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# **Framing and shaping migration governance: the case of EU-Tunisian migration relations**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Politics

May 2019

## ABSTRACT

Migration governance is an organisational process, which means it centres on how organisations make sense of and respond to signals from their environment. This thesis contributes to the study of migration governance by developing comparative insight into how organisationally bound and ‘situated’ migration governance processes in Tunisia and at European Union (EU) level relate to each other and, through their actions and inactions, define the challenges that they face. An abundance of literature is available on the ‘EU’s external migration governance’. However, much of this literature focuses on the policy outputs produced, or the policy outcomes determined, often reaching assumptions on processes of migration governance based on these analyses. As the EU has been the main driver of this policy production, the literature developed is largely Eurocentric, and often fails to give adequate and equal consideration to non-EU state dynamics. To address these issues, the thesis develops an actor-centred analysis of the organisational processes through which migration is conceptualised in the EU and in Tunisia, building from theories that value the importance of framing and sensemaking. Based on forty three interviews with migration governance actors across the two cases and extensive use of the primary and secondary literature, it analyses the dual meaning of migration governance, as actors first need to make sense of migration diagnosing its causes and consequences; and then prognosing a line of work that follows such diagnoses. The thesis finds that migration governance systems play a key role in defining migration and its challenges, rather than being simply externally impacted by them. By understanding the importance of cognitive biases and dissonance in shaping individual understandings and thus actions, it shows that contrary to what much of the available literature assumes, the EU is failing to externalise its priorities and associated meanings of migration, and EU-Tunisian migration relations remain a field of profound contestation. Firstly, the EU is not as strong as expected in this ‘profusion’ of its ideas because the thesis shows that these are contested in the EU itself. This notwithstanding, the thesis shows that the EU is driven by a framing of migration related to crisis, which urges action. Tunisia actively resists the profusion of migration frames and policies of migration from the EU preferring inaction, which aligns with a rights-based approach that emerged after the 2011 revolution and which included the right to mobility, and a view of Tunisian migration as an opportunity for the country. As such, a clash characterizes these relations, between the products of EU framings of migration, such as return and readmission, and Tunisian ones, such as increasing mobility for its citizens.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Andrew Geddes goes beyond the scholarly guidance provided. If it weren't for his trust allowing for a peculiar PhD experience, my life would be very different today. For this I will always be grateful, as well as for the invaluable advice and expertise provided.

Sarah Cooke has helped solving so many problems along the way, from the very application process until the Viva organisation. Without her, a lot of extra stress would have accrued in this experience.

I am also thankful to Dr. Owen Parker, that with the right words at the right time made me realise that this journey was reaching its end.

This PhD was part of, and funded by, the MIGPROSP project, led by Prof. Andrew Geddes. It has therefore benefited from countless exchanges also with the other members of this fantastic team: Dr. Leila Hadj-Abdou, Andrea Pettrachin, Dr. Marcia Vera Espinoza, Dr. Leiza Brumat, Dr. Michaela Bruckmayer, Dr. Gabriela Ibarra, Laura Foley, Prof. Nicola Phillips and Dr. Diego Acosta Arcarazo. I am particularly grateful to Leila and Andrea, for putting their Florentine couches at the disposal of my PhD cause, for their friendship, and for the enriching conversations that this led to.

Dr. Marc Geddes has been a great source of help and company during the first year of my PhD, an inspiration in finding my way in the complex world of academia.

Elizabeth Collett, Dr. Hanne Beirens and the friends at MPI Europe have been most helpful at a critical stage of my fieldwork. When they hosted me as visiting researcher the Brussels bubble was still floating above my head and their help has been valuable and very appreciated. I am also grateful to Camille Le Coz, for her friendship and peer-support when it was most needed.

I am greatly indebted to Laura Corrado, for her esteem and the numerous opportunities that she offered to me. Her respect for my research and for my critical thinking has been fundamental for the work carried out for her and for this thesis. The friends and colleagues of the B1 Unit in DG HOME have all helped not to lose focus on my PhD, with their repeated queries about when this would be finished. I now have an answer for you!

My fantastic LSE IMPP colleagues, Amelia, David, Veronica, Kim, Milena, Sarah and Melissa, have provided invaluable feedback and comments in the drafting of the thesis.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunities that my parents Gianni and Patrizia have given to me, without which this PhD would not have existed. I owe them gratitude also for their discrete support in these past years: I look forward to finally telling you what it was all about!

My sister Alice and my brother Mauro have been a source of unlimited and unconditional encouragement since the beginning of my studies until...right now (incoming text: have you finished yet?).

Giulia, this experience would have been very different without your company, patience and support. The smile with which you would come back home after a 24h shift gave me the energy to move forward in difficult times.

Growing up in Cagliari, in the middle of the Mediterranean, I soon developed a sense of privilege for being able to sail around without risking my life. This PhD is dedicated to all those that don't have the same freedom to move across the Mediterranean and the borders of the world.

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# **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Cabinet Juncker : Cabinet president European Commission

Cabinet Timmermans : Cabinet First Vice President European Commission

Cabinet Mogherini : Cabinet High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security.

Cabinet Avramopoulos: Cabinet of the Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs

Commission Sec Gen: Secretariat General of the European Commission

DG HOME: Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs

DG DEVCO: Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development

DG NEAR: Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

EC: European Commission

EEAS: European External Action Service

ETUC: European Trade Union Confederation

EU: European Union

EUTF: European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

HLWG: High Level Working Group on Migration

ICMPD BRUX: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Brussels siège

ICMPD TUN: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Tunis siège

IO: International Organisation

IOM BRUX : International Organisation for Migration, Brussels siège

GIZ: German corporation for International Cooperation



MENA: Middle East and North Africa

MFF: Multi-Annual Financial Framework

MoFA: Ministry for Foreign Affairs

MoSA: Ministry for Social Affairs

MS: Member State(s)

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NSM: National Strategy for Migration

OFII: French Office for Immigration and Integration

ONM: National Observatory for Migration Tunisia

OTE: Office for Tunisians living abroad

Perm Rep SE: Permanent Representation to the European Union of Sweden

Perm Rep SK: Permanent Representation to the European Union of Slovakia

Perm Rep AT: Permanent Representation to the European Union of Austria

RCT: Rational Choice Theory

SEITE: Secretariat of State for Immigration and Tunisians Abroad

SNA: Social Network Analysis

TCN: Third country national

TPMA: Thematic Programme Migration and Asylum

# CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

‘We are seeing an increasing number of clandestine migrants coming from Tunisia. In Tunisia there is no war, no famine, it is a democracy. I cannot understand why more and more boats are leaving and reaching Italian coasts. I will soon have a meeting with my Tunisian counterpart to solve the issue’ – *Matteo Salvini, Il Giornale, 15/09/2018.*

In this quote, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini makes a powerful assumption about the causes of migration. Put simply, given that there is no war and Tunisians have enough to eat, there should be no migration. Without going into a normative or evidence-based discussion about such a claim, the point of interest is that Salvini is framing his actions on Tunisian migration issues on specific understandings of the causes of migration. Put differently, ‘frames’ on migration are likely to have important effects on subsequent action. This research departs from the consideration that such understandings warrant further analysis to grasp dynamics of migration governance as well as its drivers. Actors and actions are situated in particular contexts and this research analyses the way in which such actors are situated, and how on that basis they make sense of the environment around them (so-called ‘situated actors’). It is, in fact, through such understandings and their effects that actors in migration governance systems organise their experiences and decide upon courses of action.

This thesis examines the factors that frame and thus shape European Union (EU)-Tunisia migration relations. Above all, this entails that the research focuses on the dynamics of migration governance of the two cases. This is hardly a novel topic, as a conspicuous body of literature is found to focus on ‘migration governance’. However, even before focusing on its migration-related content, this research posits an interest for the organisational dimension of governance. In other words, it focuses on the organisational processes that constitute governance by defining its structures and ideas. Rather than focusing on how governance systems respond to issues, first and foremost this research will look at how these governance systems are shaped. Therefore, the focus is squarely on the role situated actors play in constituting and giving meaning to the issues they face. Across ministries, organisations and departments, governance actors face uncertain and ambiguous issues to make sense of, i.e. social, economic and political considerations which do not have one simple and agreed meaning. At the centre of this research thus lies an interest in how such meaning is

attributed. The case of migration is particularly poignant in this respect given its complexity, with economic, social, political, demographic and environmental aspects which all play a role in shaping migration dynamics. This complexity multiplies the systems interacting with each other and magnifies the uncertainty under which migration governance actors operate, at the crossroads of great change and potential unintended consequences.

This study sheds new light on dynamics and drivers of the EU's external migration governance in relations with Tunisia by analysing migration governance as a process, rather than by analysing its outputs or outcomes. In doing so, it offers a non-Eurocentric analysis by giving equal consideration to Tunisian dynamics of external migration governance and aims to correct a tendency to develop assumptions about relations of the EU with non-EU countries without giving adequate consideration to the latter as an active shaper of such relations. This correction is achieved by equally looking at how in the EU and in Tunisia, individual 'situated' actors operating in migration governance systems organise their experience in such environments by trying to figure out what is going on 'out there' and then organising these understandings in a way conducive to action (although, as shown in this research, inaction is also a possibility).

As EU integration on migration affairs accelerated in the 1990s, its 'external' dimension, namely the external efforts to extend the reach of the EU's migration policies beyond its geo-political and institutional framework, soon started to assume a central position (Lavenex 1999, 2004; Boswell 2003). This focus was due to the fact that from the very outset, the EU's main strategy was to limit the number of arrivals to the EU (see for example the Austrian Presidency strategy paper, European Council 1998). This resulted in a wealth of literature focusing on the externalisation of border control (see below, p. 12). Until present times, much of the literature has focused on such aspects, keeping track of the multiplication of policy tools through which the EU carries out this work. This body of research is thus very important, but as noted before, by focusing on the EU's external migration governance through the analysis of EU outputs and EU-induced outcomes, a considerable EU bias has characterized this body of literature (see also Collyer 2016). Very little importance has been laid on non-EU countries as active shapers of relations on migration with the EU, most likely due to the paucity of outputs to consider produced by such countries of migrant origin and destination. The focus on processes and situated actors allows to correct this Eurocentric tendency, giving equal consideration to

migration governance dynamics of the EU and of Tunisia, analysing the way in which the north African country positions itself vis-à-vis the EU, and the ways in which migration acquires a political meaning for the country. As such, this thesis aims to offer a non-Eurocentric analysis of relations on migration carried out by the EU with a non-EU country, in this case Tunisia. It finds that whilst the profusion of a high number of actions pushed from the EU seemingly suggests that the bloc has occupied the driving seat of such relations with its security-oriented approach to migration management, these are not the actions the EU most wants, nor actions which Tunisians value. Firstly, the EU is found to have a migration governance system that is far from being a monolith, and that reaches out externally based on an array of different framings of migration, and understandings about what constitutes a challenge. These divergences are even more evident as regards Tunisia, which, driven by an interest in furthering the possibilities for emigration of its citizens, gives very little importance to the wealth of actions implemented by the EU. These actions thus become a ‘fig leaf’ for more structural divergences of how two sensible environments are constructed across two different shores of the Mediterranean, and are failing to reconcile towards an agreed way forward. Due to its EU focus, the literature on EU external migration governance does not allow to fully understand the divergence identified in this research. Placing this research in this scholarly work, the next section better identifies this gap.

### **1.1 Identifying the gap in the literature: the need to analyse migration governance processes**

The rationale for this thesis emerged by reflecting on how despite a considerable—and growing—body of literature has been developed on the EU’s external migration governance, this literature has largely focused on analyses of outputs and outcomes produced by this system. In other words, such literature has mostly focused on outputs, such as policy documents and legislation, or on outcomes, such as the dire conditions to which migrants are confined following the EU’s attempts to stem migration flows. While this body of research sheds light on very important elements of this system of governance and of its consequences, the processes by which such outputs and outcomes are reached are not adequately analysed, as often assumptions are made about the motives of actors. This thesis complements this literature by offering an analysis of such processes, whilst challenging the idea that assumptions on these can be made by departing from outputs and outcomes, rather than by the actors which make up such processes. This section therefore asks: how have these issues been accounted for in the literature so far? Focusing first on EU external

migration governance literature examining policy outputs, and then on that analysing policy outcomes, it recognises the need for an analysis of policy processes, also identifying how this offers promising tools to overcome an Eurocentric bias in the analysis of the EU's external migration governance. The section does not focus specifically on literature on Tunisia and EU migration relations with Tunisia, as it first frames the bigger scholarly field of the EU's external dimension of migration governance and relations with non-EU countries. The next Chapter will rather use literature on Tunisia, which is very limited, to contextualise this research empirically (see Chapter 2, p. 48).

### 1.1.2 The focus on policy outputs

As noted before, security concerns played a key role in driving the development of an EU external migration policy. Scholars such as Lavenex (1999,2001, 2004), Guiraudon (2003), Geddes (2005), Boswell (2003, 2007) all focused on the emergence of this external dimension that accompanied the EU's integration on migration related issues. The next chapter will expand on this literature and build on it to define the analytical framework of this research. The focus here is thus rather on the literature that followed the emergence of this external migration governance system of the EU, which largely focuses on the emergence of numerous practices driven by the fear of migration, which had the objective of stemming the flows. Such policy outputs have attracted a wealth of attention in the scholarly literature.

The management of borders and the externalisation of their control have been widely accounted for in research. Their policing as well as their militarisation has, in particular, attracted analyses of a number of scholars. Lutterbeck (2006) highlights how the growing concerns for irregular migration that took place since the 1990s, in fact, had an immediate effect on the militarisation of the Mediterranean space, with a scaling-up of resources aimed at increasing the hardware of border control as well as military patrolling. Moreover, increasing attention was also placed on the control of migration beyond European borders (Ryan and Mitsilegas, 2010) or on a growing tendency to consider the extraterritorial processing of asylum claims (Leonard and Kaunert 2016). Guild and Bigo (2010) focus their attention on the policies which have led to pushing back border controls to origin countries and regions, before migrants actually travel rather than controlling them at their arrival.

What this literature has in common is a focus on policies produced, but also a tendency to complement the analysis of such policies and of their consequences with some considerations of how these came to be. Guild and Bigo (2010) in particular state that part of their objective is to examine ‘how those choices are made’, which lead to ‘people hanging on tuna nets’ in the Mediterranean Sea (Guild and Bigo 2010: 257). Their effort to examine such policy choices is based on their analysis of outputs produced by the EU, mainly in the form of official documents and legislation. The point of this thesis is to evidence how such assumptions on policy choices can be enhanced by analyses of the context within which such choices are taken, and the individual and organisational processes that lead to them. Complementing these studies on external border control, this research offers an alternative way of looking at migration governance processes in which such choices are taken, challenging the methodological notion that assessment of the drivers of migration governance can occur on the basis of assessment of outputs and outcomes alone.

A further body of research which has developed significantly focused on readmission and return of non-EU country nationals from the EU. This coincided with an increase in such work from the EU, especially as its role was recognised in the Treaty of Amsterdam first, and finally enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. Mostly from a legal perspective, scholars such as Carrera (2016) have particularly explored the legal problems of readmission policies, relating for example to the difficult task of recognising migrants which often do not have documents, to facilitate non-EU countries to accept them back. Cassarino (2007, 2009) focuses on political aspects of readmission agreements with countries of origin and transit, highlighting the pervasive nature of these arrangements in the EU’s external migration governance, an integral part of all the EU’s external dimension of migration policy. Cardwell (2013) also considers the implication of some of these new policy tools which are constructed as ‘trojan horses’ for security objectives such as readmission, considering the perils of these instruments of this ‘new governance’, which may lead to lack of transparency and legitimacy.

Overall, while a lot of scholarly attention has been placed upon border control and extraterritorial control as a bedrock of the EU’s external migration governance, few studies have considered the fact that the EU’s efforts of relating with non-EU countries have been necessarily impacted by reactions from non-EU countries concerned. Rather than being passive recipients of EU policies, these countries have their own

preferences shaped by internal dynamics and pressures. Only few scholars, such as Betts and Milner (2007), Reslow (2012) or El Qadim (2015), have placed attention on perspectives of non-EU states and their active role in EU extraterritorial border control. This research contributes to this body of work by examining the EU's external migration governance through a study that gives equal standing to the EU and to Tunisia, and by understanding processes of migration governance as defined by how both actors determine their preferences in relation to their own internal dynamics. Tunisia, in other words, will not be considered as a passive recipient of EU externalisation efforts, as is often implicitly assumed by the literature reviewed above. This literature focuses on the negatives of the EU's actions on border control in relations with non-EU countries, without giving a full account of how the final outcomes are then shaped on the basis of non-EU countries' preferences.

Zanker (2019) in particular makes an effort to value equally policy outputs produced in the EU and those in African countries and regional institutions to understand the perspectives of all actors involved. The scholar reviews 76 policy outputs to understand the rhetoric of EU-African migration relations, and evaluate how this reflects the practice of migration governance. The insight produced on the distribution of wordings of migration and commitment between the two partners is of high value. However, this content analysis is also followed by an evaluation of 'practices' of migration governance and of implementation, based on the outputs reviewed and without considering the role played by actors within these processes which are intrinsically organisational. This research, instead, aims to offer an analysis that considers the EU and Tunisia equally, by focusing on the individual and organisational processes through which meanings on migration are developed, and that shape the action carried out.

Together with the considerable literature on security-driven EU policy outputs, significant attention has also been placed on the so-called 'root causes' approach of migration, a development-oriented policy aimed at governing migration. Such a policy approach that is more oriented towards developmental actions assumed importance in the mid-2000s, but as Lavenex and Kunz (2008) highlight, it failed to take the upper hand in the EU's external migration governance. Policy work on this issue has often been linked to security-oriented efforts of the EU, such as in relation to the link between migration, return and development, for which the EU has pushed (Olesen 2002); and also in relation to the benefits, or the 'triple wins', arising from 'circular

migration', that is considering regulating migration through shorter term stays of migrants (Vertovec, 2007). De Haas (2007) criticises what he defines as the EU's 'development instead of migration' approach, that is the EU's stated intention to reduce migration by increasing the development of countries of origin. Bringing forward a body of research which shows how migrants do not originate from the poorest countries, and that an increase in development may also lead to an initial 'migration hump', i.e. an increase in emigration, de Haas criticises the development-focused policy outputs for being based on misconceptions about migration. This is also picked up by Castles (2004) who ascribes failure to the fact that policy makers manifest ignorance about the complexity of migration drivers, together with what he calls 'hidden agendas' that mean there can be ambivalent intentions in relation to desired policy outcomes. Such factors are frequently recognised in the literature as potential shapers of policy outputs, and thus direct or indirect drivers of policy outcomes. However, while this may well be the case, it is impossible to know only on the basis of assumptions deriving from assessment of policy outputs. Rather, what is required is investigation of the decision-making processes that lead to such outputs. Moreover, Lavenex and Kunz (2008) recognise that institutional contexts embed frame-competitions which define the way in which development issues find their way in policy frames, urging to move away from simple 'dichotomous juxtapositions'. Such investigations are a key goal of this research.

A less developed but highly important field of research investigates relations between EU external migration governance and EU trade policy, which is an area in which EU competencies are very strong. Lavenex (2002) shows that, by inserting migration clauses, and in particular readmission clauses, into trade agreements and negotiations, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) officials have smuggled their priorities into the highest levels of the EU's foreign policy agenda.

A policy output which attracted scholarly attention was the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This was not developed as a purely migration oriented instrument, but, as Barbé and Johansson-Nogués (2008) argue, migration control was an integral part of the ENP since its inception, with the EU trying to extend the reach of its migration management policies to neighbouring countries. Various other critiques (see for example Hollis 2012) have highlighted how such policy was largely inconsistent with local dynamics across the neighbourhood, and continued the 'our size fits all' approach recognised by Bicchi



(2006) to be the bedrock of the EU's approach to extending its normative reach to its neighbourhood. Bicchi (2014) also recognised that the core dynamics underlying the implementation of such policy did not change even after the Arab Spring, not adapting to a changing context.

Together with the insertion of migration in broader policy frameworks such as in the ENP, the external migration governance of the EU has also been furthered by *ad hoc* migration-related instruments. A notable example at EU level is the development of so-called 'Mobility Partnerships' in 2007 that aimed to provide a framework of cooperation between willing Member States and selected non-EU countries. Initially, the concept was considered to have potential for being a vehicle of the 'balanced approach' to migration governance promised by the EU's 'Global Approach to Migration' of 2007 (CEC 2007). However, framed within the migration policy context described above, it is unsurprising that such instruments have been considered by various scholars such as Carrera (2011), Reslow (2015), and Chou and Gibert (2009), as instruments aiming to further the EU's strategic interests which ultimately concerned preventing irregular migration, without offering substantial legal alternatives to it.

