously recount the spatio-temporal constraints on their migratory and life trajectories arising from EU and Greek exclusionary laws and policies operationalized in Moria. In material terms, the artists understand Moria as a 'prison', a segregated space of waiting and detention, surrounded by walls and barbed wired fences, which they must escape to continue their onward journeys (see Figure 3; Figure 4). The artists also powerfully illustrate their perceptions of 'waiting', with visual elements such as skulls, skeletons, or the grim reaper, and emotions such as crying or being silenced.¹² These elements and narratives can be interpreted as the artists' understanding of waiting as a condition of "in-betweenness" (see Agamben 1998, 39; O'Reilly 2020, 81), representing how the artists experience their spatial exclusion and the postponement of their migratory and life trajectories in Lesvos.

Refugees come to Lesvos through dangerous journeys, typically by rickety boats from the Turkish shores. So did Abdullah Rahmani, an Afghan refugee who had resided in Lesvos for two-and-a-half years. Though, as revealed by the narratives in the paintings about refugees' everyday life in Lesvos (see Figure 3), the landing of refugee boats at the Lesvos shores is only the beginning of yet another challenging experience. Abdullah's journey halted in Lesvos, where he had to live through appalling conditions for a quarter decade:

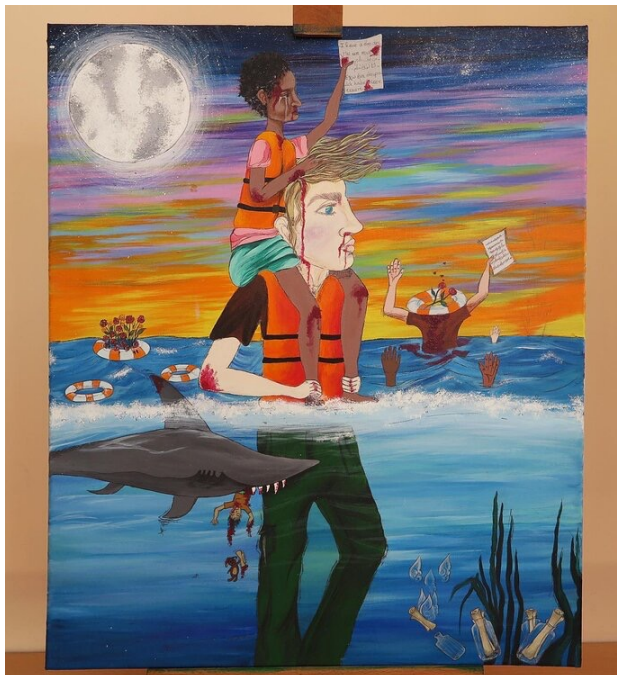


Figure 2. "Mr. Eric", painting by Nazgol Golmuradi, 2021. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

Lesvos (Moria camp) ... was very bad for refugees. When I was there, we were about 23,000 people in a camp. So, of course out of bathroom, toilet, and food. We were staying in line for 2 hours to receive food. I was waiting till 3 o'clock in midnight to take shower. (Abdullah Rahmani, WhatsApp message to author, July 20, 2022)

As Abdullah expressed, the Moria camp is a space of exception where refugees are reduced to their 'bare life', a biological condition that denies their political subjectivity and considers refugees as voiceless, destitute victims incapable of acting autonomously (see Agamben 1998; Turner 2015, 143; Georgiou 2018, 48), where only their basic needs are provided, such as washing, eating, and sleeping in overcrowded facilities. The spatio-temporal suspension of refugees' lives and rights in this space of exception aims to prevent refugees from continuing their journeys and creating a life with agency, and leaves them exposed to the charity and humanitarian compassion of state authorities (see Malkki 1996; Fassin 2005).

Nevertheless, this suspension and the interruption of refugees' journeys in the camp do not necessarily mean that refugees are shorn of agency. "[They] do not simply accept the conditions of the camps as passive victims, and many do struggle to overcome them" (Gündoğdu 2015, 144; see also Turner 2015, 143). Many refugees tend to reject the charity and compassion of EU and Greek authorities, as the visual narratives in some paintings reveal. Although refugees are portrayed in the camp, surrounded by walls and barbed wired fences for their containment and segregation, they continue to engage with daily activities, such as playing at the campsite, washing clothes, attending art workshops at the Hope Project, and running errands.¹³ These paintings also depict the temporariness of the camps in which they are residing, with visual elements illustrating makeshift tents within unhygienic surroundings (for example, a debris of solid waste, as illustrated by Najib, see Figure 3), and indicate how refugees adapt to the changing life situations at Moria, regardless of the challenges they encounter. As Turner (2015) argues, "[as r]efugees adapt to the life of the camp, ... [their a]daptation may ... lead to new social forms and opportunities" (143), and "for individuals to remain socially alive, they need to be able to imagine a meaningful future for themselves—however miserable their present-day situation is" (145).

Many refugees also engage with artistic projects in their everyday lives, such as attending art workshops at the Hope Project, while waiting for the processing of their asylum claims on Lesvos. Creative practices allow refugees to reflect on their past and "reinvent themselves" to give direction to their future endeavors (see Oelgemöller 2011, 409; Turner 2015). The workshops have been a retreat location for many refugee artists, such as for Abdullah:



Figure 3. Untitled, painting by Najib Hosseini, 2021.
Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

I learned painting in Afghanistan. I heard that Hope Project is a place where artists can paint for free ... After that, I was always there for being far away from the camp (Moria). I did many paintings there and showed my feelings through the painting. (Abdullah Rahmani, WhatsApp message to author, July 20, 2022)

A significant number of paintings also depict the fire that destroyed the Moria camp in 2020, indicating that the incident has left a big mark on the refugee artists' memories, imaginations, and their visual practices (see Figure 3). Some paintings realistically demonstrate that the fire took place during the Covid-19 pandemic; this can be interpreted through the visual elements of refugees wearing masks (see Figure 3). Illustrating a refugee family escaping the fire at the Moria campsite, for instance, Najib skillfully shows the strong emotions in the eyes of a refugee woman holding her child while trying to save herself and her family's lives with her husband (Figure 3). Running away by the walls and fences of the camp and carrying only a few bags of belongings (Figure 3), it can be interpreted that these refugees did not choose to stay in Moria. Rather, they were subjected to the practices of containment and segregation in the Moria camp, within makeshift tent structures surrounded by visible, physical barriers. Possibly, many refugees considered the fire as an escapeway to improve their conditions, though, were transferred to another camp in Lesvos ('Moria 2.0') with equally appalling conditions.

Ultimately, many refugees at Moria intend to continue their journeys upwards toward other European countries as they see no future for themselves in Lesvos or Greece. Judging by their past habits and future projects and venturing to encounter the borders along their journeys, they evaluate the alternatives and take the initiative to leave Moria (see Mainwaring 2016). For them, the journey that halted in Lesvos is unfinished, as Najib utters in his story:

I was in Greece for almost two years, my asylum application was rejected twice by the Greek immigration office, which forced me to leave Greece as well. I currently live in Switzerland. (Najib Hosseini, Instagram message to author, July 28, 2022)

Reminiscent of what Abdullah did to overcome the burden of degrading conditions in Moria, Najib engaged with painting in Lesvos to visually narrate his first-hand experiences of the European border regime and empathetically recount those of other refugees. His agency first led him to continue painting while on the move, notwithstanding the challenges he had encountered in Moria. Second, akin to his visual stories, he gave a future direction to his life and decided not to stay in Lesvos or Greece. As his efforts to be legally recognized as a refugee in Greece failed, he then embarked on another risky journey to reach and reside in Switzerland for safety, better chances, and a life with dignity and human rights.

Reimagining a Hopeful Future within a Tide of Uncertainty and Freedom

The last common narrative emerging from the paintings recounts refugees' futures, reflecting on their wishes, dreams, hopes—or the loss of those—as well as their search for safety in Europe. Usually, refugee artists use bright colors in the paintings that depict their future aspirations, as well as visual objects such as a lightbulb, or metaphors, such as the light at the end of the tunnel and flying birds.¹⁴ These elements could be interpreted as representing refugee hopes for their emancipation from onerous and squalid conditions in Moria. While "imagining a future, planning one's life trajectory and acting accordingly in the present become seriously challenged" due to camp's ephemerality, most refugees seek a life beyond the camp in the future (Turner 2015, 145). In this sense, the imagined future is often a better version of what refugees have been through throughout their journeys toward EU territory and their everyday life on Lesvos.

This is, of course, in no way to overemphasize that all artists portray the future in their paintings as bright. Several artists also illustrate the uncertainty of refugee journeys toward safe soils, as well as that of life in Moria associated with their elongated waiting in the camp. In particular, a painting that illustrates a number of refugees heading toward a dark tunnel, the end of which is invisible and uncertain, can be interpreted as suggesting that the journey is unknown, yet worth taking risks in order to reach safety and a better life.¹⁵ Another painting illustrating a child at the seashore looking at debris of lifejackets and at the opposite shore (possibly Türkiye) can indicate that his perilous journey toward Lesvos is in the past, and he successfully managed to enter EU territory.¹⁶ However, it can also be construed that a child, a refugee that would be considered a 'minor' in legal terms, may be unaccompanied and

waiting for his parents who could not even make it to Lesvos. The future looks perturbing; the child refugee is at risk of being part of a 'lost generation' if he fails to gain access to fundamental rights, such as the rights to an adequate standard of living and to education. This emerging narrative indicates the brutality of invisible borders both towards refugees *en route* and those contained in Moria, creating an anxiety of uncertainty and nescience regarding their future.

Recounting refugees' continuous struggles between freedom and uncertainty, Abdullah visually narrates how borders affected him and other refugees coming to Europe. "I want to share my ideas about suffering of refugees in Europe through my paintings", said Abdullah (WhatsApp message to author, July 20, 2022). Some of his ideas and feelings in his paintings concern the future, portraying himself in one of them as flying on a dove through barbed wired fences opening toward the road ahead (see Figure 4). These fences can be interpreted as representing the borders that he had encountered in Moria and, perhaps, also during his journey from home to Türkiye toward Lesvos. Abdullah expresses that if borders were open, or if he could somehow overcome them, he could then continue his journey. Here, there is a future-oriented element of agency: Abdullah wished to move freely, though he had then been residing in Moria and attending art workshops at the Hope Project.



Figure 4. "Peace and Freedom", painting by Abdullah Rahmani, 2019. Reproduced with the permission of the artist.

In view of some paintings depicting the future, it can be interpreted that refugee artists envision a hopeful future where they can freely and single-handedly navigate their journeys toward and in their desired destinations. This is contrary to their past and present settings where state actors attempt to control them and their lives through borders. Such an imagined future is not one where refugees succumb to the Greek bordering practice of deportation to Türkiye under a set of law or policy tools, such as the EU-Türkiye Statement, or back home, but one where they rebuild their own migratory and life trajectories. In pursuit of these trajectories, Abdullah did not stay in Moria, reminiscent of his painting illustrating his emancipation from the camp. By reflecting on his past experiences to navigate his future in his own terms and wishes, he decided to leave Lesvos and its squalid conditions for Germany. He first arrived in Athens, mainland Greece, to access the North Macedonian border near Thessaloniki where he had unexpected encounters:

After [Athens] I went to Thessaloniki to enter [North] Macedonia [where] unfortunately I [had an] accident on the border with a train and unfortunately, I lost my left leg. Now I am [an] amputee, Europe changed my life. Now it's [been] about 2 years ... but still I am feeling disappointed. I was five months in a hospital in Greece. ... Now I am in Rome, [a humanitarian organization] made my prosthetic leg and gave [me] a place to stay. (Abdullah Rahmani, WhatsApp message to author, July 20, 2022)

Despite the accident Abdullah had while crossing the Greek-North Macedonian border, he could finally make his way to Rome, a place where he could settle and direct his life in accordance with his future endeavors. It is very likely that this is not what Abdullah had imagined in his paintings and in reality. The borders of Europe altered both his migratory trajectory, that he ended up in Italy instead of Germany, and his life trajectory, that borders cost him a part of his physical body. Now, Abdullah continues to paint in Italy: "I want to be a professional artist", he said, "to show refugees' suffering, happiness, [and the] ways which they passed [through] to the people of Europe" (Abdullah Rahmani, WhatsApp message to author, July 20, 2022). The creative practices he once engaged in Afghanistan, as well as in Moria despite the spatio-temporal suspension of his life, certain rights, and his journey, have developed into his profession. Abdullah wishes and hopes to make his voice and unique story heard by others in a common world where he is acknowledged for his art and as a unique human being, and not by his country of origin or his status as a refugee.

Conclusion

"Thank you for being my voice and being people like me, it makes me proud" (Najib Hosseini, Instagram message to author, July 28, 2022); these were the words

of Najib when he urged me as a researcher and a fellow migrant-artist to convey his story and art to the world. The issue at stake not only concerns whether refugees have a voice, but also whether their voice reaches a relevant framework. Because "the excluded, those who have 'no part' in the social order ... have to interrupt not just to be heard, but to be recognized as speaking beings" (Nyers 2006, 54). To be seen and judged as "people with agency and voice" (Eastmond 2007, 253), the venue of expression the artists at the Hope Project chose was art. At the Hope Project, artists were able to express their selves, experiences, and aspirations in a manner that transcends the boundaries of state territories and of communication through the universal and uniting impact of art. In Philippa's words (interview, May 14, 2022), rather than "showing sad pictures of the camp and things", in this article I have elucidated refugees' creative practices and imaginations to understand their lived experiences concerning borders in their own voices. In doing so, I have shown that even seemingly depoliticized spaces, namely art workshops and paintings, can become "hyper-politicized", precisely through refugee artists' subtle contestation over im/mobility, identity, and political subjectivity vis-à-vis the European bordering regime. Therefore, this article offers significant insights into the role of art as a medium through which refugees assert their political agency and voice while advancing the current debate on the interplay between migrant agency and bordering by highlighting the political significance of refugee-produced paintings in borderlands.

In the article, I dissected how, in the face of exclusionary structures fabricated by a set of laws, policies, and discourses of migration management, refugees, as the experiencing subjects of these structures, understand the momentous changes in their lives and recount these changes in their paintings. Exploring the post-2015 European border regime in the second section, I argued that although the EU's borders have been reinforced and diversified after the summer of migration, refugees have found new tactics to overcome the borders located both within and outside EU territory. Additionally, many refugees have continued to engage with creative activities in their everyday life in Lesvos. Attending art workshops at the Hope Project has helped them to reflect on their past experiences, remain "socially alive" at present (Turner 2015, 145), and "reinvent themselves" for their future endeavors (Oelgemöller 2011, 409). In the third section, I discussed that migration-border research would benefit from assessing the artworks produced by refugees as a form of data to understand and disseminate refugees' cross-border experiences. Visual analysis of refugee-produced paintings helps us understand refugees' border imaginations, visualize the often-invisible and intangible borders, and push refugees' voices to relevant frameworks.

In the fourth section, I addressed what refugee artists at the Hope Project reveal in their visual artworks regarding

their perceptions of borders and their experiences of struggles with/against them. Uncovering three common narratives from the paintings, I ascertained that these narratives illustrate a sense of continuity between the past, present, and future of refugees' migratory and life trajectories, during which refugees confront the state borders that obstruct their journeys; hence, these narratives also defy symbolic borders. In stark opposition to over-generalized and dehumanizing legal, policy, and media accounts and images concerning refugees in host societies, refugees are capable in their visual stories of "emphasizing agency and ability rather than victimization and disability" (Eastmond 2007, 254; see also Martiniello 2022, 10). Refugees' visual practices and narratives have the power to reflect and emplace refugees as socio-political agents in a world surrounded by borders.

By exploring narratives of agency in refugee-produced paintings, this study provides an intimate and contextual understanding of refugees' perceptions of borders and their first-hand experiences of struggles with/against them. Research scrutinizing the implications of border regimes for refugees *en route* from refugees' visually and culturally imbued perspective can help elucidate the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of their experiences of borders in context. Despite rising cynicism toward refugees' narratives, this promises to expose refugees' lived experiences and struggles from below as well as the wider socio-political context within which borders have a profound place and impact.

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Notes

- 1 The term "refugee(s)" in this article refers also to "asylum seekers", people who are not yet recognized as refugees under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol but intend to apply or wait for status determination, or remained in the country where they applied for asylum after their claims were rejected.
- 2 I decided to do the interview online mainly because of the

issue of access to refugee sites given the Covid-19 situation and the construction of a new Closed Controlled Access Center in Lesbos (see AIDA 2023, 39).

- 3 A certain body of CBS scholarship refer to migrant agency as "the autonomy of migration" (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; De Genova 2017; De Genova et al. 2018). I prefer the term "agency" to emphasize the continuous contestation and ambivalence within a border regime, rather than the primacy of migrant mobility over state control (see Mainwaring 2016, 294). On this account, refugees still act with agency even though they do not succeed to overcome the borders or reach destination states.
- 4 For the exhibition with Norwegian artists, see <https://www.instagram.com/kunstenaahjelpe.no> (accessed April 11, 2024).
- 5 For online repositories on Fine Art America (a platform to support living artists across the world), see <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/thehopeproject-moriarefugees>; Instagram, see <https://www.instagram.com/hopeprojectart>; Facebook, see <https://www.facebook.com/HopeProjectArt> (accessed April 8, 2024).
- 6 For example, Oh's (2012) participatory visual ethnography explores the everyday life of children in Umphiem-Mai refugee camp at the Thai-Burmese border using photo elicitation method. Lenette and Boddy's (2013) research embarks on a visual ethnography with single refugee women in Brisbane, Australia through a variety of visual methods, such as digital storytelling, photovoice, and photo elicitation. O'Reilly's (2020, 95–136) work explores the everyday subjective experiences of ten refugees in Ireland through creative methods within a participatory photography project. In her work, Brambilla (2021) dissects the political presence of young people in their everyday life at the Italian-Tunisian borderscape using collaborative visual methods.
- 7 By analyzing two drawings created by refugee children and found in a human rights report and a newspaper in Australia, Lenette and colleagues (2017) address the dearth of research on refugee children's own perspectives on their conceptualization of lived experiences of detention. Using visual semiotics method, Catalani (2019) explores the narratives of displacement, cultural traditions, and longing for home found in the paintings produced by Syrian refugees and are available on online repositories, such as Facebook. Through examining around 120 migrant-produced drawings and writings at the French-Italian borderland in Ventimiglia, Amigoni and Aru (2023) explore the traces of undocumented movements to and through Europe and endorse the need for migration narratives from a bottom-up perspective.
- 8 I have exhibited four of the images of the paintings. Although all images, including those displayed here, were publicly available, I obtained the permission of respective artists for the reproduction of the images and publicizing their full names in the body of this article. My selection of three artists and their testimonies followed a heuristic process. Before selecting the 70 paintings, I randomly chose about ten paintings that strongly addressed my research questions. I sought guidance from Philippa and Eric on contacting the artists, but only Abdullah's contact was available. After contacting Abdullah, he provided Instagram accounts of five other artists, two of whom had paintings in my initial selection. I then reached out to Najib and Nazgol, who agreed to feature their paintings in my article. Although initially unplanned, Abdullah expressed interest in sharing his own journey to Europe and painting. I agreed to incorporate his story and painting into the article, ensuring him of a broader audience upon publication. Nazgol and Najib also shared their short stories with me under similar

assurances. While acknowledging the limitations in data representativeness, I utilized the testimonies only to supplement my primary data, namely the paintings.

- 9 See the painting at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CNniB02nzVn> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 10 See the paintings at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CTAXBqLKEUE>, and <https://www.instagram.com/p/CJLH-xQsrGA>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/borders-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/journey-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 11 As written in the caption (description) of the image of Najib's painting, posted on Hope Art Project's Instagram page, this shore is in the north of Lesbos. See https://www.instagram.com/p/CL40qPWn_HT. With an online search, I found that this is most likely the Eftalou Beach; its high proximity to the Turkish shores makes it a frequent landing destination for many refugees transiting through Türkiye into Greece. See for example, the following video available at Wikipedia: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:20150824_Syrians_from_Turkey_plastic_boat_Eftalou_Beach_Lesvos_Greece.ogv (accessed April 11, 2024).
- 12 See the paintings at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CM0BKXBHa9y>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-waiting-game-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/tears-of-a-refugee-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://www.instagram.com/p/CRGclXnH36C> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 13 See the paintings at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CTNIOTkkP0I>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/life-behind-the-wire-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLrwoSbnux4>, and https://www.instagram.com/p/CWWec5NK_sf (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 14 See the paintings at <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/wanting-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://www.instagram.com/p/CH7USMonoWd>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/1-guiding-hand-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html>, and <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/freedom-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 15 See the painting at <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/un-certainty-the-hope-project-moria-refugees.html> (accessed July 5, 2024).
- 16 See the painting at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGXVtkrllSr> (accessed April 8, 2024).

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Les mobilisations familiales pour le départ migratoire à partir de la Casamance (Sénégal)

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Le rapport entre les salaires de base en Europe occidentale et en Afrique subsaharienne est d'au moins un facteur dix, voire nettement plus ; et il n'évolue guère. Beaucoup de jeunes Africains rêvent donc d'émigrer en Europe. La voie aérienne reste un privilège réservé aux familles des élites : pour prendre l'avion il faut un visa pour un pays européen. Sans visa il ne reste que la voie maritime, par navigation côtière le long des côtes africaines, et la voie terrestre à travers le Sahara. Ce sont ces voies très dangereuses et à l'issue aléatoire qu'empruntent chaque année des dizaines de milliers de migrants. L'article étudie le cas d'une famille de petits paysans-éleveurs vivant d'autosubsistance à l'intérieur de la Casamance, la région du Sud du Sénégal. Il permet de voir comment ce groupe familial de 42 personnes en vient à décider d'envoyer l'un des siens tenter d'entrer clandestinement en France, au risque de sa vie. Comment il choisit le migrant et se mobilise pour réunir les fonds nécessaires ; et ce qu'il advient des deux tentatives. Cette étude de cas donne une idée des étapes suivies chaque année par des dizaines de milliers d'autres familles en Afrique.

Mots Clés : Mobilisation, migration illégale, famille, voyage, Casamance.

Introduction

En dépit de décennies d'efforts pour réduire un tant soit peu les immenses écarts de richesse entre les pays du 'Nord' de la planète et ceux du 'Sud', ces écarts ne diminuent guère (Journal Du Net 2022). Selon les données de la Banque Mondiale (Banque Mondiale 2022), leur ordre de grandeur serait, pour beaucoup de pays, de un à dix (entre par exemple la France et l'Algérie : 3.524\$ contre 334\$; ou entre les Etats-Unis et l'Équateur : 5.492\$ contre 508\$). Mais pour la plupart des pays francophones d'Afrique de l'Ouest, qui figurent parmi les plus pauvres de la planète et dont le pays européen de référence est souvent la France, ce

rapport est de un à dix-huit pour la Côte d'Ivoire, et de un à trente pour le Sénégal (et même de un à quatre-vingt-deux pour Madagascar).

Ces écarts considérables sont longtemps restés confidentiels. Ils sont désormais non seulement publics, mais connus de tous, y compris dans les pays les plus pauvres. Ils se traduisent en écarts considérables de niveau de vie et de chances de vie ; des écarts que la mondialisation des médias—et plus précisément l'américanisation des feuilletons télévisés—a fait connaître dans tous les pays, ou tout au moins dans la

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plupart des villes du «Sud» de la planète. Inévitablement, de tels écarts font rêver ; et les jeunes des pays dits «en développement» sont très nombreux à avoir envie d'au moins 'y aller voir', non seulement pour vivre mieux, mais aussi pour pouvoir aider leur groupe familial resté au pays à sortir de la pauvreté endémique en lui envoyant régulièrement de l'argent.

L'Europe, la France n'est qu'à quelques heures d'avion de la plupart des pays d'Afrique subsaharienne francophones. On peut trouver des billets d'avion Dakar-Paris pour 500€ ou 600€ : une somme certes très élevée, mais pas inaccessible. Mais le problème n'est pas seulement là : il est dans l'obtention d'un visa en bonne et due forme. Les autorités françaises, comme celles des autres pays européens, ont pris conscience de l'immense attractivité du niveau de vie européen et sont devenues très exigeantes. En pratique, elles ont fait le choix de pratiquement fermer leurs frontières aux courants d'immigration de masse venant du 'Grand Sud'.

La voie aérienne étant désormais très surveillée, il reste encore pour les jeunes Africains deux autres façons d'atteindre les frontières de l'Europe (et d'essayer de les franchir illégalement) : ce sont la voie maritime et la voie terrestre. Mais elles sont l'une et l'autre extrêmement dangereuses. De fait, on trouve fort peu dans la littérature scientifique de recherches faisant le point sur l'une ou l'autre de ces voies de passage, et peut-être moins encore de récits de jeunes aventuriers témoignant de ce qu'ils (ou elles) ont vécu en suivant l'une ou l'autre de ces voies de passage. Or en tant que Sénégalais ayant fait mes études de doctorat en France sur, précisément, les chemins de l'émigration de jeunes Sénégalais de Casamance vers la France, j'en ai recueilli un certain nombre. Et ces récits, ainsi que mes observations, remettent en question nombre d'idées reçues.¹

On imagine souvent en effet que les jeunes Sénégalais (ou d'autres ressortissants de pays d'Afrique subsaharienne) qui tentent d'émigrer en Europe—ou au Canada—partent à la suite d'une décision toute personnelle, voire à l'insu de leurs parents et de leur parentèle. Or au cours de mes recherches, j'ai rencontré plusieurs fois des jeunes qui étaient partis avec l'entier soutien de leur famille ; et c'est précisément l'un de ces exemples que je veux présenter ici.

Justification de l'étude de cas

L'étude de cas d'une famille rurale pauvre de Casamance vivant à Saré Bidji² et que nous désignerons tout au long de cet article sous le nom de la famille Diamanka,³ se justifie pour plusieurs raisons. D'abord, le choix porté sur cette famille s'explique par le lien de confiance que j'avais établi avec elle lors de mes différentes enquêtes de terrain. Lien de confiance qui m'a permis d'enquêter

pendant plusieurs années au sein de la famille dont tous les membres étaient très ouverts, collaboratifs, et toujours prêts à répondre à mes questions. J'ai longuement discuté et vécu avec la famille durant mes enquêtes en partageant parfois même avec elle les repas de midi et en allant faire des observations dans leurs champs.

Le choix de la famille Diamanka a été, également, guidé, par le fait qu'en dépit du fait que cette famille soit pauvre et qu'elle vit essentiellement de l'agriculture et de l'élevage, elle est parvenue avec le concours de tous les membres à financer les deux tentatives d'émigration d'un des enfants (Oumar). Nous avons souhaité comprendre comment une famille qui ne dispose pas des ressources économiques qui permettraient à l'un des leurs d'emprunter la voie de l'émigration légale vers l'Europe est parvenue à trouver et à mobiliser l'argent nécessaire à la réalisation de ce projet migratoire.

En fin de compte, la famille Diamanka a été choisie également du fait qu'elle fait partie des 23 familles ayant soutenu la/les tentative(s) d'émigration d'un de leurs enfants et qui s'est soldé(es) par un échec. Sur les 30 familles que j'ai interrogées dans mon étude, je n'ai décelé que 7 cas de réussite soit une moyenne d'une tentative sur 4. Cela montre que les cas d'échec sont beaucoup plus nombreux dans les tentatives d'émigration illégale soutenues par les familles. Cette famille Diamanka est à l'image de dizaines de milliers de familles qui, chaque année, mobilisent leurs ressources pour envoyer un de leurs enfants en migration dans l'espoir d'améliorer leurs conditions de vie et de pouvoir sortir ainsi de cette pauvreté ambiante et chronique qui frappe de plein fouet nombre de familles en Casamance, au Sénégal et dans les autres pays africains.

C'est pourquoi présenter l'étude de cas de la famille Diamanka est particulièrement intéressant et extrêmement riche en termes de processus de décision sur le choix du migrant et de mobilisation des ressources nécessaires pour le voyage.

Revue de la littérature

Au regard des travaux sur les migrations illégales au départ des pays africains, tout laisse croire que les mobilisations qui consistent à réunir les fonds nécessaires au voyage relèvent de deux types : les mobilisations individuelles et les mobilisations familiales.

Dans son étude sur la migration illégale au Maroc, Mohamed Khachani (2008) montre que «le recours à l'épargne personnelle est fréquent. Près des deux tiers (65%) des migrants ont déclaré que leur projet migratoire a été financé par l'épargne personnelle issue du travail. 71% ont affirmé avoir bénéficié de l'aide familiale (74% d'hommes et 58% de femmes), 22% de l'aide amicale (21% d'hommes et 28% de femmes). 23%

ont eu recours à l'emprunt (27% d'hommes et 9% de femmes)» (Khachani 2008, 11).

D'autres auteurs, comme Nehara Feldman, Stéphanie Lima et Sandrine Mesplé-Somps (2020), mettent en évidence l'idée qu'« en règle générale le départ depuis la région de Kayes (Mali) d'un membre de la famille en migration répond à une stratégie familiale. Ceci est valable aussi bien pour un départ d'un homme qu'un départ d'une femme. Il en ressort également que le départ à l'étranger s'effectue presque systématiquement au sein des familles ayant déjà des membres installés à l'extérieur du village qui sont en mesure de prendre en charge les dépenses liées au départ. Si le départ d'un homme vise avant tout l'engagement de ce dernier dans un travail rémunérateur et l'envoi d'argent à la famille restée derrière, le départ des femmes est défini initialement comme une pratique visant à seconder un autre membre de la famille (une sœur, une tante, un mari, etc.). » (Feldman et al 2020).

Pour ce qui est des migrations légales effectuées le plus souvent par avion, Doudou Diéye Gueye (2003) a étudié dans sa thèse de doctorat les mécanismes et stratégies mis en œuvre par les ressortissants de la vallée du fleuve Sénégal pour rendre possible les ambitions migratoires de l'un des leurs. Ses travaux mettent en lumière l'existence de différents types de mobilisation : les mobilisations communautaires, les mobilisations familiales, et les mobilisations purement individuelles (Gueye 2003). La *mobilisation communautaire* renvoie aux différentes stratégies mises en œuvre par tout un village pour réunir les ressources permettant d'envoyer l'un de ses membres en Europe ou au Canada. La *mobilisation familiale* désigne les stratégies mises en œuvre par une famille—nucléaire ou élargie—pour financer le voyage de l'un des siens ; l'auteur montre que ces mobilisations familiales peuvent prendre la forme soit de dons, soit de prêts, selon la structure de la famille étudiée. Restent enfin la *mobilisation individuelle* dans laquelle c'est le migrant qui finance lui-même son voyage (Gueye 2007).

Mais comme nous l'avons signalé, les migrations légales sont réservées aux enfants de familles qui disposent de moyens financiers importants. Pour ce qui est des migrations illégales, il semble que la mobilisation communautaire soit absente (ou très rare) : compte tenu des risques élevés d'échec (par décès du migrant, par sa capture aux fins d'exploitation car le risque existe en Libye, ou par arrestation et renvoi forcé au pays de départ), dans aucun village la population ne prendrait le risque d'investir toutes ses maigres ressources dans un voyage aussi aventureux, dangereux et au résultat aussi incertain. C'est pourquoi, en matière d'immigration illégale, il n'y aurait que des mobilisations familiales ou des projets individuels (Ngom 2017).

De fait, les migrations illégales sont souvent perçues comme des aventures entreprises à titre individuel (Fontanari 2019). Or mes recherches empiriques,

menées à coups d'observations suivies dans la durée et d'entretiens narratifs de type récits de vie, tendent à réfuter cette vision 'individualiste'. Elles montrent au contraire comment la migration illégale s'appuie le plus souvent sur un projet *familial* mûrement réfléchi par des groupes familiaux comportant jusqu'à une cinquantaine de personnes et poursuivi sur plusieurs années.

Le contexte politique de la Casamance

La Casamance est la région située au Sud du Sénégal. Elle se compose de trois sous-régions : celle de la côte atlantique, où se trouve sa capitale Ziguinchor ; et deux régions situées à l'intérieur des terres, dont celle—la plus éloignée de la côte—où vit la famille Diamanka. Séparée pour l'essentiel du reste du Sénégal par l'enclave de la Gambie (voir carte ci-joint), la Casamance a vu naître et se développer il y a maintenant quarante ans un mouvement séparatiste, le Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC). Les origines du conflit remontent à décembre 1982 : une marche pacifique avait été organisée par le MFDC en direction de la gouvernance de Ziguinchor. Mais cette marche a été réprimée de manière sanglante par les autorités sénégalaises, qui ont également procédé à de nombreuses arrestations dont celle du dirigeant du mouvement, l'abbé Augustin Diamacoune Senghor. Les partisans du mouvement se sont enfuis et ont trouvé refuge dans la forêt de cette région, où ils ont mis un mouvement de rébellion visant l'indépendance de la Casamance, plongeant ainsi la région dans une situation d'instabilité de «ni guerre ni paix» (Marut 2010).

Contexte économique et social

Parallèlement à cette situation d'instabilité politique, le contexte économique et social en Casamance n'est pas des meilleurs en raison de la pauvreté ambiante qui frappe de plein fouet les familles qui y vivent. En témoigne d'ailleurs l'incidence de pauvreté dans les trois régions qui constituent la Casamance : elle demeure plus élevée que la moyenne nationale (46,7%). En 2011, l'incidence de pauvreté dans la région de Ziguinchor était estimée à 66,8%, à 76,6% dans la région de Kolda et à 68,3% dans la région de Sédhiou (ANSD 2013). Le seuil de pauvreté y est plus élevé que dans toutes les autres régions du Sénégal et une famille y vit en moyenne avec 3 ou 4€ par jour, soit une centaine d'euros par mois. Ce chiffre à lui seul donne une idée de l'importance des «rémittences», ces versements d'argent qu'un des fils ou qu'une des filles émigré(e)s en Europe envoient périodiquement à leur famille. Il ne prend pas en compte l'autoconsommation, évidemment très importante dans la paysannerie traditionnelle du monde entier, et pas seulement au Sénégal. Mais ce chiffre de 3 ou 4€ par jour pour les achats à l'extérieur est à comparer avec ce qu'un jeune établi en Europe pourrait envoyer par mois, soit des dizaines voire des

centaines d'euros. On comprend mieux alors pourquoi certains parents mobilisent une bonne partie de leurs ressources afin de financer le projet migratoire d'un de leurs enfants, malgré les dangers considérables que présente le voyage (il n'y a bien souvent qu'un seul des enfants par famille qui émigre).

Du fait d'une situation économique et sociale extrêmement précaire, notamment pour les jeunes de cette région, et de la situation d'instabilité politique, l'émigration s'impose comme alternative la plus crédible vers la réussite, malgré les risques encourus. De nombreux migrants vont tenter de passer par la voie maritime en embarquant dans une pirogue chargée à ras bord⁴ pour tenter de rallier les côtes européennes. Ils le font généralement depuis l'île de Djogué ou l'île de Carabane,⁵ où ils s'entassent dans des pirogues et voyagent dans des conditions très risquées, animés cependant par une envie folle d'atteindre le continent européen. Le voyage en navigation côtière prendra—si tout va bien—près de deux semaines.

D'autres vont tenter le voyage par voie terrestre en traversant le désert du Sahara : partant de la Casamance ils voyagent vers le Mali, puis passent au Burkina Faso, puis au Niger en remontant vers le Nord pour traverser le Sahara et atteindre finalement l'Algérie, d'où ils espèrent pouvoir atteindre l'Europe, en particulier l'Espagne (ou ses enclaves africaines de Ceuta et Melilla).

Présentation de la famille Diamanka

La famille Diamanka vit à Saré Bidji, dans la région de Kolda, en Haute Casamance. Ses 42 membres vivent dans une grande maison composée de plusieurs cases. Il ne s'agit pas d'une famille dite « nucléaire », mais d'une famille élargie à trois générations, caractéristique de la famille traditionnelle au Sénégal. La famille Diamanka se compose du grand-père, ici (re)nommé Al Hassane ; de ses dix enfants vivants et de leurs conjoints, et de leurs 21 enfants ; au total dix-huit hommes et vingt-quatre femmes. Les principales activités économiques de la famille sont l'agriculture et l'élevage. La famille dispose d'un cheptel d'animaux de 18 vaches laitières, 13 moutons et 11 chèvres.

Cette famille a toujours pu assurer sa survie grâce à ses activités agricoles, dont elle vend une partie pour répondre à des besoins non liés à l'alimentation. L'essentiel de ce que produisent et consomment les membres de cette famille étendue se fait donc en circuit fermé : ils/elles consomment ce qu'ils/elles ont produit. Mais il faut aussi faire parfois des achats importants à l'extérieur. Ceux-ci reposent principalement sur l'organisation d'un type particulier de tontine que nous appelons *tontine privée*. On connaît le principe (universel) de la tontine : des individus liés ensemble

par un contrat moral s'engagent à verser à intervalles réguliers une certaine somme dont le total (appelé prélèvement) sera remis à chaque participant à tour de rôle ; ce qui lui permettra d'effectuer une dépense (investissement de préférence, voire certaines consommations) qu'il ou elle n'aurait jamais eu les moyens d'économiser seul. Ainsi, l'objectif d'une tontine est la collecte de ressources suffisantes pour permettre la réalisation d'un projet individuel ; à charge de revanche, bien entendu. L'argent des tontines est aussi utilisé pour préparer des cérémonies ou pour financer tout ou partie du voyage d'un des participants.

Or la migration illégale représente aussi un investissement—individuel ou familial—élevé, et risqué : il y a là matière à tontine. Toutefois, il ne s'agira pas d'une tontine classique ; nous l'appellerons *tontine privée*. Par ce terme nous entendons l'ensemble des contributions qui sont versées de manière récurrente selon une certaine régularité au sein de la sphère familiale. Contrairement aux tontines classiques, ici la cotisation n'est perçue que comme une contribution symbolique de chaque membre de la famille, en fonction de ses ressources, pour (par exemple) la réalisation d'un projet d'émigration temporaire vu comme un investissement familial.

L'émigration vers l'Europe comme investissement familial

Nous avons vu qu'au Sénégal, une famille de petits agriculteurs vit essentiellement d'autoconsommation, ne dépensant en moyenne que 2€ à 4€ par jour pour ses achats à l'extérieur, soit une centaine d'euros par mois. Cela donne une idée de l'importance, pour ces familles rurales pauvres, des transferts de fonds que les jeunes immigrés en Europe envoient périodiquement à leur famille. Un rapport récent de l'OIM (2018) montre à ce titre que les montants des transferts de la diaspora sénégalaise ont pris une ampleur considérable au cours des dernières années. Leur volume est passé de 233 millions \$ en 2000 à 925 millions en 2006, puis à 1614 millions en 2013, pour atteindre 2220 millions en 2021, soit un total de 930 milliards de FCFA par an au cours des dix dernières années (2008-2017). La part de ces transferts dans le PIB du Sénégal est passé de 6% en 2001 à 8,6% en 2007 et à 13% en 2017. Les pays de provenance des envois de fonds sont nombreux ; mais on constate une prédominance de la France (647 millions \$ en 2017) et de l'Italie (425 millions \$), suivis de l'Espagne (302 millions \$) (OIM 2018).

Ces chiffres permettent de comprendre pourquoi, malgré les dangers considérables du voyage, certaines familles mobilisent une grande partie de leurs ressources pour financer le projet de migration d'un de leurs enfants (un seul, car le plus souvent c'est un seul enfant par famille qui émigre). La famille Diamanka

ne dépense sur les marchés que 2.500FCFA (4€) par jour, soit 75.000FCFA (120€) par mois. Cependant elle possède un cheptel, et peut donc en cas de besoin vendre un de ces animaux (qui cependant font partie de ses capitaux productifs). Une vache laitière peut être vendue sur les marchés locaux pour des sommes allant de 250.000FCFA (380€) à 800.000FCFA (1220€).

Les différentes voies d'émigration du Sénégal vers un pays d'Europe occidentale

L'émigration légale par avion

En Casamance comme dans les autres régions du Sénégal, l'émigration légale vers un pays d'Europe occidentale par avion n'est possible que si le migrant (ou sa famille) dispose d'une certaine manne financière, non seulement pour payer le billet,⁶ mais surtout pour répondre aux conditions d'entrée demandées par les pays européens. Dans le cas contraire, le passage aérien s'avère impossible et il faut se tourner vers la voie terrestre ou la voie maritime, l'une et l'autre autrement dangereuses et aléatoires.

L'émigration par avion implique le strict contrôle des documents administratifs. Or l'obtention d'un visa d'immigration est une affaire complexe ; et les procédures qu'il faut suivre sont loin d'être à la portée de tous les migrants. Pour commencer, le demandeur doit fournir un justificatif d'hébergement dans le pays de destination : un bail de location ou une attestation d'hébergement chez un parent ou ami. Il ou elle doit également s'acquitter de la taxe consulaire, qui ne sera pas remboursée en cas de rejet de la demande de visa. Or cette taxe n'est pas d'un montant négligeable : pour un dossier de demande de visa français depuis le Sénégal par exemple, la taxe consulaire se situe entre 50€ et 99€ selon le profil du requérant (étudiant, «demandeur ordinaire»), la durée prévue de son séjour (court ou long séjour) et le motif du voyage (études, tourisme, santé...). Ce ne sont pas tant les frais de dossier qui constituent un obstacle pour les demandeurs, mais surtout le fait qu'ils doivent certifier qu'ils disposent à l'avance des ressources nécessaires pour couvrir leurs dépenses durant la durée de leur séjour (Ngom 2017). Pour les membres de familles riches, la justification de ces ressources est aisée ; mais pour tous les autres, elle constitue un obstacle de taille.

Une autre stratégie, lorsqu'on appartient à une famille riche, consiste à acheter un visa auprès d'un réseau ou d'une filière illégale qui s'occupera de fabriquer et fournir toutes les pièces justificatives. Le prix en est élevé : il va de un à trois millions de francs CFA (soit d'environ 1.500€ à 4.500€), voire plus.

Il faut donc déboursier beaucoup d'argent pour obtenir un visa. Pour les membres de familles riches, cela pourra

se faire sans grande difficulté. Mais pour tous les autres, la barre est placée trop haut.

Les voies d'immigration illégale

À vol d'oiseau—comme on dit si bien—la distance entre Dakar et Barcelone est de 3.500 kms ; elle est de 4.500 kms entre Dakar et Paris. Mais ces chiffres n'ont guère de signification pour les migrants. Ceux qui ne pourront prendre l'avion devront voyager pendant des semaines sur des routes dangereuses et trouver les moyens de traverser plusieurs pays africains avant d'affronter la dernière épreuve et la plus difficile : franchir une frontière de l'Europe.

Mais pour la grande majorité des migrants en Europe, qui n'ont pas de famille riche pour les aider, il n'y a que cette voie terrestre ; ou la voie maritime, en pirogue de fortune surchargée naviguant de jour comme de nuit le long des côtes africaines pendant plus d'une semaine. Certains migrants sénégalais vont privilégier la voie terrestre en passant par le Niger, puis le Maroc ou l'Algérie, ou la Tunisie. Ou tenter de suivre le long pourtour méditerranéen, qui passe par la traversée de la Turquie et l'entrée en Europe via la Grèce. Il leur faudra de toute façon éviter la Libye, désormais pays sans État livré aux pouvoirs de bandes armées qui capturent les migrants et les réduisent en esclavage.

D'autres migrants optent pour le passage par la voie maritime : soit via la haute mer, vers les côtes des îles Canaries (qui sont espagnoles) ; soit le long des côtes africaines vers Ceuta et Melilla, enclaves espagnoles au sein du Maroc ; soit même vers Lampedusa, l'île italienne la plus proche des côtes d'Afrique du Nord.

Tel est l'éventail des choix aujourd'hui ; mais tel était-il déjà il y a une vingtaine d'années, quand Oumar partit pour son premier voyage vers l'Europe.

Les raisons du départ en migration d'Oumar

La pauvreté et l'absence de perspectives d'amélioration de la situation familiale ont été les causes structurelles du projet d'émigration d'Oumar. Mais la principale raison qui a déclenché son départ en migration, ce sont les propos rapportés par son frère aîné Youssouf au chef de famille Al Hassane. En effet, une autre famille vivant à Saré Bidji avait l'un des siens qui vivait en Europe, plus précisément à Brescia en Italie. Cet émigré envoyait chaque mois à sa famille 200.000FCFA (305€). Or la famille Diamanka vivait principalement d'autoconsommation et ne pouvait réunir que quelques euros par jour, environ 120€ par mois, pour ses achats extérieurs. Dans ces conditions, il est clair que l'idée d'envoyer un des leurs en Europe leur sera bénéfique en termes d'envoi de fonds, mais à condition bien sûr que ce dernier réussisse son voyage.

Le projet migratoire : objet de discussion et de débat au sein de la famille

Dans le cas d'Oumar, le projet de migration et son financement ont été imaginés et précisés pendant plusieurs années (2 ans plus exactement) au sein de la famille Diamanka. Pendant cette longue période, le projet a été constamment pensé, réfléchi et débattu au sein de la famille sous la direction du chef de famille, le grand-père Al Hassane. Des efforts considérables ont été investis dans les champs agricoles pour assurer des rendements élevés et des récoltes abondantes. Cela a permis à la famille d'être autosuffisante en matière de nourriture, et ainsi de vendre le surplus produit afin d'accumuler de quoi financer le voyage vers l'Europe. Les efforts déployés par tous les membres de la famille élargie n'étaient pas sans arrière-pensée : l'idée sous-jacente, partagée par tous, était qu'une fois son voyage réussi Oumar pourrait améliorer les conditions de vie de la famille en envoyant de l'argent tous les mois. Comme l'écrit D. Gueye, « Dans ce registre spécifique de la mobilisation familiale, elle a l'apparence d'une forme d'investissement économique, d'autant plus que tout départ au sein de la famille répond avant tout à une stratégie économique dont le résultat attendu serait de voir l'immigré pour lequel on s'est mobilisé s'investir activement en retour dans la réalisation de certains besoins de l'unité de production familiale » (Gueye 2007, 15).

Le choix du migrant au sein de la famille Diamanka

Dans le cas de la famille Diamanka, c'est le chef de famille Al Hassane à qui revenait le choix du migrant. Al Hassane a choisi Saliou, l'aîné de la famille Diamanka. Cependant, après avoir parlé à un migrant de retour au pays et avoir pris conscience des dangers du voyage, surtout par la mer, Saliou a abandonné le projet de partir pour l'Europe. Oumar, son jeune frère, a alors proposé de faire le voyage à sa place ; et il a été fortement soutenu par Al Hassane. Voici comment il décrit ce moment décisif :

(C'était) mon frère aîné qui était censé partir. Mais il a refusé de partir (...). Lorsque toute la famille s'est réunie, mon grand-père m'a désigné pour partir à l'étranger et y travailler pour aider la famille. Ma famille savait que si je réussissais le voyage, je pourrais les aider. En fait, mon frère aîné était allé voir un immigré qui était venu en vacances pour lui parler. Il a vu comment le gars est revenu. Puis mon grand frère est revenu à la maison pour en parler avec mon grand-père, pour lui expliquer l'histoire de cet immigré qui a réussi et qui gagne bien sa vie en Espagne. Il voulait y aller ; alors, mon grand-père lui a dit d'aller demander à l'immigré comment était le voyage. Et quand l'immigré lui a expliqué, il est revenu vers mon

grand-père pour lui dire qu'il abandonnait, parce qu'il avait vu la façon dont l'immigré lui avait expliqué le voyage : le voyage semblait très difficile. À partir de ce moment-là, comme mon frère aîné ne voulait pas partir, mon grand-père m'a désigné pour y aller. (Entretien effectué à Saré Bidji le 18 juillet 2014)

À vrai dire, dans cette famille, si le choix du migrant a été fait par le chef de famille Al Hassane, cela s'est fait au prix de nombreuses discussions très animées et de désaccords très vifs entre lui et une des tantes d'Oumar, Aby. Aby s'opposait farouchement au voyage, et tenait tête aux autres membres de la famille et au grand-père et chef de famille Al Hassane. Or dans la culture locale, les décisions sont normalement prises seulement après qu'un consensus général ait été atteint. Aby n'étant pas d'accord, il n'y avait pas consensus. Certes c'était une femme ; et selon la tradition, dans certains villages du moins, les paroles et les arguments d'un homme ont plus de valeur et de poids que ceux d'une femme lorsqu'il s'agit de prendre certaines décisions. Aby avait été autorisée à parler et elle a pu présenter son point de vue ; mais parce qu'elle était d'un âge avancé. Si elle avait été plus jeune, elle n'aurait pas eu son mot à dire dans une décision émanant de l'autorité principale, ici incarnée par les hommes de la famille et surtout par le grand-père. Cela dit, en dépit du fait qu'elle ait pris la parole, le dernier mot est revenu au chef de famille Al Hassane.

Le grand-père d'Oumar a pu convaincre la tante d'Oumar : non seulement la nécessité d'envoyer un jeune membre de la famille, mais aussi que ce soit précisément Oumar. Les familles décident le plus souvent d'envoyer un de leurs plus jeunes adultes, car elles pensent qu'il pourra ainsi travailler pendant plus longtemps dans le pays d'accueil, et donc envoyer aussi de l'argent pendant plus longtemps. Dans cette région, il est coutume que la plupart des décisions concernant l'ensemble de la famille soient d'abord discutées collectivement, même et surtout s'il existe des divergences d'opinion et des désaccords entre ses membres (Ngom 2019). Le grand-père a finalement réussi à persuader la tante d'Oumar—et d'autres membres de la famille, initialement peu convaincus—de désigner Oumar et de mobiliser les ressources nécessaires à son voyage. Par la suite il a également réussi à convaincre le reste de la famille élargie de la nécessité d'utiliser l'argent de la vente des récoltes pour continuer à financer le voyage d'Oumar par la voie terrestre.

Première tentative d'Oumar de rejoindre l'Europe (voie terrestre)

Tout départ en voyage de migration illégale nécessite au préalable une certaine somme d'argent. L'étude détaillée de trente cas dans mon étude a permis d'identifier deux principaux types de financement :

soit par mobilisation familiale—comme dans le cas d'Oumar—soit par mobilisation individuelle. Cela implique une analyse approfondie des différentes actions entreprises tant par une famille—un réseau familial—que par un migrant lui-même.

En septembre 2000, une première vente de récoltes avait permis à la famille Diamanka de réunir la somme de 50.000FCFA (76€) pour permettre à Oumar d'effectuer le voyage de Saré Bidji à Dakar, d'où il poursuivra ensuite son périple. Oumar est parti à Dakar le 6 septembre 2000 et une fois arrivé, il a dû attendre que la récolte d'arachide soit vendue pour pouvoir continuer son voyage. Il est resté à Dakar pendant six mois (de septembre 2000 à février 2001). Là, il vivait dans le quartier de Grand Yoff chez l'un de ses oncles. En février 2001, après la vente de la récolte d'arachide, la famille lui a envoyé 350.000FCFA (534€) supplémentaires. À ce stade, les deux sommes d'argent qu'il avait reçues s'élevaient donc à un total de $(76+534=)$ 610€. Cela constituait le budget provisoire de son voyage, mais il avait déjà fallu sept mois pour les gagner et les économiser.

Une des stratégies de la famille Diamanka a donc été d'envoyer de l'argent à Oumar petit à petit, afin qu'il puisse poursuivre son voyage étape après étape. Ce n'est pas le cas dans les familles urbaines que j'ai interrogées dans le cadre de mon projet : dans leur cas, la somme nécessaire au voyage est mobilisée en une seule fois et remise à leur migrant. Mais ce n'est pas seulement cela qui est intéressant dans son cas ; c'est aussi que la réalisation du projet d'émigration en Europe a mobilisé les énergies vives de tous les membres de cette famille rurale pauvre. Dans le vocabulaire proposé par Catherine Delcroix (2013), ce ne sont pas seulement ses ressources objectives (ses économies) qu'elle y investies, mais aussi les *ressources subjectives*⁷ de chacun de ses membres, qui ont dû redoubler d'énergie dans le travail des champs pour parvenir à dégager un surplus de récolte apportant un revenu supplémentaire.

Oumar était parti avec un montant de 400.000FCFA (610€) en poche. Après la vente des récoltes, il a reçu un troisième versement de 200.000FCFA (305€), puis un quatrième versement de 320.000FCFA (488€) provenant de la vente des récoltes. Et comme son frère aîné Youssouf lui avait envoyé 150.000FCFA (229€), son voyage aura finalement été financé à hauteur de 1.070.000FCFA (1633€). En examinant les montants reçus par Oumar au cours de son voyage, on constate qu'au fur et à mesure de sa progression, les montants envoyés par sa famille ont été de plus en plus importants. (Tableau 1)

Quel a été le périple d'Oumar ? En septembre 2000, il prend une voiture à la gare routière de Kolda pour se rendre à Dakar. Il paie 12.000FCFA (18€) pour le trajet Kolda-Dakar. Une fois à Dakar il y reste six mois comme nous l'avons mentionné précédemment, le temps que sa famille lui envoie les 350.000FCFA (534€) issus de la vente des récoltes. Après avoir reçu l'argent, Oumar continue son voyage : il revient vers l'Est en direction de la région de Tambacounda. De cette région frontalière entre le Sénégal et le Mali, il continue plein Est jusqu'à Bamako—la capitale du Mali—où il passe trois semaines en transit, avant de poursuivre son voyage au Burkina Faso, puis au Niger, et enfin en Algérie où il arrive en novembre 2001. C'est dans ce pays qu'il est intercepté à la frontière, et rapatrié au Sénégal.

Si l'on reconstitue à l'aide d'une carte géographique le périple suivi par Oumar, il apparaît clairement qu'il n'a pas suivi du tout la route la plus directe. Pour aller par exemple à Tanger par voie terrestre à partir de Dakar, il faudrait monter directement vers le nord, traverser la Mauritanie puis l'ex-Sahara occidental—région très dangereuse—entrer au Maroc et remonter encore jusqu'à, par exemple, Tanger. La distance Dakar-Tanger par la route est de plus de 3300 kms. Mais c'est une tout autre route qu'a suivie Oumar. De son village, une fois qu'il a reçu une première somme d'argent (50.000FCFA, soit 76€) il est parti de son village vers Kolda, et de Kolda vers Dakar, où il est resté six mois en attendant

de recevoir de quoi continuer son voyage. C'est lorsqu'il a reçu 350.000FCFA qu'il s'est mis en route, non pas vers le nord, mais vers l'est et l'intérieur de l'Afrique. Il visait tout d'abord Bamako, la capitale du Mali. Une fois à Bamako, il y a rencontré d'autres migrants ; et l'un des passeurs l'a informé qu'il devait essayer d'obtenir des papiers maliens s'il voulait continuer son voyage. Le passeur lui a donné le numéro de téléphone d'un autre contact, en lui précisant qu'il devait dire qu'il appelait de sa part pour que ce contact accepte de lui faire des (faux) papiers maliens. Naturellement il fallait les payer ; Oumar a alors appelé sa famille pour l'en informer. Son frère aîné Youssouf lui a alors envoyé la somme de 150.000FCFA (229€) à

Tableau 1: Financement de la première tentative d'Oumar (voie terrestre).

Origine du financement	Montants	Dates
Première tranche issue de la vente des récoltes	50.000FCFA (76€)	septembre 2000
Deuxième tranche issue de la vente des récoltes	350.000FCFA (534€)	février 2001
Argent envoyé par Youssouf	150.000FCFA (229€)	février 2001
Troisième tranche issue de la vente des récoltes	200.000FCFA (305€)	février 2001
Quatrième tranche issue de la vente des récoltes	320.000FCFA (488€)	septembre 2001
Total	1.070.000FCFA (1633€)	septembre 2001

Source : Enquête de terrain, Ngom 2014.

Bamako, au nom de toute la famille. Après avoir acheté ses faux papiers, Oumar a poursuivi son voyage vers l'intérieur de l'Afrique. Une fois parvenu au Niger il a repris la route vers le nord pour tenter de rejoindre l'Algérie. Il a finalement atteint la frontière algérienne en novembre 2001. Cela faisait un an qu'il était parti de son village ; et six mois qu'il était sur la route.

L'échec de la première tentative d'Oumar (voie terrestre)

À son arrivée en Algérie, Oumar a été intercepté par la police algérienne et aussitôt rapatrié par avion au Sénégal, plus précisément dans la région de Dakar. Il a alors décidé de rester à Dakar, le temps de collecter de quoi repartir. Il est resté à Dakar pendant huit semaines, passant ses nuits dans la gare ferroviaire : il ne voulait plus habiter chez son oncle, car il voulait éviter que ce dernier soit informé de son rapatriement forcé. Mais au bout de deux semaines, en décembre 2001, ne voyant pas d'issue à sa situation, il s'est finalement décidé à appeler son grand-père pour lui dire que son premier voyage avait échoué. Et pour lui parler de la deuxième tentative qu'il envisageait de faire, cette fois-ci par la mer.

La deuxième tentative d'Oumar pour atteindre l'Europe (voie maritime)

Après avoir passé deux mois et demi à Dakar, Oumar en est reparti en décembre 2001. Cette fois il a décidé d'essayer de rejoindre l'Europe par la mer. Il a appelé Ousmane, un passeur basé à Elinkine dont il avait obtenu le numéro par l'intermédiaire d'Ibrahima, l'un de ses compagnons de route dans le désert, lui aussi originaire de la région de Kolda. Elinkine est un village de pêcheurs situé sur le fleuve Casamance, un peu en amont de son embouchure. À l'époque les pêcheurs sénégalais commençaient à prendre conscience que si l'on disposait d'une pirogue, il y avait plus d'argent à gagner avec les migrants vers l'Europe qu'avec la pêche ; d'autant plus que les navires-usines qui pêchaient au large des côtes sénégalaises (une pêche industrielle) étaient en train de vider la mer de ses bancs de poissons.

La mobilisation des ressources par sa famille

Pour payer le passage par la mer il fallait cependant payer d'avance. Après qu'Oumar ait appelé sa famille depuis Dakar, ses frères réunirent une première somme de 20.000FCFA (30€) qui lui fut envoyée à Dakar quatre jours plus tard. Elle avait été obtenue grâce à une *tontine* privée que la famille avait organisée immédiatement après avoir reçu l'appel d'Oumar. Ce sont principalement les

quatre frères d'Oumar qui s'étaient mobilisés pour lui envoyer cette somme, grâce aux économies qu'ils avaient réalisées sur la vente du lait frais et du lait caillé de leurs vaches. Leurs femmes redonnaient l'argent tiré de la vente du lait à leurs maris. Chacun des dix frères et sœurs d'Oumar a donné 2.000FCFA (3€) au chef de famille Al Hassane, qui remit ensuite l'argent à Youssouf (le frère aîné d'Oumar) pour qu'il l'envoie à Oumar par la poste. Al Hassane ajouta 2.000FCFA (3€) pour payer l'affranchissement. À Dakar, Oumar a continué à recevoir de l'argent de sa famille pour préparer son second voyage. Apparemment on ne lui en voulait pas d'avoir échoué.

Après avoir reçu 20.000FCFA (30€), Oumar prit une voiture de Dakar à Ziguinchor, la capitale de la Casamance et son principal port sur l'Atlantique. Une fois à Ziguinchor, sa famille lui envoya une grosse somme, 394.000FCFA (600€) pour payer le passeur qui organisait le voyage en «pirogue» depuis l'île de Djogué, en Casamance. La famille Diamanka avait réussi à réunir cette somme en un mois seulement grâce à une stratégie. Son frère aîné Youssouf avait réussi à vendre la meilleure vache laitière que possédait la famille, pour un montant de 300.000FCFA (457€). Cette somme élevée était cependant insuffisante pour couvrir les frais du nouveau voyage d'Oumar, comme me l'a expliqué son grand-père Al Hassane lors d'un entretien.

J'ai demandé à Youssouf de prendre la plus grosse vache laitière et de la vendre au marché louma. Je lui ai dit qu'il pouvait vendre la vache à un prix raisonnable et qu'il ne devait pas la brader, même si nous avions un besoin urgent d'argent. Je savais qu'il la vendrait à un bon prix, c'est un bon éleveur et il connaît la valeur d'une vache. Même si Youssouf avait pu vendre la vache à 300.000FCFA (457€), il manquait 94.000FCFA (143€) que j'ai complété moi-même afin que nous puissions avoir les 394.000FCFA (600€). (Entretien effectué à Saré Bidji le 19 juillet 2014)

Comme la première fois, c'est Youssouf qui lui a envoyé les 394.000FCFA (600€). Après avoir retiré l'argent, Oumar s'est rendu à Elinkine pour rencontrer le passeur, qui l'a discrètement emmené dans une maison où d'autres migrants attendaient patiemment. (Tableau 2)

Tableau 2: Financement de la deuxième tentative d'Oumar (voie maritime).

Origine du financement	Montants	Dates
Tontine privée des frères d'Oumar	20.000FCFA (30€)	décembre 2001
Vente d'une vache laitière par la famille	300.000FCFA (457€)	décembre 2001
Épargne du chef de famille Al Hassane	94.000FCFA (143€)	décembre 2001
Total	414.000FCFA (631€)	décembre 2001

Source : Enquête de terrain, Ngom 2014



Pour sa deuxième tentative, Oumar a été introduit dans un réseau de passeurs qui organisent méticuleusement les départs en pirogue depuis la Casamance vers le nord du Maroc (ou vers les Canaries), et qui disposaient de relais dans chaque localité du parcours : îles de Djogué, île de Carabane, Mbour, Saint-Louis, Dakar (Ngom 2020). Oumar a été accueilli par un passeur à la gare routière d'Elinkine ; il lui a remis à l'avance la totalité du prix de son voyage. Il est resté à Elinkine pendant deux jours avec les autres migrants avant d'embarquer avec eux le troisième jour vers quatre heures du matin. Lui et les autres ont embarqué sur une petite pirogue qui devait les conduire à l'île de Djogué, où la grande pirogue était déjà préparée et approvisionnée en diesel et en nourriture. Oumar a embarqué avec 88 autres migrants pour rejoindre l'Europe par la navigation côtière.

Pour la deuxième tentative d'émigration d'Oumar, l'argent pour le voyage n'a pas été mobilisé par la famille étape par étape, contrairement à la première mobilisation des ressources par la famille. On remarque, en outre, que l'argent mobilisé pour la première tentative d'Oumar (par voie terrestre) était beaucoup plus important (1.074.000FCFA) que celle de la deuxième tentative (414.000FCFA), effectuée par voie maritime. Pour les voyages en mer, l'argent est mobilisé en une seule fois. La comparaison des formes de mobilisation des ressources met donc en évidence une différence considérable entre les budgets investis dans les voyages terrestres et les voyages maritimes. Cette différence s'explique peut-être par le fait que dans les voyages terrestres, l'argent est investi par la famille au fur et à mesure de la progression du migrant ; alors que dans les voyages, par la mer, il faut s'acquitter de la totalité du prix du voyage avant d'embarquer.

L'échec de la deuxième tentative d'Oumar (voie maritime)

Le voyage en pirogue d'Oumar a duré onze jours et nuits. Dans la journée le capitaine profitait de la visibilité pour aller le plus vite possible. La nuit il continuait à avancer, mais plus lentement. Au bout de la onzième nuit, après être passé sans encombre au large de Tanger il s'était engagé dans le détroit de Gibraltar ; et à l'aube, Ceuta—le cap qui fait face à la baie de Gibraltar—était en vue. Oumar, comme les 88 autres passagers, crut pendant quelque temps avoir enfin réussi à gagner la Terre promise.

Mais la pirogue avait été repérée par les garde-côtes. Ceux-ci s'approchèrent pour aider la pirogue à accoster, avant que la Croix-Rouge ne prenne le relais et ne donne aux migrants des médicaments et de la nourriture. Puis ils furent conduits dans des camps. Oumar y resta pendant une quinzaine de jours ; ensuite il fut rapatrié au Sénégal à Dakar. C'était en janvier 2002.

Revenir dans son village, son quartier ou même son pays après un échec est toujours une expérience douloureuse pour le migrant. Cependant, son retour ne sera pas perçu de la même manière si sa tentative a été financée par sa famille ou s'il l'a financée lui-même. La plupart des migrants ont été soutenus dans leur tentative d'émigration par leur famille ; et le fait d'être rapatrié dans leur pays d'origine—et donc d'avoir échoué—ne peut être vécu que comme une honte ; d'autant plus que les espoirs de toute une famille reposaient sur eux. Le migrant doit trouver des explications plausibles à son échec, et essayer de les faire partager par ses parents et ses proches qui n'ont pas d'expérience concrète du voyage et de ce qu'il comporte d'obstacles, de risques, de dangers, de souffrances et de difficultés.

Si le migrant a autofinancé son voyage et n'a pas pu réussir son projet migratoire, le retour est moins douloureux : car c'est son argent qu'il a dépensé en vain pour financer un voyage dont il savait d'avance qu'il avait peu de chances de réussir. Dans ce cas de figure, il n'a donc aucune explication à donner à qui que ce soit, puisqu'en plus d'avoir pris d'énormes risques en tentant d'émigrer par voie maritime ou terrestre, c'est son propre argent qu'il a perdu.

Ce n'est pas la même chose si c'est toute la famille qui a cru en lui et a porté son projet d'émigration. Tel était le cas d'Oumar ; et il revenait vers les siens la tête basse. Aussi fut-il très agréablement surpris de l'accueil chaleureux qu'il reçut à son retour. Tous voulaient le reconforter et lui manifester leur joie de le retrouver sain et sauf. Les plus chaleureux étaient sa mère, sa tante Aby et son grand-père. Personne ne mentionna les importantes sommes d'argent investies dans ses deux tentatives d'émigration qui n'ont pas détérioré ses relations avec sa famille. Après quelques semaines de repos au sein de sa famille, Oumar reprit ses activités agricoles et d'élevage au même titre que ses autres frères restés au village. Il s'est marié deux ans plus tard et a maintenant trois enfants. Cependant, lors de mes derniers entretiens avec Oumar en février 2021, j'ai constaté qu'il exprime toujours le désir et le besoin d'émigrer à nouveau pour répondre aux besoins de sa famille.

Conclusion

Que nous apprend l'étude approfondie du cas d'Oumar ? Ce jeune Sénégalais, membre d'une famille nombreuse de paysans-éleveurs de Casamance vivant d'autosubsistance, se porta volontaire pour tenter de rejoindre l'Europe. L'espoir était que s'il réussissait, il pourrait—en travaillant dur—gagner de quoi envoyer aux siens une véritable manne de plusieurs centaines d'euros chaque mois. Alors sa famille pourrait enfin sortir de sa condition précaire ; comme cette autre famille du même village dont un fils travaillait déjà en Italie.

Le cas d'Oumar n'est pas une exception. Compte tenu de l'écart considérable des salaires entre l'Europe et l'Afrique subsaharienne, ce sont sans doute des millions de jeunes Africains qui rêvent d'aller travailler en Europe, et des dizaines de milliers qui, concrètement, tentent le passage. Sans visa bien entendu, car l'Europe est devenue une *forteresse* dont les frontières sont de plus en plus difficiles à franchir (Pian 2016). Pour ce qui est d'Oumar, soutenu par toute sa famille qui redoubla d'efforts dans les champs et vendit sa meilleure vache laitière pour financer ses tentatives, il essaya par deux fois de rejoindre l'Europe. D'abord par la voie terrestre : en traversant plusieurs frontières (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Algérie...). Et, une seconde fois, par la voie maritime. Deux tentatives : deux échecs.

Il n'existe pas, du moins à notre connaissance, de statistiques précises sur le nombre annuel de jeunes Africains subsahéliens qui tentent de rejoindre l'Europe, et sur le pourcentage de ceux qui y réussissent (voir cependant : De Haas 2007 ; Beauchemin & Lessault 2009). Ce n'est guère surprenant, compte tenu du fait que ces migrations sont, comme on dit, « illégales » : les migrants ont d'excellentes raisons de chercher à passer inaperçus, que ce soient des autorités européennes elles-mêmes ou de celles des pays de la rive Sud de la Méditerranée, qui collaborent avec elles. Sur les trente cas de tentatives d'émigration en Europe que nous avons étudiées de près, sept ont réussi, soit un pourcentage d'environ 25% : trois échecs pour une réussite (Ngom 2019 ; Ngom 2020 ; Ngom 2021). L'un des cas s'est achevé tragiquement par le décès du migrant. Encore ne s'agit-il que du Sénégal, qui n'est que l'un des nombreux pays d'Afrique subsaharienne.

L'intérêt des études de cas est ailleurs : dans l'accès qu'elles donnent à la façon dont les choses se sont passées concrètement dans tel ou tel cas. Elles donnent à voir les contextes locaux, les situations structurelles des acteurs impliqués, leurs projets, les stratégies et les cours d'action qu'il/elles mettent en œuvre pour tenter de les réaliser, les ressources mobilisées, les obstacles rencontrés, les interactions avec d'autres acteurs (Delcroix & Bertaux 2000). Chaque cas est un mélange intime d'éléments particuliers et d'éléments généraux, quasiment impossibles à distinguer les uns des autres tant qu'on en reste à un seul cas. Mais si l'on multiplie les études de cas, on verra peu à peu se dégager des éléments dont la récurrence d'un cas à l'autre signale le caractère général (Bertaux 2016).

L'étude approfondie des deux tentatives d'Oumar apporte des éléments d'information sur un certain nombre d'aspects d'un phénomène général, les flux de tentatives d'émigration de jeunes Africains vers l'Europe. Nous aimerions terminer cet article en concentrant l'attention sur l'un de ces aspects : l'économie morale du phénomène (Thompson 1963). Autrement dit, l'« économie » des représentations, des convictions (ou « valeurs ») et des sentiments qui sous-tendent les

actions entreprises, et en premier lieu leur *signification* pour les acteurs impliqués. Car il n'y a pas d'action qui ne soit sous-tendue par une signification subjective pour l'auteur de l'action. Et si l'on inscrit ce rappel de Max Weber (1991 [1922]) dans la dimension temporelle, il apparaît que toute tentative d'émigration en Europe, exemple typique de cours d'action inscrit dans la durée, ne peut qu'être soutenue par un projet ancré dans la subjectivité, aussi illusoire soit-il. Alors, que nous apprend l'étude du cas d'Oumar sur l'économie morale des tentatives d'émigration vers un Eldorado imaginé ?

Quand il s'engage dans l'aventure dangereuse, il porte les espoirs de tout le groupe. Son frère aîné, après s'être informé des dangers qui l'attendaient, a préféré renoncer. Sa tante Aby pense que le risque est trop grand : celui qui partira pourrait bien y laisser sa vie, alors tant pis pour l'argent ! La priorité, c'est la vie ! Mais la pression des autres est si forte qu'à la fin, elle ne peut que céder. Le groupe familial finance donc le voyage d'Oumar : du point de vue de l'économie des sentiments moraux de la famille Diamanka, cela signifie respect pour son courage, confiance en ses capacités. Le groupe a investi en lui, financièrement, mais aussi moralement : il l'a investi d'une grande responsabilité.

Oumar est conscient de tout cela. Parti sans expérience, il a fait tout ce qu'il pouvait. Mais le franchissement de la frontière algérienne se passe mal comme ce fut le cas avec les autres migrants avec qui il a voyagé. Arrestation ; rapatriement forcé à Dakar... On imagine ce qu'il ressent à ce moment-là : un sentiment d'échec, mais surtout la honte d'avoir échoué, comme s'il avait trahi la confiance des siens. Il se cache plus d'une semaine, dort à la gare comme un sans-domicile.

Finalement il trouve la force de contacter les siens par téléphone. Il a dépensé en vain tout leur argent. Mais s'ils veulent bien recommencer à le financer, il est prêt à essayer encore, cette fois-ci par voie de mer. Mais il ne sait pas nager et n'a pas de gilet de sauvetage. C'est sa vie qui serait donc en jeu. D'autant que les pirogues sont des embarcations bricolées, inadaptées à la navigation en haute mer (Ngom 2017). Les passeurs les chargent à ras bord : les passagers écoperont frénétiquement nuit et jour (Ngom 2021). Après onze jours d'angoisse, la pirogue accoste au Maroc. Personne n'est mort en route. Mais ce voyage n'aura servi à rien : épuisés, les 88 passagers sont dès lors abreuvés, nourris, soignés par une ONG... et rapatriés de force.

Alors Oumar revient chez lui la tête basse. Il s'attend au pire. Il va certainement, pense-t-il, être la risée de ses frères et sœurs ; peut-être pas de ses parents, mais de ses oncles et de ses tantes ; et de Grand-père Al Hassane. Comment survivre à cela ?

Et puis... le miracle ! Au lieu du mépris, des applaudissements chaleureux, des accolades serrées ! Il s'attendait à être reçu comme un *loser* ; bien au

contraire, la famille tout entière l'accueille comme son héros !

C'est peut-être la découverte la plus contre-intuitive de cette étude de cas. Elle mérite donc l'attention ; et une tentative d'explication.

Le groupe familial avait investi beaucoup d'espoirs (et d'efforts) dans les voyages de l'un des leurs vers l'Europe. Mais chacun de ses membres savait aussi—sinon consciemment, du moins inconsciemment—qu'Oumar, quant à lui, mettait en jeu sa propre vie pour aider toute sa famille. S'il s'était noyé par exemple, chacun en aurait porté une part de responsabilité. D'où ce mélange de sentiments moraux : la déception en apprenant son premier puis son second échec ; mais la joie, l'indicible joie de le retrouver bien vivant, lui qu'on avait cru perdu plus d'une fois.

N'y a-t-il pas finalement de l'Odyssée dans ce qu'a fait Oumar ? Comme disait un poète né, il y a tout juste cinq cents ans :

*Heureux qui comme Ulysse a fait un beau voyage
Ou comme celui-là qui conquiert la toison
Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,
Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge.*
(Du Bellay, 1558).

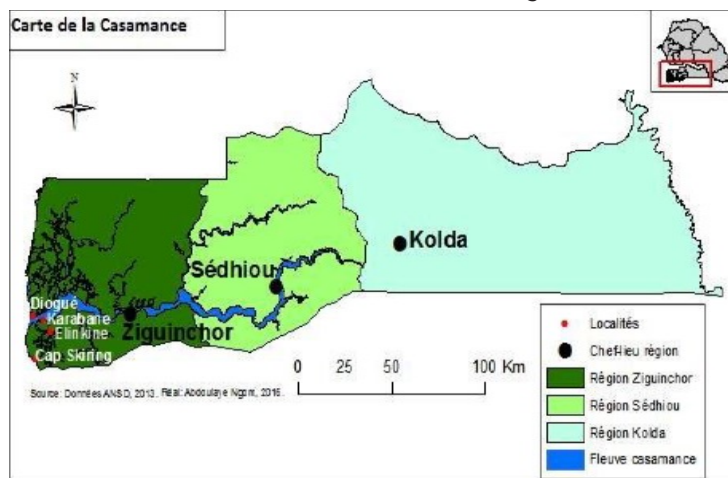
Enfin, Oumar a pu bénéficier, dans le cadre des politiques de prévention des départs en Casamance, d'un financement pour développer son activité et rester au pays (Ngom 2020). Ce financement obtenu, à travers le projet *Alternatives endogènes contre les migrations irrégulières* (ALEMI) lui avait permis de pouvoir développer des activités de maraîchage dans son village (Saré Bidji) et de pouvoir gagner un peu d'argent en vendant les rendements de ses récoltes en ville (Kolda). Vingt ans plus tard, Oumar a toujours le regret d'avoir échoué dans ses deux tentatives de rejoindre le continent européen et exprime le désir ardent de réaliser à nouveau son rêve ou plutôt devrais-je dire le rêve migratoire de toute une famille.

familles et divers acteurs (capitaines de pirogues, promoteurs intermédiaires de voyages, marabouts et pêcheurs). Nous sommes rentrés en contact avec nos enquêtés par le biais du carnet d'adresses à disposition avec lequel nous avions déjà travaillé dans le cadre de la préparation de notre mémoire de Master 2. Nous avons repris ainsi contact avec nos enquêtes afin de pouvoir avoir accès aux familles vivant dans la région de Ziguinchor. D'autres personnes-ressources ont été localisées grâce à notre réseau de connaissances personnelles. La stratégie d'approche des personnes-ressources s'est effectuée par effet boule de neige. Dès le début de notre recherche, une approche basée essentiellement sur le discours et la description dense (Geertz 1998) des pratiques paraissait plus appropriée concernant notre objet d'étude. Notre approche se focalise davantage sur le recueil biographique afin de reconstituer des historiques de familles (Delcroix & Bertaux 2000). Étant donné que nous étions basés en France plus particulièrement à Strasbourg, nous avons planifié nos enquêtes de terrain au Sénégal plus particulièrement en Casamance en faisant un voyage chaque année d'environ deux mois pour effectuer nos entretiens et mener nos observations de terrain. Nous avons également effectué des entretiens via Skype avec quelques membres de la famille en présence de notre directrice de thèse depuis Strasbourg. Pour ainsi dire, nous avons continué à mener des entretiens avec cette famille et les autres une fois de retour à Strasbourg. Cela montre que nous avons gardé le contact et continué à faire du suivi dans la durée avec la famille une fois de retour à Strasbourg. La famille Diamanka dont nous présentons l'étude de cas a été suivie dans la durée avec des entretiens répétés avec des membres de la famille répartis comme suit : j'ai d'abord interviewé Oumar, le migrant, puis le grand-père paternel, le père, la mère, la tante paternelle, deux oncles paternels, trois sœurs, et huit frères. Pour éviter tout biais, les entretiens ont été le plus souvent réalisés en peulh ou en wolof puis traduits en français (Ngom 2018).

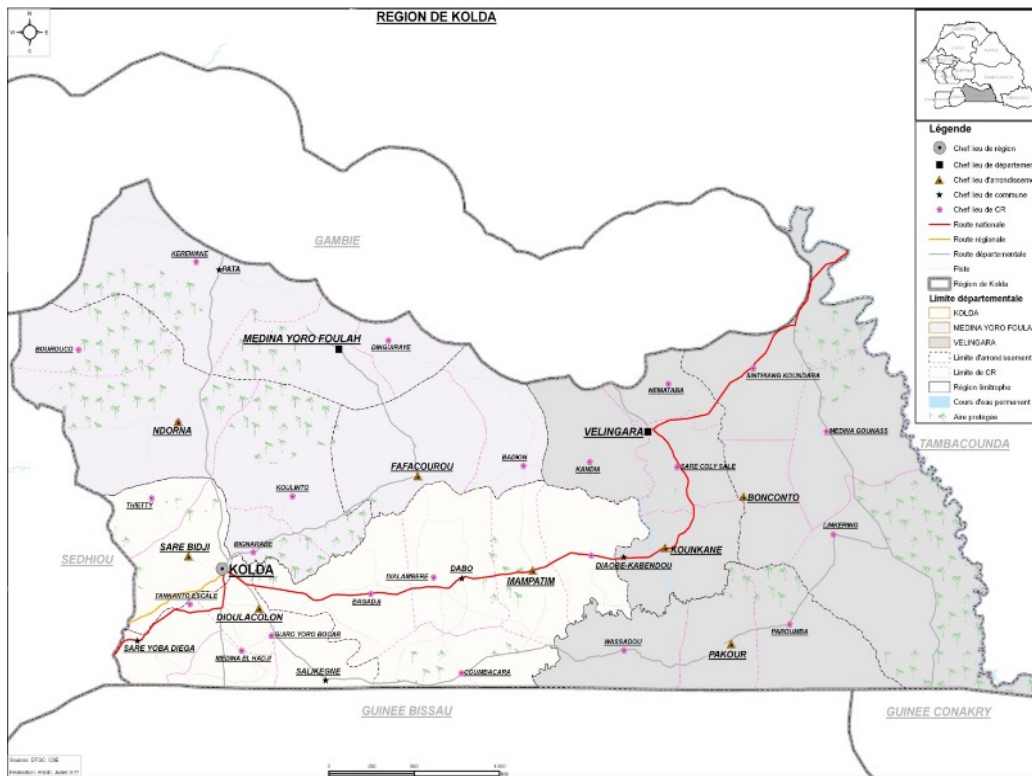
Note méthodologique

Cet article s'appuie sur les résultats d'une recherche doctorale sur les mobilisations familiales et individuelles pour la réalisation de projets d'émigration de la Casamance vers l'Europe. Ce travail combine différentes techniques de collecte de données de nature essentiellement qualitative : récits de vie, récits de vie croisés, entretiens semi-directifs et observation directe. Les enquêtes ont été réalisées dans la durée entre 2013 et 2017 en Casamance—une grande région du sud du Sénégal—auprès de trente migrants, de trente

Carte 1 : Carte de la Casamance. Source : Ngom 2017.