This review of the literature shows how great attention has been spent on analysing policy outputs, and how this often led to a tendency to make assumptions about how such policy outputs were reached. It also has been shown that many studies focus on EU externalisation of border control in non-EU countries without giving adequate attention to the processes that occur in these non-EU countries, which play a fundamental role in shaping the outcomes of such international migration relations. We now turn to the literature that focuses on the outcomes of the policy outputs discussed.

### 1.1.3 The focus on policy outcomes:

As the policy outputs discussed before started to multiply, so did their effects. As such, a growing body of scholarly attention focused on the outcomes that such policies were having.

Given the security focused nature of the policy outputs adopted, the largest body of policy outcomes analysed have been those that impact on migrants' livelihoods. The rising number of migrant fatalities started to be a concern in the mid-2000s. Carling (2007b), for example, notes that as migration attempts rose, so did migrant deaths, evidencing the fallacy of increasing the surveillance and interception infrastructure in

order to reduce migrant fatalities. Similarly, Spijkerboer (2007) argues that the proposition made by European governments, namely that border deaths can be combated by fighting against irregular migration, is flawed, giving evidence to the claim that border deaths increase as a consequence of intensified border control.

Linked to the impact of border controls for migrants' livelihoods and experiences, attention has been placed upon the consequences of the EU's action in relation to migrant smuggling. De Bruycker et al. (2013) point out that migrant smuggling has been a structural phenomenon in the Mediterranean region since the 1990s, as irregular migration from Africa to Europe started to rise. However, attention in the literature has been placed on how smuggling has evolved since, as an outcome of EU border control policies. Scholars such as Carling and Hernandez Carretero (2011) point to the 'vicious cycle' of border controls measures not resulting in less migration, but rather to changing smuggling routes and strategies. These then lead to further border control strategies, to which smugglers once again react, with the outcome of multiplied risks in the migrant's journeys (De Haas 2011). Collyer (2007, 2010) particularly looks at the impact of these controls for migrants in the trans-Saharan region, finding that the outcome of increased difficulty in undocumented migration is leading to drastic consequences for migrants, who need to embark on increasingly longer and fragmented journeys to reach their destination. Brachet (2018) also focuses on smuggling and mobility in the Sahara, considering how smuggling in the region was 'fabricated' by the EU's action. The scholar finds that while the area had long established informal patterns of mobility across very porous borders, the EU started forcing rigid controls in the region, resulting in greater difficulties to move across borders, that could be facilitated only by professional smugglers. El-Enany (2013) further notes that as migrants' journeys become more dangerous as a result of heightened control, the paradox of the whole protection system of Europe is exposed, as those in need cannot reach its protection. Similarly, Morrison (2000) argues that the 'securitised' border control policy of the EU was having the effect of ending the right to asylum in Europe.

Finally, a less developed body of literature has focused on the impact that the EU's external migration policies were having on countries of origin. Adepoju et al. (2009) review the EU's approach to migrant sending countries, finding that it is often a top-down relationship that is far from being based on what a true 'win-win' situation would look like. Trauner and Deimel (2013) focus on Mali, and on how the EU's policies

have pushed the African country to a more restrictive approach toward migration. However, they also point out how the official response of the state is ambiguous, and how internal dynamics involving the role of civil society organisations is playing an increasing role in the governance of migration. As highlighted before, to date, very little research has focused on these kinds of dynamics in relation to Tunisia, adding scope for the case study of this research.

The literature reviewed gives an excellent account of often very dire situations migrants are experiencing across the European borders. With research across disciplines, increasing knowledge is available about the consequences of the policies produced by the EU's external migration governance. However, the knowledge gap remains as regards the processes through which these approaches emerged. For example, why is it that, even though evidence points to the counterproductive effects of smuggling policies, these policies remain as the bedrock of the EU's approach? Some scholars, such as Carling and Hernandez Carretero (2011), attempt to give indications about the relation between the policy narratives and policies adopted, in order to shed light on the implication of these with the policy choices that drive such work from the EU. With the same objective of offering an account of why and how certain policies are produced, de Haas (2008) states that policies are based on flawed assumptions about migration and its causes, and therefore 'invariably' fail and have perverse effects. Complementing a body of research that considers the importance of analysing how policy outcomes come to be, this research challenges the notion that these can be reached by making assumptions about what policy makers know, or what they do not know. Insight into the context within which decision makers operate and make choices cannot be attained on the basis of ex post assessment of outputs and outcomes. It needs, in fact, a closer investigation of the organisational settings within which these are produced, and of the framings of migration held therein that impact and drive the production of such policies.

To fill the gap in the literature identified in this section, this research posits that it is through the diagnoses situated actors carry out of what is going on around them that they develop prognoses about what courses of action to take next. The research evidences the importance of this process of sensemaking for the construction of a 'sensible environment' by governance actors, namely an interpretation about the issues they face and the challenges that constrain their actions. It is, in fact, following the different construction of this

environment in the EU and in Tunisia that an urgency to develop new actions is determined in the former, and largely the opposite occurs in the latter, driving its conscious inaction. It is by filling this gap in such a way that this research has the tools to develop a non-Eurocentric account of migration relations of the EU with a non-EU country like Tunisia, as it equally values processes of migration governance in both cases, and analyses dynamics of migration governance on that basis.

## **1.2. Research questions and research design**

A research question was identified to guide this inquiry, namely: *what are the factors framing and shaping migration relations between the EU and Tunisia?*

To answer this question, four sub-questions have been developed:

- 1) Who are the key actors involved in the governance of migration between the EU and Tunisia?
- 2) How do governance actors understand migration?
- 3) How do governance actors understand ‘migration crisis’, and how does this impact understandings of migration?
- 4) In what ways do these understandings drive migration governance?

The actor-centred approach of this research is clearly reflected in the formulation of the questions. As such, this study first seeks to identify the actors which play a role in this migration governance system, then analysing how such actors understand migration as well as migration crises, organising their experiences on this basis, especially in times of uncertainty. The fourth sub-question then guides the analysis of the prognostic implications of such understandings, namely how on the basis of particular framings of migration and its challenges, a course of action, or inaction, is developed accordingly.

As such, macro-systemic and meso-institutional dynamics will be explained by examining the micro-individual level of the two migration governance systems. Migration relations between the EU and Tunisia offer a case for studying migration governance in such a way, equally focusing on the two units of analysis. Wanting to shed light on dynamics of EU external migration governance, the choice of the EU as unit of analysis is tautological, considered in its ‘European’ dimension as a supranational institution that includes intergovernmental dynamics between the Member States comprising it (for a discussion on the spatial

boundaries of this definition, see Collyer 2016: 622). Tunisia was chosen as an exemplary case in light of its geopolitical strategic position, as the closest African country to the EU in the Central Mediterranean region. Moreover, in 2011 the ‘Jasmine revolution’ considerably changed the organisation of Tunisian governance, including of migration, increasing the interest for shedding light on a country which, in part given the rigid control of previous despotic leader Ben Ali, has remained largely under-researched.

The design of this research pivots on the desire to change the way migration governance is understood and analysed by bringing a new approach that will help look at how migration issues are shaped, not merely at how such systems react to them. Departing from the belief that migration governance is an organisational process, the research design takes this seriously and is grounded on the organisational dimension of migration governance. To this purpose, the thesis explores the potential of theories of decision making and social psychology (Kahneman and Tversky 1974; Jonathan Haidt 2013), of framing (Chong and Druckman 2007a) and of sensemaking (Karl Weick 1995) to explore frames, framing effects and how processes of making sense of issues work in organisational settings. Grounded in an interpretivist standpoint, such an approach allows a focus on situated actors and on the way they construct a sensible environment in which to operate, a context for their work which is defined by systematic limits of rationality, as well as constraints of the organisational setting in which they operate. This focus on situated actors is driven by an interest in their cognition and on the causal power of frames, namely focusing the analysis on processes of framing and sensemaking, meaning ways with which individual governance actors organise their experiences, diagnosing the issues that they face and prognosing potential strategies to address these.

### **1.3 Contributions of this study**

Through such an innovative approach to the study of migration governance, and by applying this to the case of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, this research aims to bring forward a conceptual contribution to the study of migration governance, which has potential to be applied to studies which examine dynamics of migration governance at all levels. This conceptual contribution is coupled with a significant methodological implication relating to the focus on processes, rather than outputs and outcomes. The value of this approach is evidenced through the empirical contribution that it allows to bring forward,

with the analysis of the case of EU-Tunisian migration relations and understanding how the two migration governance systems frame their positions vis-à-vis each other.

This research aims to show that conceptually, migration governance should not be understood as a passive recipient of migration flows and shocks. Rather, such systems of governance play a fundamental role in shaping the meaning of the issues they face, such as migration. This conceptual understanding helps overcome a tendency to view migration as exogenous to such governance systems—a challenge which externally impacts such systems and to which solutions need to be found. Rather, the conceptual contribution brought forward by this research stresses the importance of the endogenous ways in which migration is defined and constituted as an issue, and, on that basis, challenges, problems and solutions are considered. In other words, actors of migration governance systems understand the causes and effects of migration, which help them organise their experience and strategy. This contribution is significant because beyond the single empirical cases analysed in this thesis, it provides a framework for analysing how migration governance systems are shaped, organised, and how their actions are defined. As such, it allows to examine the drivers of migration governance.

This conceptual contribution has an important methodological implication. In fact, in order to study the endogeneity of the constitution of migration as an issue and a challenge, the research pivots upon the importance of situated actors and the processes by which they frame migration and their experience working on the topic. Rather than departing from outputs and outcomes, it posits the importance of focusing on cognition at the individual level, and how migration is framed through such cognitive processes and acquires meaning. Such cognition, however, is not autonomous and independent, but highly related to the situated context in which actors operate, in its organisational dimension. Bringing forward such a methodological contribution to the study of migration governance, this research shows how through such an analysis it is possible to analyse how individual governance actors build understandings of migration, and the way in which these then drive action and, as the research finds, also inaction.

The conceptualisation of migration governance as an organisational process, studied through an actor centred approach, allows to bring forward the empirical contribution of this research. Much of the literature developed on the EU's external migration governance focused on the externalisation of EU border control,

indicating implicitly or explicitly that through this focus the EU has externalised meaning and ways of doing on migration issues. The approach adopted in this research allows for a non-Eurocentric analysis of these dynamics, showing that Tunisia plays an active role in shaping its position in relations with the EU, on the basis of its own understandings of migration and of the issues at stake. This revelation has profound implications because, although the EU does initiate a considerably large number of interactions (mostly due to a wealth of migration related projects started in Tunisia), these interactions are all framed by two very different understandings of migration and the issues at stake. This difference between the political security-oriented narrative of the EU and the Tunisian positive framing of migration, or at least of emigration, is latent and never reconciled, leading to actions which have little effect. Moreover, the innovative approach adopted allows to show that the EU, when ‘going abroad’ with its migration governance, does not operate as a single homogenous bloc. Rather, relations with Tunisia are carried out at different levels, considered in this research as different environments in which individual governance actors operate. While the political level is highly permeated by security-oriented frames, recognized by much of the externalisation literature, and carries out hierarchical relations on that basis, a growing network of horizontal relations between technical officials is growing, tasked with the implementation of many actions and projects sought by the political level. However, rather than carrying these tasks out with the same framing of migration prone to security-oriented prognoses, a different and more positive way of understanding migration defines the work of many of such actors, weakening the diffusion and transfer of security frames on migration from Europe to Tunisia. Therefore, through the conceptual and methodological approaches adopted in this research, which contribute to a literature on migration governance, an empirical contribution is developed, on the EU’s external migration governance and migration relations in particular held with Tunisia. This furthers our understanding of how non-EU countries such as Tunisia relate with the EU, not as passive recipients, but as active shapers of such relations which remain largely contested.

#### **1.4 The Structure of the Thesis**

To build such contributions and respond to the research question and sub-questions defined before, the thesis is developed in eight chapters.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 builds the analytical framework and empirical context of this research. It first considers the working definition of governance in this study, focusing on its own meaning rather than that of its adjectives (e.g. multi-level, multi-actor). It then develops a specific definition of international migration governance, reflecting on the linkages between this and notions of turbulence, uncertainty and migration crises. Having set this approach, the chapter then reflects on the meaning this definition acquires in the EU external migration governance, looking at how this developed. It then identifies the need to develop an analytical framework which allows for a non-Eurocentric analysis of migration governance processes in Tunisia. Having defined the analytical framework, contextual factors are given to place this research empirically, looking at the ways in which the EU tried to externalise its migration governance system, and how dynamics in Tunisia shaped its response.

Chapter 3 then offers the methodology to carry this study out. It reflects on the ontological and epistemological implications of the analytical framework adopted, developing a methodology accordingly. It grounds the research in an interpretivist consideration of individuals as situated agents operating within a context which is however 'strategically selective', i.e. that limits the courses of action available to individuals. It then uses the work of Kahneman and Tversky (1974) to better understand the causal power and the importance of frames, to understand how decisions are taken under conditions of uncertainty. As such, it develops the tools to analyse the social and individual cognitive processes which frame issues and make sense of them in order to develop their action. It does this following the seven properties of sensemaking developed by Karl Weick (1995; 2001), and complements this with Social Network Analysis (SNA) in order to better grasp the importance of the environment in which situated actors operate. The chapter then brings this together by building the research design of the thesis, justifying the selection of the cases analysed, and presenting the methods which will be used to operationalise such methodology, largely based on qualitative 'elite' interviews.

In chapter 4, the first research question is addressed. The chapter defines the context of the research through an SNA, identifying the actors that will be at the centre of the qualitative analysis of Chapters 5 and 6. In doing so, the SNA is complemented by a substantial analysis of primary and secondary sources to account for how the revolution of 2011 in Tunisia and the migration crisis in 2015 in Europe impacted and changed



the two respective migration governance systems. It then maps the network of relations in and among actors working on migration relations in the EU and in Tunisia, not only through a quantitative SNA, but also expanding this inquiry through qualitative data which allows to better understand the nature of the relations in place, such as power, agreement and disagreement, rather than just their existence.

Taking stock of the environment defined by the SNA, Chapters 5 and 6 then address the remaining three sub-questions of the research. Chapter 5 focuses on the EU, and firstly analyses the ways in which governance actors understand migration, finding that situated actors respond to a political security-oriented framing in different ways, largely on the basis of the environment in which they operate. While a constellation of actors is identified as framing migration as a threat, another important constellation is recognised to develop a migrant-centred framing of migration. This contrast is then reflected in considerations of migration crisis, with the former constellation of actors framing migration as a threat for Europe, and the latter considering the 'European migration crisis' to be a crisis for migrants rather than a crisis of migrants. Notwithstanding these differences however, all framings of migration and of crisis led to a sense of urgency in reducing uncertainty that defined their organisation, acting so as to implement possible solutions to the challenges faced. The chapter concludes by considering the strategies and actions adopted, showing how these were the product of diagnostic framings of migration.

Chapter 6 addresses the same questions of the previous chapter, in relation to the case of Tunisia. Firstly, it frames the Tunisian migration governance system with a discussion of dynamics pre- and post-2011 and the Jasmine revolution, identifying dynamics of the migration governance system today. It then focuses on the way in which Tunisian governance actors understand migration, identifying how since 2011, a positive framing for Tunisian migration has defined their approach, considered as a solution to many problems of Tunisian citizens and of Tunisia, rather than a problem itself. However, the chapter also recognises a framing dissonance in many Tunisian actors, which manifested a security-oriented framing to irregular migration inherited by Ben Ali and kept dormant by its low salience, but nevertheless still present. The analysis of framing of migration crisis then allows to turn the telescope around and lose a Eurocentric bias in analysing migration dynamics in the Central Mediterranean region. Tunisian actors, in fact, did not refer to this time as a crisis of migration, and, rather than associating migration to moments of crisis, reflected on how migration

is a product of their 'crisis of development', part of an ongoing normality, rather than a sudden shock. The chapter concludes by explaining how, as opposed to the EU, the causal power of the frames developed by Tunisian actors largely leads to inaction rather than action, as the best strategy considered to maximise the alignment to their positive outlook of Tunisian migration is to avoid taking actions and allowing an unorderly migration system to unfold, rather than repress it.

Chapter 7 then brings the analysis together, and reflects on empirical and conceptual implications of the findings of the research. It first synthesizes findings on the EU and on Tunisia, reflecting on implications for relations between the two. It recognizes the existence of two levels of relations, political and implementational, considering how the framings produced by the two partners are shaping relations mostly based on divergence rather than convergence. It then considers the conceptual implications the findings of this research have for analyses of migration governance, highlighting the importance of considering framings of migration, namely of its causes and effects, as drivers of action, and considering the organisational setting in which these are developed.

Chapter 8 finally concludes this thesis, reflecting on the importance of the approach taken and the case studied, synthesizing the empirical and conceptual findings by addressing each question and sub-question of the research individually. It then offers a policy discussion, not giving a set of policy recommendations, but rather reflecting on how the research helps understand processes of policymaking, including the role evidence plays in them, with implications on when and how to give policy advice. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the importance of the conceptual approach taken, as well as of the non-Eurocentric analysis of EU external migration governance, considering potential avenues for future research that integrates these elements.

## **CHAPTER 2- ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

As identified in the introduction, this research is interested in the organisational dimension of migration governance. To carry out a research on the organisational processes that constitute migration governance then, the first thing needed is to specify what migration governance means. This chapter therefore builds the analytical framework of this research. It first asks what is governance? And what is migration governance? This allows the development of working definitions of such terms, focusing on what they mean rather than by focusing on the meaning of adjectives often associated with them (multi-level, etc.). The dual meaning of migration governance is thus defined as the conceptualisation of what is occurring in the underlying systems that shape migration and their environment, followed by the decision of what work to develop accordingly. This allows to grasp, given their crucial position in the research question, what the drivers of migration governance are, identifying these in the understandings developed by actors situated in migration governance systems about causes and consequences of international migration, which need to precede any action.

Having developed such definition, the analytical framework is fixed by contextualising this to the EU, and in particular to the EU's external migration governance, at the centre of this research. It therefore asks: what is the EU's external migration governance, why has it become so prominent, and how can a migration governance system develop ways to reach beyond its boundaries? In replying to such questions, the chapter identifies a tendency to focus on EU dynamics when analysing its external migration relations, at the expense of dynamics of non-EU partner countries. As such, it reflects on this tendency by asking what is Eurocentrism in studies of migration governance? How can the EU's own external migration relations be studied avoiding an EU bias? It recognises that the working definition of migration governance adopted in this research allows for analysing equally the way migration governance actors in the EU and in Tunisia develop their own understandings about the causes and consequences of migration, in relation to the environment in which they operate.

Having replied to such questions which build the analytical framework of the research, the chapter then provides some contextual factors, empirically framing this thesis. It first focuses on the EU, and asks: in what ways has the EU tried to externalise its migration governance outside of its institutional framework?

This is then followed by a discussion on Tunisian migration governance dynamics before and after the revolution of 2011, which overthrew the leader Ben Ali. Turning the telescope around, in what ways has Tunisia reacted to efforts of the EU to externalise its policies and instruments? Through such questions, this chapter builds the analytical framework of the research, contextualising this to the cases of the EU's and Tunisia's migration governance systems.

## **2.1 Analytical framework**

### 2.1.1- Governance

There has been a notable trend in political science and international relations to shift the focus of the analysis from 'government' to 'governance' (Rhodes 1996). Studies of migration and of the EU have frequently exemplified this shift (Betts 2012; Kohler-Koch 2006), developing interesting analyses that focus on its multi-level and multi-layered (Kunz et. Al 2011) and global or regional nature (Betts 2012; Lavenex et. al 2016). Yet, the meaning of governance is rarely spelt out, with the focus mostly being laid on its attributes.

The shift from 'government' to 'governance' can be considered as one of the most significant developments of 'advanced industrialised democracies' (Pierre 2000:1), caused both by external factors—such as de-regulation, the rise of sub national governments and the emergence of new policy networks—as well as internal changes in the organisation of centres of power and command of governments (ibid.). As Hirst (2000) puts it, this shift has been propelled also by the increasing emergence of new challenges to the nation state, that required recognition that certain problems could no longer be dealt with at state level. Migration, together with issues such as climate change or global terrorism, are cases in point. As Rosenau (1997) points out, this is not to say that the organisation of the control of these challenges is moving away from nation states, but rather that a new 'domestic-foreign frontier' is emerging, in which such issues are contested by governance actors at different levels, from the national to the supranational and international.