Carte 2 : Carte de la localisation de Saré Bidji. Source : ANSD 2013.



Remerciements

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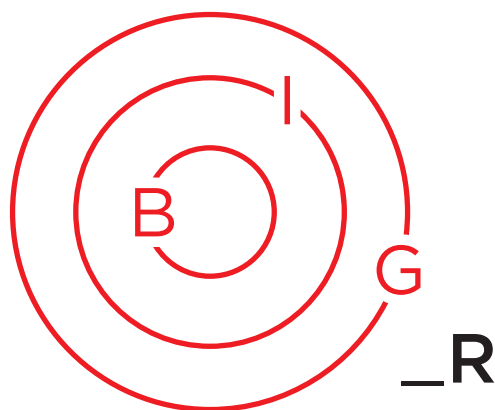
Notes

- 1 Mes enquêtes ont été réalisées entre 2013 et 2017 en Casamance, la grande région du sud du Sénégal, auprès de trente migrants et de leurs familles, ainsi qu'auprès de divers acteurs de l'émigration : capitaines de « pirogues », pêcheurs, promoteurs intermédiaires de voyages, marabouts...). Parmi ces trente familles dont l'un des membres a tenté le voyage vers l'Europe il n'y a eu que 7 cas de réussite, soit une moyenne d'une tentative sur quatre. Le présent article présente l'étude de cas approfondie de la famille Diamanka qui a financé les deux tentatives de l'un de ses membres, le jeune Oumar. Cette famille se compose du grand-père Al Hassane, de ses dix enfants et de leurs conjoints, et des 21 enfants de ces dix couples, dont Oumar.
- 2 Saré Bidji est une communauté rurale de la région de Kolda, en haute Casamance au sud du Sénégal. Elle s'étend sur une superficie de 325 km² et sa population est estimée, en 2013, à 16753 habitants. La communauté rurale de Saré Bidji est bordée à l'ouest par la communauté rurale de Diana Bah (région de Sédhiou), à l'est par les communautés rurales de Bignarabé et Ndorna, au nord par la communauté rurale de Thiéty et au sud par les communautés rurales de Tankanto Escale et Dioulacolou. La plupart des familles qui y vivent parviennent à assurer leur survie grâce à l'agriculture et l'élevage.

- 3 Dans un souci de respect de l'anonymat de nos enquêtés, l'ensemble des noms et prénoms que nous citons dans cet article sont des prénoms et noms d'emprunt.
- 4 Les pirogues sont des embarcations creusées à la hache dans le tronc d'un gigantesque baobab, de caïcédrat ou de fromagers. Il s'agit, plus exactement, d'embarcations de fortune faites de bateaux à moteur qui sont normalement utilisées pour la pêche côtière et qui sont souvent en mauvais état. Ces pirogues sont des sortes de bateaux sans quille, peu stables, adéquats certes pour voguer sur un lac ou une rivière au cours paisible ; mais pas pour affronter la mer, sa houle, encore moins ses déferlantes, alors qu'il est surchargé. C'est sur ce type d'embarcations que se tentent les passages vers l'Europe par voie de mer.
- 5 Les îles de Djogué et de Carabane sont des villages de pêcheurs situés en Casamance.
- 6 Le prix d'un billet d'avion pour l'Europe varie en fonction de la ville de destination. Par exemple, un billet d'avion Dakar-Paris (aller simple) coûte environ 200.000FCFA (304€) ; pour un Dakar-Barcelone, c'est environ 180.000FCFA (274€) ; et pour un Dakar-Milan, environ 190.000FCFA (290€).
- 7 Les *ressources subjectives* sont « les énergies physiques, mentales et morales qu'un individu développe à un moment donné de son existence, ainsi que ses savoirs et savoir-faire qui lui permettent de mobiliser à bon escient ses énergies, voire celles de ses proches, pour répondre à ses besoins et réaliser ses projets » (Delcroix 2013).

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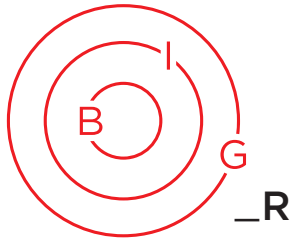


POLICY

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POLICY REPORT

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Customs Revenue in the Renewable Energy Sector: Evidence from South Africa

Jean Luc Erero *

This report assesses the effects of customs revenues in the renewable energy industry in South Africa. After ESKOM (State-owned enterprise) presented the firm's biggest loss of R9.7 (\$0.6) billion in August 2009, several applications for higher tariffs were performed over the years. South Africa has been going through an energy crisis, with more loadshedding expected in 2024, which is predicted to hamper GDP development. Indeed, the country's economy has been adversely disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and its improvement path is at this instant stifled by incessant power cuts. There is no doubt that this energy crisis will continue for a while in the future, and it is unlikely to get better soon. This policy report provides a customs revenue analysis of the market participants or entities in the renewable energy industry. This study adopted a pragmatic research methodology and found that the government could propose to the National Treasury the scrapping of value-added tax (VAT) and Customs Duties on the importation of solar panels and parts in order to help reduce the cost of purchasing for both businesses and households.

Disclaimer

The views and contents of this report only reflect the author's opinion and do not represent the point of view of the South Africa Revenue Service (SARS).

Executive Summary

South Africa is experiencing an energy crisis with more power cuts anticipated in 2024, which is predicted to slow down the development of the GDP. To close the electricity supply gap, the government is promoting alternative sources of energy, mostly renewable energy such as solar electricity, wind, geothermal, hydropower, ocean, and bioenergy (CSIR 2023).

The pragmatic method was used to analyse the customs revenue in the renewable energy sector. Desktop research was performed to collect data from secondary sources. A literature review was performed from various sources of accredited journals for comparison purposes with other countries. Most countries in the world have embraced the use of clean and renewable energy (United Nations 2013). Hydropower is the major renewable energy source that has been embraced by most countries in the world, accounting for more than 40% of the total mix of renewable energy. The top 10 countries in the use of diversified renewable energy worldwide based on capacity are composed of China, USA, Brazil, India, Germany, Japan, Canada, France, Italy, and Russia.

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In this respect, these countries have made significant progress in switching to renewable energy as part of reaching specific objectives and dealing with the issue of air pollution. Though not among the world leaders, South Africa is the leader in renewable energy diverse power in the African continent, followed by Egypt and Ethiopia (IRENA 2023). South Africa is leading mainly in both solar and wind energy and is the third biggest in hydropower following Ethiopia and Angola. In terms of bioenergy, the country is the second largest following Ethiopia. South Africa was the fourteenth biggest producer of carbon dioxide in the world in 2021 mainly due to the country's reliance on coal energy.

The renewable energy industry provides solutions to import dependency by encouraging the government to allocate resources and protect the economy from the volatile price swings of fossil fuels. This will stimulate economic development, job creation, and poverty alleviation (Okazaki 2018). Furthermore, renewable sources of energy can assist countries moderate climate change, foster buoyancy to unstable prices, and reduce the costs of energy (WTO 2017).

The growing interest in new technologies and renewable energy points to a new system of harmonisation in dealing with renewable energy potential (Yaren 2020). All economic agents such as investors, regulators, governments, and consumers need a universal similar structure for both renewable and non-renewable energy resources to measure energy sustainability at all stages (WCO and WTO 2022).

This paper found that the import of solar and wind equipment increased between 2019 and 2023 by recording a massive increase in 2020. The custom value increased from R1.6 (\$0.1) billion in 2019 to R32 (\$2.1) billion in the 2023 financial year. This increase is in chapter 85 (Cellphones, Electrical Equipment, and Machinery) under tariff code 85044000 (Electrical transformers and static converters such as rectifiers and inductors parts) recording R28.3 (\$18.5) billion total custom value in five years followed by tariff code 85076000 (Electric accumulators–Lithium-ion accumulators) with R22.3 (\$1.5) billion.

The South African government should consider the use of tax and customs revenue to improve policy formulation. There is no doubt that the effective use of tax data can increase compliance levels, enhance revenue collection, and assist in the identification of new revenue opportunities.

1. Introduction

Currently, there is no doubt that loadshedding is a familiar word to all South Africans, as it affects not only households but also businesses and the entire country. Loadshedding is the interruption of an electricity supply

to avoid excessive load on the generating plant. This loadshedding frustrates the smooth performance of the economy and households by carrying its price effects on production and living costs, and thus negatively impacting the expansion of the economy, which was recovering from the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Erero 2023). The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) pointed out that the GDP growth is predicted at 0.3% for 2023 mainly due to loadshedding. Nonetheless, when taking into consideration the sternness of loadshedding, the Bank estimated that it will push down growth by up to 2 percentage points in 2023, as opposed to the prior forecast of 0.6 percentage points (SARB 2023). In understanding the impact of loadshedding, a previous study conducted by Erero (2023) shows that there is an overall negative impact of loadshedding on the economy, even though the magnitude varies.

The Association of Psychologists puts forward a strong warning that loadshedding is having a negative emotional impact on South Africans. In fact, the continual power cuts trigger anxiety and depression in some individuals and can also be disastrous. Indeed, South Africa has experienced power cuts at exceptional stages that have distressed the normal lives of several South African citizens (CSIR 2023).

South Africa's economy has been challenged with an unprecedented case of loadshedding which has negatively impacted food security, mobile networks, and economic sectors in general. Stats SA (2022) stated that the country's GDP declined by 0.7% in the last quarter of 2022—a lot of this drop was ascribed to rolling power cuts which hobbled economic production. Furthermore, the magnitude of the current blackouts put at risk the GDP improvement from the 0.7% decline undergone in 2022. There is a need for partnership between the government and private sector to finance the use of renewable energy (BER 2022).

ESKOM's continued stage 6 loadshedding has now even instigated considerable harm to the South African economy, with more than R4 (\$0.3) billion lost from the GDP for every single day it carries on. The country's economy could be between 8% and 10% higher if ESKOM did not perform poorly. Nonetheless, despite the harm done to the economy in general, both households and industries are currently condemning the incompetency of ESKOM in managing power cuts (ESKOM 2023).

The challenges of loadshedding were addressed through a comprehensive variety of amendments and policy procedures implemented by the government in March 2023. The most important measure included tax relief stimulating the growth of the renewable energy industry, in which households who install rooftop solar panels should be eligible to claim a rebate of 25% of the cost of the panels, up to a maximum of R15,000 (\$980) from March 2023. As large businesses shift to

some degree towards self-generation of energy, this will have positive spin-offs for the government through expansion in imports. Furthermore, investment in renewable energy by companies and households will contribute to greater rebate claims and tax refunds to taxpayers (SARS 2023).

Against this backdrop, this report evaluates South Africa's electricity sector, namely, the usage of renewable energy. A desktop method is used to assess the customs revenue generated from the renewable energy sector. Section 2 presents the South African renewable energy policy. Section 3 captures the state of the renewable energy sector in South Africa. Section 4 analyses the effects of renewable energy, and Section 5 puts forward conclusions and recommendations based on the business cases of the renewable energy sector.

2. Overview of the Renewable Energy Industry

2.1. Global Comparison of the Renewable Energy Industry

Most countries have embraced the use of clean and renewable energy, albeit at various degrees, including, amongst others, solar electricity, wind, geothermal, hydropower, ocean, and bioenergy. Hydropower is the major renewable energy source that has been adopted by most countries in the world, accounting for more than 40% of the total mix of renewable energy. The top 10 countries in the use of mixed renewable energy worldwide based on capacity include China, USA, Brazil, India, Germany, Japan, Canada, France, Italy, and Russia. Consequently, these countries have made significant progress in switching to renewable energy by reaching specific objectives and addressing the issue of air pollution as well (IRENA 2023).

Currently, the war in Ukraine has triggered spiking fossil fuel costs by hampering energy-importing poor countries. Consequently, renewable energy sources can be found in every country, with the exception that their potential should be harnessed accordingly. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) pointed out that 90% of the world's electricity could and should emanate from renewable energy by 2050. In fact, renewable energy seems to be an inexpensive power alternative in several countries nowadays. OECD (2022) and IRENA (2023) indicate that prices for renewable energy technologies are declining rapidly. For instance, the cost of electricity from solar power declined by 85% between 2010 and 2020, while the costs of onshore and offshore wind energy declined by 56% and 48% respectively, during the same period.

Though not among the world leaders, South Africa is the leader in renewable energy diverse power in the African continent, followed by Egypt and Ethiopia.

South Africa is leading mainly in both solar and wind energy and is the third biggest in hydropower, following Ethiopia and Angola. In terms of bioenergy, the country is the second largest, following Ethiopia. South Africa was the fourteenth biggest producer of carbon dioxide in the world in 2021, mainly due to the country's reliance on coal energy.

Though not among the world leaders, South Africa is the leader in renewable energy mix capacity in the African continent, followed by Egypt and Ethiopia. South Africa is leading principally in both solar and wind energy and is the third biggest in hydropower, following Ethiopia and Angola. In terms of bioenergy, the country is the second largest, following Ethiopia. The largest emitters of carbon dioxide in the world accounted for more than 60% of CO₂ emissions in 2021. South Africa was the fourteenth biggest producer of carbon dioxide in the world in 2021, mainly due to the country's reliance on coal energy (WTO 2019).

Table 1. Renewable energy share of electricity capacity in percentage in 2021. Source: International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA 2023).

World	38.3
Asia	37.6
Africa	23.1
Eurasia	29.4
Europe	52.2
North America	32
Oceania	45.3
South America	68.5
Middle East	7.3
Central America and Caribbean	37.7

Regarding the share of renewable energy to the total electricity capacity, **Table 1** indicates that there are variations across the regions, with a world average of 38.3%. South America and Europe have so far achieved higher shares of renewable energy's share to the total electricity capacity. South Africa's share of renewable energy is below that of the global and continental average at 17.6% (IRENA 2023).

Most of the countries that have embraced clean energy have invested billions of dollars and put in place incentives to entice both businesses and households to convert to environmentally friendly energy sources like solar power through different policy measures unique to each country's circumstances (WTO 2017).

2.2. South African Renewable Energy Policy

South Africa has been investing in renewable energy for over a decade and has increased the capacity of renewables exponentially from 1,003 Megawatts in

2012 to 10,193 Megawatts in 2021, mainly driven by investments in wind and solar power. The state of South Africa Renewable Energy data for South Africa released by the Department of Mineral and Energy (DME) shows that solar PV, concentrated solar power (CSP), wind and biomass, and renewable energy technologies are available in all South African provinces (Akinbami, Oke, and Bodunrin 2021). The Northern Cape province recorded the highest in all renewable energy (solar PV, CSP, wind and biomass), followed by the Eastern Cape Province and the Western Cape.

The South African government addressed the challenge of power cuts through a series of reforms and policy strategies. Amongst others, this includes the tax proposal designed to stimulate the expansion of the renewable energy industry, in which households who install rooftop solar panels will be eligible to claim a rebate of 25% of the cost of the panels, up to a maximum of R15,000 from March 2023. As large businesses shift to some degree towards self-generation of energy, this will have positive spin-offs for the government through achievable improved imports and investment in renewable energy by companies and households that will expand the rebate claims and tax refunds to taxpayers (SARS 2023).

DME developed the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2018 with the main objective of serving as the primary plan for new-build power generation. The original one was written in 2010 and it was meant to be appraised every two years. The 2018 IRP marked a considerable move towards renewable energy, with the largest part of the new generation emanating from solar power PV, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and wind (DME 2018).

Table 2 indicates that the 2018 IRP marked a considerable move toward the implementation of the strategic objectives of renewable energy. More new capacities were established for the purpose of reducing the negative impact of the unending power cuts.

The renewable energy sector, like many other established industries, has organised itself with industry bodies and councils being established globally and domestically. The following are some of the key bodies that are regulating and monitoring the renewable energy industry:

- International Renewable Energy Agency
- Global Wind Energy Council
- South African Wind Energy Association
- South African Photovoltaic Industry Association

3. Renewable Energy Value Chain

South Africa is the biggest consumer of energy in the African continent accounting for 30% of electricity demand. The current energy mix comprises mainly coal which contributed over 80% to the systems demand, 4.6% from nuclear, and about 13.7% from renewable energy (CSIR 2023). A comparison of the energy mix between the years 2020 and 2022 indicates a decreased share of coal-generated electricity and an increasing share from renewable energy sources, as depicted in **Figure 1**.

The increasing share of renewable energy sources is not only a result of increased loadshedding in the country, but the government has also played a critical

Table 2. Policy adjusted IRP draft 2018. Source: policy revised setup of the plan (DME 2018)

	Cool	Nuclear	Hydro	Storage	PV	Wind	CSP	Gas/ Diesel	Other (cogen, biomass, landfill)	Distributed generation
Current	37149	1860	2100	2912	1474	1980	300	3830	499	
2019	2155					244	300			allocation to the extent of the short term capacity and energy gap
2020	1433				114	300				
2021	1433				300	818				
2022	711			513	1400	1600				
2023	750				1000	1600				
2024		1860				1600		1000		
2025					1000	1600				
2026						1600				
2027	750					1600		2000		
2028					1000	1600				
2029				1575	1000	1600				500
2030			2500		1000	1600				500
Total installed capacity by 2023 (MW)	40381	3720	4600	5000	8288	17742	600	6830	499	4000

- Already contracted
- Extension of Koeberg plant life
- Installed capacity
- New capacity
- Distributed generation capacity for own use

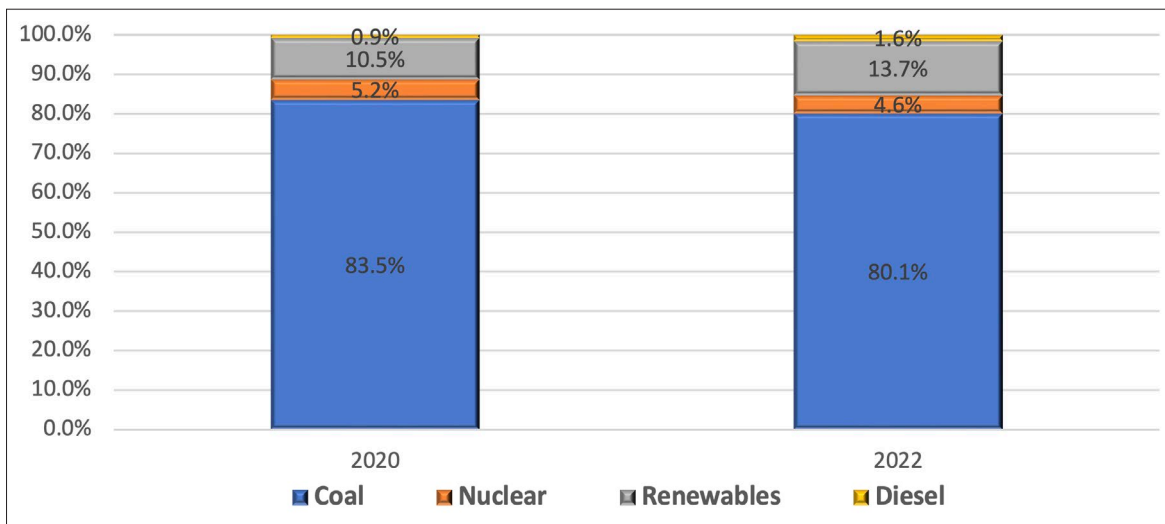


Figure 1. South Africa's Electricity Mix (Installed Capacity) between 2020 and 2022. Source: CSIR 2023.

role in enabling increased investment. In July 2022, the President announced the electricity plan to hasten the supply of new capacity from renewables, gas, and battery storage by relaxing policies for private generators and doubling the size of Bid Window 6 of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (REI4P). The quantity of new generation capacity supplied through Bid Window 6 for wind and solar power is estimated to double from 2,600 MW to 5,200 MW (GreenCape 2020).

The rising share of renewable energy in the electricity mix also makes notable contributions towards the target of net-zero emissions. The increased government support for investment in renewable energy will in turn lead to a drastic rise in the demand for fabricated components and services within the renewable energy value chain. It thus becomes critical to understand the value chain driving the renewable energy industries in order to develop relevant industrial development support programs that support localisation, employment creation, and economic growth.

3.1. Renewable Energy Distribution

In 2022, coal-generated electricity still dominated the energy mix. However, renewable energy is increasingly infiltrating the energy mix with wind energy being the main contributor (50%), followed by solar energy (34%). Hydropower and CSP contribute small shares in the renewable energy industry, as depicted in **Figure 2**.

3.2. Renewable Energy Trends

With South Africa experiencing continual and revolving energy blackouts of up to 10 hours a day, this has facilitated investments in renewable energy sources. The private sector, government, and households have made these investments. With no clear solution to

how the coal-generated electricity supply crisis would be resolved, the opportunities within the renewable energy market in the country reflect a positive outlook (National Treasury 2023).

South Africa's solar PV industry has been growing steadily over the past few years with an increasing number of installations from retail centres, offices, and residential areas, resulting in an increasing share of solar-generated electricity (Akinbami, Oke, and Bodunrin 2021). The push towards solar energy is fuelled by the increasing power shortages from coal-generated electricity in the country. In 2014, 1,000 GWh of electricity was generated through concentrated solar and this increased to 7,000 GWh concentrated solar and 1000 GWh solar photovoltaic by 2020 as depicted in **Figure 3**.

The country's 2019 IRP indicates that by 2030, a total of 75,744 MW of electricity will be generated. The share of solar PV-generated power is expected to be 10.6% of the energy mix by 2030. Concentrating solar power is expected to have one of the smallest contributions to the energy mix of about 0.9% by 2030 (IRENA 2023).

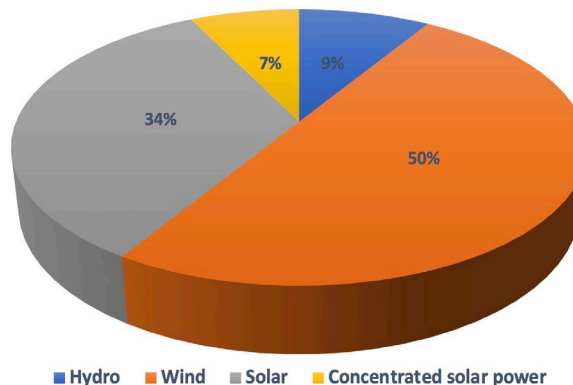


Figure 2. Distribution of Renewable Electricity Generation in South Africa in 2022. Source: CSIR 2023.

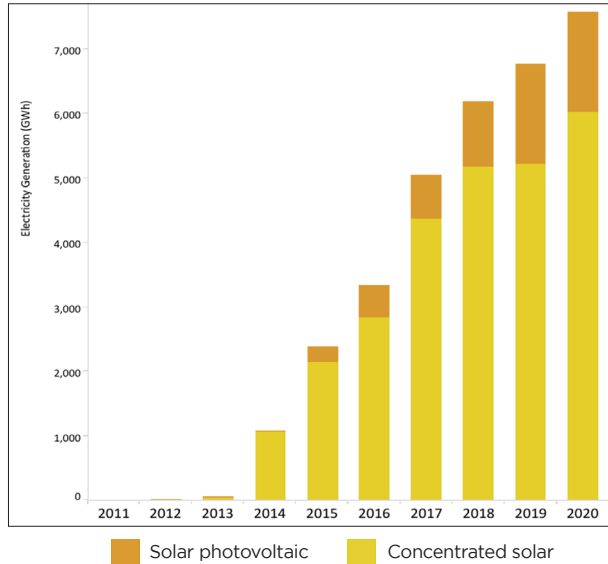


Figure 3. Solar Energy Generation between 2011 and 2020.
 Source: IRENA 2023.

South Africa has an abundance of solar energy as a resource for electricity generation. The country's solar resources ranked amongst the highest in the world. The annual average global solar radiation is approximately 220 W/m² for South Africa, while in certain regions of the United States of America, it is 150 W/m² and 100 W/m² for Europe and the United Kingdom. This suggests that South Africa should take the opportunity of this energy resource and grow the solar industry (ESKOM 2023).

3.3. Set-Up Cost

In South Africa, the cost of installing a complete solar energy/power system in 2023 ranges between the price range of R49,500 (\$3,235) to R360,000 (\$23,529) or more for different homes and offices, and this largely

depends on the capacity to be installed in a home, office space and industrial area. The costs are driven by the supplied inverter, solar PV panels, the roof mounting kit, certification, electrical work, and installation as well as other components (SARS 2023).

4. Customs Values of Renewable Energy in South Africa

The increased use of renewable energy in South Africa is evident in the import of Catalytic Converters, Computers, and Mechanical Appliances which are under Chapter 84, and Electrical equipment under Chapter 85 (WCO and WTO 2022), both of which increased substantially between 2019 and 2023. Chapter 84 imports recorded an increase of R546,999 (\$35,752) in Customs Value, R93,575 (\$6,116) in VAT amount, and R0 (\$0) in total duty amount, whilst Chapter 85 recorded a growth of about R30.4 (\$1.9) billion in Customs Value, R4.9 (\$0.3) billion in VAT amount and R45.3 (\$2.9) million in total duty amount with the highest increase reported in 2020 and a slight decline in 2022 for both Chapters. The total duty amount shows a similar trend as the customs value and VAT amount as depicted in **Table 3**.

Table 3 indicates that the import of Solar and Wind equipment increased between 2019 and 2023 by recording a massive increase in 2020. The custom value increased from R1.6 (\$0.1) billion in 2019 to R32.1 (\$2.1) billion in the 2023 financial year. This increase is in chapter 85 (Cellphones, Electrical Equipment, and Machinery) under tariff code 85044000 (Electrical transformers and static converters such as rectifiers and inductors parts) recording R28.3 (\$1.8) billion total custom value in five years followed by tariff code 85076000 (Electric accumulators-Lithium-ion accumulators) with R22.3 (\$1.5) billion as depicted in **Table 4**.

Table 3. Import of Solar and Wind equipment. The average exchange rate between Rand and US dollar is 15.3, meaning that 1US\$=R15.3. Source: SARS 2023.

Chapter 84	Quantity	Customs Value	VAT Amount	Total Duty Amount
2019	9	R 13 139.00	R 847.95	R 0.00
2020	82	R 386 527.00	R 62 006.85	R 0.00
2021	105	R 399 737.00	R 65 956.65	R 0.00
2022	7	R 55 381.00	R 9 137.85	R 0.00
2023	206	R 560 138.00	R 92 422.65	R 0.00
Total	409	R 1 414 922.00	R 230 371.95	R 0.00
Chapter 85	Quantity	Customs Value	VAT Amount	Total Duty Amount
2019	8 300 918	R 1 633 029 960.00	R 266 019 536.10	R 14 289 158.80
2020	52 840 895	R 12 299 312 204.00	R 2 004 076 178.04	R 37 059 954.84
2021	33 319 093	R 13 355 000 668.00	R 2 114 694 832.67	R 41 945 496.89
2022	48 621 856	R 11 691 094 803.00	R 1 908 994 581.00	R 29 865 681.81
2023	99 037 201	R 32 117 136 434.00	R 5 261 881 768.03	R 59 590 862.04
Total	242 119 963	R 71 095 574 069.00	R 11 555 666 895.84	R 182 751 154.38

Table 4. Custom Value on Solar and Wind equipment per tariff code. 1US\$=R15.3. Source: SARS 2023.

Tariff Code	Custom Value					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
85044000	R 1 181 364 450.00	R 4 695 679 013.00	R 4 837 825 602.00	R 6 045 212 067.00	R 11 576 539 173.00	R 28 336 620 305.00
85076000	R 293 553 825.00	R 1 534 626 874.00	R 2 874 826 662.00	R 3 601 244 606.00	R 14 026 141 671.00	R 22 330 393 638.00
85023100	R 329 535.00	R 5 356 029 969.00	R 4 851 862 019.00	R 90 768 317.00	R 8 940 001.00	R 10 307 929 841.00
85414300				R 1 414 776 441.00	R 5 570 609 637.00	R 6 985 386 078.00
85021300	R 78 156 872.00	R 319 357 833.00	R 445 496 249.00	R 266 564 964.00	R 505 493 640.00	R 1 615 069 558.00
85021100	R 42 068 615.00	R 203 327 243.00	R 184 336 584.00	R 156 312 891.00	R 236 866 524.00	R 822 911 857.00
85021200	R 37 556 663.00	R 190 291 272.00	R 160 653 552.00	R 116 215 517.00	R 192 545 788.00	R 697 262 792.00
84128010	R 13 139.00	R 386 527.00	R 399 737.00	R 55 381.00	R 560 138.00	R 1 414 922.00
Total	R 1 633 043 099.00	R 12 299 698 731.00	R 13 355 400 405.00	R 11 691 150 184.00	R 32 117 696 572.00	R 71 096 988 991.00

Table 4 illustrates that there is only one tariff code under Chapter 84. The data of customs values are taken from the Table 3. Nonetheless, Tables 5 and 6 indicate that the VAT amount increased from R226 (\$14.8) million in 2019 to R5.2 (\$0.3) billion in the 2023 financial year. Similar to the custom value, chapter 85 tariff codes 85044000 and 85076000 reported the highest VAT amounts for the five financial years. The duty amount increased from R14.2 (\$0.9) million in 2019 to R59.5 (\$3.9) million in the 2023 financial year. There is a slight decline of VAT amount in 2022 as depicted in **Table 5**.

The tariffs that reported the highest values in customs value and VAT amount are showing lower duty amounts. Table 6 indicates that the duty amount increased from R14.2 (\$0.9) million in 2019 to R59.6 (\$3.9) million in the 2023 financial year.

5. Revenue Opportunities

The persistent roll-out of loadshedding not only brought economic challenges but is also serving as a catalyst for the growth in the use of renewable sources of energy, which creates great business and investment opportunities for the existing industry players and potential new entrants and thus revenue opportunities for SARS. The implementation of the policy inherent to rebates for solar installation is likely to encourage businesses that have commenced with their projects to generate their own electricity to move with speed and will lead to huge rebate claims from businesses across all sectors.

In the short run, businesses across various industries are struggling as a direct result of loadshedding and

Table 5. VAT amount on Solar and Wind equipment per tariff code. 1US\$=R15.3. Source: SARS 2023.

Tariff Code	VAT Amount					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
85044000	R 193 322 506.50	R 773 246 755.89	R 778 354 842.77	R 995 485 930.20	R 1 907 371 219.94	R 4 647 781 255.30
85076000	R 48 432 170.85	R 251 107 248.30	R 433 857 420.15	R 593 050 321.35	R 2 312 844 781.34	R 3 639 291 941.99
85023100	R 54 373.20	R 883 744 929.00	R 799 971 114.45	R 14 976 769.80	R 1 475 098.20	R 1 700 222 284.65
85414300				R 233 434 978.35	R 917 055 029.55	R 1 150 490 007.90
85021300	R 13 412 476.80	R 39 010 468.80	R 63 699 104.70	R 39 760 035.90	R 76 487 609.10	R 232 369 695.30
85021100	R 5 257 969.20	R 29 435 462.10	R 19 026 738.60	R 17 511 600.90	R 25 696 523.70	R 96 928 294.50
85021200	R 5 540 039.55	R 27 531 313.95	R 19 785 612.00	R 14 774 944.50	R 20 951 506.20	R 88 583 416.20
84128010	R 847.95	R 62 006.85	R 65 956.65	R 9 137.85	R 92 422.65	R 230 371.95
Total	R 266 020 384.05	R 2 004 138 184.89	R 2 114 760 789.32	R 1 909 003 718.85	R 5 261 974 190.68	R 11 555 897 267.79

Table 6. Customs Duty amount on Solar and Wind equipments per tariff code. 1US\$=R15.3. Source: SARS 2023

Tariff Code	Duty Amount					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
85021300	R 8 204 981.40	R 12 018 061.08	R 15 016 214.20	R 6 510 623.14	R 31 309 855.38	R 73 059 735.20
85021100	R 3 628 823.20	R 14 066 404.80	R 13 280 139.80	R 13 416 153.40	R 18 536 735.20	R 62 928 256.40
85021200	R 2 455 354.20	R 10 811 162.11	R 13 572 846.20	R 9 864 165.36	R 9 456 813.76	R 46 160 341.63
85044000	R 0.00	R 153 417.00	R 66 796.69	R 65 739.91	R 248 949.45	R 534 903.05
85076000	R 0.00	R 9 409.85	R 9 500.00	R 9 000.00	R 12 508.25	R 40 418.10
85414300				R 0.00	R 26 000.00	R 26 000.00
85023100	R 0.00	R 1 500.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 1 500.00
84128010	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00
Total	R 14 289 158.80	R 37 059 954.84	R 41 945 496.89	R 29 865 681.81	R 59 590 862.04	R 182 751 154.38

have resorted to finding quick solutions such as installing generators, which are costly and require fuel/diesel to run as well as maintenance. This has created an opportunity for the suppliers of generators and diesel, which should translate into increased income tax revenue for SARS.

In the medium to long term, there is a likelihood of increased opportunities for businesses operating in renewable energy, from production to installations and maintenance, as the overall drive towards increased electricity generation through renewable energy sources results in a significant increase in demand for components and services for the various renewable energy technologies (solar, wind, hydro, and bioenergy). This is likely to boost the revenues of suppliers and installers across all segments of the alternative or renewable energy sector, especially solar, for both households and businesses. The banking industry is likely to also benefit from introducing financing products aimed at funding solar panels by both households and businesses.

6. Conclusion

This report analysed the effects of customs revenue on renewable energy in South Africa. The pragmatic method was used to shed light on the insights drawn from the loadshedding and the possible positive spin-offs from the increased use of renewable energy to complement the ailing coal-fired electricity supply. South Africa has been experiencing an energy crisis, with further power cuts presumed in 2024, which is predicted to hamper GDP expansion. Indeed, the country's economy has been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and performance is currently stifled by continual power cuts. There is no doubt that this energy crisis will continue for a long time in the future, and it is unlikely to get better soon. The persistent and worsening loadshedding is undoubtedly having a negative impact on all sectors of the economy and people, with its impact already evident in the contraction of the GDP, which is projected to be constrained further in 2024. This is likely to adversely impact the economy by:

Contributing to the rise in the cost of living, especially through an increase in food prices, as businesses shift the rising cost of doing business to consumers.

- Unemployment is likely to worsen after showing some marginal improvement in 2022.
- Social unrest is likely to rise as society grows impatient with the quality of public services that it receives and thus erodes investor confidence.
- Revenue collection will come under pressure as businesses experience losses and increased costs of doing business, which will result in assessed losses.

The pragmatic method was used to analyse the effects of customs revenue in the renewable energy sector. The import of solar and wind equipment increased from 2019 to 2023, recording a massive increase in 2020. The customs value increased from R1.6 (\$0.1) billion in 2019 to R32 (\$2.1) billion in the 2023 financial year. This increase is in chapter 85 (Cellphones, Electrical Equipment, and Machinery) under tariff code 85044000 (Electrical transformers and static converters such as rectifiers and inductors parts) recording R28.3 (\$18.5) billion total customs value in five years, followed by tariff code 85076000 (Electric accumulators-Lithium-ion accumulators) with R22.3 (\$1.5) billion.

In summary, the potential growth in renewable energy presents an opportunity for the government to collect more customs revenues. Especially, solar and wind equipment imported into the country is subject to VAT and customs duties upon importation based on their customs value and tariff, as the origin of the goods does have an impact on the customs revenues.

7. Implications and Policy Recommendations

Evidence from this study highlights that with the anticipated spike in rooftop solar projects, especially from households, it would be prudent for the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition to consider the enhancement of an industrial policy plan to support increased localisation of solar industry components (GreenCape 2020). In the same vein, there is a need for development finance institutions to have programs in place to support investment in the solar industry. The functioning of a solar system requires the assembly of the PV module, the mounting structure, the tracker, the inverter, and cabling. For small projects like household rooftops, the assembly process is normally rendered by one particular company that will do the technical assessment, solution design, procurement, and installation of the solar system. Perhaps more policy intervention will be required in the form of zero rating and removing tariffs and customs duties on renewable energy products, as well as increased private-public partnerships in the funding of renewable energy projects for both households and industry. The South African government should consider the following:

- Government could propose to the National Treasury the scrapping of VAT and Customs Duties on the importation of solar panels and parts in order to help reduce the cost of purchasing for both businesses and households.
- SARS should establish relations with and work with the two renewable industry associations, namely the South African Photovoltaic Industry Association and the South African Wind Energy Association, to identify and address the tax compliance challenges the industry is facing. Customs revenues will

depend on the promotion and encouragement of tax compliance while gaining more insight into the functioning of the industry.

- SARS should use the data at its disposal to monitor the trends in the trade of renewable energy products to assess and track the impact of the tax policy proposals on the use of renewable energy.
- Government could also improve compliance engagements with clearing agents that will enhance their work performance and fulfill the customs target of attaining higher customs revenue and compliance.

Acknowledgment

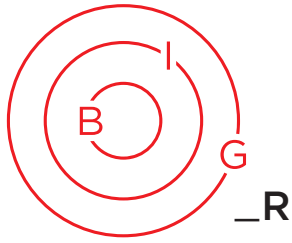
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POLICY REPORT

Franco-Italian Mont Blanc Dispute and Climate Change: Policy Perspectives after the Quirinal Treaty

Paola Malaspina *

This policy report focuses on the border dispute between France and Italy over Mont Blanc in the context of climate change, examining the causes of the disagreement between the two countries and the effects of glacier melting on borders among Alpine countries. Adopting the approach of territorial singularities and mobile borders, the work analyzes the impact of initiatives such as the ETRS89 framework, which ensures GPS-validated mapping technologies in Europe, allowing measurements of border shifts. Insight is given to practices and agreements adopted by Italy, Switzerland, and Austria, such as two bilateral treaties incorporating mobile borders. Starting with a review of the current perspectives of cross-border cooperation between France and Italy after the recent Quirinal Treaty, the report suggests some steps that could be taken to strengthen synergies and mitigate the effects of the dispute: remapping the area, monitoring border shifts, and applying a shared regulation of access and off-limits areas across the entire Mont Blanc.

Disclaimer

The views and contents of this document only reflect the author's opinion and do not represent the point of view of the National Customs Administration of Italy (ADM—Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli).

Executive Summary

Originating from the application of an 1860 international treaty, the controversy over Mont Blanc persists between two Schengen countries over an area of less

than half a square kilometer. France asserts that the principal peaks on the Mont Blanc massif lie in French territory, while Italy maintains that the summits are shared. The issue does not involve only the symbolic value of national sovereignty over a mountain. It has led, especially from 2015 to 2020, to a series of diplomatic incidents involving the movement of border markers and setting off-limits areas between neighbouring municipalities. The problem is further exacerbated by climate change, causing glaciers to melt throughout the Alps and consequently shifting mountain borders.

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This report begins with a short review of border studies, focusing on the concept of “mobile border”, influenced by natural changes and technological mapping advancements. This innovative idea has already been incorporated into two international treaties signed by Italy, one with Austria and the other with Switzerland. With the latter in particular, continuous monitoring of border movements has led to the management, albeit with difficulties, of a transboundary refuge, Rifugio Guide del Cervino, which, due to border movements, underwent a shift from Italian to almost entirely Swiss territory in just a few years. The case is a prime example of the emerging border management approach based on resource management rather than a defined border.

Whether this approach extends to the Mont Blanc scenario is uncertain, though desirable. The region is the scene of intense cross-border cooperation, which presents some weaknesses, primarily linked to the coordination modes among all institutional entities. Despite the recent Quirinal Treaty recognizing the border’s common interest, innovation remains elusive. Better outcomes may arise from governance options, like shared monitoring of border movements or networks of local authorities managing mountain access. Such an approach leverages existing expertise over a deterministic boundary, and, though not without its own challenges, could help overcome the policy hurdles of a border that is not immovable; the border has never been immovable.

1. Introduction

In 1860, with the International Treaty of Turin, the Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia (destined to become the Kingdom of Italy the following year) ceded the region of Savoy to France. Attached to the treaty was a map that drew the border between the two states along the watershed line, causing the summit of Mont Blanc to have two slopes, one in each of the two countries. The French ratified the Treaty’s content but never accepted the map, claiming that the border, according to the 1861 Delimitation Convention, was located further south, with Mont Blanc entirely within French territory (Turrini 2021). In 1865, Captain De Mieulet, on behalf of the French state, created new maps of the area based on this assumption.

These differing interpretations continue to be reflected in the official cartographies of the two countries, creating an area of approximately half a square kilometer where territorial ownership is disputed, with three main points of contention being Mont Blanc, Dôme du Goûter, and Col du Géant (Pointe Helbronner), as shown in Figure 1.

Interestingly, this incongruity did not create any problems for the construction phases of the Mont Blanc Tunnel (1957–1965), perhaps the most significant infrastructure project in the area. It was during a conference held in Nice in 1988 on the maintenance activities of the Tunnel that representatives of the two states noticed the cartographic discrepancy (Martin 2023).

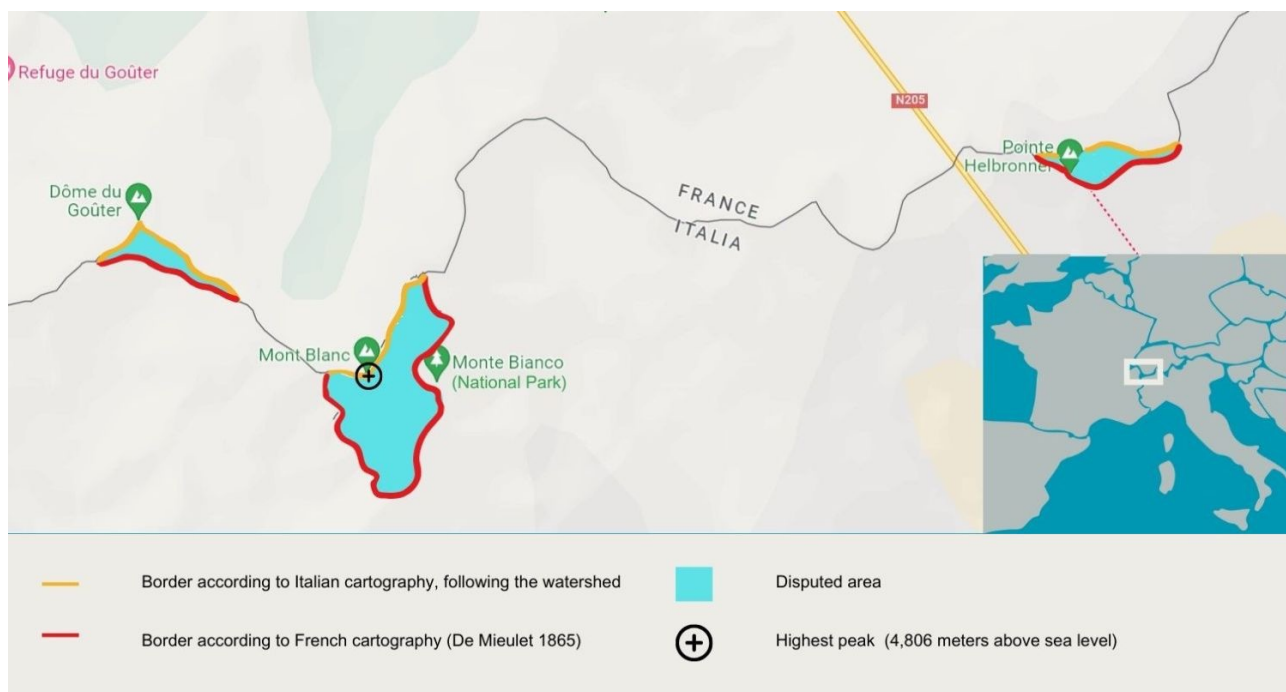


Figure 1. The three tension points in Mont Blanc dispute territory: Dôme du Gouter, Mont Blanc, and Col du Géant (Pointe Helbronner). Source: author’s elaboration from Google Maps.

This marked the beginning of a seemingly minor border dispute that would become increasingly strained from the 1990s, with a series of exchanges between the two nations and parliamentary inquiries. The dispute ignited in the middle of the 2010s, with a series of incidents occurring between 2015 and 2020 when local and national administrations of both countries took unilateral actions on the border (Gautheret 2020; Giuffrida 2020). Environmental concerns and the security of tourist access to the mountain influenced these actions.

In September 2015, after French authorities bulldozed a border marker approximately 150 meters onto Italian territory, the mayor of the French town of Chamonix blocked access to Col du Géant, the main passage through the Mont Blanc massif, from the Italian side, citing safety reasons. These actions provoked hostile reactions from the municipal administration of Courmayeur, a nearby Italian resort town. An Italian parliamentary inquiry ensued but did not substantially change the situation.

In June 2019, following a fatal accident, the mayors of Chamonix and Saint-Gervais issued a ban on paragliding landings in an area of about 600 square meters within Italian territory. The next year, in October 2020, after President Macron visited the Mer de Glace, where he announced new restrictions on access to Mont Blanc, local authorities in Chamonix, Les Houches, and Saint Gervais designated a protected area off-limits to paragliding and ill-equipped mountaineers. This area, covering an area of approximately 3,000 hectares beneath Mont Blanc, also includes a portion of Italian territory.

The resulting overall picture is complex, characterized by interactions at different levels:

- Horizontally, there are exchanges between the two states, starting from a legal disagreement regarding the application of the Treaty of Turin and a prevailing tendency toward unilateral management of the mountainous resources.
- Vertically, interactions occur between local administrations and the state. Local administrations

request adequate environmental conservation protection and individual safety in their territory. They also seek "administrative certainty" that allows them to operate effectively in the relevant domain.

In 2020, the President of the European Parliament, an Italian national, appealed to the European Commission (European Parliament 2021). However, the Commission, hopeful for a mutually satisfactory agreement, reiterated the authority of the states to define sovereign boundaries as outlined in the Treaty on the European Union.

This uncertain situation is further complicated by glacial melt, a common phenomenon throughout the Alpine region that has brought about significant changes in the landscape of Mont Blanc, as demonstrated by recent research (Figure 2).

Climate change not only alters the socio-economic dynamics of the area (Clivaz & Savioz 2020) but also complicates locating international boundaries. In this case, is the line drawn by the watershed, the crest line passing through the highest peak, or the valley bottom line? Significant border shifts have been observed in recent years in all Alpine countries (Studio Folder 2016), leading to different approaches.

This study aims to illustrate possible options for managing the border issue in Mont Blanc. Section 2, after introducing some theoretical concepts, outlines issues and approaches already adopted among Alpine countries. Section 3 provides context of institutional relations between France and Italy, existing cross-border cooperation in the Mont Blanc area, and the prospects offered by the Quirinal Treaty. Section 4 presents a brief conclusion, and Section 5 suggests recommendations based on the case's specificities.

2. State Borders on Alpine Countries

The historical approach to borders, led by the territorial state in international relations, originated in Europe with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the first based

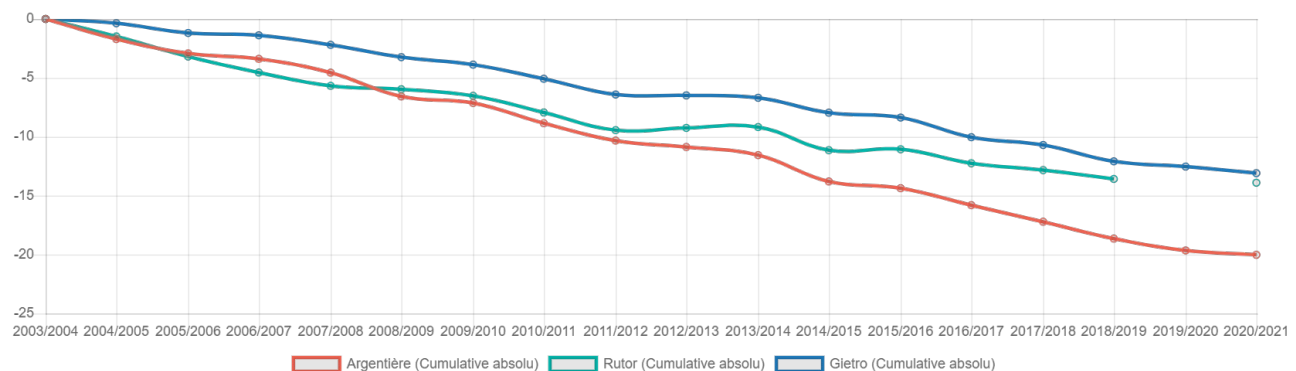


Figure 2. Annual cumulative loss of glacier mass on Mont Blanc. Image source: Observatoire du Mont-Blanc (2022).

on an international treaty and maps (Brunet-Jailly 2015[a] and 2018). This marked the emergence of the modern nation-state concept, where borders assumed a juridical role as limits to sovereignty. A study on Western Alpine regions noted the Alps' transformation as the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age unfolded, sacrificing local community autonomy to the rise of nascent states (Guichonnet 1980). The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 played a pivotal role in shaping state borders between the Duchy of Savoy and France (Sereno 1999), notably using the Alpine chain as a natural border, a criterion central to the later Mont Blanc dispute (Frey & Frey 2019).

On the other hand, border studies reveal complexities in issuing and maintaining state borders based on natural topography. Jones (1945) highlights challenges in delineation (on maps and treaties) and demarcation (on the ground) in mountain borders due to their complex shapes. The Alps' unique geography poses difficulties in retaining criteria like crest lines, watershed lines, and valley bottoms, leading to uncertainties. Such complex disputes, arising with delimitation and demarcation or when a natural element defining the border undergoes a change, can be described as "positional" (Brunet-Jailly 2015[b] and 2018). International arbitration has sometimes proven to be an effective tool, also in the Alpine area, as in the case of Alpe of Cravairola between Italy and Switzerland (Lowenthal 2004).

2.1. Border singularities and mobile borders

Unique border cases resulting from specific issues, such as a disagreement over territorial boundaries, can be studied also in the perspective of "border singularities" (Perrier 2020). In these situations, tailored agreements for the management of a shared resource are prioritized and the exact position of the border can be left undefined.

This is the case, for example, of Lake Constance, on the border between Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, an expanse of water whose border regime has been undefined, despite the presence of agreements on fisheries and navigation (Kramsch 2015), or the Ems-Dollart estuary between Netherlands and Germany, where a sort of "agreement to disagree" on the exact location of the boundary was settled, stating that the two countries, in a spirit of "good neighbourliness", jointly maintain the border zone through a binational committee (Van der Velde 2015).

In this framework, a special feature of the border is its mobility over time and space: Amilhat Szary and Giraut (2011), who first defined the concept of "mobile borders", note the fluid and evolving nature of border regions, due, for example, to political, cultural,

and social factors. Mobile borders are particularly pronounced in the Alpine region due to geology and climate change, requiring repeated negotiations and a nuanced understanding of governance solutions (Amilhat Szary 2013; Fourny 2013). This idea is further developed in Konrad (2015), according to which new border studies must incorporate this idea of movement, including a concept of dynamic equilibrium.

2.2. Innovative case studies in the Alps

2.2.1. Mapping change: the ETRS89 system

The European Terrestrial Reference System 1989 (ETRS89), established to facilitate precise positioning and geodetic data exchange among European countries, utilizes a network of satellite stations developed by the EUREF Permanent Network (EPN), a network of more than 100 universities and research institutions in Europe. The system is designed to guarantee compatibility with global frameworks like World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) and dynamic consistency through periodic updates, making it a promising tool for managing mobile borders and data harmonization. Most European countries have adopted ETRS89 in their national cartographic institutes (Bruyninx et al. 2019) and the network of satellite stations is steadily growing across European territory. One of them, Lignan, active since June 2022 is approximately 70 kilometers from Pointe Helbronner on Mont Blanc (see Figures 3 and 4).

Discussions among scholars are ongoing about the potential of bilateral border treaties based on the ETRS89 System. Detailed studies, as seen in the case of the Czech Republic (Poláček 2015), emphasize the importance of data harmonization by neighboring countries for the project's success.

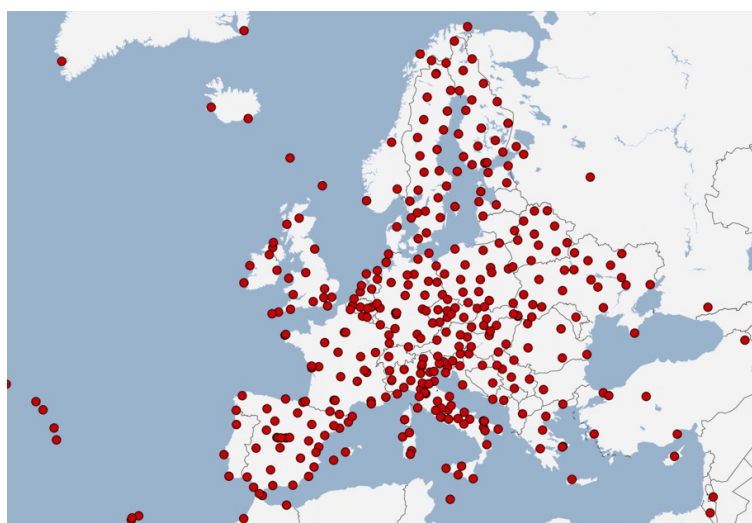


Figure 3. Locations of the EPN tracking stations (status December 2022). Source: EPN (2023[a]).

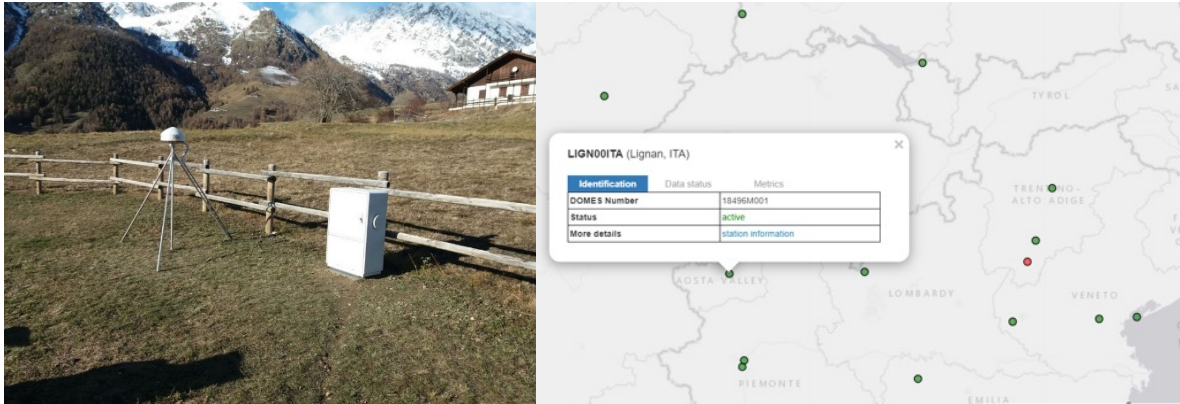


Figure 4. Lignan satellite station (Aosta, Italy) and its location. Source: EPN (2023[b]).

A unique case in Europe is the Treaty signed on June 16, 2022, between France and Andorra, explicitly mentioning the ETRS89 System as the reference for bilateral border demarcation. However, in the case of France and Italy, despite joint validation actions for coordinates along their 515-kilometer border, the Mont Blanc area remains excluded due to the ongoing dispute (CNIG 2021). This exclusion poses a significant challenge to achieving a homogeneous data framework that the ETRS89 System aims to establish.

2.2.2. Border shifts in the Alps: The Guide del Cervino case

Between Italy and Switzerland, near the Plateau Rosa, where the new cross-border cable car Cervinia/Zermatt was inaugurated in July 2023, the border, defined along the watershed, has shifted approximately by 100 to 150 meters southward due to the retreat of the Theodul Glacier, from 1940 to today (Swisstopo 2022[b]). The border shift, depicted in Figure 5, has

so far only affected uninhabited terrains, except for an alpine lodge, the Rifugio Guide del Cervino, a hangout for mountaineers located at the Swiss-Italian border, on the edge of Testa Grigia peak, at 3,480 meters of altitude.

In the 1980s, the refuge was entirely located in Italian territory, while now it is facing a challenging situation: two-thirds of its area, including most of its beds and the restaurant, is in Zermatt, the Swiss part, and only the remaining third in Valtournanche, Italy (Poll 2021; AFP 2022). The issue is seemingly minor but results in significant uncertainty for the refuge, affecting matters such as taxation and the rules for managing an accommodation facility. The administrations of both states have been monitoring the situation for some time, formalizing a tailored solution for the refuge, which, for now, remains formally under Italian jurisdiction. While Google Maps has not updated the situation, on official Swiss maps, the refuge is marked as a point along the boundary line, which in this section, instead of being continuous, is dotted, as shown in Figure 6.

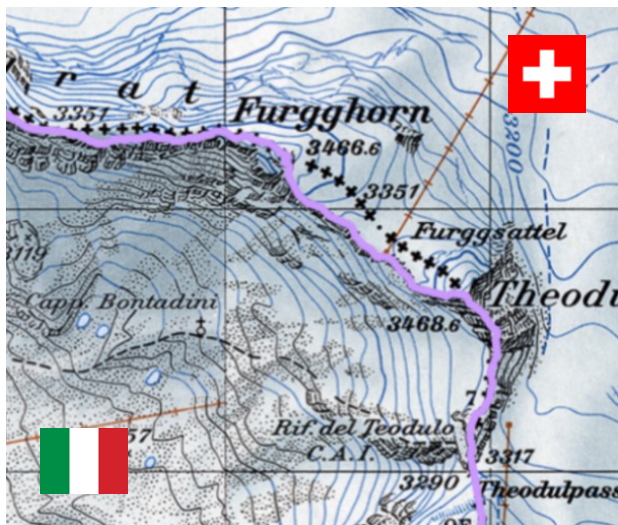


Figure 5. Italian-Swiss borders in 1940 (black crosses) and nowadays (purple line). Source: Swisstopo (2024[b]).

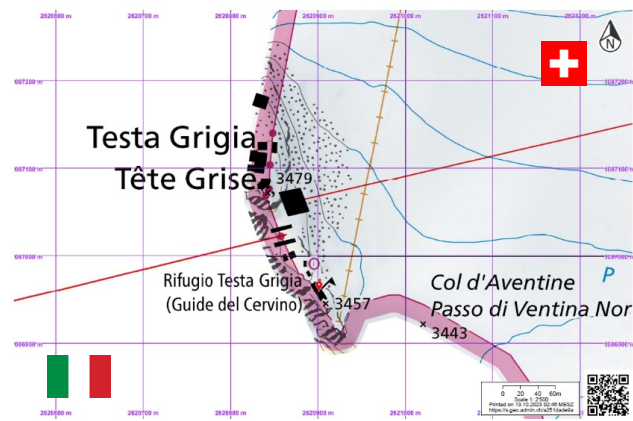


Figure 6. Location of the Rifugio Guide del Cervino and delineation of the Swiss-Italian border. Source: Swisstopo (2024[a]).

Italy and Switzerland have long been engaged in monitoring border shifts and signed a bilateral agreement in 2008 to manage mobile borders, where they agree that the mountain border may follow gradual and natural changes, defined as the result of erosion or glacier melting. Sudden natural and superficial alterations and superficial alterations normally leave the boundary line unaffected. However, in such cases, the states may agree to exchange equivalent surface areas. Both countries commit to regular border monitoring and biennial revisions, thanks to joint work by technicians from both nations. A treaty envisaging the same principles, without the option of exchanging portions of land, had already been established between Austria and Italy in 1994, demonstrating an innovative approach to the “instability” of borders. These two treaties currently stand as unique among Alpine nations. In this framework, the Rifugio Guide del Cervino, as human settlement affected by border shifts, raised administrative, economic, and legal issues concerning its management. For instance, approvals from both countries were required for its renovation project in preparation for the cable car’s inauguration. This affected the reopening of the refuge, which was possible after significant delays.

3. Franco-Italian Cross-Border Cooperation on Mont Blanc

The experience of Alpine borders prompts reflection on the border as a place where dynamics of both separation and cooperation simultaneously unfold. Within a balance between best practices and obstacles, the Alpine region is a significant example with a well-established and evolving tradition of cross-border cooperation.

3.1. Espace Mont-Blanc (EMB) and the Alcotra project

In the 1990s, prompted by the European institutional framework of the Interreg Community Initiative Programme and the Rome Agreement (1993), significant Alpine projects emerged, including the creation of the Espace Mont-Blanc (EMB). Covering 3,500 square kilometers, the EMB involves cross-border cooperation among Savoie and Haute-Savoie in France, the autonomous region of Vallée d’Aoste in Italy, and the Canton of Valais in Switzerland (Alderighi et al. 2020). The EMB, with a unique juridical status, operates through the Mont Blanc Conference, a consultation table representing five components from each country at all institutional levels involved in cross-border cooperation (EMB 2023).

From 2007, significant cooperation projects, including the Mont Blanc Observatory, emerged under the fourth and fifth programming cycles of Interreg Alcotra (Alpes Latines Coopération TRAnsfrontalière), dedicated to

cohesion between French and Italian Alpine regions. The ongoing sixth programming cycle (2021–2027), with a budget of 182 million euros, covers the extensive 515-kilometer Franco-Italian border territory (Interreg Alcotra 2021). Introducing innovations in governance tools and reinforcing territorial specificities, this cycle addresses coordination issues among stakeholders, emphasizing local interest groups. This effort aims to overcome historical weaknesses in cooperation projects, such as focus on the number of institutional entities rather than their competencies, planning complexity, and lack of shared strategic vision (Botteghi 2020). The innovations in the latest cycle provide an impetus for structural innovation, aligning with the recent Quirinal Treaty, a relevant turning point discussed in the following paragraph.

3.2. The Quirinal Treaty: a new perspective?

Signed in Rome on November 26, 2021, and effective since February 1, 2023, the Quirinal Treaty strengthens cooperation between France and Italy across economic, diplomatic, and defense policies. The preamble highlights objectives related to combating global warming and preserving biodiversity. Article 10, dedicated to cross-border cooperation, underscores the land border’s significance as a shared interest area for both populations and proposes the establishment of a cross-border committee chaired by the Foreign Ministers of both countries, involving representatives from various entities.

Two years after the Quirinal Treaty’s signing, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided an update on its implementation, reporting consultations organized by Ambassadors throughout 2022 to prepare “the modalities for the establishment and functioning of the committee” (Ambassade de France en Italie 2023). Alcotra project leaders have aligned with the treaty, expressing readiness to overcome differences on environmental and cross-border issues (Interreg Alcotra 2023[a], 6–7). In this framework, a new funded project, Alcotraité (2021–2027), specifically targets obstacles to cross-border cooperation, such as climate change, envisioning a Technical Table in support of the cross-border committee of Article 10 (Interreg Alcotra 2023[b]). This latter, formed from representatives of border communities, parliamentarians of both countries, and cross-border organizations, held its inaugural meeting in Turin on October 31, 2023. The committee has devised a multi-year work plan covering topics such as mobility, environmental protection, and public service organization, with plans for another meeting in 2024. From these elements, it seems clear that the treaty creates new opportunities for institutionalized bilateralism (Darnis 2022), establishing forums to address specific issues. The effectiveness of addressing these concerns and fostering cross-border cooperation hinges on how they are analyzed and tackled.

4. Conclusions

The Mont Blanc border dispute, rooted in a historical context where the involved countries used the border for national sovereignty demarcation, entailed challenges due to the mountainous terrain and imprecise maps in the nineteenth century. The mid-2010s brought external factors like technological progress and climate change, challenging the notion of fixed references by maps. Borders are shifting, climate is changing, and local communities grapple with preserving the environment and ensuring safety for winter sports enthusiasts. Who has the authority to govern this?

Many involved actors maintain a territorial preservation approach, struggling to envision a resolution ingrained in the political culture of both countries. The experience of cross-border cooperation, despite valuable initiatives in environmental awareness promotion, needs to embrace a perspective of change. Innovative approaches in the Alpine context, such as the ETRS89 system and legal recognition of the mobile nature of borders in bilateral agreements, show that technology and international treaties positively impact border communities when awareness of the relative nature of borders is internalized.

The case study of Rifugio Guide del Cervino exemplifies a problem-oriented approach to border management. However, it risks limited effectiveness if decision-makers focus solely on areas affected by current issues. Given the rapid alterations in Alpine ecosystems due to global warming, governance approaches beyond territorial exchanges are crucial.

The Quirinal Treaty introduces new practices to implement and evaluate (Lazar 2022), even if it sets a legal framework with little room for deviation. Its merit lies in acknowledging the border as a common interest, providing an impetus for decision-makers to view the Franco-Italian borders differently. For Mont Blanc, the disputed area is not just a zone resistant to innovation but a resource calling for shared collective responsibilities beyond border positioning. This perspective can leverage the strengths of both countries, including cross-border cooperation experiences, the skills within mountain communities, and the universally recognized landscape value of Mont Blanc. Overcoming vulnerabilities like those affecting the Alpine ecosystem and climate uncertainty requires embracing a dynamic approach to governance, recognizing borders as evolving and calling for collaborative responsibility.

5. Implications and recommendations

Considering the positions held by France and Italy, a definitive resolution of the dispute seems currently unlikely, as neither country seems inclined to relinquish sovereignty in favor of an international arbitrator. It

seems more feasible to identify actions that can mitigate the adverse effects of this dispute concerning two objectives: addressing climate change and overcoming obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

These intervention areas are identified among Alcotra Program 2021-2027 priorities, as shown in Figure 7. Specific recommendations will be identified in the following paragraphs, including: mapping the effects of climate change on the border and shaping network-based governance models for strategic decisions in the region.

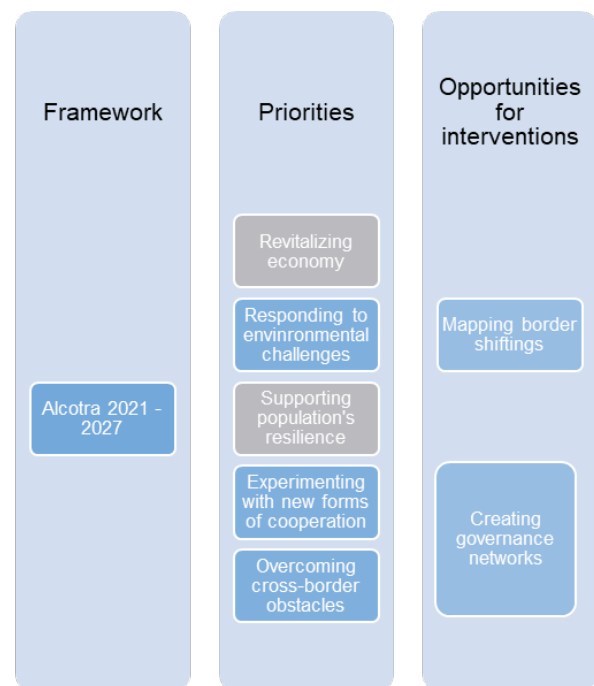


Figure 7. Priorities in Alcotra 2021-2027 and opportunities for interventions. Source: the author.

5.1. Mapping border shifts

A recent French report (Carroué 2023) highlights the absence of a quantitative study correlating glacier melting and border changes in the Mont Blanc area, despite available climate data in the Espace Mont-Blanc. Mapping this correlation is prudent due to significant Mont Blanc glacier loss and the need for an updated understanding of mountain movements in response to climate change. The area's three tension points complicate its morphology, emphasizing the need for research into how these areas behave—whether shrinking or expanding—for future environmental studies. While the positional dispute poses challenges to the project, experiences in other territorial disputes, like Lake Constance or the Ems-Dollart estuary, suggest the possibility of “agreeing to disagree” on the exact border

position. This approach could be applied to the disputed Mont Blanc area, forming the basis for joint projects, such as a monitoring plan for border movements. Existing resources and expertise only require synergies for implementation. The Observatoire du Mont-Blanc's (OMB) continuous climate data production can be integrated with border information validated by Italy and France within the ETRS89 framework. Although the border dispute hindered the project's completion in the contested area, adopting specific validation of the double boundary line is proposed. This involves listing points from ETRS89 coordinates defining the diverging boundary lines, creating a digitized map of the contested area, and using the satellite stations network, including the Lignan station in the Mont Blanc area, for further research.

5.1.1. Activating and maintaining a measurement system

The valorization of existing experiences and the creation of a partnership among competent entities constitute the initial stages for implementing a measurement system for border movements in response to climate change. The system requires numerous monitoring and revision processes to endure over time, enabling it to produce relevant information and adapt to environmental modifications. This is a progressive and cyclical development, articulated into various phases, which can be summarized in Figure 8.

In particular, it would be helpful to establish a stable synergy between the French and Italian mapping institutes and the OMB. Swiss intervention could be helpful, at least in the preliminary phases, to share

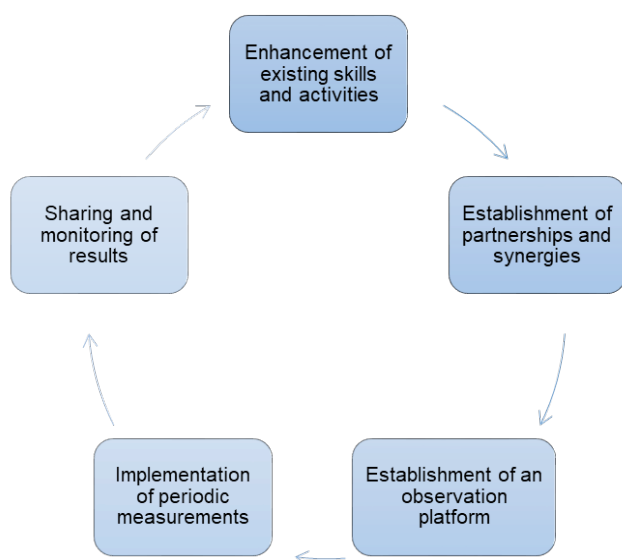


Figure 8. Activation of a system for measuring border movements due to climate change in the Mont Blanc area. Source: the author.

best practices by its Topography Office, particularly regarding methods and implementing strategies. Subsequently, features and details of a research platform could be defined with specific reference to the time intervals for measuring border movements. For instance, the same time window used to assess glacier mass variations could be applied to evaluate border shifts, specifically the hydrological year from October to September of the following year. This approach would facilitate consistent assessments and, consequently, more accessible correlation studies.

Another critical aspect is identifying methods for comparing and sharing results. In this regard, the experience of the OMB as a digital platform, with its timely and widespread production of climate data and information, can serve as a starting point to circulate these studies and make them a resource available to communities and administrations. All the results from monitoring should be shared, discussed, and developed to be the foundation of following operational strategies. In the following paragraph, proposals for suitable implementation models will be addressed.

5.2. Enhancing substantial symmetry

Incidents at the Mont Blanc border from 2015 to 2020 underscore several weaknesses in cross-border cooperation governance:

- Historically, a balance based on an equal number of institutions from different countries has been sought, neglecting a homogeneous set of competencies.
- France and Italy conceptualize relationships differently between local administrations and central governments, leading to more formal than substantive symmetry at consultation tables (Bottegghi 2020).
- Representation is imperfect, with smaller entities relying on more prominent ones, risking inadequate communication and dialogue.

To address these issues, governance should prioritize substantial representation of powers and competencies and facilitating information flow and dialogue among all parties involved. A coherent territorial governance model can be established by focusing on both vertical coordination (among local and national institutions) and horizontal coordination (among the involved states) (Faludi & Peyrony 2011).

5.2.1. Creating new governance networks

From the perspective of government tools, the Quirinal Treaty has both a conservative and innovative role. On the one hand, it maintains the existing array of tools and means provided by community legislation; on the other hand, it paves the way for a new instrument, the cross-border committee. Under what conditions can

this committee serve as a basis for innovation and not become a mere bureaucratic bottleneck? Which role can the Technical Table of the regions envisaged by the Alcotraité project assume? It seems advisable to recommend that, in the design of these new institutions, a census of powers and competencies be carried out among the entities sitting at the consultation table of the EMB. This is a necessary starting point to prevent the new institutions from operating as mere duplicates of existing ones or, conversely, to avoid “vacant functions” that could hinder and slow down decision-making processes. In addition, it would be helpful for the Technical Table to operate by suggesting specific environmental topics to the thematic committee on a case-by-case basis. To promote improved cross-border cooperation and prevent incidents like those that occurred between 2015 and 2020, the committee could promote interaction and synergy among competent institutions to define strategies about issues of common interest, such as:

- Specific regulation and programming of access to sports and tourist facilities (mountaineering and trekking routes, skiing, and paragliding landing areas).
- Definition of protected and off-limits areas due to climate conditions.
- Maintenance of border markers and demarcation tools in general.

Regarding the third point, it is crucial that on-the-ground maintenance of the border is aligned with delineation on digital maps and shared on a bilateral basis, also considering that deterioration or displacement of demarcation tools can provide important “site-specific” information about mountain conditions, territorial stability, and, in general, climate change.

More generally, a perspective of bilateral sharing should guide all impacted entities from both countries. Institutions should operate within this framework with a network-based perspective, prioritizing the exchange and dissemination of information over bureaucratic procedural structures. The resulting system should be lean, goal-oriented, and flexible in adapting to emerging needs and facilitating the flow of information.

Is this innovation genuinely achievable in the Mont Blanc area? It is indeed a recent perspective which can be embraced gradually but undoubtedly leads to adopting, at the foundation of international relations, a concept of undetermined and evolving space, where geographic study does not lose its significance but instead engages with this necessary dynamism (Agnew 2015). Whether and how Italy and France progressively embrace this perspective in their bilateral relations will significantly impact the implementation of this type of governance and its effect on the Mont Blanc dispute.

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The Effect of World Customs Organization's AEO Programme on Trade Facilitation in Zimbabwe

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Despite Zimbabwe offering considerable trade facilitation benefits under its Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programme, only 14 AEOs in total had been accredited at the time of carrying out this research from more than 3,000 transporters, 400 clearing agencies or brokers, 700 large clients, and 3,000 exporters and importers. In view of this low programme uptake, this author saw it justifiable to carry out this study. More so, it is the first of its kind to be undertaken in the country. The qualitative study sought to examine the effects of the World Customs Organization (WCO)'s AEO Programme on trade facilitation in Zimbabwe. Data was collected through a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and secondary data review. The secondary objectives were: a) to appreciate the trade facilitation developments in Zimbabwe, b) to review the AEO regulatory and legislative framework, and c) to understand the administration and management of the programme in the country.

Disclaimer

The views and contents of this document only reflect the author's opinion and do not represent the point of view of the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA).

Introduction

The WCO Council adopted the SAFE Framework of Standards (Framework) by unanimous acclamation during its June 2005 Annual Sessions in Brussels,

Belgium (World Customs Organization 2012). The Framework focused on deterring growing concerns of international terrorism, simultaneously securing and facilitating worldwide cross-border trade and safe revenue collections by Customs administrations (World Customs Organization 2005). To remain effective and relevant to the complexities of the ever evolving and emerging threats in the international supply, the Framework is routinely updated under the Customs-to-Business Pillar (World Customs Organization 2020).

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An AEO is a party involved in the international movement of goods, in whatever function, that has been approved by and/or on behalf of a national Customs administration as complying with the WCO or corresponding supply-chain-security standards (United Nations 2012). When properly implemented, the AEO Programme presents many benefits to Customs and businesses. These include fewer delayed shipments, fewer physical and document-based controls, and the sharing of Customs' security responsibilities with the private sector.

Brief Context

Zimbabwe launched the AEO Programme in 2013, starting with five exporters/importers under Phase 1. It ran as a Pilot Project up to 2017. Thereafter, Phase 2 opened to all sectors, which included manufacturers, importers, exporters, clearing agents, carriers, consolidators, intermediaries, ports, airports, terminal operators, integrated operators, warehouses, and distributors (ZIMRA 2023). In September 2017, ZIMRA approved the Mercator Implementation Plan, whose strategic objectives included strengthening and expanding ZIMRA's AEO and Post Clearance Audit (PCA) programmes.

Accompanied by a Mercator Programme Advisor and WCO PCA expert, five ZIMRA AEO experts undertook a benchmarking visit to the South African Revenue Services (SARS) in Pretoria in August 2018 (World Customs Organization 2018). Thereafter, the WCO held a national workshop in Harare during the period of November 19–21 2018. It focused on assisting ZIMRA with the development of a fully-fledged AEO programme, implementation of Article 7.7 of the World Trade Organization (WTO)'s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) (World Customs Organization 2018a), and the strengthening and expansion of ZIMRA's AEO and PCA programmes to include a wider range of compliant traders (World Customs Organization 2018b). This was in line with recommendations under the Zimbabwe Mercator Implementation Plan 2017–2020. Article 7.7 obliges Customs authorities to provide additional trade facilitation measures to accredited Authorized Operators. These benefits should include at least any three of: reduced documentary and data requirements, fewer physical inspections/examinations, rapid release time, deferred payments, comprehensive or reduced guarantees, single declaration, and clearance of goods at premises (United Nations 2012a).

On the trade facilitation front, Zimbabwe has several strategies in place. The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World System, Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS), electronic pre-clearances, Data Processing Centres, e-Single Window, drones, baggage and Non-Intrusive Inspection X-ray scanners are among some of the modern provisions in use. High-level

political will was behind the recent completion of the USD 300 million Beitbridge border modernization under a 17.5-year public-private-partnership build-operate-and-transfer arrangement (Mafurutu 2022).

Why the Study?

Through this study, this author sought to analyse the impact of the implementation of the AEO Programme as a trade facilitation measure in Zimbabwe since 2013. Trade facilitation refers to the explicit set of actions that streamline and simplify border formalities, processes, operations, and procedures in the clearance of goods and services across borders (Mafurutu 2022). Zimbabwe ratified the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on October 17 2018. Its current rate of implementation commitments stands at 84.9 percent with a timeframe spanning from February 2017 to December 2029 (World Trade Organization 2023).

The subsidiary objectives of the study were: a) to appreciate the trade facilitation developments in Zimbabwe, b) to review the AEO regulatory and legislative framework, and c) to understand the administration and management of the AEO Programme in the country. In presenting the research findings, the author begins by conducting an AEO policy gap analysis, highlighting justifications and approaches, followed by a brief literature review, the research findings, a conclusion, and, lastly, implications and recommendations.