Governance is thus not the ultimate proof of the decline of the nation state but should be rather understood as an institutional ability to adapt to external changes. In other words, governance is an institutional response to rapid changes in the environment, across different systems (Pierre 2000:2). It is in light of this that Levi-Faur (2012:7) asserts that governance may be seen as a 'signifier of change', manifested in the meaning, processes, conditions or methods of governing. As an adaptation to such changes, governance can be

understood as having a dual meaning as, first, the conceptualisation of the changes occurring in the environment in which such systems operate; and second, an attempt to steer, manage or coordinate such change (Pierre 2000). This is thus the working definition of governance of this thesis, a central pillar which ultimately allows the analysis of the drivers of governance, namely the ways in which issues are framed and how change in underlying systems are understood, and how on this basis a strategy on what to do next is developed. By building the analytical framework of this thesis around this definition of governance, it is possible for the research carried out to analyse the drivers of governance, not by focusing on the policy outputs and outcomes produced by it, such as laws and policies. Rather, it allows to focus on the organisational processes that constitute these systems, valuing the role played by situated actors—i.e. actors that shape and are shaped by the context in which they operate (see Chapter 3, p.59)—analysing the way in which they conceptualise issues and think about what to do next. This represents the first conceptual contribution of this research, which understands governance as an organisational process constituted by situated actors, and on this basis seeks to shed light on its drivers.

The purpose of this section has not been that of discerning ‘governance’ in all of its complexity, but rather to define a working definition that allows focusing on the analysis of its drivers, beyond the descriptors often used (good, bad, multi-level, etc.). This helps to understand the nature of governance as an organisational process, transcending specific loci or modes of governance, but rather focusing on dynamics of governance which may be found across different levels and modes. However, this is not enough for the purpose of this research, which needs a specific analytical framework of migration governance, to which we now turn.

### 2.1.2- Migration Governance

It has already been pointed out that the emergence of governance should not be considered as evidence of the decline of the state, as it rather represents the ‘states’ ability to adapt to external changes’ (Pierre 2000:3). Migration, in particular, is a clear example of this, given the intrinsic role of the nation state not only in its organisation, but in defining it. As Zolberg (1989:405) observes, without state borders there would be no such thing as international migration because it is the control that states exercise over their borders that ‘defines international migration as a distinctive social process’. As such, an analysis of migration governance

must account for the important role played by states, but should nevertheless follow Rosenau (2000) in understanding the different array of actors that play a role in the organisation of this issue.

The research thus understands governance as an institutional response to rapid changes in the environment. It follows that migration governance is a process in which organisations and actors involved need first to understand the changes in the environment which are determining and affecting migration dynamics, and second to attempt to steer, manage or coordinate these through their work. This is particularly complex in the case of migration, given that the issues impacting and driving international migration are varied and cross cut different underlying systems within states and across borders (Geddes and Korneev 2015). To analyse the drivers of migration governance, therefore, one needs to focus on the way in which such change is conceptualised, and how this impacts on the development of strategies from migration governance systems.

The broader analytical point here is that the complexity of the drivers of migration governance is strictly linked to the complexity of the drivers of migration and of its effects, which need to be made sense of by systems of migration governance. While this research will focus on the drivers of migration governance rather than on the drivers of migration, a reflection on the latter is needed to understand the complexity governance systems and actors situated therein face when making sense of the environment and its changes.

Migration is widely recognised in the literature as an epiphenomenal issue that is shaped by the interaction between the economic, social, political, demographic and environmental systems (Black et al. 2011).

Economic factors affect decisions of people to migrate in many ways, chiefly through wealth and income relative inequalities, but also shape who can and cannot migrate because of economic means to do so (Geddes and Korneev 2015: 56). Social factors then influence such decisions; for example it is well established in the migration scholarly field that the social networks play a role in shaping and affecting decisions of people to migrate, acting as bridges between migrants and candidates from their host societies, but also as gatekeeper preventing certain others from migrating (Massey and Espana 1987). Political factors such as conflicts and instability bear an important impact in affecting migration dynamics, particularly, but not only, in relation to individuals seeking protection within or across borders. These systems are all impacted by demographic considerations, especially in relation to who is likely to migrate and who is not as well as the trajectories of such mobility, as the youth are considered to be more mobile than older segments

of population (Geddes and Korneev 2015: 57). Finally, environmental factors, which are increasingly acknowledged as important shapers of migration, lead to situations such as drought or flooding which may impact on decisions to migrate but also to the impossibility to do so for others, albeit likely in association with the other systems described above (Black et al. 2011). What emerges is that such systems, especially in their interactions with each other, play a key role in defining who migrates, but also, and significantly, who does not or cannot do so. Finally, it is important to mention that migrants are not pawns moved around by what occurs in such systems, their changes and interactions (De Haas 2010). Rather, these are also dependent on the personal inclination of individuals to migrate, explaining also why only a tiny portion of the world population actually migrates. This further increases the complexity of migration that governance systems face when making sense of migration, and thus its uncertainty in regards to causes and effects of action meant to steer and manage such systems to 'govern' migration.

The point for this analysis of the drivers of migration governance is that governance systems and actors situated therein necessarily need to confront this complexity and make sense of these various systems, their change and their interactions in order to develop a sense of how to manage such an environment. This is what Pierre (2000) means by the dual meaning of governance, which needs to adapt to its external environment as it evolves and changes, by first conceptualising the issues with which it is confronted. As such, the analysis of the drivers of migration governance of this thesis focuses on the way in which the drivers of migration and its consequences are made sense of in relation to their underlying systems, to explain how governance actors move towards adapting, steering and/or managing the effects of such systems.

By adopting a working definition which sees governance as a response to changes occurring in the environment, this does not entail that this research considers migration, driven by such changes, as exogenously impacting on systems of governance. Rather, as the analysis is placed squarely on the perceptions and interpretations of actors of such changes, the interest is on the way in which such systems of migration governance define the issues with which they are confronted, and how on that basis they develop action to have an impact on this environment. In other words, this working definition considers migration governance not as mere consequence of external migration pressures, but also as a cause, playing a strong

role in defining the issues with which it is confronted. This occurs conceptually, by understanding and defining the abovementioned systems in their relation with migration dynamics, but also empirically, by impacting such systems with action or inaction, having an effect on migration dynamics. This thesis therefore considers migration governance with this dual meaning, a working definition that allows to build an analytical framework to analyse its drivers, amid great complexity. The next section further expands on this complexity, reflecting on the turbulence and uncertainty that underlies the process of making sense of it, which lead to a frequent definition of migration governance as being ‘in crisis’.

### 2.1.3- Turbulence, Uncertainty, Crisis

The dynamism of governance is widely recognised in the literature (see Rhodes 1996; Bevir and Rhodes 2010; Bevir 2010). As Rosenau (1995: 18) asserts in fact, ‘governance is not a constant in these turbulent times’ but is rather in a ‘continuous process of evolution’. The evolution of governance is directly linked to the evolution of the turbulence in the systems which need to be conceptualised. This organisational turbulence may be understood as ‘the collision of politics, administrative scale and complexity, uncertainty, and time constraints’ (Ansell et al. 2017:1). It is important to note that this turbulence is not simply caused by exogenous factors which impact just this system, but rather it is the output of how the environment is conceptualised as ‘in crisis’.

A wealth of studies has focused on analysing migration crises, especially in the EU in recent years, which is considered to be generated by the migration flows directed to Europe in the past years (see Lindley 2014 for a discussion). The working definition adopted here allows to complement these studies by focusing on the role played by systems of migration governance in defining the issues with which they are confronted, and challenges the assumption that governance processes have been externally impacted by such migration flows.

In order to conceptualise ‘migration crisis’ in an analytically useful way, it is important to highlight that crises are ‘constituted through narratives’ (Hay 1996: 254). Policy makers in fact act upon (inter) subjective understandings of what is going on, rather than on simple material elements (Widmaier, Blyth, & Seabrooke, 2007: 748). Moreover, Habermas (1979: 1) points out that ‘crises cannot be separated from the viewpoint of



the one who is undergoing it', thus highlighting the importance of how the frame around certain events and actions is constructed.

The occurrence of a 'migration crisis' that impacts the organisation of governance systems and multiplies their turbulence cannot be considered as driven solely by migration flows, as an objective external threat (Lavenex 2004: 686). Rather, flows constitute the material element, the *dimension* of crisis, of which meaning, however, is constructed in an intersubjective way and determined by the *perceptions* of this crisis. The processes within which these meanings are built are processes of governance, whether formal or informal, in which actors involved make sense of and define the challenges they face, and enact such understandings in the environment in which they operate. The picture below clearly exemplifies the way in which the reaction to the 'migration crisis' in Europe in 2015 was intrinsically linked to the prior definition ascribed to it. In fact, the picture displays some very powerful arrows that aim to reflect the magnitude of the migration flows reaching Europe. By picturing migration as only moving towards Europe, and thus Europe as the sole recipient of the migration flows from across Africa and Asia, this map embeds powerful assumptions on the way this migration takes place. Migrants are seen to move solely to Europe, building and reinforcing the message of 'crisis' linked to an 'invasion'.

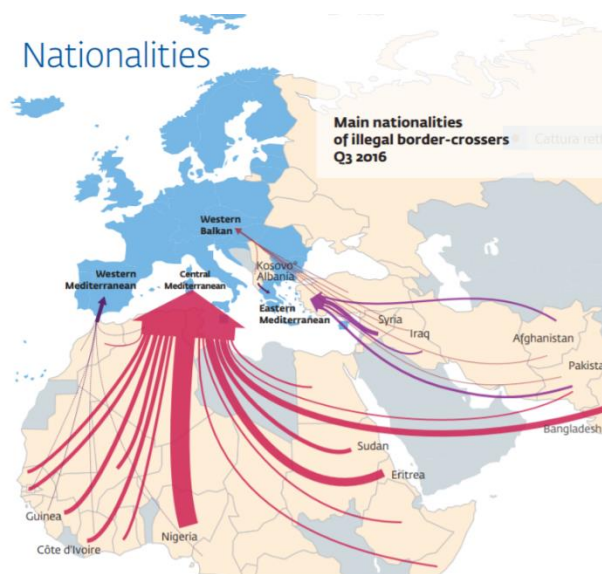


Figure 1: FRONTEX map of border crossings

Such maps are an integral component of the information packages on which EU migration governance actors base their understandings of the issue, which is clearly defining migration as a 'crisis'. It reinforces the turbulence of the migration governance system—of which it is an output—by increasing complexity, uncertainty and time constraints of these organisational settings. It is within such complexity that interactions become more 'variable, inconsistent, unexpected and unpredictable'

(Ansell et al. 2017:2), and through these that organisations play an important role in generating turbulence and projecting it onto their environment. With such an interest and understanding of migration governance,

the goal of this thesis is to analyse the way actors involved make sense of these interactions, how these are embedded in social networks, and the consequences generated by understandings of causes and consequences of migration produced.

The literature on crisis generally understands these moments as leading to profound change in organisational settings, as decision makers increase the level of economic and political resources to ‘enhance control over its resolution’ (Dutton 1986: 502). This is why Hay (1996: 254) asserts that crises are ‘moments of decisive interventions’, times when ‘new meanings are developed to concepts’. This study aims to contribute to this literature by empirically analysing the way in which such change may or may not lead to institutional change and a new set of understandings about migration. In fact, governance actors may seize the moment for pushing for change, but it is also possible that in light of increased uncertainty that defines moments of crisis, ‘decision makers may replicate structures or procedures that have been perceived as successes in the past’ (Ansell et al. 2017: 11). In other words, reaction, rather than change, may become the way through which governance actors organise their work in times of crisis. It may also be expected that in times of high uncertainty, situated actors may feel more inclined to inaction, given the high risks associated with the actions taken and possible unexpected outcomes. Given the complexity of migration, and the multiplied risks that emerge from its epiphenomenal nature, these strategies may be particularly relevant.

As recognised before, a defining element of ‘governance’ is the inclusion of a multitude of new actors in networks of power and command. Migration governance is increasingly defined by the way in which a multitude of different actors, operating in different organisational settings, interpret causes and consequences of migration. The effect that these understandings may have, between change and reaction to the challenges faced, may also lead to an increased ambiguity. This is because in such times of uncertainty tensions emerge ‘within organisations which produce ambiguity about what problems, solutions and consequences to attend any time’ (Ansell 2017:45). Different actors in different contexts may in fact produce different understandings and courses of action in front of a similar issue, also on the basis of different potentially conflicting pressures (Brunsson 1989). This is why Boswell and Geddes (2011) assert that in dealing with such complexity, organisations must try to find ways to manage such competing interests, which results in a frequent disconnection between ‘talk’, ‘decision’ and ‘action’. This means, for example, that within the same

system of migration governance, some actors delegated with the ‘talk’—e.g. political actors—may react to challenges in a certain way; that actors taking decisions may or may not follow this; and that these decisions are then implemented by different actors in different settings, on the basis of potentially different or contradicting understandings and pressures compared to the levels above (Boswell and Geddes 2011:28-39).

This highlights the importance of ambiguity in relation to crisis and migration governance. This research will consider this in its interest for the way actors make sense of all this complexity and uncertainty, placing themselves within such environment and developing understandings of causes and consequences of migration to impact such environment. To show the importance of constructions of crisis and ambiguity, this section also used the example of the EU, and of its conceptualisation of what is going on around its borders. Based on the working definition of migration governance built, the next section further develops the EU’s context, asking why this migration governance system has developed an important external dimension, and framing its development.

#### 2.1.4- EU external migration governance

The previous section developed a working definition of migration governance, recognising its position along the ‘domestic-foreign frontier’. Borders and boundaries which define international migration as a phenomenon are in fact recognised to play a significant role, but within organisational networks of decision making that cut across different levels: the national, supranational and international level. This is best reflected in responses to migration issues at a regional level, that is when a number of states work together on migration governance, generally driven by two typologies of interdependencies (Geddes et al. 2019). First, the very nature of international migration as a phenomenon across borders intrinsically links together countries of origin, transit and destination in a complex relationship based on the movement of people, resources and ideas. Second, interdependence may arise between geographically proximate states, that may seem to be sharing similar challenges coming from international migration (ibid.). The analytical framework developed so far allows accounting for the first type of relations between different countries of origin, transit, and destination, and can as such be relevant for analysing the migration governance system of Tunisia, and of the drivers of its international migration relations. However, given the importance of the EU’s migration governance system for this thesis, it is necessary to further account for the way the second type of

interdependencies, between proximate states with shared interests, have shaped an increasing prominence of the ‘external dimension’ of the EU’s migration governance. This allows for completion of the analytical framework of this research, defining how this research will understand the EU’s external migration governance, particularly in its relation with ‘crisis’.

Following a growing recognition that certain challenges posed by migration were in need of common solutions, the internal character of the EU’s migration governance system has changed gradually since the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992, finally creating since the early 2000s supranational responsibilities for the EU in what were formerly considered as issues of national affairs (Lavenex 2004; Boswell and Geddes 2011). As stated above, integration on migration—and Justice and Home Affairs more at large—was seen as a necessary step for safeguarding the internal security after abolition of internal border controls across the EU (Lavenex 2004: 688). This followed the development of the Schengen Agreement of 1985, which changed the meaning of the EU’s internal borders and shifted these borders to peripheral member states of the EU (Boswell and Geddes 2011). It was not long until the first calls were made for developing an external dimension of the EU’s work on migration issues, in light of changing geopolitical dynamics in post-Cold War Eastern Europe, and in the Southern Neighbourhood (European Council 1992, 2004). This had less to do with projecting the EU in the global scene as an international actor, but rather in relation to the external dimension of its internal politics (Lavenex 2004:684). As internal and external change fuelled anxiety about migration and security issues, these concerns were related to perceptions of vulnerability from external developments in countries outside of the EU (ibid.). As theorised by Pierre (2000), internal as well as external factors play a significant role in the shift towards governance, and this was no exception. Migration issues were first integrated ‘up’ at a supranational EU level of migration governance, and then taken ‘out’ through the EU’s external migration governance (Lavenex 2006). It is clear that this well reflects the ‘dual meaning’ of governance identified by Pierre (2000) and adopted in this research, as such system of governance first conceptualised an alleged threat coming from the outside, and then, accordingly, moved to develop tools to reach out to manage and steer such a migration challenge. The point to retain here is that the external dimension of the EU’s migration governance became very quickly integral to the way this governance system and the situated actors within framed their environment and their role within, reaching out to find ‘solutions’ to perceived internal problems. This meant, as Lavenex (2004) put it, that a growing

interest emerged for extending the EU's migration policies beyond its institutional framework. This interest necessarily warrants a reflection as to how this extension was carried out, given that, however dynamic governance systems become across borders, migration governance remains a matter of national sovereignty and 'high politics' (Geddes 2005), also for the non-EU countries that the EU wanted to reach, which impeded its direct authority over them. While in some instances, especially at Europe's eastern borders, the reach of the EU's migration governance beyond its institutional framework was simplified by promises of EU accession (Lavenex 1999), in cases like Tunisia such promises have never been present, adding to the difficulty of governing migration outside of EU borders.

The organisational composition of this new network of actors that acted along this internal-external frontier of the EU is well captured by the definition of migration governance built in the previous section. As it has been recognised, migration governance allows to capture the multitude of actors that started playing a role as the issue of migration started to cut across national and supranational organisational boundaries in the EU. By going 'external' with this migration governance, a further level is then added to these multi-actor dynamics, which include Member States, the EU and 'third countries', i.e. non-EU countries as referred to in the EU. These dynamics are thus best reflected by the notion of governance that captures the constellation of actors in the network and operates a 'hierarchical and horizontal, formal and informal' form of policy making (Lavenex 2004: 683). The concept of 'EU external migration governance' thus helps overcome a 'methodological nationalism' that has defined analyses of domestic politics and international relations, by capturing the external dimension of the internal migration policies developed at the EU level (Lavenex 2004: 683). This allows to understand how despite being an issue of high politics, the governance of migration developed at different levels in the EU and in its relations with non-EU countries. The analytical point is that an increasing number of actors started to be involved across borders, whose understandings about the causes and consequences of migration played a role in shaping and driving such systems of migration governance. Departing from this consideration, this is why the research aims to first identify these different actors and the different levels in which they operate, to then delve into their understandings and the way these are shaping migration relations between the EU and Tunisia. Like this the EU's external migration governance is understood and analysed in this research, aiming to unravel the complex dynamics which underlie the EU's efforts to extend its migration policies beyond its borders, and understand its drivers.

A further consideration is needed as regards the ‘external threats’ recognised to have driven the development of an ‘external dimension’ of the EU’s migration governance. It is in fact important to remark that such external factors are not to be understood as objective external threats, but rather as the product of an intersubjective ‘framing process within an evolving institutional environment’ (Lavenex 2004: 686). The EU’s institutional environment was increasingly assuming power and responsibilities as regards security and migration, developing its role as a ‘security community’, as evident from this quote of European Commission President of the time Solana (quoted in Lavenex 2004: 686):

The integration of acceding states increases our security but also brings the EU closer to troubled areas. Our task is to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and co-operative relations. (Solana 2003: 8)

The quote shows how internal processes of EU enlargement were being accompanied by a strengthening of the EU’s role as a security community, which, to ensure its stability, needed to reach out externally to ‘a ring’ of neighbouring countries, from which its stability depended.

Scholars from the Copenhagen school of security studies such as Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (1998) have theorised such kind of community as a security complex, a set of states ‘whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked’, that they cannot think of dealing with such security challenges if not together. Such perceptions and concerns are not the product of objective qualities of an issue, but rather, they are produced by a political process (Buzan et al. 1998: 18). Security, in fact, is not limited to the use of force, but can be understood as a particular form of intersubjective politics (ibid.). Not only at its inception, but also throughout its developments in the past twenty years (see below), perceptions of security issues have played a driving role in the EU’s external migration governance. Lavenex (2004) recognises that the inception of the EU’s external governance was due to perceptions of external vulnerabilities, but in areas which had become internally ‘securitised’.

Critical security studies scholars such as Buzan et al. (1998), Bigo (2002), Huysmans (2000) define ‘securitisation’ as a practice through which issues are presented as existential threats, and as such are in need of emergency responses. This approach allows to understand the importance of the framing of issues, in this

case of migration in political and public discourse. However, this research will not use ‘securitisation’ as a heuristic, following Boswell’s (2007) recognition that this would be problematic as it would limit the understanding of security-oriented framings by setting a precondition about their emergence, driven by securitisation practices. Given the focus on organisational processes, and of the different levels in which these occur, such an heuristic is not well placed to analyse the variety of different framings that may be expected to be found in a complex organisational setting such as the EU, some of which may be indeed security oriented, but not necessarily the product of ‘securitisation’ dynamics (ibid.). In other words, the analytical framework spelt out in this chapter does not bode well with the ‘uniform rationality’ that the securitisation literature implies. Following the suggestion of Boswell (2007), its focus is rather on how actors in organisations make sense of migration and of their environments, and how through this they develop strategies to reduce the uncertainty that has been recognised to be embedded in migration governance processes.