Policy Gap Analysis, Justifications, and Approaches

At the start of Phase 2 in 2018, ZIMRA, through its Customs division, extensively held national AEO-Public-Awareness Workshops and Sensitization Programmes. In response, participants generally showed enthusiasm to be accredited. An estimated 300 AEO self-assessment questionnaires were distributed for completion and return. However, the bulk of these were not returned. Subsequent follow-ups were unyielding, leaving the initial uptake extremely low.

A study carried out at Zimbabwe's busiest border, Beitbridge, in 2019 revealed that of an average of 400 trucks that passed daily in the first half of 2018 with correct documents, the turnaround time was 48 hours. At Chirundu One Stop Border Post where 280 northbound trucks and 140 southbound were cleared daily, Customs officials noted that it took up to 16 hours to complete border formalities while truck drivers said their overall waiting time was around 36 hours (Ngarachu et al. 2019). These long delays were largely attributed to a number of issues, and among them was the notable low uptake of the AEO Programme. By this time, only 14 entities had been certified out of

over 3,000 cross-border transporters, 400 brokers, 700 large clients, and 3,000 exporters and importers. This low uptake is despite the benefits offered by the programme to AEOs which include simplified Customs formalities, expedited movement of cargo at all ports of entry, fewer physical and document-based controls, reduced demurrage costs, priority treatment in query resolution and improved business relations with ZIMRA. Given this unresponsiveness, this author saw it justifiable to carry out this study. More so, it is the first of its kind. The findings are therefore of interest to many (e.g., policymakers, implementers, and private businesses). Zimbabwe bears many political, legal, historical, social, and economic similarities with its African peers. The findings may therefore be applicable to a wider geographic community. To contribute to new knowledge, the findings are fit for benchmarking in subsequent studies.

The data collection method employed was a mixture of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) approach and a review of various sources of secondary data. The AEO Programme is still in its early stages and remains the responsibility of a small team of experts in local customs and AEO implementation within the Division of Customs and Excise of ZIMRA. The team has been responsible for the planning, leading, controlling, rolling out, and implementation of AEO strategy. It is for these reasons that their opinions were sought after. Of the seven targeted AEO experts, five turned up for the FGD.

AEO Policy Implementation and Some of the Key Emerging Lessons

In a study of the East African Community (EAC), it was noted that the adoption of the simplified EAC-AEO procedures reduced trade costs incredibly (East African Community 2015). In Uganda, the impact of AEO accreditation on trade facilitation revealed three key outcomes: accredited operators enjoyed reduced clearance time, experienced exponential trade growth, and paid significantly more tax to the government than their non-accredited peers (Okoboi & Kyanzi 2018).

During the WCO review of Zambia’s Customs Accreditation Client Programme (CACAP), the diagnostic team made several recommendations to the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA). These included identifying additional tangible trade facilitation benefits, strengthening AEO security validation, implementing post-authorization management processes including Other Government Agencies (OGAs), applying enhanced IT Systems for effective identification of CACAP operators, initiating exchanges for Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) with other key trade partners, and developing

an AEO training and capacity-building programme (World Customs Organization 2019).

Having been established in 2009, Chirundu—as one of the first One Stop Border Posts in Southern Africa—lies between Zimbabwe and Zambia to the north (of Zimbabwe), while Beitbridge Border Post lies between Zimbabwe and South Africa to the South (of Zimbabwe). The name Chirundu is shared by both Zimbabwe and Zambia. For Zimbabwe, Chirundu One Stop Border Post remains the second-busiest border post compared to Beitbridge. Both ports of entry form part of the busy North-South Corridor, and are interconnected by both the regional trunk road network and the trans-African highway network (see illustrative map in Figure 1).

Customs optimization of resources and close collaboration with all small operators and OGAs is critical under the AEO concept. Findings from a study in the majority of Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies revealed that small sizes of Customs AEO staff and limited use of automated processes negatively impacted the processes leading to AEO certification (Galindo et al. 2020).

In another study—in which 19 out of 21 APEC economies participated—despite Customs authorities making considerable progress in promoting cooperation with OGAs, it remained a challenge for OGAs to provide benefits to AEOs since certification followed Customs set criteria (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2020). In an analysis to establish successful factors versus challenges in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation AEO Programmes, the development of bilateral/regional MRAs, adoption of client relations management, private sector partnership awareness, and consultation with Customs before application were noted among

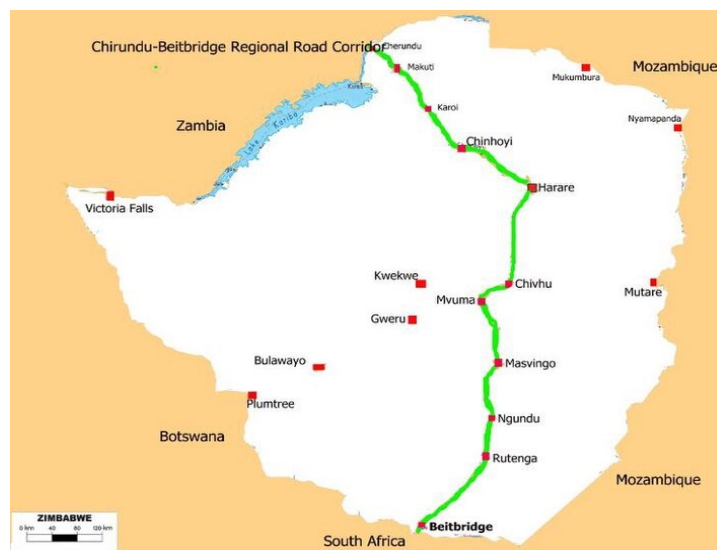


Figure 1: Illustrative map showing Beitbridge and Chirundu OSBP.
Source: adapted from Google Maps 2021.

the success factors. On the contrary, design challenges included lengthy AEO approval times, scarce participation of small players, an insufficient number of MRAs, low levels of security, and difficulties in communication between Customs and the private sector as well as other government agencies (COMCEC 2018).

Several key issues emerged during the 5th WCO Global AEO Conference held virtually from May 25–27 2021 (themed “AEO 2.0: advancing towards new horizons for sustainable and secure trade”). Lack of harmonization in levels of automation, physical security, and guarantee are prevalent challenges in current AEO programmes. The harmonization of AEO application, validation, and certification procedures through the use of technology was emphasised. Responding to evolving threats requires leveraging new technology, digitalization, data exchange, and the use of contactless systems in the entire procedure of trade documentation and processing. Intergovernmental entities stressed the importance of Customs and businesses working together towards strengthening the supply chain through e-commerce. Partnerships and extension of AEO programmes to new operators are key to furthering trade and development. Building trust for genuine partnerships in AEO programmes and MRAs in addition to sound capacity building are critical in the flourishing of Customs-to-businesses collaboration. Customs was encouraged to establish a meaningful dialogue with the private sector, appreciate its concerns, and spell out AEO Programme expectations (World Customs Organization 2021).

It is in the context of some of the above emerging lessons and findings that the author facilitated and guided the FGD toward achieving the central objective of this study.

Findings

From the FGD held, the AEO uptake remains very low due to several factors. The AEO self-assessment questionnaire is long and perceived as complicated, demanding sensitive business information about the prospective AEO applicant. According to respondents, this raised suspicion and mistrust among the prospective businesses as to the actual purpose and intention of the entire programme. The majority of the intended beneficiaries lacked appreciation and knowledge of the AEO Programme’s goals and procedures.

It also emerged that the cost of compliance with the minimum standards (such as reliable network connectivity, computer knowledgeability, and modern security systems) to qualify for AEO accreditation was high. The participants perceived a considerable mismatch between the high AEO accreditation costs of compliance compared to the existing AEO trade facilitation benefits. A point of discussion was raised

over the non-use or delayed introduction of the AEO logo to distinguish AEOs from non-AEOs. Participants generally concurred that the introduction of the logo was key in boosting AEOs’ business reputation and trust among trade partners.

In the absence of an AEO electronic platform, applications for AEOs are processed manually in Zimbabwe. The group saw this as contributing to delays in the certification of AEOs. South Africa had similar challenges. At the start of its programme, registration and licensing were done manually and some applications failed to reach the South Africa Revenue Services (SARS) offices while others were lost entirely. In response, SARS introduced the Registration, Licensing and Accreditation (RLA) System—an e-filing platform—in April 2018, leading to more than seventy different client types successfully registering online. SARS also equipped selected branches with facilities to assist walk-in applicants with their applications (Deloitte 2021).

As for the low uptake of the AEO programme, the FGD participants generally admitted that most businesses had reputations of not fully complying with Customs regulations and provisions. It further emerged that the majority of the eligible sectors are generally classifiable in the Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) categories and lack the modern computerized and automated systems required under the AEO Programme. It emerged that the introduction of the use of AEO certificates, logos, and identifiers was at a very advanced approval stage. However, an analysis of the specific and general AEO benefits in place across all sectors is generally the same in scope, if not generic. In the absence of dedicated separate AEO express lanes, currently, ad hoc arrangements for expedited AEO movement on arrival are undertaken. Collaboration and/or regular engagement with OGAs at the operational level was seen as narrow, while general AEO Programme awareness and appreciation among OGAs is yet to be fully leveraged.

A review of secondary data corroborated some of the above AEO policy response findings in Zimbabwe. In a Tanzanian case, the AEO Programme uptake remained very low because of several issues. These included limited knowledge of AEO benefits and certification requirements, the high cost of accreditation, and the demand for considerable investments in time, resources, and technology, for example, access control systems, CCTV cameras, and secure storage facilities (George 2023). In a 2018 study carried out to analyse factors affecting the uptake of AEO certification by clearing agents in Mombasa, Kenya, 74 percent of the respondents said that many operators did not enrol because their systems were not compatible with the prescribed conditions of the AEO Programme, and that the AEO accreditation process was very lengthy (Ndeto 2018).

Under the regulatory environment, the respondents revealed that Zimbabwe undertook a legislative review that resulted in the promulgation of Statutory Instrument 148 of 2015. It amended the Regulations (Statutory Instrument 154 of 2001) to include five new extensive provisions in the form of sections 34A to 34E (See Table 1 below).

There are no provisions for Customs Co-operation and Mutual Administrative Assistance Agreements and MRAs in the current domestic legislation. Currently, Zimbabwe relies on the WTO TFA provisions in this regard. The legislation does not provide timeframes for stages in the AEO approval process, from submission of an application form to accreditation, while the 2017 AEO guidelines in place are pending alignment with the 2021 version (most recent).

On the administration and management of the AEO Programme front, in the absence of a dedicated AEO standalone unit, Zimbabwe has an active standalone PCA and Customs Risk Management Units (CRMUs) for this purpose. The CRMU is responsible for operationalizing and spearheading the AEO Programme nationally. This includes setting up ad hoc Accreditation Committees comprising staff from other sections such as PCA and Enforcement units, among others, to adjudicate on new applications or whenever the need arises. ZIMRA uses the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) World System to clear all Customs declarations on goods in transit, exports, and imports. Out of the four risk-based selectivity lanes (Red for high risk, Yellow, Green, and Blue) in application, AEO declarations are channelled automatically to their dedicated Blue lane for expedited assessment and release.

On the capacity-building trajectory, various workshops and sensitization programmes were held. As recently as early July 2023, five face-to-face workshops were convened under the EU Technical Assistance Zimbabwe

Economic Partnership Agreement Programme. The aim included building capacity for the AEO Accreditation Committee, Other Government Stakeholders, sensitization for Senior Management, and the National Trade Facilitation Committee. Multi-stakeholder sessions that involved private sector participants were conducted as well. Despite these progressive developments, there is more room for aggressive extension of the AEO training to all sectors and stakeholders and regular formalized engagements or consultations between Customs and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The WCO AEO concept is critical for the safe and secure movement of goods and services along international supply chains and enhanced worldwide trade facilitation for compliant operators. Benefits enjoyed from the Programme include improved relationships between the private sector and Customs administrations as well as OGAs, recognition as a secure and safe business partner, reduced trade costs, fewer delayed shipments, reduced pilferage and losses, and prior notifications where necessary. Despite this entire programme centred on dangling carrots or anticipated low-hanging fruits, evidence from previous AEO studies, particularly in Africa, generally indicates some common trends in outcomes, such as the low-level uptake of the Programme by the intended economic players.

Consistent with conclusions in earlier similar studies, the current AEO legislation and regulations in Zimbabwe offer standard benefits that are yet to be expounded into specific sectors. There are some outstanding expectations and works in progress in the implementation of the programme. These include the need to introduce an AEO logo or identifiers for use by certified AEOs, entering into bilateral or regional MRAs, and continuous intensive and extensive public

Table 1: Key AEO legislative provisions in Zimbabwe. Source: author’s research into ZIMRA legislative provisions.

Legislation Type	Specific Section	Title
Principal legislation	216B	Registration of Authorized Economic Operators
Subsidiary legislation (General Regulations)	34	Application for registration as an AEO
	34B	Requirements before registration
	34C	Obligation of AEO
	34D	Suspension and revocation
	34E	Appeals
Other		AEO Guidelines

awareness of the Programme to cover SMEs as well. Details of these outcomes are outlined earlier under Findings. While conclusive findings showed that Zimbabwe has and continues to meaningfully invest in the creation of conducive trade facilitation through its ports of entry, other variables such as continuous review of different existing regulatory, policy, and legislative frameworks, and coordinated administrative approaches among all government stakeholders concerned, play vital complementary roles in ensuring an attractive and successful national AEO programme.

An improved environment offering practical and tangible benefits to AEOs has the potential of resulting in the high uptake of this programme in the region including Zimbabwe. To the conclusion above, it is critical to note that this study has its notable limitations. The expected time in which to complete it was limited, hence the scope could not be extended to interview the private sector, existing accredited AEOs, and other key border stakeholders to the programme such as OGAs, importers, exporters, transporters, clearing agents, and others. It is, therefore, worthwhile to have future studies adopt this broadened approach, time and other resources permitting. Content restrictions to the final report meant that various AEO-related instruments and international tools as well as the roles of Customs Risk Management and PCA could not be covered.

Implications and Recommendations

When properly implemented, the practical benefits of the AEO Programme to private businesses, OGAs, and Customs administrations are many.

Private businesses such as investors take a lot of interest in what the legislation, regulations, and the country’s policy space guarantee them in return for their participation in the economy. Having well-packaged and attractive additional benefits by sector covered in the existing AEO regulatory, legislative, and policy framework is critical in increasing the Programme uptake. This is why the WCO diagnostic team made similar recommendations of putting in place additional tangible trade facilitation benefits to Zambia during the review of its CACP. The inclusion of tangible additional benefits in the regulatory framework inculcates a sense of security, guarantee, and trust in the entire system and its benefits to the accredited AEOs as well as potential applicants. Given this, it is recommended that the current Zimbabwean legislation be amended to include provisions for CCMAA and MRAs. MRAs are beneficial for the future of the AEO Programme, as through these it becomes possible for accredited AEOs in one country to extend their benefits in another MRA member state and vice-versa. As this happens, the local AEOs’ business reputation and market shares will automatically reach beyond their borders, and vice-versa.

To avoid and discourage lengthy accreditation periods, it is recommended that the timelines required to process AEO applications, registration, and certification be categorically specified within Zimbabwe’s legislative environment and should strive not to go beyond six months at most, in line with general best practices. AEO policy, regulatory, and legislative environment-specific timelines, especially in the accreditation process, are critical for predictability, certainty, transparency and decision-making by businesses.

Resources permitting, the introduction of a stand-alone or dedicated AEO unit with an adequate and competent staff is critical in the daily operational and administrative management of the AEO Programme. This element of permanence enables potential applicants and registrants to seek assistance or to consult when the need arises. A dedicated AEO unit guarantees continuity and reforms that assist in eliminating potential delays while at the same time building experienced expertise.

From the findings, one of the major perceived reasons behind the extremely low uptake of the AEO Programme by businesses is their low levels of compliance with Customs regulations. Both PCA and CRMU are critical in the successful implementation of the AEO Programme, and with the establishment of a dedicated AEO unit, they could focus their resources more on improving the current general low levels of compliance by carrying out increased compliance audits.

When SARS introduced the RLA System, AEO registration increased over a short period of time. Since Zimbabwe had an AEO benchmark visit to SARS (World Customs Organization 2018), it is recommended that the country introduces its online system of choice for applying and registering AEOs. Consistent with findings from other countries reviewed earlier, the majority of Zimbabwe’s private businesses are in the SME category. It is recommended that the current AEO self-assessment questionnaires be simplified to suit the needs of this niche. More so, availing opportunities for the inclusion of SMEs in the AEO Programme is important given that they are a large portion of the country’s economic operators. To this end, Customs will need to collaborate with SMEs in developing a tailor-made SME AEO Programme in which they will have a say, provided they undertake to improve their Customs compliance levels.

Making the current specific and general benefits of the AEO more appealing or attractive in return for enhanced compliance levels and close cooperation with Customs is critical. Repackaging these in close consultation with the private sector and OGAs is critical. The implication of according businesses and OGAs opportunities to contribute towards the concept is fundamental for the transition of the Programme from its current state as a ZIMRA AEO Programme to becoming a national AEO Programme. This all-inclusive policy option will

fundamentally eliminate existing misconceptions that result in high proportions of national AEO Programme unawareness.

Acknowledgement

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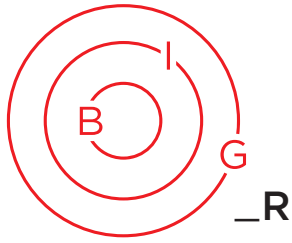


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POLICY REPORT

Customs Laboratories and the Prevention and Detection of Customs Fraud: Two Case Studies

Mihail Secu *

Customs fraud poses significant threats to global trade and national economies, demanding advanced solutions. This article delves into the vital role of customs laboratories in combating fraud, emphasizing their function in scrutinizing goods and ensuring compliance. By evaluating various case studies from Moldova's Customs Laboratory, the research reveals the methods employed to detect fraud, exposing schemes like misclassification and VAT recovery. The findings underscore the need for ongoing investments in technology and international collaboration, highlighting customs laboratories as essential defenders of trade integrity. Policymakers, customs officials, and stakeholders can draw valuable insights from this study to fortify their anti-fraud strategies.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official stance or perspectives of the Customs Service of the Republic of Moldova. Any information presented should be considered in the context of the author's individual insights and not as an official statement from the organization.

Executive Summary

Customs fraud is a pervasive issue with far-reaching implications for both national economies and global trade. This article sheds light on the critical role of customs laboratories in combating this challenge. Staffed by experts and equipped with advanced

analysis techniques, customs laboratories play a pivotal role in scrutinizing goods and verifying their authenticity to ensure their compliance with import and export regulations. Drawing upon detailed case studies and extensive result analysis, this research highlights the indispensable function of customs laboratories in preventing and detecting customs fraud. It emphasizes the need for ongoing investment in these facilities, encompassing both technology and skilled human resources, to adapt to the continually evolving sophisticated tactics of fraudsters.

The article presents two detailed case studies conducted by Moldova's Customs Laboratory, showcasing its effectiveness in combating fraud. In Case Study I, the laboratory exposed a fraudulent attempt involving

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the misclassification of a product as a polymer to gain tariff benefits. Through meticulous analysis, the laboratory revealed that the product was, in fact, a mixture of different substances, leading to its correct classification, thus preventing tariff evasion. Case Study II delves into a complex fraud scheme involving the importation of organic fertilizers with an inflated value and a hidden intention to recover VAT later on. The Customs Laboratory's thorough investigation exposed the scheme, after close cooperation with our Ukrainian counterparts, which allowed us to address the fraud effectively. In an increasingly interconnected global trade landscape, customs laboratories emerge as frontline defenders, securing trade integrity and preserving the financial stability of nations. This research serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, customs officials, and stakeholders seeking to fortify their customs control processes and combat customs fraud with precision and efficiency.

1. Introduction

Customs fraud is a pervasive issue with far-reaching implications for both national economies and global trade. This article sheds light on the critical role of customs laboratories in combating this challenge. Staffed by experts and equipped with advanced analysis techniques, customs laboratories play a pivotal role in scrutinizing goods and verifying their authenticity to ensure their compliance with import and export regulations. Drawing upon detailed case studies and extensive result analysis, this research highlights the indispensable function of customs laboratories in preventing and detecting customs fraud. It emphasizes the need for ongoing investment in these facilities, encompassing both technology and skilled human resources, to adapt to the continually evolving sophisticated tactics of fraudsters.

The implications of such fraudulent activities are profound and multifaceted. Economically, countries suffer significant revenue losses, which can affect public spending and economic stability. Businesses face unfair competition and market distortions, which can inhibit growth and innovation. On a broader scale, customs fraud undermines the integrity of trade regulations and agreements, leading to disrupted international trade flows and strained global relationships. Such disruptions can escalate to wider economic repercussions, including inflation, unemployment, and decreased foreign investment. By understanding the vast scope of customs fraud, we can better appreciate the critical role of customs authorities in maintaining the security and efficiency of international trade.

1.1. Background and motivation

In the face of the significant challenge posed by customs fraud, the role of customs laboratories has emerged as

a critical component in preventing and detecting these illicit activities. Customs laboratories are specialized facilities that play a pivotal role in safeguarding international trade. These labs are staffed by highly trained experts, mostly civil servants, including chemists, biologists, forensic specialists, and economists. The EU customs laboratories, for example, employ around 1,900 people, where around 80 percent of them are either chemists or technicians. These individuals employ advanced laboratory analysis techniques to scrutinize commodities, verify their authenticity, and ensure compliance with import and export regulations (Taxation and Customs Union n.d.).

The mandate of these laboratories extends beyond mere inspection; they are instrumental in enforcing national and international trade laws by detecting misdeclarations and misclassifications of goods, identifying counterfeit items, and ensuring that prohibited substances do not cross borders undetected. This comprehensive approach is vital for maintaining the integrity of trade systems and protecting domestic industries from fraudulent activities that could undermine economic stability.

The history of customs laboratories dates back to the 19th century, when the first such facilities were established in major trade hubs such as London, Paris, New York, Singapore, and Cape Town (Suay-Matallana 2015, 34). These early laboratories laid the foundation for the vital role that customs laboratories play today in safeguarding the integrity of international trade. While the exact global count of customs laboratories is not available, it is noteworthy that within the Member States of the European Union alone, 89 laboratories and mobile laboratories are actively contributing to customs-related tasks. The European Customs Laboratory network handles an average of over 460,000 samples annually, with almost 220,000 specifically related to customs and excise tasks (Taxation and Customs Union n.d.). Despite its critical role in ensuring the integrity of international trade, the discussion surrounding customs laboratories has been limited in existing literature.

1.2. Study objective

This work aims to illuminate the significance and effectiveness of customs laboratories in the ongoing fight against customs fraud. Despite their existence for more than a century, their vital role in protecting economies and trade is still not widely understood. Through a comprehensive analysis of two specific cases and a thorough examination of the results obtained by the customs laboratory, this paper seeks to underscore the critical function that these laboratories fulfill in preventing and detecting customs fraud (Vito et al. 2017; Ghidotti et al. 2021). Moreover, it emphasizes the necessity of investment in the development and enhancement of customs laboratories as a means of strengthening the existing customs control mechanisms.

2. The Main Approach and Results

2.1. Data sets and methodologies

The methodology of this study revolves around the analysis of two specific case studies to highlight the effectiveness of customs laboratories in combating fraud. The selection of these case studies was based on several key criteria:

Relevance: The cases were selected for their direct involvement with significant instances of customs fraud. These cases provide clear, illustrative examples of how the Customs Laboratory identifies and mitigates fraudulent activities.

Impact: The chosen cases had a substantial economic impact, either by preventing fraudulent activities that could have led to significant revenue loss or by facilitating the recovery of evaded taxes and duties. This highlights the practical benefits and real-world implications of the laboratory's work.

Data Availability: Comprehensive data and documentation were accessible for these cases, allowing for a thorough and detailed analysis. The availability of extensive records ensured a robust examination of the methodologies and outcomes.

The analysis method employed in this study involves a detailed examination of laboratory reports, procedural documents, and the outcomes of laboratory investigations. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the specific techniques used by the Customs Laboratory and their effectiveness in detecting and preventing fraud.

Document Review: Detailed reports and procedural documents from the Customs Laboratory were reviewed to understand the methodologies used in each case.

Outcome Analysis: The results of the laboratory investigations were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the techniques employed and the overall impact on fraud prevention.

Comparative Analysis: The findings from the two case studies were compared to identify common strategies and best practices in combating customs fraud.

2.2. Background on the Customs Laboratory

Given Moldova's European perspective and potential future application for EU membership (Catus & Kosienkowski 2018), the establishment of a modern customs laboratory is crucial. Aligning with EU standards in customs control and fraud prevention is essential for potential membership, demonstrating Moldova's commitment to upholding the integrity of international trade and complying with EU regulations.

The Customs Laboratory was founded in 2015 as part of a broader initiative to modernize Moldovan customs infrastructure. This project received significant financial support from European sources, reflecting the EU's commitment to enhancing customs control mechanisms and combating customs fraud. The laboratory's management system adheres to the requirements of SR EN ISO / CEI 17025: 2006 (Government of the Republic of Moldova 2022, 57). The laboratory is equipped with the latest generation analysis devices, as depicted in Figure 1, showcasing just a subset of the cutting-edge instruments at its disposal. These selected tools are indispensable for various applications, demonstrating their versatility in addressing diverse challenges related to customs control.

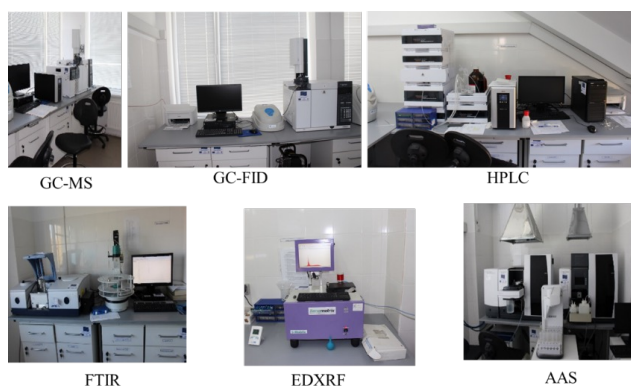


Figure 1. Snapshots of Analytical Instruments in the Customs Laboratory. Photos credit: the author and colleagues in the Customs Laboratory, Republic of Moldova.

To provide a clearer understanding of the significant investment in technology and infrastructure, we present a detailed list of the laboratory's advanced analytical instruments along with estimated costs:

1. Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer (GC-MS): €80,000—Identifies chemical compositions and ensures trade compliance.
2. Gas Chromatography with Flame Ionization Detector (GC-FID) (2 pieces): €60,000 each—Analyzes volatile compounds in food/petroleum for quality and regulatory adherence.
3. High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) (2 pieces): €65,000 each—Separates components in food/petroleum for quality control.
4. Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrophotometer (FTIR): €100,000—Examines molecular structures and verifies goods' authenticity for customs scrutiny.
5. X-ray Fluorescence Analyzer (EDXRF): €60,000—Non-destructive elemental analysis for composition and origin.
6. Atomic Absorption Spectrometer (AAS): €200,000—Instrument for various analytical applications.



Figure 2. Mobile Laboratories. Photos credit: the author and colleagues in the Customs Laboratory, Republic of Moldova.

The Customs Laboratory's investment in infrastructure amounted to a total budget of €3,437,994.00, with a grant of €3,094,194.60. These funds have been instrumental in establishing a robust technological framework for the laboratory's multifaceted role in customs operations (Biroul Regional pentru Cooperare Transfrontaliera Suceava 2016, 12). Furthermore, the laboratory's commitment to efficiency is exemplified by the presence of two mobile laboratories, as shown in Figure 2, which can perform preliminary analyses in the field, on the spot. This capability expedites customs clearance time, facilitating smoother trade operations.

One of the key strengths of the Customs Laboratory lies in its human capital. Acknowledging the significance of expertise in combating customs fraud, the laboratory actively recruits and retains highly qualified personnel. Competitive salaries and favorable working conditions attract experts from diverse scientific backgrounds, who are then trained to align with the laboratory's goal of applying cutting-edge scientific knowledge to customs operations.

Currently, the laboratory boasts a multidisciplinary team, including two individuals with doctoral degrees and two doctoral students. Many team members have acquired international experience, enriching the laboratory's expertise with global perspectives. Moreover, the team includes individuals with extensive forensics experience, ensuring a dynamic and effective approach to customs fraud detection and prevention. The Customs Laboratory currently employs seven individuals specializing in goods research, each having undergone various national and international trainings. The laboratory emphasizes continuous professional development, requiring each member to undergo at least two trainings annually to enhance their skills.

Considering the varied nature of goods covered by the Harmonized System, the Republic of Moldova operates a standard-sized customs laboratory, as per the WCO Customs Laboratory Guide (WCO 2002). However,

there is a recognized need to augment personnel over time, with an anticipated minimum requirement of 10-15 additional people. In terms of salaries, an effective non-financial and financial motivation system has been implemented at the personnel management level since 2017. This system, tied to efficiency and intensity, has significantly increased salaries, providing proportional rewards for responsibilities and performances (Serviciul Vamal al Republicii Moldova 2020, 26).

While the customs laboratory plays a pivotal role in combating customs fraud, its economic contributions are indirect, and specific data on the economic impact remains inaccessible. Similar to other border security measures, such as customs inspections, immigration controls, and cargo screenings, the laboratory's influence on economic growth is not easily quantified. However, its impact is significant and manifested in post-clearance controls, monitoring of economic agents' compliance, and rigorous laboratory tests. These activities are essential for maintaining a secure and compliant trading environment and for indirectly supporting economic stability and growth, just as effective customs and border security operations are crucial for facilitating legitimate trade and safeguarding national revenue.

An effective measure of laboratory efficiency is demonstrated by the increasing trend in the number of samples analyzed, test reports released, and test methods developed, as illustrated in Figure 3 from 2015 to 2022, reflecting rising demand for Customs Laboratory clearance services. Increasing the number of developed test methods is crucial for a lab, as it enables the management of various imported goods. While an initial rise in the number of samples and reports may indicate efficiency, maintaining this trend in the long term requires balancing workloads to prevent overburdening the laboratory. This is where mobile laboratories play a vital role in filtering samples and analyzing necessary evidence, ensuring sustained efficiency. Additionally, improved compliance by economic agents is expected to reduce the number of samples over time.

The following sections will detail two case studies that illustrate the practical application of these resources in detecting and preventing customs fraud.

2.3. Case Study I: Customs fraud based on the Certificate of Origin issuance

The case study conducted at the Customs Laboratory of the Republic of Moldova revolves around a request received from the Department of Goods Origin. The objective was to determine whether a product, developed by an economic agent, had undergone Substantial Transformation/Processing or Sufficient Processing, thereby making it eligible for the issuance of a Certificate of Origin. This certificate holds substantial implications for international trade agreements, tariff classifications, and customs procedures.

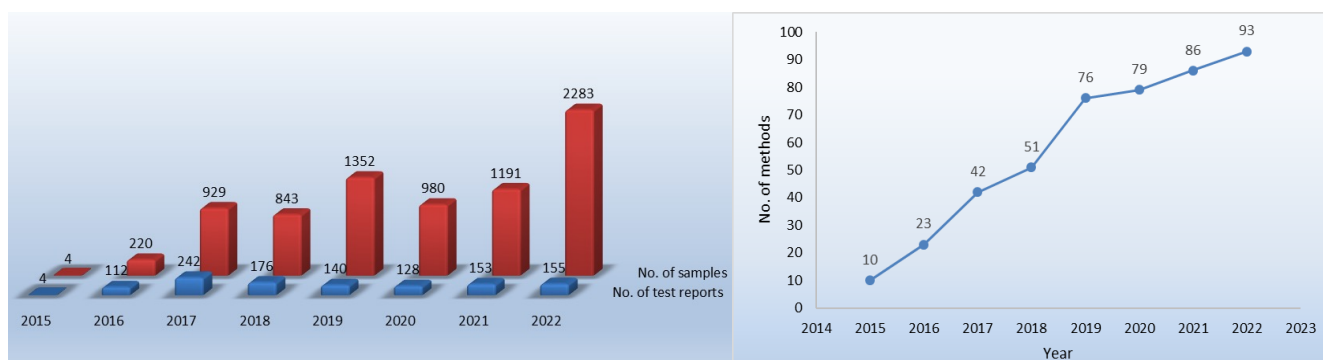


Figure 3. Trends in the Number of Analyzed Samples, Test Reports Released, and Developed Test Methods (2015–2022). Source: the author's research.

2.3.1. Procedural insights: Customs certification process

The critical process of granting the Certificate of Origin follows a specific timeline, beginning with the submission of the Application Declaration. This foundational document, governed by regulations, includes supporting documents that validate product compliance. Customs officers, who are vested with the authority to authenticate certificates of origin, meticulously examine the application in the second step. This involves accessing facilities, studying the production process, and requesting any necessary documents. The subsequent step entails the authentication of origin certificates. Authenticated certificates are then promptly issued upon completion of the export process.

The initial assessment based on the submitted documents indicated that the economic agent was poised to receive a Certificate of Origin for their product. However, given the nature of the field, which closely involves chemistry and presents challenges in verification, the Origin of Goods Directorate opted for an additional layer of scrutiny. Anticipating the complexity and sensitivity of the chemical domain, the Origin of Goods Directorate made a strategic decision to involve the Customs Laboratory in the certification process at an early stage. This preemptive move was driven by the understanding that thorough analysis, especially in fields like chemistry, could reveal critical insights into the authenticity of the product.

The alternative options could have included relying solely on documentation provided by exporters or using less specialized, preliminary field tests. However, these methods might not have provided the same level of accuracy or detailed scrutiny as the sophisticated analyses conducted by the Customs Laboratory. Involving the laboratory early in the process ensures a more reliable and comprehensive verification, thereby enhancing the integrity of the certification process.

2.3.2. Laboratory analysis and fraud identification methods

The laboratory received a set of samples for analysis, including Sample 1, identified as the claimed polymer Polymethylamine (PMTA), initially classified under HS Code 3911. The subsequent samples (Sample 2 to Sample 5) represented the raw materials required for synthesizing PMTA. Despite originating the raw materials from the CIS countries, the final product was aimed for export to the EU, necessitating a critical examination to verify its authenticity.

2.3.3. Validation challenges

In response to this complex challenge, the laboratory initiated a comprehensive analysis of the provided samples. The producer had submitted an array of documents, including a technological scheme detailing the process for obtaining the supposed polymer. In addition to these documents, the producer had included an international patent application. The chemical reactions presented in the technological scheme for the product raised substantial doubts among the laboratory's experts, as some appeared chemically implausible. Consequently, it was imperative to substantiate the existence and authenticity of this compound through rigorous laboratory analyses. The laboratory staff, drawing upon their extensive research experience, recognized the need for a systematic approach.

2.3.4. Development of a reference solution

To address this challenge, a meticulous examination process involved the creation of a reference solution replicating the quantitative ratios of the components declared in the technological process. Notably, this reference solution was crafted under normal conditions, in contrast to the specialized equipment and high-temperature conditions stipulated in the provided technological scheme by the producer.

Table 1. Physico-Chemical Properties Comparison. Source: the author’s research, data drawn from internal report of the Customs Laboratory of the Republic of Moldova.

Property	Reference Substance	Declared PMTA
Color	Colorless	Colorless
Qualitative Composition by Infrared Spectroscopy (Pavia et al. 2009, 13)	The spectrum matches with the spectrum of the PMTA	The spectrum matches with the spectrum of reference substance
Qualitative composition by Gas Chromatography with mass detector (Turner et al. 2019)	The chromatogram matches with the PTMA chromatogram, also it was found in all starting materials	The chromatogram matches with the reference substance chromatogram, also it was found in all starting materials
pH (Westcott 1978)	11.18	11.20
Kinematic viscosity at 20 degrees Celsius, square millimeter per second (ASTM D445)	4.46	4.61
Refractive index at 20 degrees Celsius (Sethi 2018)	1.4068	1.4085
Density at 20 degrees Celsius, grams per cubic centimeter (ASTM D1122)	0.938	0.936

2.3.5. Properties comparison

A thorough comparison of the physico-chemical properties between the reference substance and the declared polymer was conducted, detailed in Table 1. This comprehensive analysis unveiled a remarkable congruence between the properties of the reference substance and those claimed for PMTA polymer.

Following the comprehensive lab tests, a clear result emerged: the product initially thought to be a polymer, named Polymethylamine (PMTA), turned out to be a mix of its starting materials. What this means in simpler terms is that the product didn’t undergo enough processing to be classified as a polymer. Instead, it retains the original HS Code of its starting materials. Consequently, the Moldovan Certificate of Origin won’t be granted to the producer. Additionally, because the starting materials come from the CIS countries, the producer will be required to pay taxes upon importing into the European Union. This situation arises from the Revised Kyoto Convention, Specific Annex K, Chapter 1, 6th Recommendation, which states that goods must undergo sufficient processing to qualify for preferential treatment, and in this case, that threshold has not been met (WCO 2008).

2.3.7. The lesson on patent applications

This case emphasizes the intricate relationship between patent applications and product legitimacy, revealing the limitations of legal protection they offer. Intellectual property offices, tasked with evaluating

patent applications, refrain from directly verifying practical feasibility. Their assessment relies on criteria like novelty, inventive step, and industrial applicability, lacking practical tests. The patent office depends on the information provided in the application, placing the responsibility on applicants. This highlights the potential existence of ‘Impossible Patents,’ as discussed in Robert P. Merges’ article, underscoring the need for a nuanced approach to deceptive patent claims (Merges 1999).

2.4. Case Study II: Customs fraud related to VAT recovery

The intricate web of customs fraud often extends far beyond the initial borders of a country. This case study exemplifies a sophisticated attempt at fraud that was successfully detected and thwarted, illuminating the crucial role played by customs laboratories in safeguarding not only a nation’s economy but also international financial integrity.

2.4.1. Request and initial analysis

At a strategically located customs post within a free economic zone, a request was submitted to the Customs Laboratory. The aim was to verify whether a shipment of goods, declared as organic fertilizers and imported from Ukraine at an unusually high value of 10 euros per liter, adhered to the accompanying quality certificate. The economic agent’s choice of location within the free economic zone was a significant factor, as operating

within this zone granted certain privileges, including the ability to place and use foreign goods without the obligation of paying import duties, as stipulated by the Republic of Moldova's legislation (World Bank 2016, 7). Consequently, the product's alignment with the quality certificate became the focal point of our investigation. The Customs Laboratory, with its advanced analytical capabilities and expertise in verifying product compliance, was the optimal choice for conducting this investigation to ensure the integrity of trade practices and adherence to regulatory standards.

2.4.2. Discrepancy Detection

Upon the initial analysis, the goods appeared to meet the parameters specified in the quality certificate. However, during a routine control, subsequent tests conducted by the Customs Laboratory, which could not have been performed by any other body within the current operating framework, revealed a stark contrast. The product no longer matched the previously identified parameters nor the quality certificate issued by the manufacturer. This underscores the critical importance and centrality of the Customs Laboratory in detecting discrepancies and ensuring the authenticity and compliance of goods.

2.4.3. Alerting of authorities and comprehensive investigation

Promptly recognizing the complexity of the situation, the Customs Laboratory alerted the Criminal Investigation Division within the Customs Service. In response, samples were taken from all goods imported up to that point. It was discovered that only one sample conformed to the characteristics declared by the manufacturer. The rest of the imported goods exhibited an overwhelming presence of water, ranging between 99.68 and 99.97 percent. The goal for the product to contain mostly water was purely economic—by diluting the initial product 50 times more, the manufacturer aimed to maximize profit. The interesting part is that given the fact that the product was dark black, it could not be distinguished from actual fertilizer with the naked eye. This fraudulent practice highlighted the need for rigorous testing and verification by the Customs Laboratory to prevent economic deception and ensure the authenticity of imported goods.

2.4.4. Unraveling of the Fraudulent Scheme

Upon further investigation, details of a sophisticated plot emerged. The information revealing the orchestrated scheme came directly from the Criminal Investigation Division within the Customs Service, providing a credible and authoritative source for the unfolding events. The producer (Ukrainian company), which was discovered by the investigation, had imported organic fertilizer valued at an astounding 20 million euros over the course of a year. The malevolent intent behind this

substantial importation was to exploit the Value-Added Tax (VAT) refund system of the Ukrainian state, followed by the planned destruction of the goods within the economic zone.

The regulatory framework governing the collection and refund of VAT is enshrined in the Law on Value-Added Tax. As outlined in Article 3 of the law, both the sale of goods in Ukraine and the export of goods from Ukraine are subject to taxation. The former is taxed at a 20 percent rate, while the latter is taxed at zero percent (European Court of Human Rights 2001, 3). Exploiting this regulatory distinction, the producer sought to recover VAT from the Ukrainian state under the guise of an export operation. It was also revealed that the Moldovan company involved was established with the aid of the exporting company from Ukraine, suggesting a cross-border collaboration in this fraudulent endeavor.

2.4.5. International cooperation and legal proceedings

The Customs Laboratory shared the results of their tests and comprehensive investigations with their counterparts in Ukraine. Subsequently, legal proceedings were initiated in Ukraine to address the fraudulent activities. This joint effort between nations, facilitated by the vigilant work of the Customs Laboratory, not only protected the Republic of Moldova's financial interests but also prevented significant financial losses to the Ukrainian state as well.

2.5. Diverse challenges and comprehensive analysis

In its brief existence, Moldovan Customs Laboratory has exhibited remarkable adaptability, efficiently addressing a broad spectrum of customs fraud scenarios. Beyond the cases discussed earlier, the laboratory has swiftly confronted challenges vital for trade integrity and regulatory compliance. From uncovering misclassifications, preventing the introduction of prohibited goods, verifying product origin, and detecting contraband to addressing narcotics trafficking and conducting forensic investigations. Figure 4 quantitatively outlines the laboratory's extensive sample analysis, providing percentages and types of samples analyzed throughout 2022.

While the laboratory has had significant successes, it has also faced numerous challenges. These include keeping pace with the increasing volume and sophistication of fraudulent activities, managing resource constraints, and ensuring continuous staff training. Improvements could be made by adopting best practices from other countries with more established customs laboratories, such as incorporating advanced technologies and enhancing international collaboration.

The laboratory's multifaceted strategy not only combats

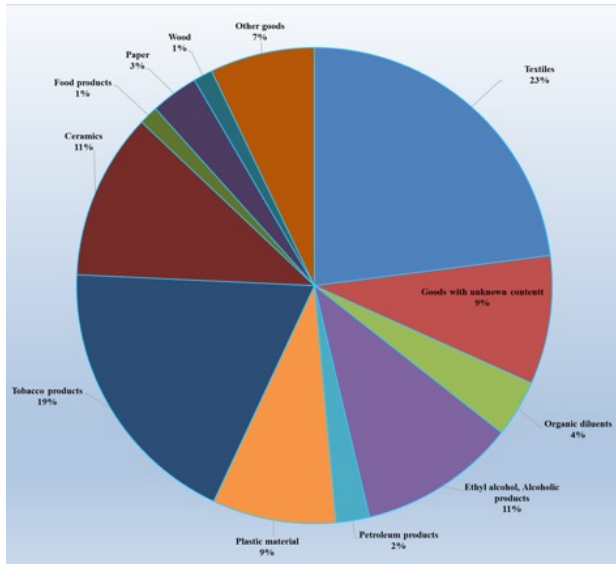


Figure 4. Distribution of Sample Types and Percentages Analyzed Throughout 2022. Source: the author's research.

customs fraud but also contributes significantly to environmental protection, public health, and the overall optimization of customs operations, offering valuable insights for policymakers considering investments in enhancing customs enforcement capabilities. Without the customs laboratory, the country would face increased risks of undetected fraud, compromised product quality, and weakened regulatory compliance, ultimately undermining trade integrity and economic stability.

3. Conclusion

In the complex dynamic world of customs fraud, the essential role of customs laboratories as protectors of international trade integrity is undeniable. The case studies presented in this research offer a glimpse into the intricate schemes devised by fraudulent actors and the specialized knowledge and advanced techniques required to expose them. However, to truly appreciate the unique value of customs laboratories, it is important to consider the broader context in which they operate.

Customs laboratories are often embedded within border agencies, a strategic position that allows them to work closely with law enforcement and other stakeholders. This integrated model can be highly effective in combating customs fraud, as it facilitates information sharing, coordinated responses, and multidisciplinary approaches. While there may be alternative perspectives on the most effective way to organize and deploy customs control resources, the success of the Customs Laboratory, as demonstrated in the case studies, suggests that this model has significant merits.

The methodology employed in this research, which includes an in-depth exploration of detailed case

studies and a rigorous analysis of their results, was designed to provide a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the role of customs laboratories in the fight against fraud. However, the author acknowledges that there may be limitations to this approach and welcomes further research and critical engagement in this important topic.

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of customs laboratories in safeguarding the integrity of international trade and the financial stability of nations. Their specialized expertise, strategic position within border agencies, and commitment to continuous learning and innovation make them an indispensable asset in the ongoing battle against customs fraud. As the global trade landscape becomes increasingly interconnected and the tactics of fraudulent actors continue to evolve, the need for robust, agile, and effective customs control mechanisms, including well-resourced and empowered customs laboratories, is more urgent than ever.

3.1. Implications and Recommendations

The insights from this comprehensive analysis have significant implications for both national and international stakeholders involved in customs control processes. Firstly, the dynamic nature of customs fraud, as demonstrated in the case studies, requires continuous adaptation and enhancement of customs laboratories' capabilities. Fraudsters are constantly devising new methods and tactics to evade detection, making it essential for customs services to invest in ongoing training programs and the latest technology for their laboratories.

Secondly, the findings emphasize the necessity for enhanced international collaboration among customs laboratories. The cross-border nature of many fraud schemes, as illustrated in Case Study II, requires effective communication and data sharing between nations. Strengthening existing networks, such as the European Customs Laboratory Network, and establishing new avenues for collaboration would significantly bolster the collective ability to combat customs fraud on a global scale. Thirdly, the study highlights the importance of public awareness campaigns aimed at both businesses and consumers. Educating economic agents about the methods employed by customs laboratories in detecting fraud can act as a powerful deterrent. While this was not a primary focus of the research, it is a recommendation that is supported by existing literature in the field of fraud prevention.

Building upon these implications, the following recommendations are made:

Investment in Technology and Training: Customs services should allocate sufficient resources for the continuous upgrading of laboratory equipment and

invest in staff training programs. The case studies have shown that staying ahead in technological advancements and fostering a highly skilled workforce are crucial for detecting and preventing fraud.

International Collaboration Frameworks: Nations should actively participate in or establish international agreements and frameworks for sharing information and expertise while ensuring compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. The case studies, particularly Case Study II, demonstrated that collaboration can significantly enhance the collective intelligence of customs laboratories worldwide.

Regular Evaluation and Adaptation: Customs services should establish a system for continuous evaluation of their methodologies and approaches, as shown in the case studies. Regular assessments, possibly through independent audits, can identify areas for improvement, ensuring that the methods employed remain relevant and effective against emerging fraud tactics.

Academic and Research Collaboration: Collaboration with academic institutions and research organizations can provide customs laboratories access to cutting-edge research and innovative solutions. Encouraging partnerships with academia, as seen in the development of Moldovan Customs Laboratory, can stimulate research in the field of customs fraud detection, leading to the development of novel techniques and methodologies.

In summary, this study underscore the need for proactive measures and international cooperation, while the recommendations provide specific steps to fortify customs control mechanisms. By heeding these suggestions, nations can strengthen their defenses against customs fraud, ensuring the integrity of international trade and safeguarding their economies from potential financial losses.

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Green is Gold: Creating a Gold Standard AEO Program through Green Initiatives

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Allanah O'Hanlon **

This policy report examines the feasibility of extending Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs to include green trade practices. AEOs are supply chain security programs that play a vital role in enhancing the security and efficiency of international trade. A significant threat to global security is climate change. Considering how Customs administrations worldwide can actively contribute to efforts on this pressing issue is crucial. This policy report addresses the nexus of security, trade, and climate change to recommend how AEOs can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation principles. Employing a survey distributed to Trusted Traders within the Australian Border Force's AEO, the authors find that incorporating green trade principles into the existing AEO and within the SAFE Framework is an achievable option. Integrating green trade practices and principles into AEO programs can significantly advance Customs' efforts on climate change.

Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation are at the forefront of international and domestic politics and public discourse. Yet, little empirical work has been done on Customs¹ administrations' adaptive capacity to respond and adapt to climate change. It is this intersection that continues to vex Customs and supranational agencies, with the question of how the management of borders can adapt to and contribute to mitigating climate change risks. There are, however, mechanisms already employed by Customs administrations that can, and should, contribute to climate change mitigation efforts and adaptation. One such mechanism is the Authorized Economic Operator

(AEO) program. In this article, we contend that AEO programs can be adapted to develop and sustain green trade practices to meet that end. To that end, we will demonstrate how green trade practices can contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Following the World Customs Organization (WCO) Green Customs Global Conference in 2022, Customs administrations were tasked to consider whether an AEO program could be adapted to develop and sustain green trade practices. The green trade practices can range from emissions reduction at the source (i.e.,

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mitigation) to partnerships with multiple suppliers in different geographic locations to reduce logistical disruption (i.e., adaptation). AEO programs are informed by the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate global trade (hereafter referred to as the "SAFE Framework"). The premise of the SAFE Framework is to support the facilitation of legitimate trade, incentivising accredited entities with trade facilitation benefits. While the SAFE Framework focuses on providing increased security to the global supply chain, Customs administrations are exploring whether the framework can integrate climate-focused recommendations. This exploration has centred on incentivising green trade practices by providing benefits for members who satisfy 'green' standards and encouraging green innovation. The threshold or framework for assessing the green trade practices of traders has not been explored beyond policy debate relating to the dichotomy of supply chain security and the climate agenda.

This policy proposal is premised on primary data collected from traders within the Australian Border Force (ABF) AEO program Australian Trusted Trader (ATT), along with archival and industry directives. The study undertaken by the authors examines the feasibility of integrating 'green' principles in AEOs, specifically to facilitate Customs' adaptation to climate change and contribute to mitigation. Through such climate action, Customs administrations able to host AEOs are better positioned to deal with our rapidly changing climate and lead the way in climate-friendly trade practices. This article begins with a background to the climate security at hand and then explores the links between climate security and supply chain security. It then discusses the SAFE Framework. The article then presents and discusses data collected from traders in the ATT program, making a case for the feasibility of this proposal. It concludes with policy options and recommendations.

Climate Change as a Security Threat

Climate change has been largely accepted by both government and private enterprises as a non-traditional security threat (Barnett 2003; Busby 2008; Dalby 2021). Not only is it a threat in its own right, but it also acts as both an accelerant for other national security threats and a catalyst for conflict (Nevitt 2020). At its core, climate change can be considered a borderless threat; it is a vexing global issue that transcends state borders and ultimately affects all of us. Borders cannot stop the threat or consequences of climate change, but we can explore how we might use borders and Customs administrations effectively to mitigate the shared threats and consequences.

One shared borderless phenomenon in this light is trade security: ultimately, Customs administrations have a

responsibility to manage the flow of goods across borders. That means managing both the threats trade can pose as well as the necessary facilitation of trade. There is a natural link between trade security and climate security in this light; on the one hand, trade significantly contributes to climate change. Global trade is critical to both developed and developing nations; however, the production and distribution of goods are significant contributors to CO₂ emissions (Li & Haneklaus 2022), increasing the threat. On the other hand, Customs administrations at the core of trade security principles have the mandate and ability to implement facilitation and restriction practices that can effectively contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change. There is a gap in policy and literature in this space. Focusing on the intersection of trade security and climate security allows us to develop strategies that account for shared consequences.

What is Being Done: Trade Security

Threats to the supply chain no longer sit within the realm of contraband, illicit trade, and the illegal movement of people and goods; rather, adaptation to non-traditional threats, including climate change, is proving necessary. Climate change is a borderless threat exacerbated by how borders are managed. While Customs administrations have sought to collaborate on green customs initiatives, governance efforts have directly focused on climate impacts within the jurisdiction to contain and adapt to them within territorial borders (Benzie & Persson 2019). Customs administrations have endeavoured to develop individual green customs strategies. However, the manifestation of these strategies demonstrates the difficulty in addressing how best to tackle the significant scope of the border and its intersection with climate change.

A key element of border security is the international supply chain. International trade is necessary for economic opportunity and prosperity and provides functional linkages among economic activities across the world (Dent 2021; OECD 2022). It is a critical practice to enable and protect. With that, there is a growing awareness of the vulnerabilities across supply chains to the risks and potential costs associated with the physical and regulatory threats related to global climate change (Jira et al. 2013; Halldórsson & Kovács 2010). Moreover, suppliers are vulnerable to climate as their business activities are likely to be adversely affected by physical changes and regulations related to climate change (De Winne & Peersman 2021; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007).

The impacts of climate change have myriad consequences, which is why it is unsuitable to have a one-size-fits-all approach to combat it. Often Customs administrations lean towards compliance and enforcement actions within relevant Multilateral

Environmental Agreements or domestic environmental compliance obligations. This approach underpins why it has been difficult for agencies to encapsulate how climate change can be addressed through the SAFE Framework and active AEO programs. In essence, AEO programs support a global governance structure that can adapt to global initiatives. While the SAFE Framework focuses on addressing supply chain security threats, primarily from human-based sources of harm, the relevance of climate change as a security threat cannot be ignored. Furthermore, expanding the SAFE Framework to encapsulate non-traditional threats will not weaken its utility; rather, it highlights the significant opportunity to leverage an existing and established framework that has been embedded into numerous Customs administrations with substantial Customs-to-Business engagement. This is a demonstration of adaptation to non-traditional threats, utilising government agencies and programs internationally, transnationally, or supranationally, at bilateral, regional, and global scales, including AEOs, to support the climate agenda (Benzie & Persson 2019; Persson & Dzebo 2019).

The SAFE Framework

The current SAFE Framework exists through three pillars: Customs-to-Customs network arrangements, Customs-to-Business partnerships, and Customs-to-other Government Agencies cooperation (WCO 2021). Since its inception, the SAFE Framework has consistently been associated with the phase in which Customs authorities verify adherence to customs regulations or specific criteria based on a risk assessment. However, there is an imperative to enhance the SAFE Framework by incorporating criteria related to climate considerations.

Through leveraging the existing pillars, the WCO can expand what is in the scope of 'supply chain security' and adaptation of the program rather than solely looking to controls relating to traditional border threats. Traders already meet compliance standards vis-à-vis Customs legislation and the SAFE Framework. Any amendments should be aimed at incentivising businesses to change their behaviour. In some cases, businesses have already changed their behaviour in light of the climate crisis and these entities should be recognised. It is unnecessary to include additional specific environmental compliance criteria within the SAFE Framework, as traders are already subject to these standards and held to account through the associated regulations and multilateral environmental agreements. Those traders, however, that take additional steps to 'green' their business practices, should be recognised by Customs administrations. An addendum addressing recognition under the Customs-to-Business pillar would facilitate guidance to countries that wish to build out their processes and practices related to this

expanded pillar within their local jurisdiction. This initiative provides support for AEO programs that can commit to the additional components that specifically relate to climate change; this could fall into mitigation, adaptation, or both. This addendum would in turn allow each AEO program to define what these obligations and objectives might look like for their AEOs, within the context of their legislative and regulatory frameworks or climate threat environments.

The incentive for traders to obtain AEO accreditation is a lighter touch at the border. In turn, Customs administrations can focus on 'shrinking the haystack' for higher risk traders. Reaching an agreement on the addendum would alleviate tensions arising from different maturity levels of AEO programs and enhance the motivation for proactive climate action among Customs administrations that are willing to meet the supplementary criteria. However, some may argue that when 'countries have different levels of climate ambition, free riders will benefit at the expense of committed countries' (Clausing & Wolfram 2023). In the case of AEO programs, moving to exclude aspirational members who seek to implement higher levels of supply chain security in the pursuit of climate-related initiatives is detrimental to the program's intent. There needs to be a balance between the necessity of secure trade and appropriate encouragement and guidance to members on the implementation of environmental frameworks and upward harmonisation through inclusivity.

Incentivising green trade: AEO Survey Results

Climate change and corporate value are recognised as being inextricably linked. However, the state of businesses undertaking green trade practices that can contribute to climate change initiatives varies significantly. To assess the viability of balancing secure trade and encouraging incorporation, we went to the Traders at the heart of the AEO. In 2023, a survey was disseminated to Trusted Traders from the ABF's AEO, the ATT program. This was the first year a set of 'green trade' questions was included within the annual survey. The set was added for the purposes of this study and relevant studies that will follow; 169 accredited traders responded to the set of specific 'green trade' questions.

Attitudes Towards Climate Security and Trade

Utilising a market segmentation, three main types of entities were clustered among ATTs: climate activist promoters, climate neutral passives, and non-aligned. Respectively, 41% of the respondents considered themselves as climate activists and agreed that climate change was a national security issue. Twenty-six per cent held mixed views of whether climate change was a national security issue but felt that should it be integrated into the ATT program; they should not

be held to a higher level of environmental standards. Finally, 33% had opinions that did not fit into either of the former categories and had an array of experiences that feature across this analysis. From the survey, 66% of ATTs had no understanding or a rudimentary grasp of the 'green trade' concept. As Figure 1 below demonstrates, the concept was not well understood among traders.

Despite this, 86% of Trusted Traders agreed (ranging from tend to agree, mostly agree, and strongly agree) that they as ATTs can play a role in combatting climate change; 74% agreed that climate change is a national security issue, as shown in Figure 2. Despite most ATTs acknowledging the implications of climate change and the role they can play in mitigation and adaptation, not all were on board. One stated "I don't agree that Climate is a national security issue. As traders, sure we can minimise this within our supply chain, but it should not be an ABF topic. ABF need to concentrate on security issues which have far more immediate consequences to our country". Interestingly, when

asked if the ATT program could be improved to support green trade, combined agreement dropped to 64%. Less than half (43%) agreed that ATTs should be held to a higher standard of environmental sustainability than non-Trusted Traders.

Across the respondents, 59% are currently undertaking green practices in relation to their physical trade or supply chain. When asked about opportunities for improving environmentally sustainable supply chains, most ATTs referred to packaging initiatives. These ranged from environmentally sustainable packaging (such as compostable pallet wrapping) to reduced plastics use and increased recycling activities. Carbon offsets and carbon trading schemes were also broached.

Adapting the ATT Program for Climate Change

The purpose of this study is to assess the viability of adapting the ATT program to incorporate green trade practices. As the Traders themselves are at the heart of the AEO, any adaptations should include their inputs.

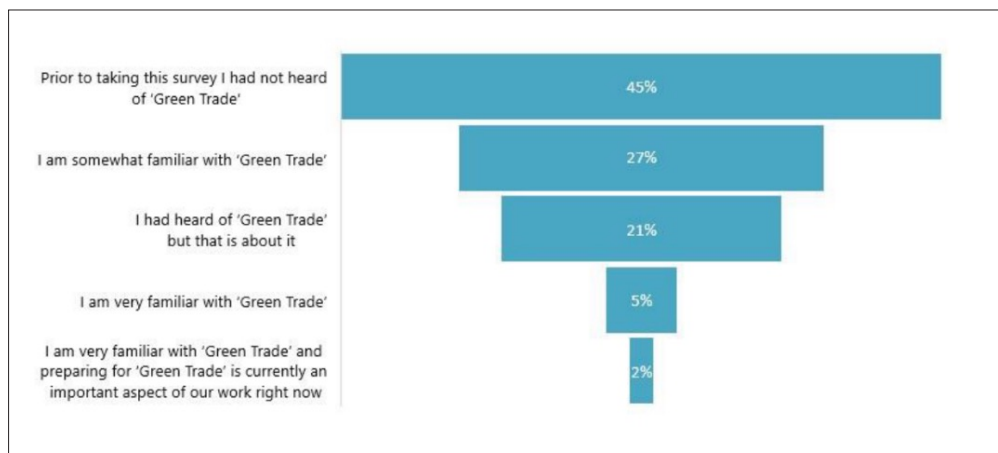


Figure 1. ATTs' Familiarity with the Concept of "Green Trade". Figure source: ARTD (2023), 3.

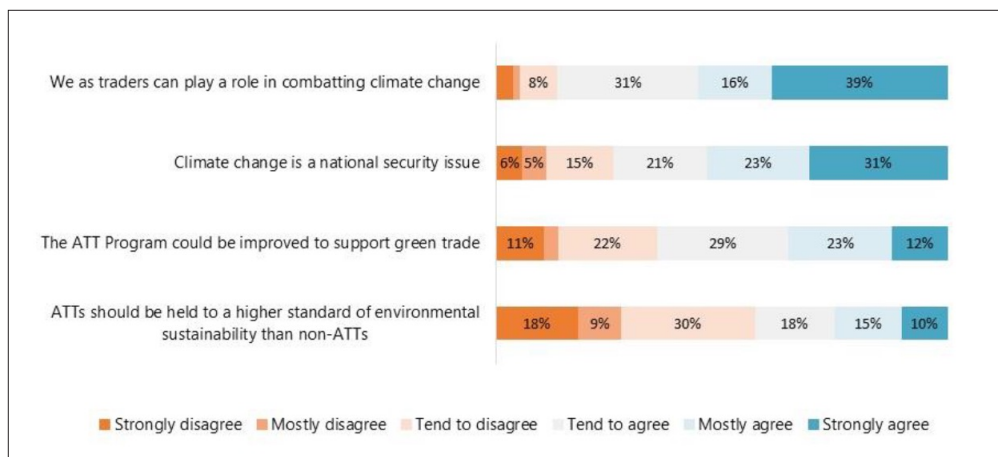


Figure 2. ATTs' Attitudes to Climate Security and Trade. Figure source: ARTD (2023), 4.

When asked how the AEO could be improved to support green trade, ATTs responded that incentives should be included to promote a shift to green trade practices. Most suggestions stemming from this question involved removing some taxes to recognise green trade practices and implementing taxes for goods and services that do not promote green trade. For example, the import of plastic goods should be taxed, whereas the import of fibre-based products would be tax free. While some of this is beyond the remit of what the ABF can unilaterally do, the incentives-based framework was a key outcome. Traders also voiced that the program should be promoting and encouraging greener alternatives to current trade and guidance on green trade initiatives, audits, and benefits for the ATT holder. While the incentives will need to be jurisdictionally contextual, there can be broad-reaching incentives, such as green trader logos and tiered clearance protocols at the border.

Implications

Most respondents advocated for the inclusion of green trade practices within the ATT program. In light of the climate crisis, the ATT program has the potential and responsibility to reshape our perspective on supply chain security and related initiatives. This program is among the key initiatives in this regard. The Customs-to-Business pillar serves as an initial step in the process of aligning the SAFE Framework with actions that can effectively contribute to adapting to our evolving world. With the backing of traders and continuous consultation, it is attainable within the Australian AEO. The addendum should be assessed in the specific jurisdiction where it is implemented, but the adaptation methods we describe are well-suited for this purpose.

Implementation

We recommend incorporating a 'green trader' certification within the AEO framework. Traders who request to be accredited as a 'green' trader would need to verify their claims. The verification of the international standard or certification is critical to the process to attempt to avoid greenwashing and assure industry and government of claims. Certifications or standards that are proposed initially to consider in the framework are listed in Table 1.

This list is non-exhaustive but represents a starting point for recognising existing certifications. Ongoing requirements for verification of continued adherence with green standards or certifications for the trader would need to be built into existing assurance programs. The use of external certifications provided by not-for-profit organisations may be contentious as some organisations may seek to obtain certifications erroneously, but such risks are outweighed by the need for amelioration.

Coupled with the verification of certification, traders would be required to provide a climate risk assessment applicable to their supply chain and business footprint. This should consider their mitigation strategies and governance that specifically relates to climate impacts, such as disaster disruption to suppliers or transport routes. This would require a trader to evaluate their business and how climate may affect their business sector. Climate risk assessments provided by traders should also build in considerations of climate resilience, understanding the material risks and opportunities and the implications for the organisation. A climate risk assessment could be informed by International Standard ISO 31000 for Risk Management; ISO 31000 is already referred to by ABF's Trusted Trader program in assessing an entity's supply chain security risk assessment. Expanding the risk assessment to include climate risks would require limited investment by entities seeking 'green' recognition by Customs officers, with the outcomes providing a greater payoff.

Another crucial component of this recommendation pertains to education. This is twofold: Customs officers cannot be expected to become experts in all matters of climate, rather they will need training to familiarise themselves with the standards and certifications provided by entities seeking to demonstrate adoption and adherence to their commitments. Second, education for the Trusted Traders will be required. Survey respondents identified this as well, and there were several suggestions focused on raising awareness and providing resources and education about green trade. These include awareness workshops, involving CITES and environmental protection agencies, educating Traders on how to go about conducting «due diligence» investigations to the standard ATTs wish to attain. More awareness of the program and the implications of incorporating green trade was also suggested and should be provided. Traders identified that education and recognition as opposed to financial benefit should be provided; both of which can be provided in the suggested AEO addendum. Additional benefits and offering an ATT logo to reflect they are supporting green trade can also be considered.

Considerations for International Compatibility

It is important to look beyond the Australian border to assess the international compatibility of such suggestions. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) Green Trade Strategy identifies that Trusted Trader programs, including their own Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT), 'continue to be an effective method to incentivize positive change in private industry and could be leveraged to encourage green trade practices' (USCBP 2022, 5). The extent to which Customs administrations can incentivise green trade and suitably 'assess' what green trade practices are is underdeveloped. Similarly, the ABF's Green

Table 1: International Standards and Certifications. Source: author's research.

Fairtrade standard certification	The Fairtrade Standards establish the criteria for farmers, workers, traders and other stakeholders to participate in this approach to trade.
International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC Plus)	ISCC PLUS is a sustainable certification scheme for bio-based, renewable and circular raw materials. It demonstrates the voluntary implementation of sustainability goals on a global scale, interconnecting the entire supply chain.
Forest Stewardship Council Chain of Custody Certification	The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, non-governmental organisation that promotes responsible management of the world's forests.
ISO 14001 Family: Environmental Management	ISO 14001 sets out the criteria for an environmental management system and can be certified too. It maps out a framework a company or organisation can follow to set up an effective environmental management system. Certification should be formally issued rather than only the implementation of guidelines.
EP100 (The Climate Group)	EP100 is a global corporate energy efficiency initiative, led by the Climate Group, bringing together over 125 ambitious businesses committed to improving their energy efficiency.
CDP (Premium or Supply Chain)	CDP is a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system for entities to manage their environmental impacts. Supply chain: Being a CDP Supply Chain member supports entities to engage suppliers, pinpoint risks and identify opportunities to set and achieve science-based targets, zero-deforestation, and water security targets.
Rainforest Alliance	The Sustainable Agriculture Standard, along with its assurance and technology systems, are designed to drive more sustainable agricultural production and responsible supply chains.
EcoVadis	EcoVadis is an international company that provides business sustainability ratings. A member of the UNGC, it rates companies based on international sustainability standards, including the GRI, UNGC, and ISO 26000. It illustrates performance across four themes: environment, labour and human rights, ethics, and sustainable procurement. It also provides enterprise solutions for sustainable supply chains.

Customs Framework considers that benefits could be offered to accredited traders through Australia's AEO programs to incentivise green trade practices. The definitions of green trade practices are broad. For the scope of this paper, it has been defined in line with the WCO's own definition as environmentally friendly trade practices and supply chains.

The WCO assessed that 'leveraging trade to support the transition of the global economy toward sustainability requires not only a reorganization of business practices towards more corporate social responsibility but also a change in mindset to allow for the adaptation of regulatory approaches and operations' (WCO 2023). The advancement of environmental goals through the SAFE Framework would require a new approach to engagement with traders, specifically requiring

Customs agencies to recognise or assess private enterprise green trade practices.

We recognise there are 80 AEOs currently in operation worldwide, and assessment of all of them for compatibility purposes is beyond the scope of this paper; however, this is a pathway for future research. Still, assessing green trade practices needs to step beyond the current commitments within the SAFE Framework. Front line officers need tangible and realistic measures and guidance to deliver on their AEO's commitment to any additional addendum. A framework to facilitate this can be developed by leveraging proven and established sustainability or environmental certification processes, including international standards, to validate claims of green trade practices. The guiding principle behind this approach is that existing rules and standards can be

gradually incorporated as the framework develops, with additional certifications or standards being recognised along the way. This would capture certifications that are relevant to whole of industry or are industry specific. As governments move towards meeting climate targets, the accepted certifications can be modified.

Conclusion

The remit of Customs administrations should continually adapt to meet the challenges of evolving border threats, including the non-traditional threat of climate change. Climate change and its threats to national and global security are pressing issues requiring a concerted approach. The nexus of trade security and climate change has been drawn out in this article, resulting in a novel recommendation regarding how to attend to some of the threats climate change poses. The SAFE Framework is a central consideration in addressing this nexus.

Customs administrations can be at the forefront of climate-friendly trade practices and policies, contributing to environmental protection: Adapting AEO programs is one example of how administrations can contribute to that protection. Introducing green trader certifications, requiring climate risk assessments, educating officers and traders on climate action commitments, and incentivising green trade are all suggestions put forward in this article. Through insights from ATT members, it is apparent that this adaptation would be welcomed. By leveraging AEO programs to consider not just human security threats in the supply chain but also climate threats, Customs administrations will enable resilient supply chains and build up industry to utilise all means available to mitigate against the consequence of climate change.

Acknowledgements

This policy report was developed from a paper for the 2023 Borders in Globalization Summer Institute, Trade & Customs Borders in the 21st Century, made possible by funding from the Korea Customs Service and support from the World Customs Organization. It was further developed at the 2023 WCO Climate Change and Customs Workshop, also funded by CCF-Korea. We thank the WCO for its ongoing support for climate action. The survey data and figures were presented by ARTD Consultants, as contracted by the ABF.

Note

- 1 For conceptual clarity, we are employing the referent Customs administrations as opposed to border security/border agency/border force. We acknowledge that many Customs administrations in the world are part of a larger border framework

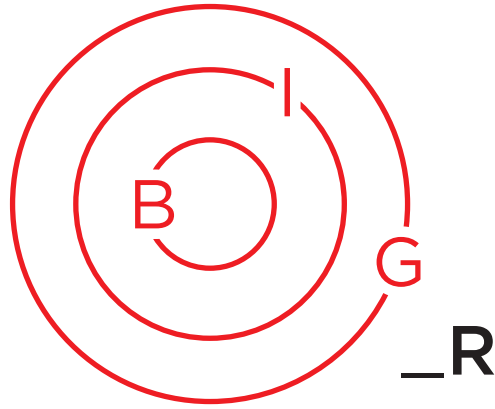
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PORTFOLIO

BIG_Review publishes portfolios of artist collections related to the world of borders—whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual borders. Portfolios are chosen by the Chief Editor and featured on the cover of each issue, and, like all *BIG_Review* publications, available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.



PORTFOLIO

Chief Editor's Choice

En français & in English

Borders in Globalization Review
Volume 5, Issue 2 (Spring & Summer 2024): 87–93
<https://doi.org/10.18357/bigr52202422082>

Construction abstraite: Frontière

Abstract Construction: Border

Laurent Reynès

La frontière en tant que expérience vécue

La sculpture de la frontière par Laurent Reynès, exposée dans le parc du Château de Pourtalès à Strasbourg, fait partie des activités du Centre d'excellence franco-allemand Jean Monnet (2022-2025), dirigé par Birte Wassenberg, professeur d'histoire contemporaine à Sciences Po Strasbourg. Le Centre travaille sur les régions frontalières en tant que laboratoires de l'intégration européenne. En faisant appel à la société civile, il organise des expressions artistiques de la façon dont la frontière est réellement vécue, à travers des lectures, des expositions, des concerts, etc. Laurent Reynès a collaboré avec un groupe d'étudiants européens et américains de Sciences Po Strasbourg et du programme CEPA pour encapsuler les difficultés et les luttes engendrées par les frontières. La Construction Abstraite a été inaugurée le 29 novembre 2023 à l'occasion des Castle-talks du Centre d'Excellence sur les récits sur les frontières en Europe, "Résilience des régions frontalières en temps de crise", et a été ouverte au grand public de l'Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Kehl jusqu'à la fin janvier 2024.

À propos de l'Artiste

Laurent Reynès (doctorat en art) est artiste, sculpteur et peintre. Il est également professeur d'architecture à l'Université de Strasbourg. Ses œuvres ont été présentées dans de nombreuses expositions à travers le monde depuis 1990, y compris un projet de sculpture en 2003 au pôle Nord. Il a participé à de nombreux symposiums de sculpture depuis 1992 et a reçu de multiples invitations pour des résidences d'artiste dans différents pays.

The Border as a Lived Experience

The border sculpture by Lauren Reynès exhibited in the park of the Château Pourtalès in Strasbourg is part of the activities of the Franco-German Jean Monnet Center of Excellence (2022-2025), directed by Birte Wassenberg, Professor of Contemporary History at Sciences Po Strasbourg. The Center works on borderlands as laboratories of European integration. Appealing to civil society, it organizes artistic expressions of how the border is actually lived, through readings, exhibitions, concerts, etc.). Laurent Reynès has collaborated with a group of European and American students from Sciences Po Strasbourg and the CEPA program to encapsulate the hardships and struggles brought on by borders. Abstract Construction was inaugurated on November 29, 2023, at the occasion of the Center of Excellence's Castle-talks on Narratives on Borders in Europe, "Resilience of border regions in times of crisis", and it was open to the general public of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Kehl until end of January 2024.

About the Artist

Laurent Reynès (doctorate in Art) is an artist, sculptor, and painter. He is also a professor of architecture at the University of Strasbourg. His artwork has appeared in numerous exhibitions around the world since 1990, including a 2003 sculpture project in the North Pole. He has participated in many sculpture symposiums since 1992 and received multiple invitations for artist residencies in different countries.



<https://www.laurent-reynes.com/>



<https://www.facebook.com/laurentreynessculpteur>



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Construction abstraite: Frontière

Château de Pourtalès, Strasbourg
De novembre 2023 à janvier 2024

Mes *Constructions Abstraites* mettent l'accent sur le concept, l'espace, la lumière, la forme, la matière, l'environnement . . . Ou encore toute autre composante qui a trait à l'architecture et l'aménagement, revue par la lunette de l'art.

Les frontières sont des constructions abstraites, pleines d'absurdités et de contradictions, porteuses de fermetures et de conflits. Elles séparent, coupent, affrontent . . . Elles exacerbent le conservatisme, la xénophobie, le racisme et l'orgueil. Elles renforcent l'impossibilité de vivre ensemble et l'étroitesse de l'esprit humain.

Pourtant, les éléments premiers, l'air, l'eau, la terre n'ont pas de frontière. Les micro-éléments n'ont pas

Abstract Construction: Border

Château de Pourtalès, Strasbourg
November 2023 through January 2024

My *Abstract Constructions* emphasize concept, space, light, form, material, environment . . . and any other component related to architecture and planning, viewed through the lens of art.

Borders are abstract constructions, full of absurdities and contradictions, laden with closures and conflicts. They separate, cut through, confront . . . They exacerbate conservatism, xenophobia, racism, and pride. They reinforce the impossibility of living together and the narrowness of the human mind.

Yet, the primary elements—air, water, earth—know no borders. Micro-elements know no borders. The wind carries these micro-elements away,





de frontière. Le vent emporte ces micro-éléments signifiant bien que la frontière est surtout une notion propre à l'animal *Homme*.

Par la tension de cette multitude de cordes, nous tentons de matérialiser la complexité de l'idée de frontière, matérialiser ce concept purement humain, dans le Jardin de Pourtalès, pour illustrer le propos du séminaire de l'IEP de Strasbourg. Cette installation s'est déroulée dans le cadre du pôle d'excellence franco-allemand Jean Monnet, mis en œuvre par un groupe d'étudiants internationaux impliquant des Français, des Américains, des Japonais, sous le couvert d'enseignants allemands, polonais, français. Il a été notoire que la mise en tension de ces cordes a été le début de la création de liens entre ces étudiants de langues et de cultures



underscoring that borders are primarily a notion belonging to the *human* animal.

Through the tension of these myriad strings, we attempt to materialize the complexity of the idea of a border, to materialize this purely human concept, in the Garden of Pourtalès, illustrating the theme of the seminar at the Institute of Political Studies of Strasbourg. This installation took place within the framework of the Franco-German Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, executed by a group of international students involving French, American, and Japanese participants under the guidance of German, Polish, and French teachers. It was noted that the tensioning of these strings marked the beginning of creating bonds among these students of different languages



différentes. Ces cordes les ont forcés à échanger, à discuter, à plaisanter ensemble. Ces liens ont été physiques et moraux, interculturels et mentaux.

Par la souplesse de la corde, les arbres sont tendus d'une trame aléatoire formant ainsi un maillage, une dentelle qui recouvre leurs ramures pendant une courte période, donnant à voir, une résille, une deuxième peau, des liens symboles du positif et du négatif que véhiculent l'imbroglio et la sophistication de la frontière.

Cette trame de fils, superposée à la trame des branches et des feuillages, est comme une visualisation de la complexité de l'idée même que peut véhiculer une frontière. Comme une toile d'araignée tissée entre les tiges, une frontière arrête

and cultures. These bonds were physical and moral, intercultural and mental.

Through the flexibility of the string, the trees are stretched with a random pattern, forming a mesh, a lace that covers their branches for a short period, revealing a net, a second skin, symbols of the positive and negative conveyed by the intricacy and sophistication of the frontier.



This web of threads, overlaying the framework of branches and foliage, is like a visualization of the complexity inherent in the idea of a frontier. Like a spider's web woven between the stems, a border halts some exchanges while stimulating others, both legal and illegal. It fosters





des échanges, mais a contrario, elle en stimule d'autres, légaux et illégaux. Elle stimule l'imagination et la transgression. Innombrables sont les liens qui peuvent se tisser de manière visible ou invisible à travers une frontière. Les liens se croisent dans tous le sens, se coupent, se renforcent, se structurent de manière légale ou pas, passant par des raisonnements le plus souvent improbables. Peut-être existe-t-il des frontières invisibles à l'Homme entre les arbres du parc de Pourtalès ? Peut-être que les frontières humaines ne sont pas les seules dans l'univers ni même sur Terre ?

Lorsque les lignes tracées sur une carte sont complexes et sinueuses, elles reflètent une histoire tumultueuse. Lorsqu'elles sont simples et rectilignes



imagination and transgression. Countless are the connections that can be woven, visible or invisible, across a frontier. These connections intersect in all directions, cut across, strengthen, and structure themselves legally or not, often through reasoning that is highly improbable. Perhaps there are invisible frontiers among the trees of the Pourtalès

park? Perhaps human borders are not the only ones in the universe or even on Earth?

When lines drawn on a map are complex and winding, they reflect a tumultuous history. When they are simple and straight, they result from a lack of thought and sensitivity to the territory. Nothing is more ambiguous, imprecise, and confusing than a border line...



elles sont le fruit d'un manque de pensée et de sensibilité au territoire. Rien n'est plus ambigu, imprécis et confus qu'une ligne frontière...