#### 2.1.5- A non-Eurocentric approach

As the EU’s migration governance system considerably expanded in the past 30 years, along with its global outreach, the risk that emerged was to follow a Eurocentric bias, in research and policy alike, by adopting jargon and definitions developed in such system. Efforts to develop non-Eurocentric analyses in migration studies are increasing, reacting against this Eurocentric bias (see Vollmer et al. 2015). However, as Collyer points out (2016), many analyses of the European external migration governance still mostly rely on Brussels-based research and interviews, perpetrating as such a very strong Eurocentric bias. It is, in fact, easy to fall into an EU bias when analysing the EU’s external migration governance, given its strong role played in such relations, and the great organisational resources deployed compared to international counterparts. This research nevertheless aims to overcome this tendency, offering a non-Eurocentric analysis of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia.

Eurocentrism and non-Eurocentrism are loaded words in studies on international relations. This is due to an increasing push to go beyond concepts inherited by colonialism and imperialism when analysing international relations and the global order. Hobson (2012:19), for example, stresses the need to go beyond analyses of inter-state relations based on ‘a priori’ conceptions based on a dichotomy between the Western

civilisation, and 'savage' and 'barbaric' other polities. A great scholarly discussion is present in the literature on this topic, and while indeed it forms the theoretical underpinning of what 'Eurocentrism' means in international relations, it largely goes beyond the scope of this research. The interest for this research rather lies in understanding how Eurocentrism becomes part of work on migration, in order to avoid these pitfalls when developing a non-Eurocentric analysis of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia.

The clearest element that exemplifies the extent to which Eurocentrism permeates the migration studies discipline is its reliance on a European understanding of the nation state, which becomes the shaper of migration as a social, economic and political phenomenon (Vollmer et al. 2015). This entails that many of the 'labels, concepts, and categories of migration are categorised' in such a Eurocentric perspective, carrying European expectations about their meaning and value (Vollmer et al. 2015: 253; Chakrabarty 2008). This meaning is normally associated with a differentiated assumption regarding European and western mobility as being voluntary and free, and non-European migration as being instead somehow forced or involuntary, a simple interplay of different systems driving it (McKeown 2004, quoted in Mohapatra 2010:110). The point here is that analyses on migration studies are largely lacking non-Eurocentric perspectives, namely insights on the causes and consequences of migration from the point of view of the sending countries. As Vollmer et al. (2015) suggests, this may include essential analyses on the reasons not to migrate, rather than over emphasising the reasons why people move. As evidenced in the section above, this is highly important when analysing how migration governance systems conceptualise migration issues, given that only a small number of people decide to migrate, meaning that the same systems that underlie migration also impact on decisions not to migrate. This focus is important because it corrects a tendency to 'overestimate the migration potential to the EU' (Vollmer et al. 2015: 234), thereby ignoring the complexity of the experiences from non-EU countries as countries of origin.

The analytical framework constructed above builds upon such an understanding of non-Eurocentrism, as it opens for the possibility of analysing the ways in which migration governance systems conceptualise the issues that they face, rather than taking these for granted. This implies that in carrying out this research, the Tunisian migration governance system will be analysed not based on a set of already made definition of the issues at stake. Rather, it analyses, like in the cases of the EU, the way in which actors situated in that system



make sense of the causes and consequences of migration. In other words, migration will not be presented as an intrinsically problematic issue following an EU-based definition of the concept, and discussions and interviews based on the outputs and outcomes that manage migration. Each actor interviewed will have the possibility to develop its own understanding, in Tunisia as well as in the EU. As such, this research aims to develop a non-Eurocentric analysis of migration governance, avoiding falling into the EU bias that is often found at the basis of studies on the European external migration governance, and accounting for the important role local dynamics in the EU and in Tunisia alike play in shaping understandings of the cause and consequences of migration.

This first part of the chapter has developed an analytical framework to analyse the drivers of migration governance, building a framework that allows a focus on the migration relations between the EU and Tunisia in a non-Eurocentric way. It has first identified the dual meaning of governance, as a system which first conceptualises the issues with which it is faced, in order to develop ways to manage and steer them. It then identified how for migration governance, this equated to making sense of the causes and consequences of migration. The drivers of migration governance, which are at the centre of the analysis of this research, are thus defined by the way governance systems make sense of such issues, particularly in relation to the high uncertainty that underlies much of the complexity of migration. Also because of this, ‘migration crisis’ is found to play a significant role, especially in the EU, where its perception determined a strong interest in the EU’s external migration governance. This meant that in order to address internal issues and perceptions of insecurity, the EU increasingly felt the need to reach out beyond its jurisdiction and institutional framework. As such, the chapter defines the interest of the research for the way in which interpretations of what is occurring beyond the EU’s institutional and geographical borders play a role in shaping the turbulent environment within which individuals and organisations act. The analytical framework built offers a working definition of ‘migration governance’ and ‘EU external migration governance’, allowing for the analysis of both the EU and Tunisia independently, but also in relation to one another. Often, this focus has meant that EU dynamics have been privileged in past studies, developing Eurocentric analyses of such developments based on Eurocentric definitions of the migration phenomenon and the issues at stake. The analytical framework developed in this section allows overcoming such a tendency, valuing the local experience of EU actors as well as Tunisian actors equally, by analysing the way these shape their understandings on the

causes and consequences of migration. The next section will define the contextual factors of this research and of EU-Tunisian migration relations before and after the 2011 'Jasmine Revolution', aiming to offer a non-Eurocentric framework from its inception.

## **2.2-Contextualising the research**

The previous section has defined the analytical framework for this research. This section now contextualises this within migration governance dynamics in the EU and in Tunisia, as well as in relation to one another. It does so by raising two main questions. First, how is it that the EU has been trying to extend its migration policy framework beyond its institutional framework? Second, how has a non-EU country like Tunisia reacted to this? It replies to these questions accounting for pre- and post-2011 dynamics, as it recognizes the Jasmine Revolution of 2011, which overthrew the despotic leader Ben Ali in Tunisia, as a breaking moment of this relation. Nevertheless, the purpose of this section is not that of explaining in detail the migration governance systems of the EU and Tunisia before and after the revolution, nor giving a detailed account of this event. Chapters 4, 5 and 6, will in fact also further expand on the contextual details necessary to frame the empirical analysis that they carry out. Rather, the aim here is to provide some contextual factors necessary to place this study amid developments of migration governance in the EU and in Tunisia, and of the relations between the two, particularly in the pre-2011 period, as this research will focus on the time after.

### **2.2.1- External migration governance dynamics in the EU**

The previous section already highlighted some key moments that defined the meaning of the EU's external migration governance. It identified that this was developed with the intent of reaching beyond the EU's boundaries, geographically and institutionally, to countries which were perceived as being of key interest for stemming migration towards Europe. This occurred through specific policies, notably security-oriented border control actions and development action, and through processes, pushing for a stronger regionalisation in the Mediterranean under EU common principles. An overview is now given of these externalisation efforts through such policies and processes.

### *Externalising policies: security and development*

Driven by the perceptions of an increased dependency on dynamics unravelling in non-EU countries, EU leaders fixed the principles of its external migration governance, to curb migration to Europe. First, they encouraged displaced people to stay in the nearest safe area close to their home countries (see Lavenex, 1999); second, they aimed to reduce migration through deterrence measures, which included an increase in readmission of non-EU country nationals (Lavenex 2001). From the outset, as Boswell (2003) puts it, efforts were being made towards the externalisation of border management control.

The strategy designed by the Austrian presidency of the EU in 1998 is highly indicative of this, as a policy meant to externalise controls and protect the European ‘security community’ through a ‘concentric circle approach’: the EU was pictured as the first level at the centre, the relations with the second level being direct neighbours largely in accession procedures, the third level being Northern Africa and Turkey, and fourth level countries of origin such as sub-Saharan countries (European Council 1998). This clearly demonstrates the framing of the EU’s position vis-à-vis migration from such countries, needing to protect itself from such flows. Amidst great displacement of people from the Balkans in the 1990s, this approach was based on the idea of ‘safe third countries’, i.e. non-EU countries neighbouring situations of displacement, considered as safe spaces where those in need of protection could be temporarily hosted until conditions were ripe to go back to their country of origin (Lavenex 1999). To those reading the headlines on migration cooperation in the Mediterranean in recent months and years, this line of thought will sound familiar (see for example The Guardian 2018). Ever since the 1990s in fact, the EU has largely failed to find countries willing to host such reception centres, including Tunisia (see Tunisie Numerique 2019), despite periodically coming back to this same ‘solution’ for its external problems. The case of the EU-Turkey statement of 2016 is the only notable example of a ‘success’ from the EU’s point of view, with the EU disbursing €6 billion to Turkey, so that it would clamp down on departures of Syrian refugees from its coast, and host them funded by the EU (European Council 2016). The stark reduction in arrivals to Europe from Turkey, is often cherished as a success in EU policy circles (see European Commission 2018a), although more contested by research (Van Liempt et al. 2017). Nevertheless, by no means has this been sufficient to rest perceptions of migration crisis in the EU, and despite calls from the architects of the EU-Turkey statement to replicate the same modus

operandi with other countries (see ESI 2017), no clients have been found thus far outside of Europe, evidencing the specific relations of power and funding of the Turkey statement. To date, therefore, the EU is still looking for willing candidates in the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, trying to sway non-EU countries through a set of, largely monetary, incentives.

Increasingly however, migrants in need of protection were not the only ones moving in the Mediterranean region. As European Member States ceased to offer visas to migrant workers following the Schengen Agreement, such migration flows, which were previously largely legal and circular, started to become irregular and much more disorderly (Berriane 2015). The increase in these flows, that were marginal if compared to the seven digits figures of 2015, led to what Pastore (2007) defined as the “paranoia” of an invasion from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean. The EU, responding to such flows, devised deterrence measures, aiming to stem migration by reducing the incentives to migrate. Notably, this included return and readmission agreements with non-EU countries, with the EU trying to ratify with countries of origin and transit agreements that could ensure the return of irregular migrants back to their country of origin or transit (Cassarino 2010). In fact, trying to extend its migration control objectives to non-EU countries, these agreements asked non-EU countries to take back migrants that were also not their nationals, but had transited through their territory. Yet again, this strategy did not attract many participants, as the EU directly required non-EU countries to solve its problems by allowing hosting ‘unwanted’ migrants outside of the EU’s borders (see chapter 5 p.145).

Finding reluctance to extend its securitized measures to non-EU countries, the EU soon focused on areas in which its actions already reached outside its borders, such as through international development cooperation. Ultimately, this meant trying to reduce migration through development aid, believing that, by alleviating poverty and deprivation, the drivers of migration would be stemmed, but also by making development aid increasingly more conditional to actions on migration control (European Council 1992; Boswell 2008). A great emphasis was thus laid on ‘addressing the root causes of migration’ (European Commission 2005), which essentially meant mainstreaming development policies into a security-driven approach of curbing migration (Lavenex and Kunz 2008). Substantial clashes were fought on this turf between security-oriented services of the EU, in the Commission as well as in MS, and development-oriented services that framed

migration in different non-security terms, leading to quite a fragmented and often incoherent landscape of funding (see chapter 4, p. 92; Lavenex and Kunz 2008; Boswell 2008; Den Hartogh 2016). As with the previous security-oriented action, this strategy still largely permeates the EU's external migration governance in its quest for extending its *modus operandi* outside its borders.

#### *Externalisation through migration cooperation processes*

The externalisation of the management of migration did not only concern the policies and actions, but also strong efforts to externalise norms, with the EU framing the relationship with its Neighbourhood on the basis of a 'our size fits all' regionalist approach (for a discussion see Bicchi 2006). As Collyer points out (2016: 606), 'regions are never natural or neutral', and particularly the Mediterranean region has a 'specifically constructivist nature'. The EU's efforts, preceded by many years of colonial engagement (*ibid.*), were streamlined in a number of processes, such as the Barcelona Process started in 1995, and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004. Through such processes, without consideration of local contexts and regional differences (Bicchi 2006), the idea was brought forward about a 'proper' way of managing migration around Europe, based on the EU's blueprint noted before. This soon became the template for the EU's external migration governance, based on bringing different actors together in order to share its norms and policy tools. Through such work, the EU's objective was that of imposing itself in the region as a norm setter, putting together its neighbouring states on the basis of its norms, shaping perceptions of what was to be considered normal in the international politics of migration (Geddes 2005).

Following this line, but reaching beyond the Mediterranean region, regional cooperation processes (RCPs) were developed by the EU (see Thouez and Channac 2006). RCPs in fact offer a platform where information is exchanged, best practices are discussed and common standards are set for policy coordination, serving as a trust building exercises between key actors that thus develop 'common perceptions of the challenges imposed by international migration' (Kunz et al. 2011: 17). Notably, the Rabat process was started in 2006, the Khartoum process in 2016, and the Valletta Summit of 2015 created a platform to coordinate the work of the two. Like this, such processes created the ground for EU member states (MS) and most African countries from the sub-Saharan and eastern region to regularly meet, supposedly to define shared priorities (Knoll and de Weijer 2016). As the action plan of the Valletta Summit demonstrates, this was no easy task, and great

divergence still prevails after 25 years of EU regionalist engagement. This broader analysis on processes and regionalisation goes beyond the scope of this research, but what is of interest to keep into consideration is that Tunisia is part of all these processes. This adds scope to the research, that will look at the way frames on migration are developed in Tunisia and therefore, without going into the details of its participation in each project, will also shed some light on the efforts of the EU to externalise norms and meanings on migration issues outside of its geographical and institutional boundaries through such processes.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that while the EU enhanced its efforts to regionalise its approach to migration management in the Mediterranean, the EU's MS carried out strong bilateral relations with non-EU countries of transit and origin (Cassarino 2010, Lixi 2017). These were largely based upon past colonial legacies, as in the case of France for example, but also in relation to geographical proximity and migration management interests. The case of Morocco and its relations with Spain is well documented in the literature (see for example Carling 2007b, Arango and Martin 2005, Carrera et al. 2016), while less scholarly attention has been placed upon the relations between Tunisia and Italy. Italy and Tunisia were linked by considerable seasonal migration flows until the early 1990s, as Tunisians travelled in and out of Italy without requiring a visa. The new visa requirements that followed the Schengen Agreement determined a rise in irregular flows. From the very beginning, since 1998, Italy started a strong 'transactional relationship' with Tunisia in order to stem such flows, with a series of deals that exchanged funding and technical support to control migration (see Lixi 2017 for a review of such deals). While the 2011 revolution considerably changed the context for such deals, bilateral relations between Tunisia and EU countries such as France and Italy, remain significant and well established. This research however will not focus upon these, as its focus is laid squarely on migration governance dynamics at the EU level, and relations at this level with Tunisia. This is the product of intergovernmental and supranational dynamics that define the EU's integration process (Geddes and Scholten 2016), but the untangling of these dynamics goes beyond the analysis of migration governance carried out in this research.

### *The 'European Migration Crisis'*

This focus on the EU has provided the context that frames the EU's external migration governance, from its inception until today. Significant 'shocks' that were perceived as 'migration crises' in the EU have largely

failed to bring about new ideas and strategies, continuing to pursue instead a quest for externalising a *modus operandi* beyond its borders to unwilling non-EU states (Guiraudon 2017). The Arab Spring is a notable example of this, given that as significant changes occurred in structures of power of countries such as Syria, Libya and Tunisia (El-Khawas 2012; Erdag 2017; Wimmen 2016 for a more detailed analysis), new dynamics of mobility and displacement emerged in the region. Unrest in Libya led to the displacement of an estimated 1.1 million people, with many returning or looking for refuge in neighbouring Tunisia (Fargues and Fandrich 2012). The Syrian conflict initially led to the displacement of 120,000 individuals, with figures reaching 4 million by 2015 (UNHCR 2015). Dimensions of challenges of mobility in the neighbourhood were therefore clear, albeit these being largely external to the EU, with only 60,000 arrivals to Italy in 2011 as compared to the rest of the regional migratory movement (Papavero 2015).

The failure of the EU to understand the magnitude of these issues and the continuation of an external migration governance based on the tenets described above, arguably led, or at least significantly contributed, to the disorderly movement of people which was then labelled as the ‘EU migration crisis’ in 2015 (Collett and Le Coz 2018). Migration started to impact Europe in a more direct manner as a growing number of migrant deaths were directly related to its controls of the borders (de Haas 2015). Soon, the magnitude of arrivals and the changing routes migrants were taking, together with the porous migration control systems of Italy and Greece (Holland 2015), inevitably questioned the Union as a whole. By 2015 in fact, the problem clearly assumed European connotations, and with close to 3,000 arrivals per day, many shipwrecks and almost 4,000 deaths in 2015 alone (data from IOM missing migrants project<sup>1</sup>), the situation started to be referred to as the *European Migration Crisis*.

The European migration crisis, which was arguably a crisis of the governance of migration, called into question the EU’s approach to its internal and external migration policy. Following Hay’s (1996) definition of a moment of crisis, we could expect this to open new possibilities for rethinking new meaning for migration policy practices. However, commentators such as Guiraudon (2017) point out how this reshaping of the EU’s migration policy system failed to materialise, with a continuation of old norms and practices. This points to what Ansell et al. (2017) recognised as being a potential course of action for organisations hit

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<sup>1</sup> <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

by moments of profound turbulence, namely ‘replicating structures or procedures that have been perceived as successes in the past’ (Ansell et al 2017: 11). To understand the drivers of the action taken, it is therefore necessary to analyse these perceptions and understandings driving such action.

This empirical context frames the relations between the EU and Tunisia going on today, and thus this study, with the EU replicating actions which are meant to extend its migration management policies beyond its borders, and with little appetite from non-EU targeted countries to take these up. As such, this thesis aims to analyse how actors involved understood their role amid such great turbulence and organisational uncertainty, and how this impacted on their understandings of causes and consequences of migration on the basis of which they carried out their work.

### 2.2.3- Governing migration in Tunisia pre and post 2011

In 2011, the revolution in Tunisia during the Arab Spring led to a significant change in Tunisia’s government, with the demise of the despotic leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had been in power since 1987. As Tunisia transitioned to become a democratic republic, this change had a significant impact for how migration was governed. As such, the section contextualises this research to the empirical case of Tunisia discussing migration governance and relations with the EU prior to the revolution, and after the 2011 regime change. It is important to note that developing a non-Eurocentric approach to the study of Tunisia’s migration governance system does not entail ignoring the EU altogether, given that important migration relations have tied Tunisia with various European countries since the 1950s. This section will explain this, highlighting how non-Eurocentrism rather entails not giving the EU any primacy when considering the relations between the two international partners. As the section explains, this leads to considering broader internal dynamics to understand the effects of EU efforts to externalise its instruments and policies to Tunisia.

#### *Ben Ali’s control in governing migration pre-2011*

Migration has been an issue that has long been part of Tunisian society. After the end of the French protectorate in 1956 in fact, Tunisian emigration started to be driven by the great demand for labour workforce in Western Europe, particularly in France and Germany (De Bel-Air 2016). Through bilateral



arrangements with various European countries, such trends continued in the years until restrictions were placed in the 1970s to migrant workers across Europe. As such, this initiated a rise in family reunification, followed by a parallel rise in irregular migration (ibid). The changes in European migration policy that occurred in the 1990s (see above, p. 43) then led to restrictions in visa regime, and while previously Tunisians did not need a visa to access e.g. Italy, a visa was then required (Natter 2014). This led to an increase in irregular migration from Tunisia to Europe.

The governance of migration traditionally focused on two main principles, under Bourguiba until 1987, and under Ben Ali since then: encouraging emigration, considered as an economic and political ‘safety valve’, and placing a high control over the Diaspora, ensuring no plots were devised against the regime (De Bel Air 2016). However, as irregular migration started to rise, so did the European fears, and Ben Ali saw the opportunity to exploit these fears in its relations with the EU and its MS. This led to a period of ‘transactional relationship’ between Tunisia and EU MS, notably Italy as the first country concerned by this influx due to its geographical location. This meant that Ben Ali started using departures as a way to ripen financial benefits for Tunisia, such as aid and military technical equipment, and international legitimacy for its role in ‘properly’ managing its borders in accordance with the EU’s doctrine (see Lixi 2017 for a review of the number of deals agreed). Moreover, as Cassarino (2014) notes, this was also used by the leader to enforce repressive legislation to better exercise control over its people and its Diaspora.

As such, Tunisian emigration trends, together with a more limited number of transit migration, was dependent on whether Ben Ali was satisfied with what he was ripening in relations with EU counterparts. This demonstrates that Tunisia under Ben Ali was not a passive recipient of EU policies and actions, but was a very active shaper of such relationship, according to its need. Cassarino (2014) notes how this was not only the case as regards border control actions, but also, and significantly, as regards legislation. A very repressive approach to the control of irregular migration started through law 06-2004, manifesting an alignment of Ben Ali with the desires of the EU (see chapter 6, p.169). However, as Cassarino (2014) explains, this sole reading would be misguided as it ignores the way Ben Ali used this legislation and security driven approach to place a series of controls over its own population and diaspora, furthering its own objectives through it, rather than the EU’s. In developing a non-Eurocentric analysis of such relations, it is

important to recognise the important agency of non-EU countries, even when they do adopt legislation aligned with the EU, as in the case evidenced by Cassarino.