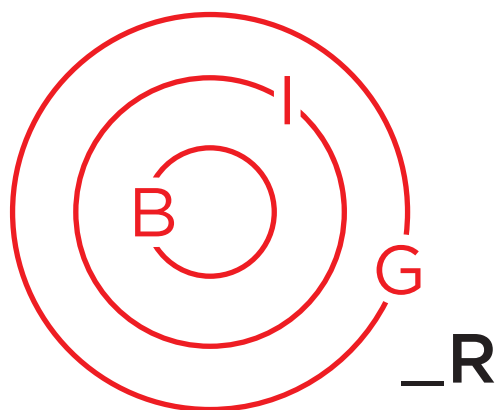
Certaines frontières sont bâties, d'autres pas ...
 Certaines fluctuent, d'autres pas ... Certaines sont vues, d'autres pas ... Certaines existent, d'autres pas ...
 Certaines sont administratives, d'autres pas ...
 Certaines existent pour les uns, pas pour les autres ...

Laurent Reynès
 Sculpteur
 November 2023

Some borders are constructed, others not... Some fluctuate, others do not ... Some are seen, others not ... Some exist, others not ... Some are administrative, others not ... Some exist for some, not for others ...

Laurent Reynès
 Sculptor
 November 2023





POETRY

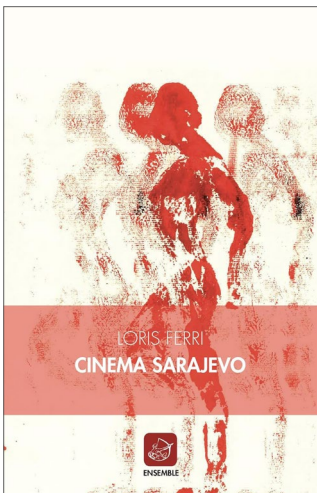
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POETRY

Selected Border Poems

Loris Ferri



Ensemble 2022 (available on [Amazon](#))



Photo credit: Luciano Americano

Artist Statement

These texts, published in the Italian collection *Cinema Sarajevo* (Ensemble 2022) and translated in English by Katie Webb, are born from a rib of the European project: REFEST, Images & Words on Refugee Routes (2018), which started in Sarajevo and developed in Croatia, Italy, and Spain, with eight Italian poets, sixteen Balkan photographers, and eight Spanish illustrators. These poems recount a cinema of lives with their pain, youthful dreams and delusions, the fear riding between two centuries, the truce of the war, and the desire for redemption beyond every exodus.

About the Poet

Loris Ferri (1978) has published several books of poetry, including *Borderline* (Thauma 2008), with a preface by Gianni D'Elia; *Correspondences on the Margins of the West* (Effigie 2011), in dialogue with Stefano Sanchini and with a Note by Roberto Roversi; *Rom: Man* (Sigismundus 2012); *Poem of the Residence* (Sigismundus 2016); and his poems appear in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *The Arcane Charm of Betrayed Love*, a tribute to Dario Bellezza (Perrone 2006); *Italian Poets Underground* (Il Saggiatore 2006); *Poetry Against the Blockade*, with more than 100 Cuban, Italian and Venezuelan voices (ebook, Argo Libri 2020). He also worked with the literary magazines *la Gru* and *El Ghibli* and took the play *Song of the Marginalised* to theatres together with Frida Neri and Massimo Zamboni. In 2019 and 2020 he was artistic director of the Sponde International Festival. He has won the following prizes: Marazza Giovani (2013) and Sédar Senghor (2017).



www.lorisferri.weebly.com





I.

I observe you men and women of tomorrow

I observe you men and women of tomorrow
that you are leaving, enraptured by the wind, between dreams and oblivion.
The urgency of twenty years is your howl.
When you hold an apple, so the world is enclosed in your hands.
Like lizards, between the ditches, ready for the simple reawakening;
do not be frightened of the last snow, alone, in the dripping

serum of illusions and ruins. Every body is a sanctuary
of limbs, is the innocent anxiety of mouths orgasms flowers.
The damp seed that takes root, principle of soil and vibration.
First loves are budding; they have storms and are buzzing,
tongues that taste of fire and honey. What awaits us, out there?
Like rain it comes and goes every great season.

II.

Respite

It will be maybe for a few hours. To return
to habitual, indolent gestures; almost simple,
solid. Wash, brush our hair, go
to gather wood. The deep scars
are continents carved out of faces;
There's no limit, imprint, and even if the collapse
has emitted one of its breaths of respite, the cults
of ruin await until the marrow.
Today us, us loners. Naked bodies, breaths,
words made of bread; and a vase of violets
picked from among the rubble. More precious than the golds
and an ultimate gift: being, finally, in the sun.

III.

Often, the world, can seem frightening

Often, the world, can seem frightening
so you retreat, slowly, like an animal
you skulk with the skin of the spirit torn from me
in the cavern of a long night; there, in the total
half-light, you contemplate the void, awaiting that they reach
the peaceful silences of a new dawn, while you ask why is love
so indecipherable and why do men live
oscillating, like dry reeds, between treachery and horror.

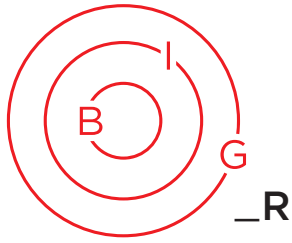
Like this – while in the torment you squint each eyelid –
you continue, crouched, to smooth the hair of this strange evil
that poisons, from inside, whose shadow is your shadow;
doesn't belong to other men. This ferocious beast of bile
devours everything in fear, until it understands that it
– the odious demon – is your comfort. In the sweet keeping of this carcass
stripped of fascination for it; and even the light that settles
to illuminate the gloaming harms you.

Until a hot rustle nestles in that pitiful den;
sudden, that almost saves you, betrays its first mystery:
and it is the smell of sun-cooked dust, that on the threshing floor
of a dilapidated farm invades with prickly pears.
It is a dream without dream that escapes death. So you leave it
like a shy lizard – elude the anxiety of existence –
and without words you fall in love with this simple breeze
which, indifferent to the human, breathes freely until its silence.

IV.

Exodus

Not a nation, more than a nation, a migrant
crowd with refugee heroes' ancient cheekbones
moving as caravans of rags – mound
of hunger blackened tongues – it reaches the places
where small anthills, colonies of grasses and wheat,
settled the windy sign of a border;
slowly the new Homers emerge from an inhuman mob
of barefoot souls, with their blind eyes, buried in fear,
engraved in sickening water. Men devour the ground;
and to the ground they return. Love has a time. Its time is the end.
On the peaks, where the old goats dare not face
the hollows of cliffs, hoist themselves as fences, in the mess
of masses, rags of lousy bivouacs. The morning is cooking
like a loaf of bread. Every little seed relies on the wind
and to unknown cracks, before coming – with moist peel – to light;
it becomes ear between ears. The day of wide bodies is gone.
Around closed doors of disaffection, men are breeding
men mixing themselves, children of one first god.
Half-breeds sowing, along centuries of blood, their own flesh.
A world has no borders but eyes. In which is celebrated
the beginning of a mirage. The cosmos is born naked; descendants
are born, they'll smell of turmeric and barley, darkness,
berber pupils deep black. They'll be the footprints
on the hard stone, the flavour in the fields of may,
the wrinkles of grains set in the cracks of a pomegranate,
the soil dug from roots; their mestizo faces will be the new god.



POETRY

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A Random Selection

Chad Norman



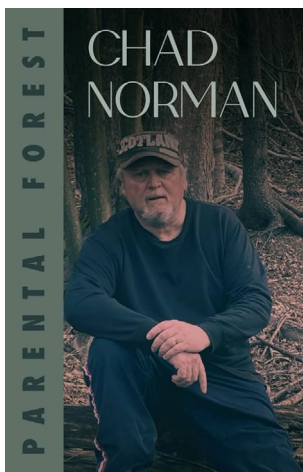
Mwanaka Media and Publishing,
2022 (available on [Amazon](#))

Artist Statement

The two poems presented here were both written with gratitude for the freedom of expression I enjoy in Canada. “How To Know I Am A Human” is from my new manuscript, *A Life Between The Brackets*, which addresses several themes and topics I stay close to, including the natural world, climate events such as wildfires and hurricanes, and local and global politics. “The Erosion Of Borders” is from my 2022 collection, *A Matter Of Inclusion*, which investigates the decisions people make to leave their homelands to begin new lives in Canada. It is my most overtly political work to date.

About the Poet

Chad Norman lives and writes in Truro, Nova Scotia. In 1992 he was awarded the Gwendolyn MacEwen Memorial Award For Poetry (the judges were Margaret Atwood, Barry Callaghan, and Al Purdy). His poems appear in journals, magazines, and anthologies around the world, with one recently selected for inclusion in the Lunar Vagabond Collection as part of a time capsule scheduled for a Lunar Codex lift-off to the moon in November 2024. His most recent book, *Parental Forest*, came out Spring 2024 with Montreal press, AOS Publishing.



Ace of Swords Publishing, 2024
(available on [Amazon](#))

 <https://www.writersunion.ca/member/chad-norman>

 <https://www.facebook.com/chad.norman.96780>

 <https://twitter.com/ChadNorman18513>

HOW TO KNOW I AM A HUMAN
for the families in Ukraine

Under a sky deciding to be blue
a yellow piece of plastic
becomes trapped
in a neighbour's fence.

When the world provides
it can be a soil or a soul
each brought in the silence
between the shells the sea
does not know, a shoreline
of crimes and tidal sadness.

Here in the tiny body I live in
only protest to a war is allowed
to be a voice, who I can be now,
one face in a mirror unbroken
unable to smile or say hello,
or be known by the family
seeking some form of border
holding a child, what was once a life
two could share, husband and wife.



THE EROSION OF BORDERS

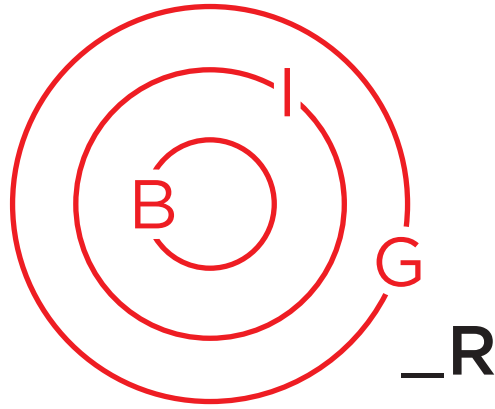
I cannot speak against the man
or show any allegiance
towards a far-too-old belief
he leaves his war-stolen homeland
to steal anything in mine.

I will not think against the man,
or stand with those fearful
of the amount of jobs available
he hopes just one becomes his.

I must not move against the man,
or try to forget the steps
into the shoes now on feet
he will wear to be a dancer.

How could I hate him
when he has his own dance,
has no fear about hugging
the men in his worried family,
even kisses them either
saying hello or goodbye?

I could not miss the chance
to offer a daring welcome
when he passes me on a street,
the eyes of his children
full of his indestructible promises.



ART & BORDERS

BIG_Review publishes art features, including original artworks, essays, and interviews related to the world of borders—whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual. The Art & Borders Section is curated by Dr. Elisa Ganivet, and, like all *BIG_Review* publications, is available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.



ART & BORDERS

En français & in English

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Manifeste: Navire Avenir

Vessel of the Future: Manifesto

Collectif du Navire Avenir

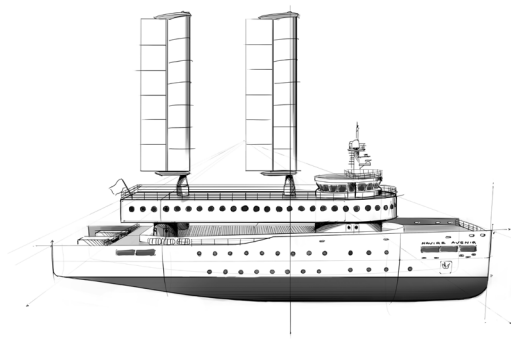


Image: Dessin du Navire Avenir, octobre 2023, Yann Prummel, VPLP Design / Image: Drawing of the Vessel of the Future, October 2023, Yann Prummel, VPLP Design

Le Navire Avenir est un outil pionnier de sauvetage et de soin en haute mer, premier bâtiment d'une flotte mondiale. C'est un « ready-made pour le 21e siècle », une œuvre agissante conçue pour soutenir l'action des marins sauveteurs et contribuer à leur reconnaissance au Patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité. « Comme toutes les œuvres d'art », écrit le collectif dans son manifeste, le projet « vise non seulement à changer notre vision du monde mais aussi à changer le monde lui-même ». Le manifeste complet suit, avec des illustrations du processus de création développé depuis 4 ans en Europe. Cette œuvre doit encore être réalisée avec le soutien financier des citoyennes et citoyens notamment, via la plateforme www.navireavenir.eu.

The Vessel of the Future is a pioneering tool for rescue and care on the high seas, the first vessel of a global fleet. It is "ready-made for the 21st century" a proactive work designed to support the actions of rescue sailors and contribute to their recognition as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. "Like all works of art" writes the collective in its manifesto, the project "aims not only to change our vision of the world but also to change the world itself". The full manifesto follows, with illustrations of the creation process developed over the past four years in Europe. This work is yet to be realized with the financial support of citizens, particularly through the platform www.navireavenir.eu.

À propos du Collectif

Le projet « Navire Avenir » est porté par plus de 500 concepteurs d'Europe et d'Amérique du Sud, dont des étudiant.e.s d'une cinquantaine d'écoles d'arts, design, architecture. Son cahier des charges a été établi par un collectif de rescapé.e.s réuni.e.s à Marseille en association, l'Association des usagers de la Plateforme d'Accueil des Demandeurs d'Asile (PADA), par les marins sauveteurs de SOS Méditerranée, par les activistes de Pilotes Volontaires et par des soignant.e.s des Hôpitaux de Marseille. Le projet est coordonné depuis 2020 par le Pôle d'Exploration des Ressources Urbaines, collectif dont les actions sont coordonnées par l'artiste et politologue Sébastien Thiéry, auteur du manifeste qui suit.

About the Collective

The "Vessel of the Future" project involves over 500 designers from Europe and South America, including students from some 50 art, design, and architecture schools. The specifications were drawn up by a collective of survivors who have formed an association in Marseille, the Association of Users of the Asylum Seekers Reception Center (PADA) by SOS Méditerranée rescue sailors, by activists from Pilotes Volontaires, and by care assistants from Marseille Hospitals. The project has been coordinated since 2020 by Urban Resources Exploration Center, a collective whose actions are coordinated by artist and political scientist Sébastien Thiéry, author of the following manifesto.

« C'est un navire spécifiquement conçu pour le sauvetage en haute mer. C'est un navire pour la Méditerranée qui n'en peut plus d'être le cimetière qu'elle est devenue. C'est un navire pour répondre à la question : qu'est-ce qu'on met de beau entre nous ? »

— extraits du discours d'inauguration du Navire Avenir qui aura lieu un beau jour de 2025.

"It's a ship specifically designed for rescue on the high seas, it's a ship for the Mediterranean, which can't stand being the graveyard it's become. It's a ship to answer the question: what's beautiful between us?"

— Excerpts from the Navire Avenir inauguration speech, which will take place one fine day in 2025.



Profil du Navire Avenir, avril 2023, VPLP design, Marc Van Peteghem, Marc Ferrand. / Preview of Navire Avenir, October 2023, VPLP design, Marc Van Peteghem, Marc Ferrand.

Le Navire Avenir parce que tout s'y oppose (envisager l'amplification du sauvetage en haute mer alors même qu'une loi immigration envisage l'aggravation de la violence sur le rivage)

Aujourd'hui même, au large de la Méditerranée, des marins sauveteurs sont à l'œuvre. Des hommes, des femmes, des enfants auront la vie sauve grâce à leurs gestes précis, à leurs techniques d'intervention et de soin expérimentées depuis des années. Des dizaines de milliers de vies ont été sauvées ainsi depuis 2015. Pourtant, tout concourt désormais à l'anéantissement de ces gestes : des milices et forces de police africaines, soutenues et outillées pour certaines par l'Europe, contraignent les exilés à des conditions de vie insoutenables et à des traversées toujours plus périlleuses, sinon impossibles ; les États du sud de l'Europe, et l'Union dans son ensemble, opposent aux opérations de sauvetage et de débarquement en ports sûrs des contraintes extraordinaires, voire les annihilent en parvenant à immobiliser les navires affrétés par les ONG ; des peuples européens toujours plus nombreux soutiennent des politiques de fermeture et de violence exacerbées, s'opposant à ce que ces navires abritent

The Navire Avenir (Vessel of the Future), because everything points in the opposite direction (i.e. the idea of increasing rescue operations on the high seas, at a time when an immigration law envisages a worsening of violence on the shore).

Right now, off the Mediterranean, rescue sailors are at work. Men, women and children will have their lives saved thanks to their precise gestures, their intervention and care techniques tested over many years. Tens of thousands of lives have been saved in this way since 2015. However, everything is now conspiring to destroy these gestures: African militias and police forces, some of them supported and equipped by Europe, are forcing exiles into unbearable living conditions and increasingly perilous, if not impossible, crossings; the states of southern Europe, and the Union as a whole, are imposing extraordinary constraints on rescue operations and disembarkations in safe ports, even annihilating them by managing to immobilize ships chartered by NGOs ; an ever-growing number of European citizens are supporting policies of closure and exacerbated violence, preventing these ships carrying survivors from actually reaching

des rescapés rejoignent effectivement les rivages de l'Europe, encourageant des législateurs à prévoir la pire des vies possibles pour celles et ceux qui y seront malgré tout parvenus.

Pourtant, ces gestes de sauvetage, de soin, de bienveillance, de fraternité, ont la beauté et la portée d'un héritage majuscule. Nous, collectif de citoyennes et citoyens européens, y tenons car nous savons qu'ils font tenir notre humanité présente comme à venir : leur amplification et leur perpétuation sont à l'évidence cruciales pour nos enfants qui connaîtront au centuple chocs climatiques et migratoires. C'est pourquoi nous avons entrepris de faire reconnaître ces gestes au Patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'humanité : une telle re-qualification par l'UNESCO doit nous permettre, collectivement, de les considérer enfin à la hauteur de ce qu'ils sont, et de bouleverser alors nos représentations quant à ce qui a lieu aujourd'hui même en haute mer, jusqu'à nous en faire saisir la splendeur. C'est pourquoi en 2020 nous avons entrepris de concevoir le Navire Avenir : outil pionnier spécifiquement conçu à partir de ces gestes pour les soutenir et les faire se perpétuer ; premier navire d'une flotte appelée demain sur toutes les mers du globe ; bâtiment dont la construction est portée par les 500 concepteurs et étudiants d'Europe entière que nous sommes ; œuvre collective portant le sceau de l'UNESCO et dont la création est soutenue par 60 institutions culturelles européennes. Cela fait trois ans que nous avons, tenace, la conviction que seul un bâtiment de cette folle envergure peut nous permettre de faire face à tous les vents contraires et à leurs aggravations quotidiennes. Cela fait trois ans que nous savons que seul un chantier naval d'une telle démesure peut contrarier l'effondrement en cours.

Le Navire Avenir n'est pas un énième navire de sauvetage qui pourrait rejoindre la haute mer sans que l'horizon n'ait été radicalement perturbé : il resterait

Europe's shores, and encouraging legislators to plan the worst possible lives for those who manage to make it.

Yet these gestures of rescue, care, benevolence and fraternity have the beauty and scope of a major heritage. As a collective of European citizens, we value them because we know that they are the foundation of our present and future humanity: their amplification and perpetuation are obviously crucial for our children, who will experience climate and migration shocks a hundredfold. This is why we have undertaken to have these gestures recognized as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: such a re-qualification by UNESCO should enable us, collectively, to finally consider them at the height of what they are, and to then overturn our representations of what takes place today, even on the high seas, to the point of making us grasp their splendor. That's why, in 2020, we set about designing the Navire Avenir : a pioneering tool specifically designed to support and perpetuate these gestures; the first ship in a fleet destined to sail the seas of tomorrow; a building whose construction is supported by our 500 designers and students from all over Europe; a collective work bearing the seal of UNESCO and whose creation is supported by 60 European cultural institutions. For three years now, we've been tenaciously convinced that only a building of this staggering scale can enable us to face up to all the headwinds and their daily aggravations. We've known for three years that only a shipyard of this scale can counteract the current collapse.

Le Navire Avenir is not yet another lifeboat that could reach the high seas without radically disrupting the horizon: it would then remain hobbled by and in an irrespirable present. The Navire Avenir is much more than a ship: it is a ship and, at the same time, the act of radically disrupting the horizon necessary for



Procession du 26 juin 2022 à Marseille. Image : Elisa Larvego. / Procession in Marseille, France, on June 26, 2022. Image: Elisa Larvego.



Rencontre autour du Navire Avenir, Friche la Belle de Mai à Marseille, 6 mai 2023. Image : Gaëlle Henkens. / Meeting around the Navire Avenir, Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, France, May 6, 2023. Image: Gaëlle Henkens.

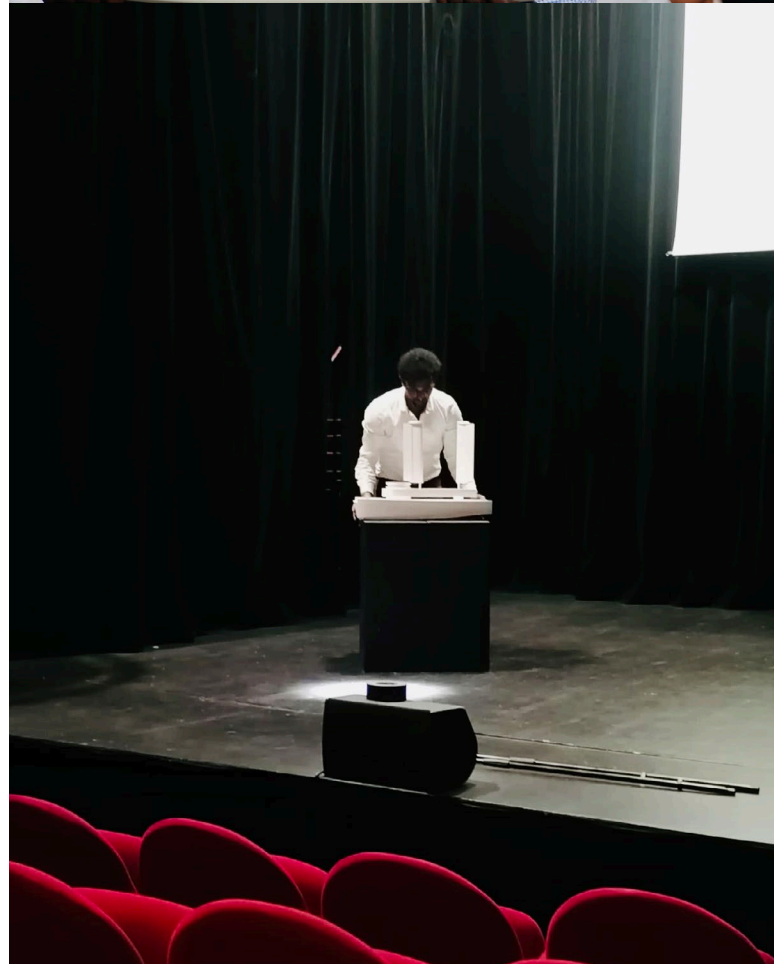
alors entravé par et dans un présent irrespirable. Le Navire Avenir est bien davantage qu'un navire : il est un navire et, simultanément, l'acte de perturbation radicale de l'horizon nécessaire à ses opérations effectives. Le Navire Avenir est exactement une œuvre d'art qui a la singularité de prendre la forme d'un outil d'intervention exceptionnellement efficace et qui porte, comme toute œuvre, l'ambition de transformer non seulement notre regard sur le monde, mais le monde lui-même et donc les conditions précises de son action. Tout dépend donc de la manière précise dont depuis trois ans nous le menons au monde, dont nous le portons en mer, dont nous nous y attachons collectivement, affectivement et juridiquement : œuvre majeure des temps présents, attestée par les institutions en charge de telles attestations, il bénéficiera alors d'une protection renforcée lui permettant d'œuvrer pleinement. C'est une œuvre collectivement pensée sous la gouverne des marins sauveteurs de SOS Méditerranée, des rescapés de l'Association des usagers de la PADA à Marseille, de soignants des Hôpitaux de Marseille. C'est une œuvre unique au monde, dessinée par l'architecte naval Marc Van Peteghem et le designer Marc Ferrand, qui s'avère un catamaran de 69 mètres de long, véritable hôpital flottant doté d'aménagements et d'éléments spécifiques pour le soin et le réconfort. C'est une

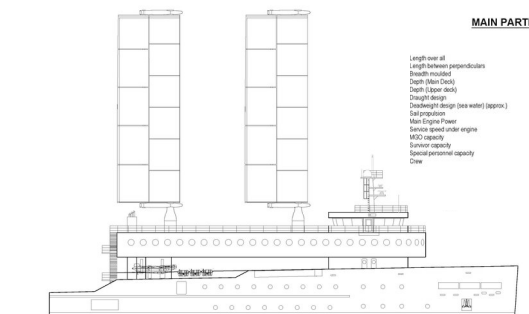
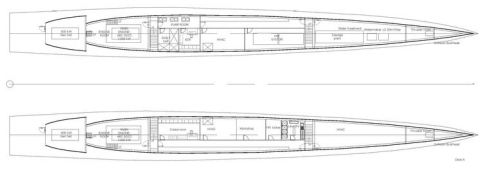
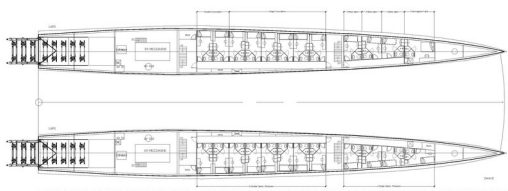
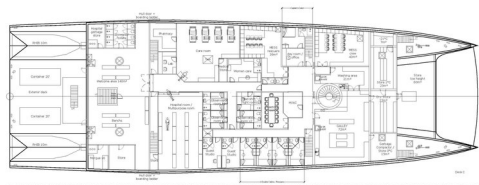
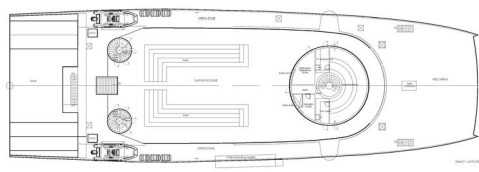
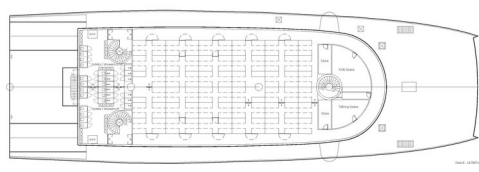
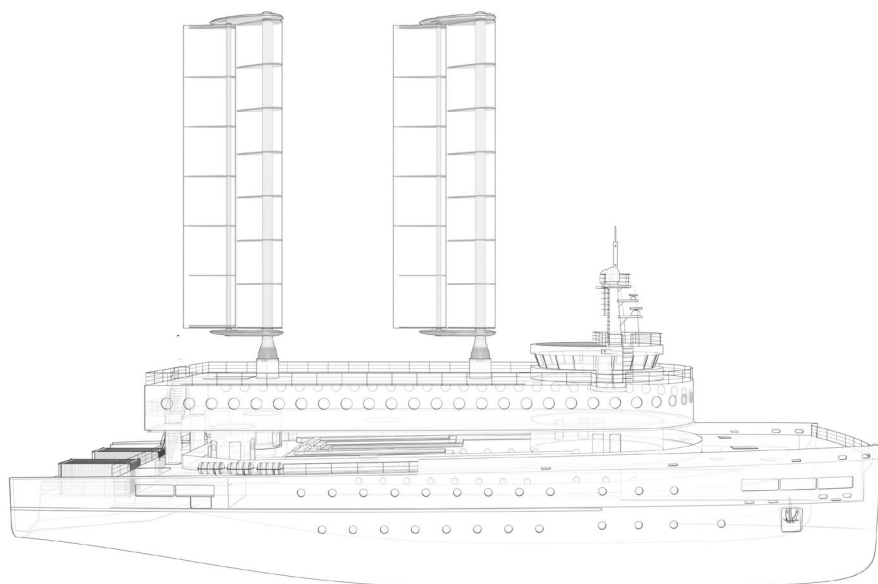
its effective operations. Le Navire Avenir is a work of art with the singularity of taking the form of an exceptionally effective tool for intervention. Like all works of art, it has the ambition of transforming not only our view of the world, but the world itself, and therefore the precise conditions of its action. Everything therefore depends on the precise way in which, over the last three years, we have brought it into the world, taken it to sea, and attached ourselves to it collectively, emotionally and legally: as a major work of the present, attested by the institutions in charge of such attestations, it will then benefit from reinforced protection enabling it to work to the full. It is a work of collective thought, under the guidance of « SOS Méditerranée » rescue sailors, survivors from the « Marseille PADA » users' association, and medical staff from Marseille hospitals. This unique work of art, designed by naval architect Marc Van Peteghem and designer Marc Ferrand, is a 69-meter-long catamaran,

Haut: Marc Van Peteghem et Marc Ferrand portant la maquette du Navire Avenir, procession du 26 juin 2022 à Marseille. Image : Elsa Ricq-Amour. / Top: Marc Van Peteghem and Marc Ferrand carrying the model of the Navire Avenir, procession on June 26, 2022 in Marseille, France. Image: Elsa Ricq-Amour.

Milieu: Ibrahima Ouattara portant la maquette du Navire Avenir, procession du 26 juin 2022 à Marseille. Image : Elsa Ricq-Amour. / Middle: Ibrahima Ouattara carrying the model of the Navire Avenir, procession on June 26, 2022 in Marseille, France. Image: Elsa Ricq-Amour.

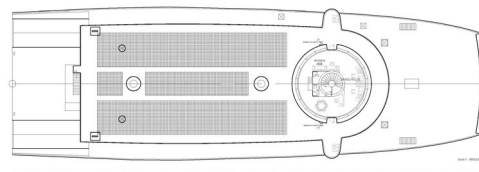
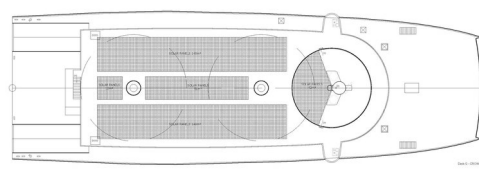
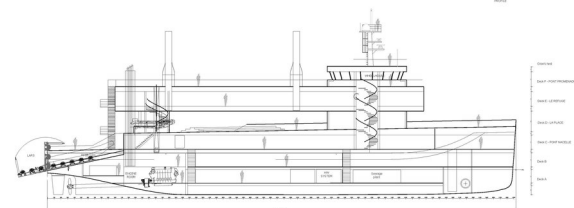
Bas: Aman Mohamadsaid portant la maquette du Navire Avenir sur la scène de la Maison de la Poésie, 12 décembre 2023. Image : Alieu Jalloh. / Bottom: Aman Mohamadsaid carrying the model of the Navire Avenir on stage at the Maison de la Poésie, Paris, France, December 12, 2023. Image: Alieu Jalloh.





MAIN PARTICULARS

Length over all	69.3 m
Length between perpendiculars	66.52 m
Breadth moulded	25.83 m
Depth (Main Deck)	9.46 m
Depth (Upper deck)	15.58 m
Draught design	3.72 m
Draught design (base water) (approx.)	4.72 m
Deadweight	2500 t
2x Grossing	2500 t
Net propulsion	24100 kW
Main Engine Power	1.6 m
Service speed under engine	200 kt
Max capacity	370
Survivor capacity	28-2 guests
Special personnel capacity	15
Crew	



Prévisualisation et profil du Navire Avenir, octobre 2023, VPLP design, Marc Van Peteghem, Marc Ferrand.
Profile and plan of Navire Avenir, April 2023, VPLP design, Marc Van Peteghem, Marc Ferrand.



Plan à échelle 1 du pont principal du Navire Avenir, festival Zone Artistique Temporaire, Montpellier, 11 novembre 2022. Image : Elsa Ricq-Amour. / Full-scale plan of the main deck of the Navire Avenir, Zone Artistique Temporaire festival, Montpellier, France, November 11, 2022. Image: Elsa Ricq-Amour.

œuvre agissante dont le coût de production s'élève à 27 millions d'euros qui doit trouver dans la société civile les ressources et les ressorts de sa réalisation effective, les désirs et les finances que nous n'imaginions pas receler. C'est un « Really made pour le 21e siècle » qui doit alors, en se réalisant, ouvrir à un avenir respirable et non faire se prolonger, comme à bout de bras, l'insoutenable présent que nous connaissons. C'est une utopie lunaire pour qui enregistre l'effondrement en cours comme réalité définitive ; c'est un projet absolument réaliste pour qui considère la séquence historique contemporaine comme une dystopie sans avenir.

Nous construirons donc le Navire Avenir, et donc l'avenir, puisqu'avec ce chantier naval s'ouvriront les chantiers de construction de tous les navires et de tous les havres sur le rivage, nécessairement magnifiques, qui ne cesseront de manquer. Le Navire Avenir est donc, en actes, une œuvre à la splendeur de ce qui vient. Un chantier naval et politique que rien, dans le présent, ne rend possible mais que tout, dans l'avenir, rend nécessaire. En cela précisément, il tire une leçon majeure de tous les rescapés avec lesquels nous avons cheminé pour le dessiner (dont Aman Mohamadsaid

a veritable floating hospital equipped with special care and comfort features. It's an active work of art, costing 27 million euros to produce, which must find in civil society the resources and springs for its effective realization, the desires and finances we never imagined we'd have. It's a "Really made for the 21st century" which, when realized, should open the door to a breathable future, rather than prolonging, as if at arm's length, the unbearable present we know. It's a lunar utopia for those who see the current collapse as a definitive reality; it's an absolutely realistic project for those who see the contemporary historical sequence as a dystopia without a future.

We'll be building the Navire Avenir and thus the future, because with this shipyard will come the construction of all the ships and harbours on the shore, necessarily magnificent, that will never cease to be in short supply. Le Navire Avenir is therefore, indeed, a work of art dedicated to the splendor of what is to come. A naval and political construction site that nothing in the present makes possible, but everything in the future makes necessary. Precisely in this respect, it draws a major lesson from all the survivors with whom we have worked to design it (including Aman Mohamadsaid,

qui, à l'image, dépose la maquette du Navire Avenir sur la scène de la Maison de la Poésie à Paris le 12 décembre 2023) : jamais, même au pire des moments de leur existence dans les déserts sans fin ou geôles immondes, ces personnes n'ont eu le luxe de penser que plus rien n'était possible ; toujours, parce que le présent était insoutenable, elles ont su que l'avenir serait magnifique.

Construisons donc l'Avenir ensemble, ici :
www.navireavenir.eu

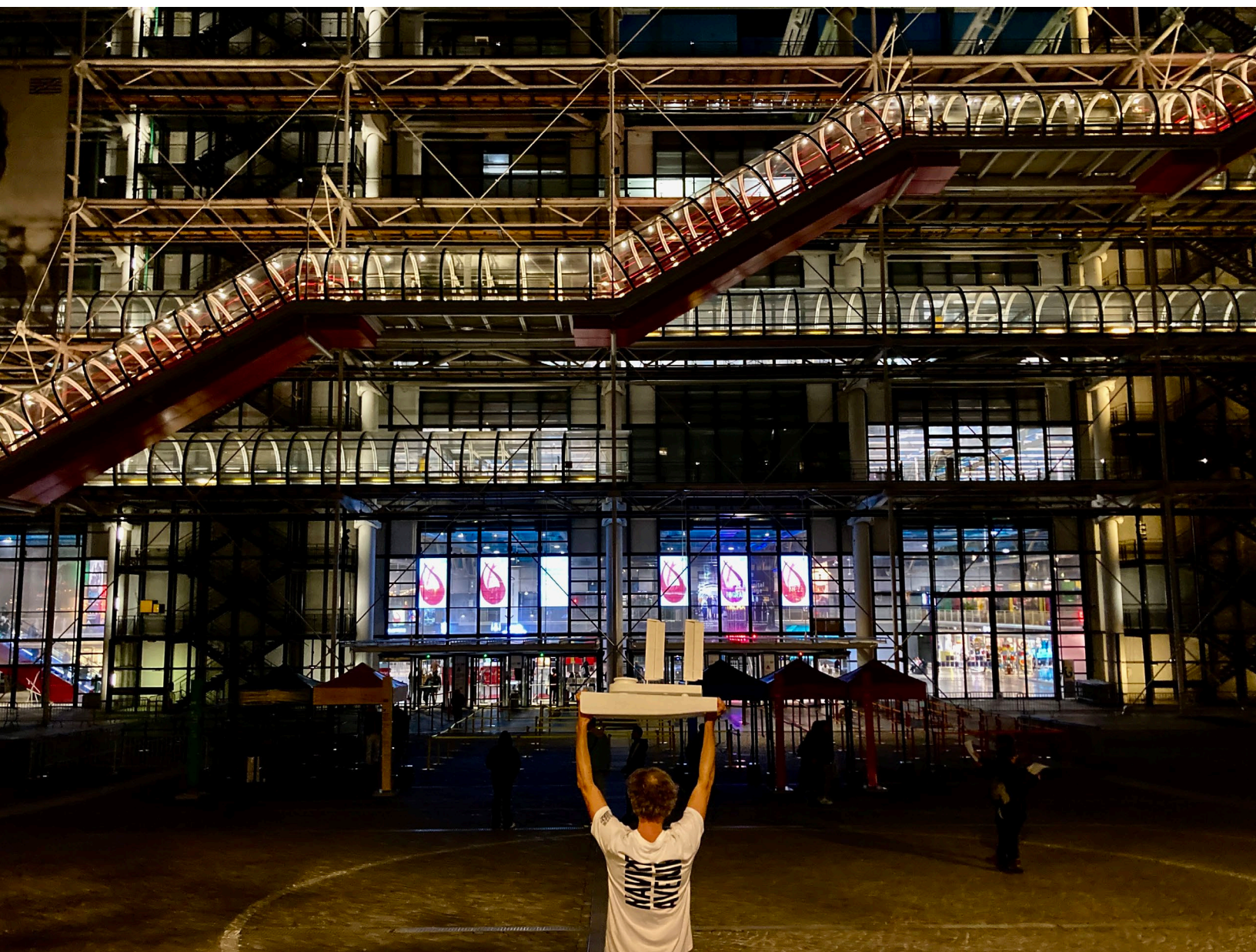
Source text:
<https://www.navireavenir.info/post/20-le-navire-avenir-parce-que-tout-s-y-oppose-envisager-l-amplification-du-sauvetage-en-haute-mer>

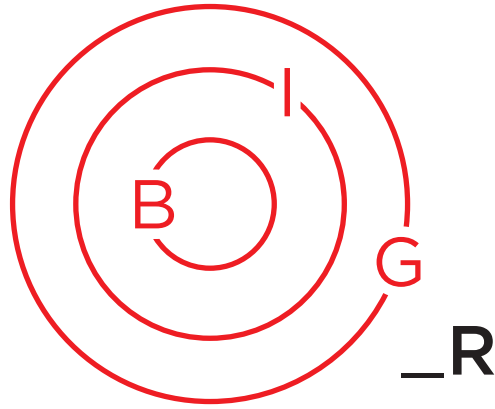
who, in the image, places the model of the Navire Avenir on the stage of the Maison de la Poésie in Paris on December 12, 2023): never, even in the worst moments of their existence in endless deserts or filthy jails, did these people have the luxury of thinking that nothing was possible anymore; always, because the present was unbearable, they knew that the future would be magnificent.

Let's build the future together, here:
www.navireavenir.eu

Source text:
<https://www.navireavenir.info/post/20-le-navire-avenir-parce-que-tout-s-y-oppose-envisager-l-amplification-du-sauvetage-en-haute-mer>

Jean-Baptiste Lévêque présentant la maquette du Navire Avenir au Centre Pompidou-Paris, 22 octobre 2023. Image : Sébastien Thiery / Jean-Baptiste Lévêque presenting the model of Navire Avenir at the Centre Pompidou-Paris, France, October 22, 2023. Image: Sébastien Thiery





FILM REVIEWS

Film reviews explore cinema related to the world of borders, whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual borders. The section is edited by Hakan Ünay. Like all content published by *BIG_Review*, film reviews are available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.



FILM REVIEW

The Good Postman: Romanticizing Refugees and Absolving States

Sinem Arslan *

The Good Postman

Film (documentary)

Release date (streaming): November 16, 2017

Written by Tonislav Hristov and Lubomir Tsvetkov

Directed by Tonislav Hristov

Run Time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

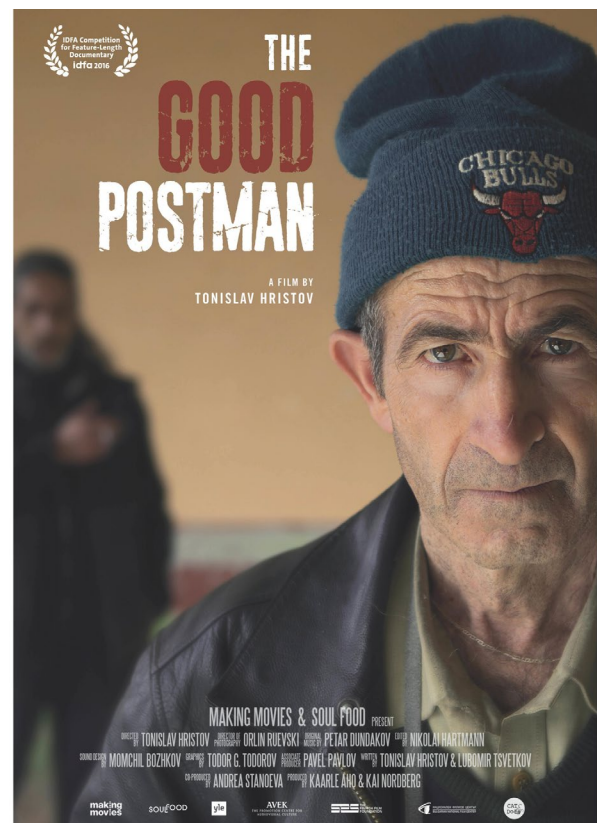
Original Language: Bulgarian

More Information at:

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6254144/>

The Good Postman presents multi-layered migration narratives through a small Bulgarian village called Golyam Derwent on the Turkish border. The documentary begins with Ivan Fransuzov, the village postman, witnessing Syrian refugees crossing illegally from the Turkish-Bulgarian border and choosing not to report them to the border police. Fransuzov's individual resistance against the system allows us to see the socio-economic background of migration through the eyes of a resident of the host country. It is 2016, and local elections have raised hopes of rescuing the village from oblivion. The villagers, who are elderly and number fewer than 40, seek a solution to the depopulation and eventual disappearance of their village.¹ Three mayoral candidates represent three different perspectives on Muslim refugees from the East, and each reflects historical trauma.

The first candidate is "the good postman", Ivan Fransuzov, from the centre-right national party, GERB. His election promise is to settle Syrian refugees in



the village to both develop the village and provide humanitarian aid to Syrians escaping war. Postman Ivan seems to represent the film's position on the Syrian refugee crisis, with his sympathetic portrayal and titular role. Both the emphasis on the loneliness of the villagers and the desperate escape stories of Syrian refugees to Europe evoke a sense of compassion in the

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audience. Although focusing on personalized stories aims at reducing the local anti-refugee sentiment, I believe that this framing absolves the real perpetrator: states and international actors. Postman Ivan stands for the socio-economic view of migration as beneficial for both migrants and the host country, while individuals and communities bear the burdens of migration governance more so than states. However, the second candidate, Comrade Ivan, appears as the embodiment of a quite different perspective.

Ivan Halahcev, candidate from the Socialist Party (successor of the BCP), represents psychological and socio-political dimensions of nationalism and xenophobia that reveal the identity politics at play. Comrade Ivan is paradoxical for embodying both communist nostalgia, marked by economic prosperity, and the dangerous identity politics of the ruling regime. Just as former BCP members saw the salvation of the country in removing the Turkish and Muslim minorities, Comrade Ivan sees hope for the village in getting rid of the others, namely Gypsies and migrants. Comrade Ivan also reminds the audience that village youth have migrated abroad due to unemployment and underdevelopment. Yet, unable to offer solutions to these problems, Comrade Ivan pledges instead to open an internet cafe so the remaining villages can visit their loved ones abroad via Skype. Comrade Ivan is not the only ghost of Bulgaria's communist past in the film. In one scene, women of the village go to clean the cemetery, triggering memories of the communist-era ban on entering the site and hinting at the darker days of communism. However, the director's nostalgic critique of communism does not allude to the conditions it imposed on Muslim and Turkish populations of Bulgaria. While the director endorses resettling Syrian refugees in empty villages, he does not touch on the country's history of ethnic cleansing of the Turkish and Muslim minorities, which was itself another factor in the depopulation of those villages in the first place. This leaves the film's story incomplete.

What about the third candidate? The current mayor of Golyam Dervent, Veselina Dimova, represents the status quo without reference to ideology or political party. Veselina is shown to have done little during the mayoral period and, unlike the postman and the comrade, promises nothing about the Syrian refugees or the revival of the village. Veselina represents the inertia and decay of public institutions, an apparition of a cumbersome state apparatus.

Postman Ivan represents the bundle of hope for democracy, the free market economy, and the European Union that emerged with Bulgaria's post-

1990 liberalization. On the other hand, Comrade Ivan is the ghost of Bulgaria's communist past. In the end, the winner of the election is the status quo, Veselina Dimova. There is no hope left for the revival of the village, nor has a solution been found for Syrian refugees. Village life continues to wane. The documentary ends with the good postman Ivan's individual resistance against the system again, as he is seen looking the other way as another group of Syrian refugees illicitly crosses the border.

To its credit, the film challenges stereotypes and orientalist views of Muslims—that they are terrorists, diseased, and ignorant. However, the film puts state rights and prerogatives ahead of those of refugees. Whose interests are served by directing migrants into villages that the locals have already abandoned in favor of opportunity elsewhere? Or perhaps the refugees may not even want to settle in Bulgaria at all (van Brunnersum 2023). The director does not acknowledge these questions. Instead, he casts the refugees as passive agents, deprived of choice. A critical viewing of the film reminds us that refugees have a right to much more than just our compassion. We should not romanticize their suffering nor absolve the real perpetrator.

Note

- 1 On the rural transformation in Bulgaria after the collapse of the communism see: Creed (1995a, 1995b), Dudwick (2007).

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FILM REVIEW

Separation and Resilience in 200 Meters

Murat Çemrek *

200 Meters

Film (drama), 2022

Written and directed by Ameen Nayfeh

Runtime: 1 hours and 36 minutes

Original Languages: Arabic

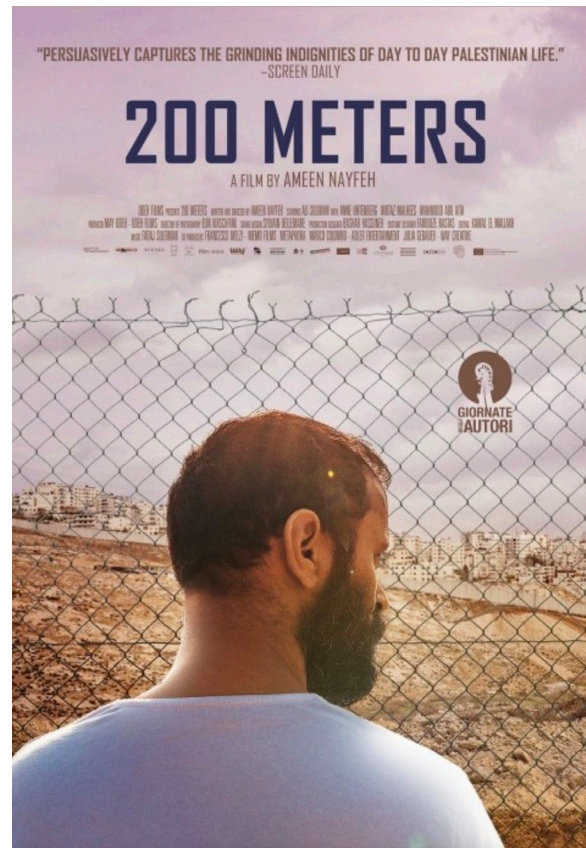
More information at:

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12246266/>

The 2022 film 200 Meters is about a separation barrier dividing a family between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The movie also illustrates how the wall motivates people to get together despite the barrier.

...

Borders, boundaries, limits, and limitations are the walls of our lives. However, borders, as artificial products decorated with or without land mines and/or wired meshes, have been the *raison d'état* and even the *raison d'être* of states, especially modern nation-states. Paradoxically, borders have been consecrated by the essentially secular nation-state. In social life, borders are the frames of the public space and become norms regulating our social lives as moral values. Borders also shape us individually and communally. We try to overcome our personal borders through sciences, arts, and sports. Since ancient Greek theatre, public space is depicted as the platform where we perform our activities with our masks. In the private sphere, we take



off our masks and act as we are. Despite the idiom “good fences make good neighbors”, borders also provoke killing and even massacres, delineating contested land claims and even wars. According to another idiom, “necessity is the mother of all inventions”, borders are artificial constructs that have emerged in an effort to regulate a well-balanced life as much as possible.

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Cinema not only shows us our defects but also how to overcome them. For this reason, borders have become a key themes in movies.

200 Meters (2020) is filmed in the occupied West Bank Palestinian city of Tulkarm, the director's hometown, and concerns the Israeli separation barrier, which the Israelis call the "security fence" and Palestinians call the "apartheid wall". The movie depicts a nuclear family separated geographically since the father, living with his elderly mom, resides on the Palestinian side of the wall and the wife with their children on the Israeli side. The film's genre is a road/journey movie with elements of thriller and action drama as well. Moreover, the film is both emotionally tailored and thought provoking thanks to the actors' vigorous performances and the artistry of the debut director and writer Ameen Nayfeh.

The film's protagonist, Mustafa (played by Ali Suliman), is an ordinary hardworking Palestinian construction worker trying to provide for his family's needs despite suffering from a back injury. He lives with his mom and mostly apart from his wife Salwa (Lana Zreik) and three children, just 200 meters away but separated by the wall. Their blissful marriage and family unity is challenged by the wall in every respect. Mustafa uses his work permit to cross the barrier daily despite long queues and unfriendly treatment of Israeli security forces. The checkpoint scenes powerfully depict how thousands of people are intimidated and herded inhumanely through fingerprint and document checks. Even passing all these steps does not guarantee passing through the barrier. This demeaning routine is unavoidable for Mustafa and many others seeking employment and education opportunities.

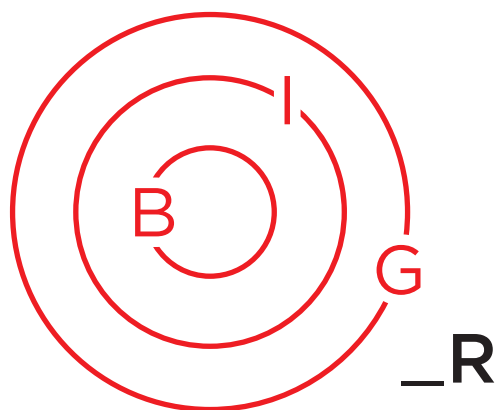


Still from the film trailer

Mustafa's other daily routine, but joyful one, is talking with his family by phone and signaling good night via flashing a light from his balcony. This creative communication epitomizes the family's determination to remain united despite the wall. Thus, the film apprehends human resilience transcending artificial borders and age-old political conflicts.

Salwa and the children can only cross into the West Bank on weekends, since during the week the children attend Israeli schools—another point of tension between spouses—and because Salwa works two different jobs and sleeps only two hours a night. The main plot of the film starts when Mustafa gets an alarming call that his son has been hospitalized after an accident. Despite Mustafa's rush to the checkpoint and his nerve-racking wait in the long line, his entry into Israel is denied due to paperwork complications, even though he holds a valid work permit. This desperate situation symbolizes what any individual might do when "legal" recourses are blocked. Lacking better options, Mustafa resorts to the "illegal" one and hires a smuggler to take him across. The symbolic 200-meter journey then becomes a 200-kilometer epic. At one point, the journey is almost thwarted when an Israeli activist, Anne (Anna Unterberger), and her translator, Kifah (Motaz Malhees), risk drawing the attention of Israeli security forces while documenting the misery imposed on Palestinians by Israeli settlers. At another point, Mustafa nearly suffocates in an overcrowded trunk of a car. In the end, despite the excitement and troubles, Mustafa happily rejoins his son and wife at the hospital.

Overall, the film portrays how the struggle of a man and his family become an odyssey in the face of the Israeli separation barrier. *200 Meters* successfully bridges the gap between politics and the human condition. The movie displays the oppression of the apartheid regime on ordinary Palestinians seeking only subsistence and dignity. The film ends with Mustafa expanding his balcony flashlight communication system with more elaborate and colorful bulbs, highlighting the creative resistance of a people struggling to remain united and hoping for better days ahead.



BOOK REVIEWS

Books reviews offer concise summaries of academic works related to the world of borders, whether political, material, cultural, or conceptual borders. The section is edited by Chief Editor Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly. Like all content published by *BIG_Review*, book reviews are available for free in open-access Creative Commons licensing, unless otherwise specified.



BOOK REVIEW

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Book Review/Commentary: *Geo-politics in Northeast Asia* by Iwashita, Ha, and Boyle

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly *

Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia

Edited By Akihiro Iwashita, Yong-Chool Ha,
Edward Boyle

Routledge, 2023

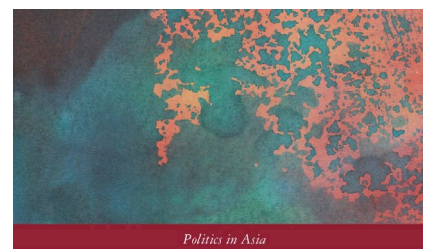
Hardback, 264 pages

ISBN 9781032263809

<https://www.routledge.com/Geo-Politics-in-Northeast-Asia/Iwashita-Ha-Boyle/p/book/9781032263816>

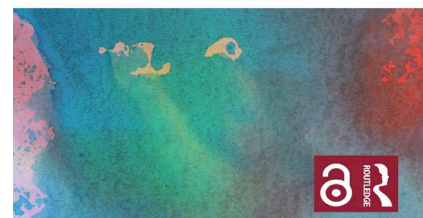
Asia is the site of much research in geopolitics and in border and borderland studies. This particularly important book looks at the edges of Japan adjoining China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Russia. The authors study those states and in particular Japan from the perspective of the edges themselves. This is a borderlands point of view that complements our 2022 review of Billé and Humphrey's 2021 *On the Edge*.

Geopolitics in Northeast Asia (2023) asks what a Northeast Asian community could be. This idea emerged in the literature on geopolitics in the 1990s, vividly illustrated in *As Borders Bend* (2005), where Xiangming Chen discusses transnational spaces across China's seas. Indeed, this is a literature primarily focused on border regions or subregions of this area of the world, and the literature suggests that trade is globalizing the region. In *Geopolitics in Northeast Asia*, editors Iwashita, Ha, and Boyle, along with their contributing authors, assess the shared interests in



GEO-POLITICS IN NORTHEAST ASIA

Edited by
Akihiro Iwashita, Yong-Chool Ha
and Edward Boyle



multilateral cooperation across South Asia. Looking at the past, the turn of century, and the present, the authors note with regret that national governments lack incentive to cooperate multilaterally because of the rise of national populist movements in numerous countries.

The authors distinguish between 'geopolitics' and 'geo-politics', or in reference to Foucault and Gerald Toal to the idea of "geo-power", i.e., a distinction between *political space* and *political power*. In turn, the authors question the positivist assumption of objectivity in geopolitics, the mutability of spatial

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scales, and their multilayered entanglement in the local, the regional, the national, and the international. They note with discernment the importance of a region looking at its own *geo-politics*, that is, a region that looks at its own margins, its borderland people and communities, and their political and economic clout within that geo-politics. The works focus our attention on the spatiality of power at the margins of the region, opening our eyes to see beyond a traditional statist view of East Asia and Northeast Asia. This is a fresh analysis of the political clout of communities at the margins of a world-region. The analyses are innovative and fascinating.

The book is made up of eleven chapters plus an introduction and a conclusion, divided into three sections. The first section looks at historically important actors in the region: the United States, Japan, and South Korea. The second section examines the role of specific subregional geographies (maritime, terrestrial, and in between, i.e., archipelagos) in the production of identity, culture, and economy, rather than the role of states. The third section looks at current and possible future developments in broader Northeast Asia. In Chapter 1, Yong Choo Ha and Akihiro Iwashita discuss the historical background of the region in greater detail and introduce the book's first major section. Chapter 2 by Yoshifumi Nakai focuses on China's transformation as a regional power and into a global power and how that rise has been perceived as a threat in the United States, even as, for China, Northeast Asia is perceived as a minor region with backyard security concerns. In Chapter 3, Yasuhiro Izumikawa looks at the adversarial impact of the Trump Administration's America First policy, noting that it does not disappoint Japan and South Korea. Chapter 4 by Mitsuhiro Mimura focuses on the disruptions caused by North Korea, not only to its allies but the whole region, indeed pitting the Korean peninsula as the geographical core of the region.

Part II of the book takes on the 'B/Ordering Society and the Region' by focusing on borderlands' views of their respective states and life in sovereign spaces at the margins of those states. Chapter 5 by Yuji Fukuhara reviews competition over fishing waters between Japan, South Korea, China, and North Korea, noting that the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS) has made those relations more difficult; the author suggests ways to alleviate tensions. Chapter 6 by Norio Horie looks at land deals and migration along the Chinese-Russian borders, arguing that those relations are improving. Chapter 7 by Naoki Amano focuses on the maritime edges of the countries of the region, particularly on the Sakhalin and Okinawa islands, where the local borderlands experience their states as attempting to "discipline" the island populations, which the author characterizes as a process of "exorcising phantom borders", drawing on Sabine von Löwis's notion of phantom borders (2015), i.e., borders that don't exist anymore.

Part III of the book asks whether there may be a "Regional Shared Future"? Chapter 8 by Mihoko Kato analyses the operation of sovereignty in the region and how diverse views impact ideas about regional regimes; Kato points to the Taiwanese legal disconnect in particular, where Taiwan, the Republic of China, is not part of the international community but exists as an important partner in the international community. Chapter 9 by Shinichiro Tabata questions whether economic integration is progressing, with only a very small amount of trade between the core countries of Northeast Asia, indeed, only about one-to-two percent of imports or exports (173)! Chapter 10 by David Wolf points to the implications of Confucian culture and lowest-common-denominator politics, for instance, in family loyalties and official obligations extending to the edges of Confucian civilization, thus including Korea and Japan and posing challenges to democracy. Chapter 11 by Naomi Chi returns to the idea of (mis)trust through social and psychological lenses, examining Japan's difficult relations with Korea, stemming from unresolved historical grievances such as the sensitive issue of Korean "comfort women"; yet Chi suggests that trust in each government internally has become more important today than trust between countries. Finally, the book's Conclusion emphasizes the worrisome extent of tension and dispute across Northeast Asia, striking a marked contrast with Southeast Asia, across the Mekong region, which has been integrating economically despite tensions along the South China seas.

Collectively, the authors question the sovereign and spatial future of the region and the prospects for an international community. At stake, they argue, is power over liquid and gas and over mobility. Yet the editors remind the reader that peripheral regions had traditionally been understood as crossings, as 'spaces of connections.' Today these spaces do not receive enough state attention, leading the authors to advocate for more relations, so borders may expand into gateways.

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BOOK REVIEW

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Review of Robert L. Nelson's *Frontiers of Empire*

Victor Konrad *

Frontiers of Empire:
Max Sering, Inner Colonization,
and the German East, 1871–1945

By Robert L. Nelson

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024

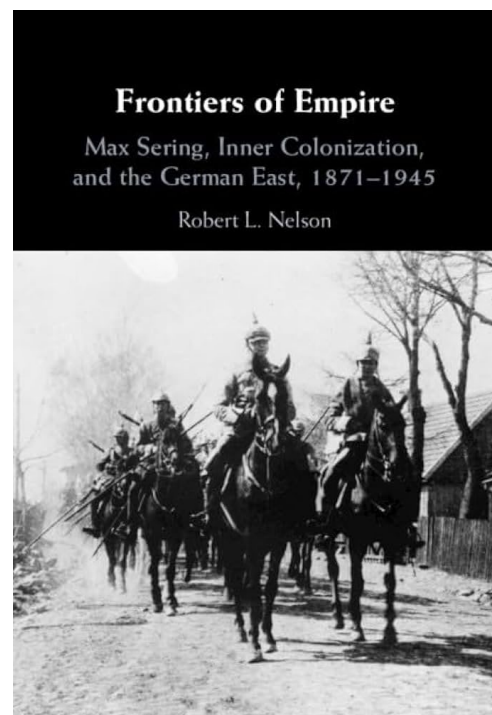
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<https://www.cambridge.org/9781009235365>

European colonization is characteristically understood as external exploration, conquest and settlement of Europeans in other world regions, namely the Americas, Africa, and the Antipodes. The process of “inner colonization” by Europeans, that is the settlement of farmers in threatened borderlands within the nation-state’s boundaries, is less well understood. In part this is because inner colonization complicates the standard thesis of separation between the colonizing country and colonized space. Also, inner colonization blurs the typical boundaries between the colonizer and colonized subjects. Inner colonization, then, has evaded critical scrutiny by border scholars because it occurs within boundaries rather than beyond borders.

In *Frontiers of Empire*, Robert L. Nelson relates how Max Sering, a world-famous agrarian settlement expert from Germany, influenced Germany’s evolving relationship with its eastern frontier, and inspired the country’s political Right, to transform the notion of *lebensraum* from the Bismarckian 1880s to the



Hitlerian 1930s. Although Sering’s grand scheme of frontier settlement in Eastern Europe was not the only component in this transformation of territorial vision and imperative, Germany’s settlement of farmers in threatened borderlands within the nation’s boundaries contributed substantially to the consolidation and control of territory.

What motivated Max Sering to champion inner colonization? Where did he get his ideas? Nelson argues that “there were global continuities in the

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transnational world of settler colonial thinking, and that Sering's study of various settler practices, most notably what he learned on the North American frontier as a twenty-six-year-old in 1883, crucially informed how he thought Germans should settle their land, both in terms of what they should and very much should *not* do" (1). Sering's eight-month journey to North America took him first to the east coast where he conferred with American agrarian experts, then across the country to California, up to Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, across the Rockies into the plains and prairies of both the United States and Canada, and finally back to New York City from where he sailed back to Germany. This formative experience of first-hand observations of homesteads, ethnic group settlements, Indigenous reservations, and of conquered and purchased territories, much of it farmland in an extensive bi-national and transcontinental inner colonization, was a continual influence on how Sering envisioned Germany's eastern borderlands.

In this richly detailed and illustrated book, Nelson guides the reader through an intellectual biography of Max Sering to tell the story of German settler colonialism in East Central Europe. Chapter one outlines how to tell such a story. Chapters two through four follow Sering and the formation of the concept of inner colonization from Sering's youth and trip to North America, to his career beginnings and development of Eastern interests, to his growth to prominence and the institutionalization of inner colonization. Chapter five treats the radicalization of inner colonization during the First World War whereas chapter six addresses the collapse and rebirth of the idea during the years of

the Weimar Republic from 1918 to 1933. With the Third Reich, the triumph of race science, and the extremism of inner colonization, Sering's journey comes to an end. Chapter seven traces the decline of the person and his ideas, and chapter eight assesses the legacies of both Sering and inner colonization.

Nelson concludes that the story of Max Sering offers important insights into the transformation of the German Right, not only in its biological racial turn, but also in its discard of the idea of a German overseas empire. After World War I, the German East became the "one and true site of a German Colonial Empire" (275). Yet, National Socialism in Germany honed a "radical, conquering, genocidal" (276) approach to German imperialism that would reverberate around the globe. Moreover, the story, Nelson argues, helps us to realize the continuum of colonization "from spaces inside one's own borders, to adjacent lands, to distant, often overseas, territories" (276), and that the people being colonized varied from neighboring Poles to Indigenous Africans. According to Nelson, this continuum complicates the history of colonization, and it should do so. Also, the focus on post-1500 subjugation of distant peoples of color by Europeans in the study of settler colonialism renders non-European peoples as having no history, as the colonizers claimed. The inner-colonial perspective balances our view of the colonial process and offers a broader template for comparison of settler colonialism. It enables a new lens for viewing the alienation of Indigenous territory. Finally, inner colonization reveals the border and inhabits borderlands from the inside and the outside, thus enlarging our comprehension of *Frontiers of Empire*.



EDITORIAL MATTER

About the Journal and For Contributors

About the Journal

Focus and Scope

Borders in Globalization Review (*BIG_Review*) provides a forum for academic and creative explorations of borders in the 21st century. Our interest is advancing high-quality and original works in policy, social sciences, the humanities, and fine arts that explore various aspects of borders in an increasingly globalized world. *BIG_Review* publishes scholarship (academic articles, essays, research notes, book reviews, and film reviews) as well as artwork (photography, painting, poetry, short stories, and more). The journal is committed to peer review, public access, policy relevance, and cultural significance.

Our starting point is that borders offer metaphoric-conceptual tools for the study of differentiation and integration. This perspective mandates a wide range of artistic, theoretical, and empirical explorations of borders. The journal is especially interested in advancing the study of the borders of globalization. New research is documenting a shift in the logic of borders from spatial and territorial to functional and aterritorial. This means that borders are increasingly detached from territory, operating as mobile and relational nodes in increasingly complex regulatory frameworks. For example, border screening often happens far from the border, and goods and people are increasingly bordered ‘on the go’ with microtechnology and biometrics. Simultaneously, global processes challenge the territorial foundations of borders, including subnational and transnational pressures, the virtual flows of global finance and big data, the spread of infectious disease, and the effects of climate change.

The borders of globalization are being established in a variety of spaces—not just in borderlands. Like a shifting puzzle, their infrastructures and institutions interlock in kaleidoscopic geographies and modalities across world, though not always visibly. *BIG_Review* offers a platform to visibilize, problematize, and discuss how these borders are changing and how they affect all

other borders, physically, of the mind, of social groups, and across cyberspace.

The journal also advances original artwork related to borders. Borders capture the popular imagination and inspire creative works. Artwork reflects and influences the cultures that shape borders and can be subversive. *BIG_Review* connects artists to audiences around the world through wide distribution networks and open-access electronic editions. Our art pages showcase individual works as well as portfolios, including photos, paintings, poems, short stories, fiction reviews, and more. All art is published at no cost to the artists.

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Each academic article and essay considered for publication in *BIG_Review* undergoes at least two double-blind peer reviews from our international Editorial Board (board members are listed at the front of this issue and on our journal home page). In the event of a split recommendation, a third (and sometimes a fourth) review may be obtained. Publication decisions are based on these reviews.

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We are able to share peer-reviewed academic work around the world for free (open access) in part because we charge a \$250 (Cdn) article processing charge (publication fee) to the author(s) of approved and published submissions, and we charge \$2,500 (Cdn) to guest editor(s) for special sections or special issues (thematic collections up to ten articles) that are approved and published. We encourage authors and guest editors to seek support from research funds, grants, and supporting institutions. The fee allows author(s) to publish work that is both refereed (with at least two double-blind peer reviews) and shareable with friends, family, and social media (Creative Commons BY-NC 4.0). The fee only applies once to academic submissions that have been approved and prepared for publication. There are no fees for submissions that are not published, and there are no fees for book or film reviews or for any artistic submissions (paint, poetry, story, etc.).

Print Copies Available

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Borders in Globalization Books (BIG_Books) shares an editorial board with *BIG_Review*. The focus and scope of the books are the same as the journal, except the books publish only academic content, not artistic or fictional. Learn more at [BIG_Books](#).

History

In 2018, [Borders in Globalization](#), a Research Lab of the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, established *Borders in Globalization Review* (BIGR/*BIG_Review*) and the Borders in Globalization Book Series (BIGB/*BIG_Books*). Both publish online, open access, double-blind peer-reviewed manuscripts about the borders of globalization.

Funding and Support

BIG_Review is funded and supported by the [Borders in Globalization](#) research program (BIG). BIG received funding from the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada \(SSHRC\)](#) Partnership Grant (Grant no: 895-2012-1022), and from the [Erasmus+](#) programme of the European Union (the European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein).

In order to continue publishing high-quality and open-access work in the absence of secure, long-term funding, *BIG_Review* aims to become self-sustainable through publication fees for academic submissions and advertising revenue.

The [Centre for Global Studies](#) at the University of Victoria provides office space and support. The journal is hosted online by [University of Victoria Libraries](#).

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BIG_Review reserves space for paid promotional content in the social sciences, humanities, and fine arts, including advertisements for new books and other publications, special events, calls for papers, courses and programs, and more. Full and partial page insets will be made available on the inside of the front and back covers, as well as the first and last pages of the journal.

Inside front cover: full page = \$1,000 (Cdn);
half page = \$500; quarter page = \$250

Front pages: full page = \$500 (Cdn);
half page = \$250; quarter page = \$125

End pages: full page = \$100 (Cdn); half page = \$50;
quarter page = \$25

Inside back cover: full page = \$500 (Cdn);
half page = \$250; quarter page = \$125

Ad proposals should be submitted as PDFs directly to our Chief Editor. All inquiries welcome. *BIG_Review* reserves the right to reject ad proposals on any grounds.

Publication Frequency

BIG_Review publishes twice annually: spring/summer and fall/winter.



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It is the responsibility of the authors, not the journal, to determine whether disclosure of their material requires the prior consent of other parties and, if so, to obtain it.

Editorial Notes

BIG_Review is produced on Adobe InDesign. All content templates and design by Michael J. Carpenter (except front cover template, by Karen Yen).

For Contributors

Submission Guidelines

BIG_Review publishes **scholarship** (academic articles, essays, research notes, book reviews, and film reviews), **policy work** (briefs and reports), and **artwork** (photography, painting, poetry, short stories, and more).

Scholarly submissions should present original research relevant to borders in the 21st century. Submissions should engage with the interdisciplinary research literature on borders, including, for example, borderlands, borderscapes, and bordering processes. We are especially interested in studies that go beyond the 'land image' by exploring borders as non-contiguous, aterritorial, globalized, mobile, electronic, biometric, functional, etc. We are equally interested in border studies from Indigenous perspectives, along with questions of sustainability, climate change, global health, colonialism, and subnational and transnational identities. Research questions might include: What are contemporary challenges to borders, internally and externally? How are borders adapting? What challenges do borders pose for communities and for people in transit or seeking asylum? How are cultures shaped by borders, and vice-versa? How are technologies shaping borders? We encourage innovative theoretical work and explorations of borders widely construed, as well as empirical and quantitative research. We welcome scholarly submissions from all disciplines and backgrounds.

BIG_Review also promotes **artistic submissions** pertaining to borders (borders understood broadly: political, social, cultural, metaphorical, personal). Borders capture the popular imagination and inspire creative works. Artwork can reflect and influence the cultures that shape borders. We promote small portfolios and individual works, including original poems, photos, paintings, short stories, creative essays, film and literature reviews, artistic commentaries, and other forms of art. Artists retain copyright of their work and benefit from increased exposure at no cost to them.

BIG_Review's **policy section** dedicates space to the translation of academic research and scholarship into focused, plain-language reports available to everyone. Writing policy briefings and essays is a special skillset that requires researchers to step outside of their academic training and to imagine what their work might look like to someone without their background. Researchers need to present their work in ways that inspire and enable non-experts to incorporate the findings into their policy frameworks. This means submissions should use clear and relatable language, catchy titles and headings, appeal to current events and issues, avoid jargon and theory, cite relatively few sources, and avoid footnotes. Policy suggestions should flow naturally from the research's key findings.

For technical submission requirements, see below.

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Each academic manuscript considered for publication in *BIG_Review* is submitted to at least two members of the Editorial Board (or other qualified scholars) for double-blind review. In the event of a "split" recommendation, a third (and sometimes a fourth) review may be obtained. Publication decisions are based on these reviews.

The editors notify authors as early as possible as to whether their paper has been accepted for publication. Selected manuscripts are assigned a member of the editorial team, who will work with the author to address any outstanding issues concerning style or substantive content prior to publication. Papers that do not abide by the publication's style guide may not be accepted. Once revisions have been completed, copyediting and production are provided by *BIG_Review*.

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Academic Submission Requirements

Articles are long-form papers (7,000 to 11,000 words) that advance public knowledge about borders in the 21st century, presenting original research, data, analysis, or theory, and engaging with contemporary scholarly literature on borders. Authors should have a background in social sciences, humanities, law, or policy.

Essays are shorter-form papers (1,000 to 4,000 words) that advance public knowledge about borders in the 21st century, including literature reviews, persuasive writing, and opinion pieces, as well as short research papers.

Research notes engage concisely (750 to 1,200 words) with single concepts, terms, or debates pertaining to border studies.

Book reviews (between 800 and 1,100 words) summarize and analyse books (academic and fiction) relevant to contemporary border studies.

Film reviews (between 800 and 1,100 words) summarize and analyse film and television relevant to contemporary border studies.

Submissions must be written in English, though we also consider French and Spanish submissions.

All academic articles and essays must include an **abstract** (75 to 200 words) that summarizes the paper, including the main argument or findings, the disciplinary background or approach, and research literatures or theories relied upon.

BIG_Review **citation style** is very similar to [Chicago "author-date" manual of style](#). This means all citations are contained inside parentheses within the text, listing author(s) last name, and the year of publication (and pagination when appropriate, especially following quotations). Complete bibliographic details of all references are contained in Works Cited at the end of the manuscript, listed alphabetically by author last name, with year of publication preceding work title. All references to academic journal articles must include [DOI weblinks](#) or other [stable URLs](#) at the end of the entry. This increases the exposure of your work.

Quotations should not end with a period or a comma inside the quotation marks, unless the punctuation is original to source; otherwise, periods and commas come after and outside the quotation marks. In the case of article titles in the Works Cited, these should be in quotation marks and followed by no punctuation marks, neither commas nor periods, as in the following examples.

Examples of *BIG_Review* citation and reference style (*notice the placement of all punctuation*):

According to some scholars, borders raise normative imperatives as well as territorial considerations: "what borders do", for example, "should always be related to the overriding ethical concern that they serve and not undermine human dignity" (Agnew 2008, 176).

Works Cited

Agnew, John. 2008. "Borders on the Mind: Re-framing Border Thinking" *Ethics & Global Politics* 1(4): 175-191. <https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v1i4.1892>

Andreas, Peter, and Thomas J. Biersteker (eds.). 2003. *The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jones, Reece. 2012. *Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India, and Israel*. New York and London: Zed Books.

O'Lear, Shannon. 2016. "Geopolitics and Climate Change: The Case of the Missing Embodied Carbon" in Shannon O'Lear and Simon Dalby (eds.) *Reframing Climate Change: Constructing Ecological Geopolitics*. London: Routledge. 100-115.

Shear, Michael, and Maggie Haberman. 2019. "Mexico Agreed to Take Border Actions Months Before Trump Announced Tariff Deal" *New York Times* (June 8). <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/08/us/politics/trump-mexico-deal-tariffs.html>

Endnotes are not used for citations and should be used sparingly. Endnotes may be used for substantive observations or supplementary material, but not for citing (though endnote content may include in-text citations). Endnotes should appear together at the end of the manuscript. We use endnotes, **not footnotes**.

For **numerals**, single-digit numbers are spelled out ("zero" through "nine") but higher-digit numerals (starting with "10") are written with numbers. For example, "the total membership rose from just seven to a staggering 6,500". Note that a comma is inserted in four-digit numbers and higher (not for years). Large numbers in units of hundred, thousand, million, etc., may combine numerals with spelling, for example: "There were 18 million applications and just six hundred awards."

Units and **percentages** are spelled out, as in "kilometer" (not "km") and "percent" (not "%"), unless the text is particularly heavy on units and percentages, in which case these should be abbreviated.

All **figures** and **tables** are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end (or markers are used within the text to indicate placement).

Sentences are separated by one space, not two. Paragraphs are separated by an additional line.

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Visual art (photography, painting, sculpture, etc.) must be high-resolution, BMP, JPEG, or PNG, including separate captions.

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Policy submissions may take two forms: policy reports or policy briefs. **Policy reports** should be 4,000 words in length, include a short summary (three bullet points), executive summary, findings, and conclusion with implications and recommendations. **Policy briefs** should be 2,000 words, include a short summary (three bullet points), and must conform to the following template (reports may adopt this format as well):

Title [A policy briefing title should capture the reader's attention and clearly state the brief's purpose]

Author [full name, highest degree, position, institution, city, country, and contact info (email and/or website and/or social media account if applicable)]

Executive Summary [An executive summary details the central themes and purpose of the report and will also contain one or two explicitly stated policy suggestions in the conclusion. An executive summary fills a similar role as a research paper abstract, though it is longer, less technical, and written in plain language that is accessible to non-experts. Whenever possible, avoid the use to jargon or theory. Your sentences and overall approach should strive for brevity and clarity. You should write the executive summary last.]

Introduction [A good introduction will provide the reader with an outline of the problem or question being tackled by the research and will justify why the research is of interest/importance to the audience you are trying to reach. It will also provide a brief overview of the research and its findings and will encourage the reader to continue reading.]

Approach and Results [Here, you will lay out a summary of the research's findings, and a short description of the project's methods and analysis (who conducted it, how was it conducted, what research methods were employed). The findings should start by painting a general picture, before providing specific detail. This section should not be too technical, as it will be read by a non-specialized audience. If applicable, this section should also highlight potential opportunities that emerge from the research.]

Conclusion [Interpret your findings for your audience. Make sure your conclusions flow from your findings and are supported by them. Be as definite as you can be. Aim for clear assertions rather than equivocations.]

Implications and recommendations [Implications are what could happen, based on the research; recommendations are what should happen. Both need to flow from the conclusions and be supported by the evidence. Implications tell the reader “If ‘X’, then...” Even if specific advice hasn’t been requested, implications—when phrased correctly—can imply a course of action regardless. Recommendations ought to state clearly what should happen next. They should be related in a step-by-step fashion, and they must be relevant, credible, and feasible.]

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BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION REVIEW

Volume 5 | Issue 2 | Spring & Summer 2024

ARTICLES

Narratives of Agency: Understanding Refugee Experience through Paintings

Berfin Nur Osso

Mobilisations familiales pour le départ migratoire à partir de la Casamance

Abdoulaye Ngom

POLICY

Customs Revenue in the Renewable Energy Sector: South African Evidence

Jean Luc Erero

Franco-Italian Mont Blanc Dispute and Climate Change

Paola Malaspina

Effect of WCO's AEO Programme on Trade Facilitation in Zimbabwe

Rwatida Mafurutu

Customs Laboratories and the Prevention and Detection of Customs Fraud

Mihail Secu

Green is Gold: Creating Gold Standard AEO Programs

Jamie Ferrill and Allanah O'Hanlon

PORTFOLIO

Construction abstraite: Frontière / Abstract Construction: Border

Laurent Reynès

ART & BORDERS

Manifeste: Navire Avenir / Vessel of the Future: Manifesto

Collectif du Navire Avenir

And POETRY by

Loris Ferri

Chad Norman

FILM REVIEWS by

Sinem Arslan

Murat Çemrek

BOOK REVIEWS by

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly

Victor Konrad

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