The rigid control imposed by the Tunisian leader did not allow for a critical literature to be developed analysing such relations, and dynamics ongoing in Tunisia driving it. As such, the literature started to account for these trends mostly in the aftermath of its demise (see for example Limam and Del Sarto 2016, Souissi and McLarren 2018, Garelli and Tazzioli 2017), meaning that no empirical work helps to understand how migration was governed at the micro level in Tunisia at the time. However, some literature accounted for dynamics of migration, rather than of its more politicised governance, in the North African country (see for example Boubakri and Mazzella 2005, Cassarino and Fargues 2006).

#### *Migration governance in Tunisia after the 2011 revolution*

The ‘Jasmine revolution’ that led to the change in leadership and to the beginning of the Tunisian’s democratic transition, led to important changes in the organisation of the Tunisian government. Whilst the vast majority of officials remained in place, as well as many politicians, the very centralised government started to open up to different actors of organisations, national and international, reaching a multi-actor dynamic of governance in many areas, including migration.

Significantly, this opening of the governance of migration to a multitude of actors was first driven by a need of the Tunisian authorities, which faced a rapid rise in influx of migrants fleeing Libya in 2011, that counted 170.000 arrivals by the end of the year (Lixi 2017:11). Together with this, a significant outflow of Tunisian migrants to Italy—25.000 by the end of 2011—increased the prominent role migration was assuming and the problems it was creating to the newly established government (Fargues 2016). This situation soon stabilised as most of non-Tunisian nationals fleeing Libya were repatriated, and border controls were re-established to limit the irregular departures of Tunisian citizens. However, what did not go back to previous dynamics was the way migration governance was carried out, halting an availability to strike deals similar to Ben Ali in exchange for clamping down on migration (Lixi 2017).

Within such a renewed context, the EU tried to position itself quickly as the ‘norm setter’ as regards migration governance, and negotiated and ratified a ‘Mobility Partnership’ in Tunisia in 2014. Mobility

partnerships had been proposed by the European Commission in 2007, as a way to step up bilateral negotiations with countries of origin and transit of migration, in an effort to strike a balance between mobility and readmission (Limam and Del Sarto 2016). In pushing for this policy tool in relations with Tunisia, the EU constructed the instrument as a necessary step in the process of democratisation, exploiting the vulnerability of the Tunisian authorities of the time (Limam and Del Sarto 2016). From then on, migration relations have been mainstreamed under this instrument, which to date has failed to open the ‘mobility’ channels embedded in its name, and has focused mostly on security-oriented measures, prioritised by the EU (ibid.). This instrument started to be the basin for an ‘extreme profusion’ of new actions on the various dimensions of migration management (see chapter 6, p 211). However, as irregular departures from Tunisia were far from being problematic as neighbouring Libya, relations with Tunisia were side-lined compared to those with its neighbouring country. It was from September 2017 that arrivals in Italy of Tunisian irregular migrants started to spike, with almost 1.000 recorded in September alone, reaching 6.092 by the end of the year (see Lixi 2018 for further details on such flows).

The Tunisian governance system is, to date, largely understudied, with little research analysing its dynamics even after the 2011 revolution. Cassarino (2014), Boubakri (2013), Natter (2015, 2018), are a few exceptions that focus on the changing Tunisian governance system, although largely from a theoretical point of view, with empirical analysis of this governance system still underdeveloped. The analytical framework developed in this Chapter provides the tools to fill this gap, contributing to the emerging body of literature on Tunisian migration by analysing dynamics of its governance structure. The focus will be laid on elements of concern with relations with the EU, but this notwithstanding, a wider focus is required given the paucity of research upon which to frame this thesis. The focus on drivers of organisational and individual action will be most useful to understand how, at a micro level, the numerous changes that have occurred—and are occurring—in Tunisia have been understood by actors involved in the governance of migration, and how this understanding impacts the way actors carry out their work when relating with the EU on migration issues.

The section evidenced how Tunisia has not been a passive recipient of EU externalisation of migration management. During Ben Ali’ regime, while it aligned to the will of the EU, this was mostly due to the willingness of Ben Ali and the advantages he was ripening from this. Following the demise of Ben Ali,

Tunisia has experienced an ‘extreme profusion’ of actions, projects and initiatives on migration driven by the EU. This research aims to evaluate the role played by Tunisia in this process by looking at how Tunisian governance actors’ conceptualisation of such issues played a role in shaping the outcomes achieved.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

To build the analytical framework needed to study the drivers of migration governance, and empirically contextualise this to the EU-Tunisian dynamics, the chapter raised 6 questions.

First, it asked what governance is. Following the work of Pierre (2000), it identified governance as being an adaptation to changes in the environment, which needs to be conceptualised first in order to define the position of the governance system in managing or steering them.

It then looked at how this applies to migration governance, recognising that such governance systems face a considerable complexity given the epiphenomenal nature of migration, at the intersection of change in the economic, social, political, demographic and environmental systems. Conceptualising this complexity is the first step to make sense of migration, defining its conceptualisation in the migration governance system, which therefore is not a passive recipient of migration challenges but rather an active shaper of what these challenges mean. Turbulence and uncertainty have been highlighted as being important elements that are part of this sensemaking process, as two elements which are often intrinsic of complex issues to which governance systems need to adapt, such as migration. The two elements have been looked at in relation to ‘migration crisis’, using the EU’s example to show how in 2015, the ‘European migration crisis’ was a product of the system and of the conceptualisation of migration issues, rather than simply an external shock.

The focus on the EU has shown how important it was for this system to conceptualise what was going on outside of the EU borders. The following section therefore asked how this was the case, and how could it be possible for an external migration governance system to organise its action based on an external reach where it did not exercise authority. It showed how perceptions of vulnerability from migration dynamics outside of the EU became an integral part of the environment of this governance system, with considerable attention being spent on instruments that could extend the migration policy framework of the EU beyond its institutional framework.

Before going further into the empirical context of how this took place in relation to Tunisia, the chapter asked how it is possible to carry out a study on these dynamics without keeping a Eurocentric bias, highlighting that this defines much of the literature produced on the EU's external migration governance system. It recognised that the analytical framework developed in this research allows to analyse migration governance systems respecting their own conceptualisations of issues at stake, and not analysing policy outputs or outcomes framed by already set concepts. This entails that in Tunisia, just as in the EU, actors develop their own understandings about causes and consequences of migration, allowing for an analysis of how local dynamics inform these and how this then frames the Tunisian environment in its own right.

Having defined this analytical framework for the research, the chapter looked at the empirical context in which this research is placed, asking how has the EU tried to externalise its policies and norms beyond its institutional framework? And how has a non-EU country like Tunisia responded to this? By reviewing practices of externalisation through security-oriented and development-based policies, and by looking at the efforts to regionalise the Mediterranean area around a 'our size fits all' (Bicchi 2006) approach, it finds the EU as very active in reaching out to non-EU member states. However, the focus on Tunisia helps to evidence how losing an EU bias makes it possible to understand that these actions have largely failed in their intent, as measures taken in non-EU countries remain closely associated to its domestic understandings and interests. Despite the cross-border dynamism of 'governance', migration policy remains firmly grounded to local contexts.

Chapter 1 identified a gap in the literature on EU external migration governance (see Chapter 1, p.12). As it focuses on policy outputs and policy outcomes, processes of governance are largely unstudied, and when conclusions are reached regarding their functioning, this is largely based upon assumptions reached by backtracking from such outputs and outcomes analysed. Complementing such literature, this research challenges the assumption that knowledge on the dynamics and drivers of migration governance can be reached on the basis of outputs and outcomes of governance systems. The analytical framework spelt out in this chapter allows for an analysis of the organisational processes that constitute migration governance and through which this is defined, in a non-Eurocentric manner which gives equal consideration to dynamics in

Tunisia and the EU. The next chapter now develops a methodology for this research, providing with the tools to carry this study out.

## CHAPTER 3- METHODOLOGY

‘The problems [of migration] we are dealing with are really complex, and there are no easy solutions to complex problems. The challenge for an official is to understand these complex challenges and think about such solutions’- *European Commission Official, 25/09/2018*

This quote from an EC official replying to questions at a public event captures the importance of analysing migration governance as an organisational process, in which a key role is played by situated governance actors and their understandings about ‘the challenges they face’. The previous Chapter identified the importance of developing an analytical framework that accounts for this. This theoretical point embedded also a methodological consideration, namely the intention of focusing on processes rather than outputs or outcomes to reach conclusions about the drivers and dynamics of migration governance. This Chapter develops the methodology that guided the research into such analysis, considering the importance of individuals and their cognitive processes in migration governance. As such, it raises three main questions: how do actors of various types ‘within’ migration governance systems understand ‘these complex challenges’? How can a researcher then analyse these understandings? How do these translate into action? The Chapter first considers the ontological and epistemological setting for this research by specifying the conceptualisation of individuals acting as ‘situated agents’ that both shape and are shaped by their surrounding environment. Considering the relevance of this approach for this study, the chapter then considers how actors shape and are shaped by the environment. Through the work developed by Tversky and Kahneman (1981) on Prospect Theory, the importance of framing is considered, both as a cognitive individual process, but also as an organisational process, as frames define the environment in which actors operate, impacting on their interpretation of what is taking place. Sensemaking is then considered as an approach to understand the way in which such interpretation occurs, with individuals developing diagnostic frames about what is taking place, and prognostic frames about what action to take next. Drawing from the work of Karl Weick (1995), seven properties of sensemaking are identified and considered as conceptual tools to carry out the analysis on framing and individual cognitive processes. Given the interest to equally value the environment in which individuals operate, the first section concludes by proposing Social network

analysis as a tool to complement the analysis on framing and sensemaking. This gives importance to the relations held by actors and the way in which these may act as vehicles of power, funding and frames.

The second section then operationalises this discussion, justifying the choice of the case study and explaining how the research design is developed. It concludes by explaining the methods that are used in the research to investigate each sub-question.

### **3.1 Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology**

#### **3.1.1 An interpretivist ontology and epistemology**

The previous Chapter specified the importance of the environment in which actors operate. This is why it was observed how an analytical framework of migration governance cannot renounce the importance of structure, such as a consideration for nation states and their borders. While ‘governance’ does entail a greater degree of fluidity of this environment, their importance cannot be ignored. As noted before, for example, without borders there would be no international migration, and hence no governance relating to it. This notwithstanding, it is important to carefully evaluate the role and importance to be ascribed to such structure. In fact, even in the case of borders, it has been analysed in Chapter 2 how despite their existence in the material world, their meaning may vary significantly. The meaning of European borders changed considerably before and after the end of the Cold War, given the different fears arising from potential inflows of migrants. Similarly, the meaning of European borders changed also in relation to the Schengen agreement, as despite these external borders were still physically the same, they were then protecting an area in which internal borders had in turn changed their meaning and where much more porous. The same may be said of crisis, given that as shown in the previous Chapter, various situations which presented very different objective dimensions were considered and defined as ‘migration crises’, showcasing how important this labelling was in defining a moment as in crisis or not. The point here is that even the elements of structure that are fundamental for this research are not fixed, and rather their meaning is given to them in an intersubjective manner, through discourse. This entails that these structural elements are necessarily coupled by the role individuals play in defining them. This is why the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research is based on an interpretivist approach.



Interpretivist approaches to studies in social sciences focus on meanings and how they can shape actions (Bevir and Rhodes 2002). Such meanings do not exist objectively and independently, but rather are ‘continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman 2016: 29). Actors are clearly central to an interpretivist study, as social phenomena are not considered to exist independently from the interpretations and understandings that actors give to them. While structure does hold importance, as shown before, its causal power rests on the intersubjective interpretations given to it.

Other theories differ in the way they conceptualise this relationship between individuals and structure. Notably, Rational Choice Theory (RCT) ascribes ontological primacy to individuals, whilst Institutional theories to structure, in the form of institutions.

Similarly to the framework of this research, RCT does give importance to individuals. However, it considers individuals as autonomous agents that always choose courses of action that maximise their utility (Downs 1957). This means that RCT is based on the idea that individuals are intrinsically self-interested actors, that have the rational capacity to choose the best course of action available for them, ignoring any other emotion or cognitive influence (Ward 2002: 68). Because of this, RCT is based on methodological individualism, meaning that as a theory it posits all explanatory power of social phenomena on the courses of action of individuals, expected to behave like utility maximisers (Almond 1990: 123 in Ward). This takes the consideration for individuals too far, as it doesn’t allow for considering the important role that the environment has in shaping the actions taken by individuals. As identified in the previous Chapter, governance actors do operate on the basis of their understandings, but these are developed in relation to the environment in which they operate, often characterised by uncertainty and turbulence which add pressures and constraints upon individual actors. RCT fails to capture this, as it disregards preference formation (Dowding and Hindmoor 1997). Preferences are understood as fixed and always entail maximising utility for individuals (ibid.). The cause of the course of action taken is therefore considered to be simply the strategy which allows to objectively ripen the highest gains for the individual taking it (Little 1991: 36-97). This falls short in accounting for the relationship between actors of migration governance and the environment in which they operate. Moreover, it doesn’t provide the tools to understand how such actors define their

preferences and understandings amid an uncertain environment which often offers imperfect information about the issue at stake, for example in relation to the causes of migration.

Institutionalist theory corrects this individualist bias by focusing on institutions. Although various types of institutionalist theories understand 'institutions' in different ways (for a discussion of different forms of institutionalism see Lowndes 2002; Hall and Taylor 1996), the focus of current institutionalist theory goes beyond the understanding of *government*, and instead focuses on a much more inclusive and dynamic *governance* (Lowndes 2002: 98). Institutions are seen not as fixed entities, but as processes. This resonates greatly with the focus of this research, given that this study of migration governance aims to focus on the processes that define it. Because of this, this attention for institutions and 'networked forms of institutions' (Marsh and Rhodes 1992: 196) mirrors the analytical framework defined before, focusing on the context within which individuals form their preferences, and accounts for changing dynamics of governance. However, in so doing, it goes too far, and as RCT placed ontological primacy to individuals over structure, institutionalism places it on institutions over individuals. Political institutions are considered to shape the values, norms and preferences of individuals, greatly influencing their behaviour (March and Olsen 1989: 172). As Lowndes puts it (2002: 98), this means that institutions provide the rules of the game, and individuals are limited to having to play the game, abiding by such rules. As such, while opening for an understanding of governance which is similar to that held in this research, this approach to studying the social sciences does not allow to value the role of governance actors as this research aims to do. The understandings of causes and consequences of migration would be in fact considered to be provided for by the institutional setting in which the actors operate, without any margin left for interpretation. This denies the space for individuals with their agency to create, shape and impact these processes of migration governance in a meaningful way, diminishing or nullifying their role in such organisational process. This goes clearly against the framework identified for this research, perpetuating a dualism between structure and individual agency which is rather reunited in the analytical framework developed in this research, rather than decoupled.

The two main approaches to the study of individuals and of institutions are recognised as being ontologically and epistemologically incompatible with the analytical framework developed in this research. It follows that

the methodological tools that this Chapter develops to carry out this research cannot be based upon their premises. Their critique, however, has served to reiterate how important it is to study migration governance processes through an approach that goes beyond a misleading dualism of structure and agency, and rather considers its mutually constitutive nature. Interpretivism accounts for the intersubjective nature of the environment in which actors of migration governance operate, as in the case of a context defined by borders to which meaning changes on the basis of different interpretations about causes and consequences of migration. At the same time, it allows for the actor-centred research at the core of this study, understanding the role played by individuals in shaping this intersubjective negotiation of meanings that define their environment. As such, the next section focuses on such relation, recognising the need to overcome this dualism.

### 3.2.2- The Situated Agent

This research aims to study migration governance by valuing the role played by actors, considering their position within the environments in which they operate. The ontological implication of this is identified by Hay and Wilcott (1998), which assert that explanations about policy and institutional developments need to focus on the mutually constitutive nature of individuals and institutions. Put simply, this approach suggests a focus on how actors shape and are shaped by context (Hay 2002: 89).

Hay asserts that rather than being defined by an ontological distinction, agency and structure are interwoven, as neither has a place in reality if not in relation to the other (Hay 2002: 127). The distinction, rather, is purely analytical. Hay (2002:94) considers agency to be the 'ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously... to attempt to realise his intentions', while structure is the context, the 'setting within which social, political and economic events occur and acquire meaning'. However, the two are not separate and agency can only lead to 'strategic action', namely an action that an individual is free to make, that however needs to be 'strategic', oriented to the realities of the surrounding context that is internalised by the individual (Hay 2002: 128). At the same time, the surrounding context is not pre-existent, but rather it is constructed through the strategic actions of individuals and their interpretations of it, which define a context that is 'strategically selective', namely that 'it favours certain strategies over others as means to realise a given set of intentions or preferences' (ibid.). This translates into understanding the relation between

individuals and institutions as dynamic, shaping and influencing each other, thus opening to institutional innovation and change, albeit in a structured context that ‘facilitates certain forms of intervention over others’ (Hay and Wilcott 1998: 956).

Much discussion has taken place between scholars reflecting on this ‘strategic-relational model’ developed by Hay and Jessop (Jessop 1996; Hay 2002, 2011), and to broader considerations about the relation between structure and agency (see for example Bevir and Rhodes 2006a, Dowding 2004, McAnulla 2006). Of this debate, a useful contribution that moves this Chapter from considerations of ontology and epistemology to methodology is the role of ‘situated agents’ identified by Bevir and Rhodes (2003, 2006b). Similarly to Hay, the scholars observe how despite acting against the same social background, they choose to follow different beliefs and act in different ways (*ibid.*). This means that there is space for individuals following different beliefs and different preferences, within a social context that acts as a background for the actions taken. This reinforces the dialectical relationship between individuals and their environment, strategic actors and strategically selective context, identifying that individuals have this freedom within their context, that is however defined by a ‘tradition’, a way of doing that limits the options individuals have, somehow constraining their action (Bever and Rhodes 2001). Actors are embedded in this ‘tradition’ understood as webs of meaning from which actors draw in order to make sense of their experience.

This way of thinking about the relationship between individuals and the environment in which they operate reflects the approach of migration governance of this thesis. The previous Chapter discussed how the development of EU external migration governance has not been based on actions taken by passive individuals responding to objective dimensions of crisis. While they have been shown as being constrained by internal and external dynamics driving turbulence in the environment in which they operated, they have been shown to have also played an important role in shaping this environment. This occurred first by giving meaning to it, defining migration as a challenge or opportunity on the basis of their understandings about its causes and consequences, and then shaping this environment through their actions based on such interpretations of what was going on ‘out there’. In order to understand such actions, it is therefore important to understand how this strategic selective context was constituted, locating ‘beliefs in webs of beliefs’ and ‘webs of beliefs against the background of traditions’ (Bever and Rhodes 2005:177). This shows that such

ontological positions regarding the relation of agency and structure bear important methodological implications.

Given that the environment is defined by the meaning ascribed to it by individuals, it makes no sense to try and study phenomena such as migration governance purely on the basis of e.g. migrant flows, given it is not their characteristics that define the processes of governance, but rather the meaning given to it. In 2006 for example, it was not the 10.000 arrivals of irregular migrants in the Canary Islands shores that defined the occurrence of a 'migration crisis', but rather the meaning given to such arrivals driven by fears and perceptions of vulnerability. Social and political research, in fact, is not 'an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning' (Geertz 1973: 5). In studying the governance responses to changes in arrivals at Spanish borders, for example, a student of political analysis cannot point to structural objective facts that automatically trigger a new paradigm emerging. Instead, there is the need to understand the changes in mentalities, policy paradigms and the reasons that lead individuals to develop new ones.

### 3.2.3- The importance of framing

The actor centred perspective of migration governance developed in this research is based on an interest for situated agents, and the way they understand their relationship with the environment that constrains and surrounds them. But how do they do that? How do they develop understandings about an issue, and develop their preference for a course of action? And ultimately, how can we understand how they operate?

As Druckman and Lupia (2000) assert, this issue is a key in social science research given it links what people want to how people act. To understand fully this causal process, political scientists needs to interrogate why it is that people want a certain thing. The study on framing helps to develop this understanding. As Chong and Druckman put it (2007b: 104), framing 'refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue, or reorient their thinking about an issue'. At the most basic level, this leads to take the individual as referent object, studying the dimensions that influence the cognitive processes of individuals in developing a preference (Chong and Druckman 2007a; Chong and Druckman 2007b). This operationalises the objectives embedded in the framework of this research, as it allows to investigate at the

micro level the ways in which individuals develop an understanding about the causes and consequences of migration, and how on that basis they develop a preference for a course of action to take.

The renowned work on 'Prospect Theory' carried out by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) helps appreciate these issues, as the scholars propose a descriptive theory of decision making. The theory developed by the two scholars in fact highlights that to understand how individuals make decisions, it is important to understand that their cognitive processes are based on systematic rationality. This means that all individuals have systematic ways in rationality through which they develop systematic errors. It is through such systematic errors that individuals frame what is taking place around them, developing preferences for the decisions they need to take. This is why the scholars highlight the importance of *decision frames*, defined as the 'decision maker's conceptions of the acts, the outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice' (Tversky and Kahneman 1981: 453). This framing is driven by the way the decision problem is formulated, but also by the 'norms, habits and personal characteristics of the decision maker' (ibid.; Tversky and Kahneman 1986: 257). Just as different perspectives determine change in perceptual visual appearances, frames impact the development of preference (Tversky and Kahneman 1981). Situated agents, therefore, emerge as operating in their strategically selective environment by framing issues with which they are confronted, in order to develop a preference for an action to be taken. However, what is important to consider, is that the two scholars stress the fact that the strategic thinking of such situated agents, i.e. their agency, is not only bound to the limits of the context in which individuals operate. In fact, the choice of individuals is also significantly limited by the individuals' own cognition, which is first and foremost driven by intuition when taking decisions, which are then followed by an ex-post rationalisation based on its strategic thinking. To clarify this point, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2013) suggests considering the cognition of individuals as an elephant and its rider. The elephant freely moving represents the intuitive part of the intellect, and the rider the rationality, which is convinced to be in steering position but is actually being carried around by the more important elephant. This research, with its objective of developing an actor-centred analysis of migration governance systems, needs to take seriously such influential body of research that looks into how actors reach decisions. This does not translate, of course, in drifting towards an experimental approach into the functioning of the brains of individuals. Rather, this recognition of how our cognition works determines the importance for studying frames and how these are developed. The point is

that decision frames are developed on the basis of such intuition, and to study frames and their impact in systems of governance, a better understanding of cognition and intuition is also needed.

The framing literature defines such cognitive evaluation carried out through framing as the ‘frames in thought’, which determine the way actors determine and classify their preferences about an issue (Druckman 2011). Prospect theory is furthermore particularly useful for the framework of analysis of this research as it operationalises the way in which such frames in thought operate, and how specifically under conditions of high risk and uncertainty, they lead to intuitive cognitive ‘short cuts’ which frame the issues and decisions faced. Tversky and Kahneman have examined the way in which individuals simplify complex situations that occur in uncertain contexts, developing an analysis of ‘judgement heuristics’ through which individuals reach decisions, creating short cuts that often lead to systematic biases (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). These are systematic ways in rationality through which situated actors develop systematic errors. Given the focus on migration governance, and the recognised uncertainty relating to the causes and consequences of migration, such heuristics offer promising tools to understand how situated agents frame their experiences as governance actors, understanding issues and developing preferences for action.

In the previous Chapter, migration governance has been linked to change in the various different systems that underlie migration, multiplying the uncertainty of actions taken in this domain, which may result in unintended consequences due to its complexity. As such, the analysis of ‘short cuts’ in uncertain circumstances is particularly relevant for this study. These in fact offer an appreciation of the psychological mechanisms that lead people to evaluate the probability of an event to occur, impacting on its decision making. Amid various judgement heuristics recognised by the scholars (for a full review see Tversky and Kahneman 1974), the ‘availability heuristics’ stands out as particularly relevant for this study. The previous section in fact recognised the dilemma that actors of migration governance have in times of crises, which may either use the opportunities that come with crisis ‘to develop new meanings to concepts’ (Hay 1996: 254), or ‘replicate structures or procedures that have been perceived as successes in the past’ (Ansell et al 2017: 11). By analysing whether or not actors developed an ‘availability heuristic’ in framing the challenge they faced, it is possible to understand whether and how they opted for a more pro-active or a more re-active course of action, replicating actions. Through this heuristic, individuals simplify their decision making by

assessing the probability of an event to occur, through the ‘ease with which previous relevant instances come to mind’ (Tversky and Kahneman 1973: 207). This means that given the ease in accessing and thus recalling prior events perceived as similar, these will lead to systematic biases that favour the likelihood of decisions made on that basis, rather than foreseeing the possibility of an event that is rarer to occur and thus less ‘available’ (ibid.; Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Instances that are more available in the cognitive processes of individuals, given their frequency and thus perceived likelihood of re occurring, will trump on other complex and interacting factors that may also play a role in determining outcomes of certain events. For a EU policy maker operating at the wake of the so called ‘European migration crisis’, this may mean that by framing an issue through an availability heuristic, the official reverts back to similar situations of the past, and understands the new crisis on similar terms compared to the previous one, enhancing likelihood of developing similar action deemed relevant and successful in the past. This is not only due to the fact that an individual feels obliged to follow the way things have been carried out in its environment, but even in the space its agency has to choose a course of action, the intuitive bias of individuals is likely to drive a preference for an action that is more ‘available’. In other words, as the next section suggests, actions of individuals are impacted by the way their intuition defines the plausibility of the issues they are framing, based on the most salient cues, rather than by a rational evaluation of cost and benefits. As such, we can expect situated actors analysed in this research to interpret a crisis in line with the way they already see the world, driven by their cognitive biases and very resistant to change. Rather, a migration crisis could be expected to reinforce the way individuals already see migration issues, triggering the emergence of understandings driven by such intuitive short cuts.

This way of considering the way situated agents develop frames in thought focuses on the cognitive processes of individuals. However, this is not to say that the intersubjective and social level of the environment in which individuals operate is less important in theories of framing. In fact, at the basis of Prospect Theory lies the critique of RCT, specifically in relation to its ‘principle of invariance’, which leads RCT scholars to focus on individuals as utility maximisers without paying attention to the way a decision problem is presented to them. Instead, Kahneman and Tversky (1986) account for the importance of the way issues are framed in the environment in which an individual operates, given that if the same issue is presented in different ways, the same problem might yield different choices (ibid.). This is due to the fact



that individual cognitive decision-making processes are also affected by *framing effects*, that determine how options are represented, together with other non-linear elements such as values and beliefs (Tversky and Kahneman 1981;1986). *Frames in thought* therefore, namely the subjective framing of individuals, are coupled by *frames in communication*, that is the way challenges are presented to individuals on the basis of the environment in which they operate.

As Druckman puts it (2011), in presenting information on a certain topic, certain dimensions are often emphasised more than others, offering alternative *frames in communication*. In fact, together with the above described role frames play as ‘cognitive structures’ that help individuals make sense of issues, they are also ‘interpretative structures embedded in political discourse’ (Kinder and Sanders 1996: 164, cited in Druckman 2009). When these structures embedded in the contextual discourse influence the way an individual frames certain decision problem, and shape its preferences on actions to be taken, a *framing effect* takes place. A framing effect takes place when emphasis and attention is placed on a subset of considerations of a broader issue, which leads individuals to construct their opinions on their basis (Druckman 2001: 1043). If, for example, a policy maker involved in Mediterranean migration control is surrounded by norms, policy briefings and verbal influences that highlight the risks of migrant influxes on European economies, the policy maker is more likely to focus on that aspect of migration. The individual is placed within a *strategically selective context*, that limits the available options. This does not extend to a structuralist understanding of frames in communication, which would assume that such frames that define the environment within which actors operate determine the way actors define their choices. Rather, frames in communication are to be understood as being ways in which issues are presented, which might increase the salience of particular dimensions in the understandings of actors. However this will always be coupled with subjective interpretations of the issue, through frames in thought and ‘judgemental heuristics’ recognised above, as well as ‘norms, habits, and personal characteristics of the decision maker’ (Tversky and Kahneman 1986: 257).

As Druckman (2011: 286) asserts, frames in communication sometimes will and sometimes will not influence and shape an individual’s frame in thought. There is in fact research that shows the importance that already defined beliefs may have, given that individuals do not passively absorb frames but they relate them

to the different considerations that already characterise their beliefs on a decision problem (Druckman 2001: 1044; Nelson et al. 1997: 237). This indicates once again that together with the surrounding context of the European external migration governance, actors within still have space for evaluating the various frames against their own beliefs and impacted by their individual intuition. What is interesting to point out is that even though frames in communication do not have a direct causal effect on individual preferences, at times individuals follow unreflexively the frames of actors that they trust. The study of this has been carried out by Druckman (2001) in relation to the manipulation of public opinion by governing elites, but its relevance is evident in the case under study in this research. The scholar finds that governing elites are not carrying out a unilateral form of manipulation on the public, but rather it is the people that turn to elites that they perceive as credible. Rather than “falling” for whatever frame in communication, individuals tend to believe frames from sources perceived to be credible, knowledgeable and trustworthy (Druckman and Lupia 2000). This means that rather than passively being targeted by such frames, individuals actively engage in them depending on the source. Chapter 2 has identified how the EU is considered as a legitimate norm setter in the Mediterranean on migration issues. The analysis of framing, therefore, allows for analysing if and how this takes place, and how Tunisia responds to the frames produced by the ‘normative power’ Europe.

Through framing and by being exposed to the frames present in their environment, actors of migration governance understand their position in their environment, and make sense of issues by creating shortcuts to simplify their complexity. These concepts however need to be operationalised further, to develop useful methods needed for this analysis, in particular in its focus to the organisational contexts in which this framing takes place. This is now done following the suggestion of Fiss and Hirsch (2005), which suggest that an analysis of framing is best carried out if coupled with sensemaking, that is the way in which ‘meanings materialise and inform and constrain action’ (Weick et al. 2005: 409).

#### 3.2.4- Organisations, framing and sensemaking

By framing issues, governance actors develop understandings about their position in the environment, making sense of challenges with which they are confronted and developing preferences about courses of action to be taken. This is in line with the analytical framework developed, and identifies what this research will analyse, and why it is important. By focusing on a literature on framing, the previous section offered

insights on how frames come to be and how they serve as signposts for action (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). However, this research still needs to understand this process of framing in relation to the organisationally constrained environment in which governance actors operate, shedding light on the important role played by the contexts within which such framing takes place. Fiss and Hirsch (2005) suggest that in order to do that, it is best to combine a study of framing with that of 'sensemaking', extending an analysis of framing to better capture how contextual factors trigger and define the individual and social processes through which frames are defined. The study of sensemaking proposed by Karl Weick (1995, 2001) allows in fact to understand how frames are conceptualisation of issues which are not pre-existent in reality, but instead are part of an 'enacted environment', a context which is defined by the actions taken on the basis of previous framings of challenges and issues.

Such concepts need to be operationalised with a methodology that considers how to investigate them. In fact, while the interest is on the cognitive processes of situated actors, a social scientist cannot rely on instruments to explore their cognition other than interpreting their thoughts. How is it that actors frame migration, and thus understand its causes and consequences? How is it that on the basis of such frames a course of action is considered? How to understand such micro individual level processes, in order to understand macro-institutional developments on migration governance and relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia? The study of sensemaking proposed by Karl Weick (1995, 2001) helps developing the tools through which this research can carry this out, focusing the analysis on framing discussed before to the specific context of organisational settings, and on the translations of such frames into action.

The importance of frames and framing effects have been examined for understanding the formation of preferences of individuals. Ontologically, this signifies that this research does not posit the existence of a physical reality against which organisational actors need to act. Rather, in between the subjective and intersubjective level, it posits that actors actively construct it (Fiss and Hirsch 2005: 31). This premise lies at the centre of sensemaking (Czarniawska 2005) given it is through sensemaking that 'meanings materialise and inform and constrain action' (Weick et al. 2005: 409). Through sensemaking, organisational actors turn ongoing circumstances into a discursive concept, developing an understanding of causes and effects in a way

that triggers action (ibid.; Fiss and Hirsch 2005). In this process, the relations with frames and framing effects is most evident, given that, as Gamson and Modigliani assert (1989:3; quoted in Fiss and Hirsch 2015: 31), frames organise ideas ‘for making sense of relevant events’. As such frames also embed preferences as regards the course of action to take, and sensemaking helps analysing the reasons that lead such frames to emerge, and the relation between such frames and the context in which they are developed and contested.

The issue of giving meaning to ongoing circumstances is particularly relevant for replying to the questions of this research, providing a methodological framework that analyses environments and governance structures not taking these as a given, but as constructed by situated actors that ‘enact’ upon their ideas and beliefs, ‘making them real’ (Czarniawska 2005: 271, Weick 1990, 2005). As Weick puts it, the study of organisations needs to focus on the process of organising, that is the process of ‘assembling ongoing interdependent actions into sensible sequences, i.e. that generate sensible outcomes’ (Weick 1979: 3). Organising, therefore ‘determines interlocked causal loops rather than a linear chain of cause and effect’ (Czarniawska 2005: 269). To study causes and effects as external to organisational discursive contests would be highly misleading, giving to them an ontological primacy that does not reflect the way in which organisations, like those in migration governance systems, work. This is why the study of sensemaking expands and improves the literature of framing in the context of this research, given that, as suggested by Fiss and Hirsch (2005), it allows to part from a static conceptualisation of framing and action, but instead actively reflect on how framing is linked to contested discursive contexts in which such frames emerge, i.e. ‘interlocked causal loops’. For this reason, such an approach fits with the objective that underlies this research, namely that of unravelling the governance processes through which outcomes are reached.

The review of the literature has shown how much of the work carried out by the EU in its external migration governance is based on a security-oriented policy approach, with often terrible consequences which include the death of migrants at its borders. Because of this, studies reviewed adopt a negative framing of policy processes and policy officials working on such outcomes, albeit without investigating the drivers of their actions and the context within which such actions assume meaning. Through the analysis of sensemaking, the analysis of migration governance systems will go beyond the prevailing assumption of ‘bad people

making poor decisions', and will instead focus on governance actors as 'people struggling to make sense' of what goes on around them (Snook 2001: 206-207; quoted in Weick et al. 2005: 415).

The work developed by Weick on sensemaking emerges as particularly relevant for this research given its attention for conditions of uncertainty and crisis which define many governance systems, and, as recognised before, the one analysed in this research. In line with the interpretivist epistemology of this research, it views the environment not as a 'pre-existing set of problems to which an organism, or an organisation, must find solutions' but rather, it sees the organism or organisation responsible for creating the problems in the first place' (Czarniawska 2005: 268). This allows to examine problems that arise in times of crisis not as issues having an objective physical reality that impacts a governance system, but rather as elements that offer 'scope for sensemaking treatment' (Rickards 1997: 66). Sensemaking, in fact, according to Weick, despite being ongoing and occurring constantly, 'explicitly emerges when the current state of affairs is perceived to be different from the expected state of affairs, i.e. when a shock-crisis occurs' (Weick et al 2005: 409). This is because this disruption increases the uncertainty within which actors operate, that pushes them to make sense of what is going on and 'stay in action' (ibid.). Consonant to the theory developed by Tversky and Kahneman (1981), under conditions of uncertainty, governance actors deploy particular short cuts which help them understand what is going on, and develop a course of action to carry out next.

Sensemaking theory recognises that uncertainty not only leads to making sense of its causes, but also drives governance actors to find ways 'to enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly' (Weick et al. 2005: 410). After having made sense of it, reducing uncertainty lies at the core of what governance actors understand to be their role in such a context. Reducing uncertainty, in fact, is at the core of the work of any organisation (Seiter and Dunn 2010). Individuals operating in such organisations are therefore not only interested to organise their experience of what is taking place, but also to act in a way that empowers them to make their environment more orderly and reduce the uncertainty (Weick et al. 2005: 410). This research will therefore posit that processes of sensemaking in organisations are triggered by perceived changes in the environment. These are then followed by enactment, which means that situated actors bracket certain cues from the environment fixing them in language, and label them into a form that is more deployable for active treatment, providing actors with a set of 'cognitive categories and a typology of action'

(Tsoukas and Chia 2002: 573; Czarniawska 2005: 269). Enactment is nothing more than acting upon such ideas and beliefs, thus making them real, and creating like that an 'enacted environment', constructed rather than given (Weick 1988). It is by 'talking events into existence' that situated actors act on their beliefs (Weick et al. 2005). This represents the main added value of linking together the literature of framing and that on sensemaking, given that as recognised by Fiss and Hirsch (2005), sensemaking allows to understand how frames emerge out of enacted environments, ie. interpretations of environments that make sense to actors operating in them. An example is the concept of securitisation discussed in chapter 2 (p. 38), that is a self-referential process, and it is through the understanding of migration as a security threat that it becomes securitised, or, as Weick would put it, the enactment of this way of making sense of migration 'fulfils some prior definition of the situation' (Weick 1995: 11).

Sensemaking therefore follows the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research, as a theory based on interpretation which places importance on the way meanings are developed and how through this reality comes to be. This is important first because it contextualises the micro-macro methodological framework and the focus on framing to the analysis of organisational settings with its analysis on situated actors to explain institutional developments. Moreover, it also offers a 'rough guideline for inquiry into sensemaking' (Weick 1995: 18). This guideline developed by Weick is based on seven properties of sensemaking, through which the social scientist can untangle the cognitive processes of governance actors which guide their actions. Sensemaking is considered as: grounded in identity construction; retrospective; focused on and extracted by cues; driven by plausibility rather than accuracy; enactive of the environment; social; ongoing (Weick 1995; Mills et al. 2010). These properties of sensemaking are considered to be part of a 'good story' which governance actors need to develop, that 'simplifies the world and is therefore a useful guide for action' (Czarniawska 2005: 271). As such, this research adopts such suggested framework for research, which operationalises the discussions of this Chapter. This means that following an analysis of the way in which migration governance actors frame migration, mostly in relations to its consequences, this sensemaking approach provides tools to analyse the origin of these frames both at an individual and social level, and how they shape the strategies developed and implemented by migration governance actors. Sensemaking thus serves as a guideline for analysis based on the properties discussed below.

### 1) Sensemaking is grounded in identity construction

The way any individual looks at his or her environment and at problems thereof is closely related to an actor's identity, and the factors that played a role in shaping it (Mills et al. 2010: 184). This property clearly situates this heuristic within the ontological and epistemological boundaries of this research, as it embeds importance of both the subjective level, identity, as well as the intersubjective level, namely the relational experiences that contributed to defining this identity. Identity is considered to be at the basis of sensemaking, and influences the way in which the other properties are understood (Mills 2003:55). This is because actors 'make sense of ambiguous stimuli in ways that respond to their identity needs (Coopey et al. 1997: 312 quoted in Weick et al. 2005: 416).

### 2) Sensemaking is retrospective

When a disruption in the perceived normality of organisational routine occurs, actors are prone to revert back to familiar scripts and habitual responses to make sense of what is going on and of what to do next (Mills et al. 2010: 183). In fact, individuals rely on past experience to interpret new events (ibid.). This offers situated actors with a quick way of making sense of events, which however can lead to the shortcomings of fixing the actions taken based on previous ones, at the expense of originality. This property helps applying the 'availability heuristic' recognised by Tversky and Kahneman (1973, 1974) to an organisational setting, as actors intuitively rely on what is available to them from prior experiences, based on the frequency with which these occurred. Preference is given by actors to cues that have taken place more frequently and are therefore more familiar, leading to the significant bias that determines action. The questionnaire developed for the interviews in the frame of this research has been developed in a way that allows for examining these past experiences, and the role they played in defining understandings on causes and consequences of migration, and of the consequent actions taken.

### 3) Sensemaking is focused on and extracted by cues

When an actor is trying to make sense of an event, he or she focuses on certain elements of the environment in order to support the interpretation of that event, whilst ignoring others (Mills et al 2010: 184). These salient cues extracted from the environment and bracketed will be determined by retrospection, namely the

past experiences to which an actor turns to make sense of what is going on. It is by connecting a new cue to an existing frame that sensemaking occurs (Czarniawska 2005: 271), and it is for this reason that both will be analysed in this research.

#### 4) Sensemaking is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

In various studies on European external migration governance examined in the previous Chapters, it appears that attention is spent on effectiveness of policy outputs, that largely emerge as being determined by the accuracy of the perceptions and understandings actors, and notably higher-level actors, have of migration issues (Weick et al. 2005: 415). This appears to follow a rational decision-making process, where accurate information determines accurate perceptions, increasing the quality of outcomes. However, as Weick observes, organisations don't fit this *modus operandi*, and problems must be first bracketed in a plausible form from a stream of information in order to make sense of them and act upon them. In doing so, situated actors don't rely on the accuracy of their perceptions, but rather on what emerges as plausible to them, creating a story that taps on familiar discourse, and that is first and foremost driven by the intuition analysed in the previous section. This story therefore 'is consistent with other data, facilitates ongoing projects, reduces equivocality, provides an aura of accuracy and offers a potentially exciting future' (Mills 2003: 169). In an epiphenomenal issue like migration, of which causes and effects are complex and touch upon many different systems, it is highly unlikely that perceptions can ever be accurate, fully capturing what is going on, and can instead be expected to be based on simpler cues that emerge as plausible to the actor. This may occur at different levels and driven by different cues present in the environments where different types of governance actors operate. It is therefore not because of the accuracy and rationality (or lack of) of the leading figures of organisations that organisational action unravels and effective or ineffective outcomes are reached. Rather, it is due to the way the various actors involved in the organisational process frame issues to be plausible for them, justifying the enactment of a strategy accordingly. This can lead to examine differences between interpretations of plausible policies or events between levels in organisation, for instance between hierarchies and officials, given the different contexts in which these actors operate, and stimuli they receive, even on a same migration issue.

#### 5) Sensemaking is enactive of the sensible environment



As already mentioned above, enactment is a central pillar of sensemaking, given that situated actors in sensemaking want to enact the sense made back into the very environment that they have been making sense of. Such environment is not a pre-existent objective reality, but rather is 'sensible', i.e. the result of the way actors make sense of what occurs around them and thus of the constraints to their actions. It is for this reason that we can consider sensemaking as both constrained and shaped by the environment it has itself shaped (Mills et al. 2010:184). As the environment is enacted and not pre-existent, actors are prone to re-enact the environment that they have contributed to create, through their understandings and thus their actions. In light of this, this research views migration governance systems not as a recipient of external shocks, but rather as a contributor to the unravelling of such events, as it builds through its enactment a 'crisis prone environment', that is in turn understood through sensemaking processes. It is through this property that this methodological framework gains the tools to look at drivers of action, and not just at the development of frames. It posits in fact that understandings of 'what is going on' are followed wondering 'what comes next', with a willingness to take action to reduce uncertainty, at the individual level that in turn constitutes the organisational level, the enacted environment.

#### 6) Sensemaking is social

The intersubjective level of analysis of this research has already been previously defined. Sensemaking fits well within such framework, given that it is considered dependent from the interactions with others, whether through physical contact and exchange or through organisational rules or routines that provide a script to situated actors for appropriate action and conduct (Mills et al. 2010:185). Like this, sensemaking complements the framing literature analysed above and its attention to framing processes of individuals, however also equally considering the way actors are situated in their social environment, clearly describing the way situated action takes place.

#### 7) Sensemaking is ongoing

Despite having repeatedly stated that sensemaking is triggered by particular shocks and routine disruptions, sensemaking is ongoing, as it is a process that does not stop. Sensemaking processes, in fact, are always constant (Mills et al. 2010). The two things, as Mills and colleagues explain, are not in contrast, given that actors are constantly making sense of what is going on around them, but it is when this process of

sensemaking is disrupted from perceptions of normality that they try to isolate familiar and simple cues to understand what is going on and what course of action to take. This property is important for this research, as it allows to investigate conditions of uncertainty, crisis and normality, understanding how migration governance actors make sense of this environment.

These seven properties emerge as clearly interrelated, although, as Weick (1995) puts it, this does not mean that they equally emerge in sensemaking processes, but some may be more prominent than others. The analysis of this research is based on such properties, recognising if and how they play a role in the cognitive processes which drive action of governance actors. This section has identified how governance actors do two things: first, they consider what is going on; second, they reflect on what to do next. Through the analysis of frames and of the seven properties of sensemaking, the research will shed light on how such cognitive processes define understandings of causes and consequences of migration of governance actors involved in migration relations between the EU and Tunisia. Taking the example of irregular migration to the EU, this means that the research will first focus on understanding how governance actors frame migration, ie. largely in relation to the (negative) consequences that this bears for the EU, and then it will expand this focus on frames with an analysis of how these frames are embedded in an enacted environment and define action, at an individual and organisational level. As detailed in this section, this process is however not unidirectional – ie. from framing to action- but rather the research will look at how the actions developed are both the product of frames but also contribute to creating an ‘enacted environment’, an environment which makes sense to actors which operate in it and from which frames are developed and extracted. Therefore, the research does not only shed light on the negative framing of irregular migration, but through its sensemaking approach it will consider how this leads to a series of security oriented action on migration, and how such security oriented actions shape the environment from which the negative framing of migration emerges. This represents the strength of this approach, which expands both the framing and sensemaking literature by combining the two conceptually compatible approaches, thus being equipped to fully analyse each phase of the causal loops between framings and actions.

Before turning to a discussion on the methods of how this is carried out however, a further reflection is needed on the importance of accounting for the environment in which actors operate, given the fact that

sensemaking and framing are both impacted by the social and intersubjective level. As such, this research aims to adequately consider this fact by analysing the environment in which governance actors operate, through a Social Network Analysis (SNA).

### 3.2.5- Social Network Analysis

The analytical framework developed in Chapter 2 is based on a recognition of the importance to account for dynamics of governance rather than government. The EU's external migration governance has been considered as a multi-level and multi-actor network, with a 'constellation' of different actors operating 'hierarchical and horizontal' form of policy making (Lavenex 2004). This governance system has been conceptualised as a network, which constitutes the environment in which actors frame and make sense of ongoing events. This Chapter has repeatedly shown how the beliefs and the actions developed by governance actors are not independent but rather highly dependent on the 'strategic selective' environment in which they operate; SNA allows to take this one step further, analysing how these beliefs and actions are part of networked relations. This is particularly relevant for the EU's external migration governance network, which has been often defined as a network (Lavenex 2004, 2016), although the context of the networked relations that follow has seldomly been investigated in such a way (for an exception see Wunderlich 2012).

By complementing the study of frames and sensemaking with SNA, this research considers the migration governance network studied as more than a typology of organisation, but as a context which is structured by important relational characteristics (Hafner Burton et al 2009: 560). Consonant with the methodological framework developed, such relations are considered to form structures which in various ways 'constrain and enable actors involved in them' (ibid.). The actors that comprise the network in fact, considered as nodes, are not autonomous but interdependent. The relations between them are conductors for information, beliefs and norms as well as material elements such as funding (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 562; Borgatti et al. 2009). The methodological implication is that this research will not only place importance on the cognitive processes of individuals, but also on the different ties between the nodes of the networked governance. The SNA will complement research about individual level attributes by focusing on the interaction between different nodes as unit of analysis. This allows to map the individual analyses within a networked structure, representing such complex relations that define actors' positions in relation to their colleagues in the

network. By so doing, this enables to consider how central or marginal are the frames developed by these actors in the network and examine if and how actors are positioned amid contexts of shared understandings.

The position of actors and of frames is an important dimension to consider in the network analysed.

Significantly, this allows to consider an element that is largely missing in Weick's sensemaking approach: power. Sensemaking in fact does account for the social level within which ongoing sensemaking processes occur, but it does not adequately account for how different power dynamics characterise the environment within which situated actors operate. Following the example of Oliver and Montgomery (2008), sensemaking will be thus coupled with SNA in order to unravel the role played by power dynamics in the network. In this sense, power will not be considered only as an attribute held by an individual, but rather in relation to the position of actors in the network (Hafner Burton et al. 2009: 570). This leads to consider the issue of centrality and marginality, as a central actor may have the possibility to alter 'common understandings of capabilities, common interests, and norms' (ibid.). This mirrors the hypotheses that will be tested in this research, as it considers that the EU uses its power to influence other actors of the networked governance through its own framing of migration. SNA, therefore, offers a methodology to consider if and how this has occurred.

SNA also offers a way to consider different types of nodes, that is not only focusing on relations between different organisations and institutions, but also offering tools to untangle the complexity of certain organisations and focus on ties between actors and services operating therein. This is of use for this research, particularly as it focuses on a complex multi-level organisation such as the EU. Following the example of Borgatti et al. (2013), the ties visualised will be those between different actors, part of broader organisations, but representing a smaller unit of analysis, such as a service or unit part of the larger organisational structure. This is because this represents the first epistemic community within which the meanings and frames developed by actors are socialised. In other words, it represents the first direct context that actors shape, and in which they are shaped.

SNA complements sensemaking and framing, and constitutes the body of the methodology of this research.

Having developed an analytical framework and a methodology that allows to analyse and test them, the

research case study and design is defined , and the research questions are considered against the different methods adopted.

### **3.2 The Case Study of the research**

As Seawright and Gerring (2008) asserts, case studies should be carefully justified, driven by the research questions and the purpose of the study, so as to clarify from the outset what the research is a case of.

Case studies are generally used to develop detailed and multifaceted examinations of complex issues, investigated as they occur in their context but generalisable to other contexts (George and Bennett: 2004).

This can be investigated at different levels, micro-individual, meso-institutional, and macro-systemic. Given this research cuts across such levels in its analysis of dynamics of migration governance, a case study that may incorporate them all appears to be most fit. The different levels investigated in a case study also lead to the possibility of using mixed methods approaches, and are therefore consonant to the interpretive approach supplemented by social network analysis carried out in this research.

At the centre of this research lies an interest in migration governance, with a framework that aims to offer a conceptual contribution which sheds lights on the importance of understandings and frames of migration for its governance, and a methodological contribution by focusing on processes rather than outputs and outcomes. To carry this out, the case study chosen is that of EU-Tunisian relations on migration. The main reason underlying this fact is that such case study allows for considering not only the broader systemic case, but also the different and multiple units of analysis that compose it. This means that, following Yin's (2014) definition, this case study is embedded.

Yin (2014) differentiates between a 'holistic' case study, and an 'embedded' case study. The boundaries of a holistic case study are broader, in the sense that the focus is placed on the whole case. A holistic case study could therefore be an analysis of the EU's external migration governance, considered in relation with all countries with which it relates externally. Rather, this research considers the case study as 'embedded', that is more specific and composed by further units of analysis which compose the case. Figure 2 helps to understand this fact, evidencing how the research only investigates the broader case of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, and how they fit in the broader context of migration governance. It does so by

focusing on smaller units of analysis, namely the EU’s external migration governance system, and Tunisia’s external migration governance system. In an embedded case study in fact, ‘the case itself provides a number of different instances where the phenomenon of interest—in the case of the research processes of migration governance— occurs’ (Cavaye, 1996: 237).

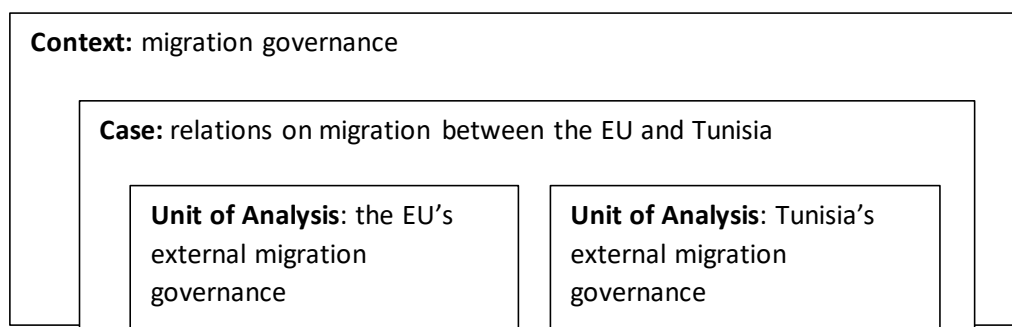


Figure 2: Definition of case study. Elaboration of the author following the example of Runeson and Host (2009).

By not giving methodological primacy to the EU’s dynamics, but considering the EU as a smaller unit of analysis of broader migration governance processes, in equal standing with Tunisia, the research aimed to overcome an EU bias recognised in the literature in Chapter 1 and 2. Few studies have been identified as studying EU relations on migration without giving methodological primacy to the EU, if only by basing much of the data collection at the EU level (Collyer 2016). The research design based on such case study seeks to overcome this, investigating migration relations between the EU and Tunisia without taking for granted the primacy of the EU, but investigating the processes through which these preferences are developed, and thus outcomes produced, in both units. It also needs to be noted that such approach did not entail that the two units of analysis were considered as fixed and monolithic. To the contrary, the embedded case study approach allowed to focus on the dynamic relations of governance, dissecting even further the units of analysis, at the different levels considered in the analytical framework and part of the research design.

It is also important to point out that the focus on such units of analysis does not mean that a cross case comparison was carried out, comparing dynamics of migration governance in the EU and in Tunisia. Yen (2009) does acknowledge that a cross case comparison occurs when focusing on one phenomenon across different cases. However, rather than focusing on two distinct cases to investigate dynamics of migration

governance and compare the findings, the focus was on relations between the two units, part of the same case, namely relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia.

Finally, it is necessary to define and justify the focus on relations with Tunisia. In fact, given the intention to test a framework for analysing migration governance processes in relation to the EU's external relations on migration, it could be argued that any non-EU country would have been relevant, as long as its position was valued in the research design.

Tunisia has been considered for three main reasons:

- 1) Its geopolitical context: Tunisia is widely considered as the only 'success story' of the Arab Spring and its democratisation promises. As such, the country is considered to be the most stable partner for the EU in the region, also in regards to migration. Therefore, despite the low number of departures from the Tunisian coasts for Italy, migration relations with Tunisia are still a key for the EU in an unstable region. In this context, Tunisia also represents for the EU a country of origin and of transit of migration, adding importance to the case that allows to study how they EU relates accordingly, and how Tunisia considers this 'label'.
- 2) Its change: given the change that occurred in the country following the 2011 revolution, a lot of uncertainty has resulted in relation to the future outlook of the country's migration policy. Given the analytical framework adopted, which allows to investigate causes and consequences of such uncertainty, this was a particularly interesting case. This uncertainty specifically emerged as migration policy moved from being centralised and became part of governance dynamics, with a variety of different actors playing a new role and trying to make sense of the uncertainty resulting from such organisational change.
- 3) Its relative absence in the literature: while the considerations above lead to exclude an interest in other countries in the region, such as Algeria or Egypt for example given their centralisation of migration policy, other countries did reflect similar conditions. Morocco, above all, is often considered as a case in point for relations with the EU, far before the 2011 revolution. This

determines an abundance of literature on dynamics of migration relation between the EU and Morocco, and therefore this research aimed to offer further insight in the less studied case of Tunisia.

### 3.3 Research Design

The question overarching this research is: *What are the factors framing migration governance and shaping relations between the EU and Tunisia?*

Level of analysis	Question	Methodology
Macro	SQ1: Who are the actors involved in the governance of migration between the EU and Tunisia, and what role do they play in the network?	Social Network Analysis
Micro	SQ2: how do actors within such migration governance systems understand migration?	Framing + Sensemaking
Micro	SQ3: how do actors within such migration governance system understand migration crisis, and how does this impact understandings of migration?	Framing+ Sensemaking
Macro	SQ4: how do these understandings drive migration governance?	Framing + Sensemaking + Social Network Analysis

Figure 3: Research Design

To reply to this questions, four sub-questions have been identified, each focusing on a level of analysis to explain finally the factors which frame migration governance systems in the EU and Tunisia, and shape the relations between them. This is based on the ‘macro-micro-macro approach’ of Coleman (1990), which consonant to the discussions of this Chapter, considers the importance of explaining the functioning of ‘macro’ social systems by analysing the ‘micro’ level which compose it, such as situated actors (ibid: 19). As represented in Figure 3, the research starts in Chapter 4 with an analysis of the ‘macro’ environment of this



research, identifying through Social Network Analysis the actors which play a role in such networked governance and what role they play in it. A networked structure will be visualised, that accounts for relations between actors which impact on the actions and understandings of situated actors. Chapter 5 and 6 will then each focus on the successive three sub-questions, analysing the micro level, and the implication this has for explaining macro level institutional developments. Each Chapter responds to the three sub-questions, first focusing on external migration governance dynamics of the EU in Chapter 5, and successively on those in Tunisia. Finally, the resulting 'macro' level considerations about factors framing and driving migration governance systems in the EU and Tunisia are synthesised in Chapter 7, bringing in the three components of the methodology adopted —framing, sensemaking and social network analysis— to define the factors shaping relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Extensive data collection from primary and secondary documents was used to identify the discursive context in which relations between the EU and Tunisia on migration are occurring, as well as to identify a sample of actors to interview. This was done by tracing back the production of the documents, identifying the services within institutions and organisations relevant for this research, that include governmental and non-governmental officials. All efforts were taken to ensure that the case of the EU was not privileged in a way that would make the research too Brussels centred, losing its non-Eurocentrism.

Following the extensive document analysis, the rest of the research was based on interviews with governance actors. This follows from the analytical and methodological framework adopted in this research, which, as Marsh (2010: 218) points out, requires speaking with actors in order to identify their preferences and perceptions. Thus the research, following the advice of Aberbach and Rockman (2002), was based on an interviewing technique that enables it to approach situated actors and understand both their attitudes, values and beliefs, but also how they are placed within a wider web of beliefs, norms and institutional settings. Because of the position of interviewees in the governance system, these interviews are to be considered as

*elite interviews* (Leech 2002: 663). Leech (2002) laments some level of confusion as to what an elite interview is, and what it entails in terms of practicalities from the researcher. At times in fact, the term elite is used to refer to the position of the interviewee in terms of privilege, whether political or socio economic (ibid.). The meaning this assumes for this research however follows Dexter's (2012) conceptualisation of elite interviewing, in contrast with a standard form of interviewing random samples of the population in which answers are only sought for within the scope of already defined propositions (Dexter 2012: 6). Rather, the elite interviews carried out will be characterised by the will of learning from the interviewee different angles and interpretations of the issues and problems discussed, given that the position of the interviewee in the governance system studied determines their role as experts as regards the topic of discussion (Leech 2002: 663).

Elite interviews require the selection of experts as interviewees for the research. This means that actors should be best placed not only to reflect upon migration governance in general, or even the EU's or Tunisia's external migration governance, but also about relations with each other. This significantly narrowed down the number of interviewees available given the limited number of people that focuses on this relation, especially from the EU side. Therefore, while it was never the objective of this research to develop a statistical representation (see Corbetta 2003: 210-228) of the network under study, the end result captures a very significant portion of the number of actors involved in these cross-border relations.

Interviewees were first selected on the basis of the document analysis, locating potential interviewees that could lead to a successful successive snowball sampling. Both in the EU and in Tunisia, this proved to be a successful strategy.

In the EU, this was facilitated by personal contacts established in the EU institutions, following a 6 months stage carried out in DG Migration and Home Affairs, and successive 6 months as a temporary policy officer working on the external dimension of legal migration. This allowed first-hand insight into policy making and attendance at many meetings, including numerous EU-Tunisia meetings, witnessing relations in practice. Due to ethical restrictions, this was not used as a participatory study, but rather it allowed me to develop a network of people from the inside, considerably improving the sampling of the research by targeting the most relevant people. It also allowed to understand who the key non-governmental players were, that worked

in contact with the EU institutions and its MS. Following the framework of the research, governmental and non-governmental actors were interviewed. From the EU institutions, representatives from the EU Commission were interviewed, from all services involved in relations on migration with Tunisia. EU level officials from the Council of the EU and the European Parliament were not considered to play a significant role warranting their inclusion in the research. For Parliament, a number of documents produced helped locate the role of the institution in the EU's external migration governance, which never takes centre stage. For the Council, EU level officials were not interviewed because, recognising the different levels which make up the EU and its external migration governance, importance was placed on Member States participating in meetings at the Council of the EU. The High Level Working Group on Migration (HLWG) was particularly identified as the venue from which a selected number of representatives of the EU MS could have well accounted for the inter-governmental level of decision making that characterises the EU. Established in 1999, the HLWG serves as a venue in which the policy strategy on the external dimension of the EU's migration policy is defined. All MS are represented, together with the European Commission and the EEAS. Ten interviewees were therefore identified from this working group, consisting of some of the key MS that emerged during the document analysis, as well as MS which had held the presidency of the Council, and therefore of the HLWG, in the wake of the European Migration Crisis (2014-2018). Moreover, together with governmental actors, a selected number of non-governmental actors were also interviewed, reflecting the analytical framework of migration governance of this research. However, less non-governmental actors have been interviewed in Brussels as compared to Tunisia, due to the fact that in Brussels non-governmental actors involved in the EU's external migration governance engaged in very frequent discussions and debates in numerous closed- and open-door events and workshops which the author participated in. This determined that a wealth of data was collected during such discussions and presentation, rendering less necessary a large number of further interviews.

As regards interviews in Tunisia, the first limitation compared to the EU was obviously due to geographical proximity. I spent 6 weeks in Tunisia on 3 different trips, which was an adequate amount of time to carry out the 20 interviews needed. Snowballing was significantly improved thanks to an invitation I received from ICMPD to take part as expert in a peer-to-peer EuroMed Migration IV meeting in Tunis, in October 2017.

As numerous governmental and non-governmental actors were present, this allowed me to develop a network

of contacts that was then instrumental for successful sampling in my successive two field work trips to Tunisia. Together with the interviews, I was also invited to two further meetings, within the frame of the Lemma Project part of the Mobility Partnership between the EU and Tunisia. This allowed first-hand insight into how such meetings unravelled, and how discussions took place between EU and Tunisian actors in a different geopolitical setting. Given the importance of the civil society in Tunisia after the 2011 revolution, non-governmental interviewees were also considered as important for interviews, also in light of a less frequent number of events which I could attend to gain their insights. Finally, key representatives from EU MS were also interviewed, that emerged in other interviews as being central to the networked migration governance of Tunisia. This also helped reinforce the consideration for MS within the EU's external migration governance network, and was particularly used in cases for which interviews with their EU based colleagues were difficult to fix.

### **3.5 Methods**

Together with defining the sample of interviewees to include in the research, it has also been very important to carefully select the best method for data collection in such interviews, as well as responding to the needs that emerged after a first set of interviews carried out. Interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured, depending on the degree of openness of the questions raised (Leech 2002). The different sub-questions of the research have been investigated through different methods, in structured and semi-structured elite interviews.

*SQ1: macro level analysis of the social network which defines the environment of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia.*

SNA has been used to analyse such question. This signified that the interest was on relations of the interviewees with other actors of the network, collecting structured information in fixed boxes relating to the frequency, magnitude and nature of such relations. SNA requires a systematic coding of such information, determining ties between actors on the basis of a binary indicator where 0 represent no tie and 1 represent a tie, and also a weight of such ties, considered in this research from 1 to 3 (for the rationale behind such

coding see Knoke and Young 2008: 30). As such, the questionnaire was developed to contain a structured component to collect data for the SNA analysis, that could then easily be transferred to the data analysis software Gephi. However, from the very first interviews, interviewees were manifestly not comfortable with this way of collecting data, neither when I asked them to fill in themselves a structured questionnaire, nor when I read out the questions myself. This reflected what Aberbach and Rockman (2002) pointed out, namely that as elites are well informed actors on the topics discussed, they tend not to like being categorised in a series of closed ended questions. Rather, they appreciated the possibility of spacing and motivating reasons for the beliefs they held. Interviewees in fact either took a very long time in articulating an answer which essentially was looking for a very concise structured reply to fill a box, and often they didn't get to the point of the question after their lengthy replies. To obviate to this fact, the questionnaire was soon changed and also for the SNA part a limited number of direct semi-structured questions were included, which could help me fill in myself the structured questionnaire needed for the SNA analysis. While giving the impression of not wanting to fix insights of interviewees into rigid boxes, semi-structured interviews allowed to keep a strong degree of comparability across interviews. These questions included an initial assessment of the other actors with which interviewees related on the topic of migration relations with Tunisia, across all levels of interest to the research across borders. It then asked about the direction of such relations, i.e. who contacted who, as well as the frequency and the nature of such relations. Finally it asked about framing consonance between the actors with which the interviewees had significant ties, inquiring on the degree of similarity of their understandings of causes and consequences of migration. As such it was possible to get an understanding of the relations held by interviewees, as well as weigh characteristics of the relations needed for the analysis.

The analysis was then carried out through the Gephi software for SNA analysis, which allowed to add ties and weighs of relations between the different actors, visualising them in a social network map. These maps lie at the basis of the analysis of Chapter 4.

*SQ 2 & 3: understandings of migration, of migration crisis, and how do one impact on the other.*

At the heart of the analytical and methodological framework lies the objective of this research to analyse macro processes of migration governance by investigating micro individual cognitive processes. Having

accounted for the context within which such understandings are developed with the SQ1 and the SNA, the other part of the questionnaire was based from the start on semi-structured interview methods.

As Aberbach and Rockman (2002: 674) assert, semi-structured interviews are best fit for 'exploring elite values, patterns and perceptions'. By using open ended questions in fact, interviewees were able to concentrate on the element of the question raised, articulating their replies in the directions they considered most fit and relevant to their understandings and preferences. To avoid the unstructured nature of ethnographic methods to interviewing, a questionnaire was developed to guide the conversation and seek information considered as important for the analysis of sensemaking and framing. However, a degree of flexibility was always kept, in order to adapt the original plan to the developing conversation, probing respondents to develop points of interest that emerged even beyond the script, following the advice of (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 674).

Consonant to the methodological approach spelt out in the previous sections however, such interviews have been carried out considering the fact that governance actors were likely to first offer an instinctive reply and then rationalise their strategic thought. The questionnaire (see Annex 2) was composed of three main themes which considered this fact and reflected the three research sub-questions of this research. The first question was meant to capture the micro attributes of interviewees, such as educational and professional background and work position. The first substantive theme then asked about understandings of causes and consequences of migration, including questions inquiring the susceptibility of these understandings to change, i.e., if these were altered by particular events or change in work description. This was then followed by questions relating to understandings of migration crisis, with a particular focus on the European migration crisis, its causes and consequences, including more general points about migration governance during times of uncertainty.

Finally, the last set of questions focused on policies carried out, and especially about perceptions about such policies, their effectiveness as well as their efficiency, relating this to developing policy responses in times of uncertainty.

With 43 interviews carried out across all levels of analysis, and with the duration of interviews ranging from forty minutes to one hour, this resulted in a considerable amount of data collected. To help with its organisation and for its analysis, the NVIVO software was used. A code book was first developed to guide

the analysis of the data, which was then rigorously coded in the software used. This allowed to have data categorised in codes which reflected the three main sub-questions that were being analysed. As such, the analysis of individual and organisational frames produced was carried out, linked to the preference formation analysed through the 7 properties of sensemaking.

*SQ4: investigating how understandings of migration and migration crisis impact and drive migration governance action*

This sub-question was tackled in Chapter 5 for the EU context, and then in Chapter 6 for the Tunisian context, before being synthesised in Chapter 7. Its analysis was based on a synthesis of the previous sub-questions, including considerations emerging from SNA to locate the understandings and frames identified in the broader network. In particular, with the previous questions focusing mostly on the diagnostic frames produced, i.e. actors interrogating ‘what is going on?’, the analysis on this sub-question analysed heuristics used to develop prognostic frames, that is the action to be enacted in the environment.

### **3.6 Problems encountered and potential limitations**

As with every social science research, some problems emerged during the research, which lead to potential limitations which must be acknowledged.

In the fieldwork relating to the analysis of the EU, the first challenge emerged when selecting the interviewees for the research. It was soon evident that a very limited number of actors dealt with migration relations with Tunisia specifically. As such, interviews carried out also included a variety of different actors for which Tunisia was only one of many countries they dealt with. This led to a more limited knowledge about specificities of relations with Tunisia, also reflected in the data collected. However, this proved to be a finding in itself, as it showed the level of generalisation with which EU external migration governance was carried out.

A limitation of this study is due to an ethical dilemma concerning the level of details regarding the position of interviewees that could be associated with their interview material used for analysis. For sure, by adding such details the study would have been improved, allowing to easily identify in the SNA carried out in

chapter 4, the position of the interviewee from which a quote was used in the analysis. This would have allowed for a smoother integration of the empirical work of Chapter 4 with Chapters 5 and 6. However, this was ethically impossible, as this would have breached the anonymity and confidentiality terms of the signed informed consent sheet. In fact, given the low number of officials working in EU-Tunisian relations in each services considered in this research both in the EU and in Tunisia, in the majority of cases a risk is present of allowing identification of interviewees. The only exception is DG HOME in the European Commission, and details of this position in the network have been associated with interviewees given the higher number of interviews carried out here, making it impossible to know who these are associated to.

In Tunisia, an initial difficulty was encountered as the contacts I relied on were mostly from the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is because the Secretary of State on Migration before sat there, but as I arrived in Tunis it was moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This resulted in an inter-institutional clash which made it considerably hard to snowball across ministries, and it took some time before I found some useful contacts that opened the door of relevant interviewees in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This resulted in less interviews in the latter ministry and especially in the office of the Secretary of State for Migration. Therefore I prepared the useful contacts to include such interviews in the last fieldwork trip one year later, only to find out that it had been moved back to the Ministry of Social Affairs, with many people changed. This slowed down the process, but overall the interviews needed were carried out, even if in a couple of cases the interviews were carried out with who held office previous to the last change. As the intention was not to capture Tunisian migration governance at that point in time, this was not considered as a problem, and actually resulted in much more productive interviews given the wealth of experience of actors that had been key figures in relations with the EU on migration over the previous five years or more.

In my first trip to Tunisia, I managed to have lunch with an official from the Navy and an Interior Ministry official. However, they did not agree to have a formal interview with data recorded and a signed informed consent sheet. In my successive trips to Tunisia, these services of the government, including the Ministry of Defence, were increasingly closed to external people and interviews (other researchers and people working in Tunis reported the same thing). Thus, in my last field trip I interviewed 5 individuals which work in close contact with these actors, shedding light on dynamics there to the extent they felt comfortable with. While



this remains a second-best option, it was the only one possible and the data collected was nevertheless sufficient to support the analysis carried out in Chapter 6 and 7.

A final problem encountered relates to the informed consent sheets which all interviewees had to sign or agree to formally take part in the interviews. In Tunisia in particular, this was a very important obstacle at the beginning of each interview, somewhat altering the good and informal relationship of trust created at the beginning, which then had to be rebuilt promptly. Also given the difficult climate relating to the migration dossier across ministries, there was great reluctance for signing the sheet, and in a few occasions, with governmental and nongovernmental officials alike, the informed consent sheet was not signed, and this data could not be included in this research. In some cases, they allowed nevertheless for a non-recorded informal conversation to occur, so this information was considered as a background and was useful for triangulating the data, but it could not be used in the final data analysis.

This problem did not only relate to Tunisia, but also in the EU this was an issue in some occasions.

Institutions and non-governmental organisations appeared to be more used and open to these kind of formalities with researchers, but various officials from national governments were reluctant to sign. This was especially the case when, given their busy agenda, interviews were scheduled at the margins of some other event or meeting. In the case of an EU MS, the interviewee came from a capital, and would not sign the consent sheet as she/he did not inform its superiors about this fact and did not want it on record. As such, like in Tunisia, the information discussed was used as informal background, but not included in the data analysed. For the case of some EU MS, a lack of responsiveness from the officials at the Permanent Representation in Brussels led to choose to contact directly their colleagues in Tunis.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This Chapter considered the methodological implications of the analytical framework developed in Chapter 2 and offered an overview of the tools through which the questions of this research have been answered.

First, the discussion on methodology considered the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research. It identified that the framework developed for migration governance rests on an interpretivist approach, which sees reality not as a pre-set given, but as constructed through the meaning given to things.

Following the interest for individuals that emerged in Chapter 2 and to which interpretivism is associated, the second section identified actors of migration governance as situated agents, namely individuals that are shaped by the environment in which they operate, but that also shape this environment through their interpretation of it, as well as the actions they carry out. In light of this, other approaches such as RCT and Institutionalism were discarded, given the ontological primacy given to individuals in the case of the former, and structure the latter. Instead, agency and structure were recognised to be distinct only analytically, as ontologically they only exist in relation to each other.

Having defined the importance of situated agents, a consideration was offered on how they operate in their environment, framing the challenges with which they are confronted. Prospect theory was used to evidence the importance of accounting for framing, to identify the short cuts through which actors simplify the challenges they face to develop their action. This was particularly relevant in the case of this research, given that actors have been recognised from the outset as operating in complex and uncertain conditions.

Sensemaking was then recognised as a useful approach to operationalise discussions on framing, recognising how governance actors framed their role in the environment through two main questions: what is going on? and what to do next? The seven properties of sensemaking were then considered as way to untangle the way in which actors develop and respond to these two questions, making sense of issues and enacting these understandings back in the environment in which they operate, thus shaping and being shaped by it. The attention placed on individual cognitive processes was then complemented with further considerations on how to analyse also the environment in which actors operated. Social Network Analysis was used as a method that helps to visualise complex characteristics of the networked structure in which actors of migration governance operate, placing importance on the relations they have between them.

The second part of the Chapter identified the research design of this study, building from Coleman's macro-micro-macro approach, explaining macro-institutional developments by analysing micro-individual processes. This approach was considered to be fitting for the 'embedded' case study adopted in the research, which focuses on migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, and considers the EU's external migration governance and the Tunisian external migration governance as equal units of analysis. This is key for this research, as it allows to ensure its non-Eurocentrism. The four sub-questions of the research were then

considered individually, exploring the methods used in each, having an operational discussion about social network analysis, framing and sensemaking. As the analysis carried out in the successive Chapters followed this toolkit here developed, this Chapter ultimately served to give the means to this study to answer its research question.. It did so by following an analytical framework to migration governance that considered the importance of situated actors and their understandings of causes and consequences of migration, and substantiating this with a methodology that ultimately considered the importance of migration governance processes and the way to analyse them. This approach allowed the following Chapters to offer conclusions relating to migration governance dynamics in the EU, in Tunisia, in relation between the two, and finally theoretical conclusions about migration governance itself.

## **CHAPTER 4- MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF EU-TUNISIAN MIGRATION RELATIONS**

The analytical and methodological frameworks developed in the previous two Chapters have identified actors, their environments, and their position therein as the main focus of this research. In order to unravel the factors shaping and driving relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia, it is first necessary to respond to the first sub-question of this research, and identify who are the key actors that play a role in these two networked migration governance systems, in the EU and in Tunisia, and the implication of this for relations across the two. Consonant with the methodology developed in the previous Chapter, this means asking three things in this Chapter: who are the actors that play a role in this network, and how are their relations structured? How do power relations that are embedded in the ties between actors shape and constrain the actions of these actors? And how do situated actors make sense of these pressures in their environment, and what impact does this have on their understandings of migration? Through these questions, the Chapter identifies, visualises and analyses the strategically selected context within which actors are situated, in order to consider the analysis of their framing and sensemaking of the successive Chapters as embedded in this structured migration governance network.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 largely takes these issues for granted, mainly considering the 'EU' the driver of relations with non-EU countries through its financial and soft power, as a homogenous block that externalises its priorities and frames. Others, such as Lavenex (2004, 2015), recognise the importance of the networked interactions that move this domain away from 'government' and towards 'governance', with significant implications for its mode of organisation. Moreover, Lavenex and Kunz (2008) point to the fact that in the EU, the institutional contexts that are shaped by these networks are arena of policy coordination defined by a significant frame-competition. In this research, networks are not only understood as modes of organisation, but acquire analytical significance that explains the web of power relations that bound the actions of 'situated agents'. This Chapter offers an empirical and methodological contribution to the study of migration governance networks, taking this one step further. In fact, while valuing the analytical significance of networks following the tenets of SNA, it also recognises a limitation of this theory. SNA, and especially quantitative accounts of SNA, accounts for relations between actors, visualising a structure of nodes and ties

that define the governance's network. However, this falls short in explaining the content of the relations. For the purpose of analysing drivers of migration governance, it is one thing, for example, to say that two actors relate frequently with each other, it is another thing to say that because of this, one of the two nodes feels the pressure of the other and thus adapts its framings of the challenges it faces. Integrating the sensemaking and framing literature with that of Social Network Analysis (SNA), networks are seen as loci where frames are exchanged and where the social dimension of sensemaking is defined (see Chapter 3, p.74), anchoring the sensemaking analysis of this research on a structural account that identifies the web of power relations that defines and constrain it.

The Chapter develops this argument in three sections. First, it uses a quantitative account of SNA to visualise the actors that play a role in this network, and the extensive relations that characterise this 'networked governance'. By coupling this analysis to that of documents and literature available, it recognises that dynamics represented are not only a single snapshot of a point in time, but represent broader dynamics that have emerged since the 2011 revolution in Tunisia —and more specifically structured with the Mobility Partnership signed in 2014— and after the adoption of the EU's new Multi Financial Framework in 2014. Through this analysis of primary and secondary sources, the section also analyses the change that occurred after 2011 in Tunisia and 2015 in the EU, as regards the actors involved in the external governance of migration. Having identified the actors involved and their role, the second section then focuses on the relations between actors, identifying the ways in which these form the situated context in which actors may develop their actions. It does so through an original analysis of pressures perceived by actors, and interpreted through a qualitative account of SNA. Finally, the Chapter asks whether the existence of these pressures, mostly of political nature, entails a transfer of framings of migration, analysing the consonance and dissonance of framings of migration between interacting actors. As such, it explores how actors make sense of the environment in which they operate and of its pressures, and the ways in which this impacts on framings of migration developed. Rather than identifying ties in the networks as mere vehicles of framings, the Chapter finds more complex dynamics at play ongoing in a highly contested turf, based on power struggles between actors and services to define the line to take when 'going abroad' with migration policies.

## 4.1 EU and Tunisian external migration governance before 2011 and 2015

Prior to the two shocks that impacted on the migration governance of the EU and of Tunisia, respectively the European migration crisis of 2015 and the Tunisian revolution of 2011, the external migration governance network between the two partners was significantly different. To understand the changes that followed, a reflection on conditions before the two events is needed.

### 4.1.1- The EU's external migration governance and its financial instruments

As regards the EU, an internal clash occurred since the early 2000s between development-oriented actors that pushed for a 'comprehensive approach' to migration, in line with a new global consensus which followed the newly established Global Commission on International Migration, and security-oriented actors (Lavenex and Kunz 2008; Boswell 2008). As Lavenex suggested (2006), much of the EU's attention was on the security dimension of external migration policy, creating the barriers for irregular migrants to reach Europe, while leaving few regular channels to do so legally. Recognising this fact, the Commission when launching its funding instrument for external actions on migration and asylum for the 2007-2013 period, the 'Thematic programme on cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum' (TPMA), stated that too much attention was placed on border control in its external funding on migration actions, and a rebalance was needed to include different dimensions of the phenomenon, 'in particular development and employment' (European Commission 2006). However, Den Hartogh (2016:10) reports that most actions financed aimed at curbing irregular migration (31% of funding), given the predominance of DG HOME in imposing its internal security objective upon DG DEVCO colleagues. This political pressure determined that security objectives were predominant of the EU's approach to external migration management, with a de facto marginalisation of dissonant views from different actors and services that shared the pot from which to allocate funding. To obviate to this situation, in which DG HOME complained about not having a direct funding instrument for its external actions, and DG DEVCO complained about having to fund actions that responded to internal security priorities with its development funds (ibid.), the 2014-2020 Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF) rebalanced this. A separation of external migration funds was decided, between development oriented actors such as DG NEAR and DG DEVCO, whilst also giving to DG HOME funding as part of its AMIF instrument to be spent on its external priorities on migration. However, as the next

sections will evidence, the European migration crisis altered this funding landscape, leaving DG HOME with little money to invest on its external actions on migration vis-à-vis the funding managed by DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, de facto giving to these actors a new role in the external migration governance network.

The landscape of actors playing a role in the EU's external migration governance on migration is intrinsically linked to access to funding instruments due to the fact that in the absence of tangible results in hard policy, such as readmission agreements (see for example Carrera et al. 2016), most external actions were taken through funded projects. It is also because of this context that the European External Action Service (EEAS) from its inception in 2009 played a marginal role in the external migration governance network prior to 2015.

As regards EU MS, their control over the funding of external actions on migration has always been significant. This occurred either through the 'comitology' mechanism that underlaid funding instruments, whereby each funding instrument has its own committee in which MS examine and vote on the different actions (Den Hartogh 2016), or through the HLWG by defining the direction of the EU's external migration governance. The HLWG, created in 1998 and chaired by DG HOME, provides the political guidance to the work of the Commission, defining the EU's line to take on the EU's external actions on migration and asylum. The importance of this working group is sometimes doubted, as key decisions are taken at higher political levels such as the Council of the Interior Ministers, or even at European Councils. Nevertheless, it remains an important link between the political levels of the MS, and those actors in the Commission called to implement decisions made, as evidenced by the relations between HOME and MS in Figure 4.

#### 4.1.2 Tunisia's centralised network of migration management

Prior to the 2011 revolution that led to the overthrow of Ben Ali and the beginning of a new democratic era for Tunisia, it is not possible to speak about migration 'governance' in Tunisia. All matters relating to the policies of migration management were in fact highly centralised under the control of the despotic leader. Migration policy was used by Ben Ali to enhance his own international legitimacy, abiding to the requests of his European counterparts in clamping down departures as well as arrivals in Tunisia (Cassarino 2014). Rather than just following European requests however, Ben Ali used all aspects of his migration policy to pursue his objective of security and control of Tunisia's population and emigrant community. In fact,

Cassarino (2014: 104) notes how the demands of the EU largely led Ben Ali to implement policies that 'reinforced managerial centrality of the state and of its law enforcement bureaucracy', giving him an opportunity to 'exert stronger legitimate coercive power and control over Tunisian society'<sup>2</sup>. To consolidate this strategy, the Tunisian leader managed to turn the security-oriented narrative to his advantage, strongly criminalising irregular migration through a very repressive law, that allowed for prosecuting whoever attempted an un-authorised entry and exit of the country, as well as anyone that for whatever reasons provided assistance (Law 2004-6). In light of this, actors involved on migration issues were confined to Ben Ali's political entourage, the Defence and Interior Ministries, as well as the Office for Tunisians Abroad (OTE) in the Ministry for Social Affairs, which was mainly devised to exert a stringent political control over the members of the Diaspora. With the revolution of 2011, and with the changes that followed the institutional framework in Tunisia, migration assumed a new and highly salient role in the public debate, institutionalising its move from a domain of centralised 'government' to 'governance' with the inclusion of a wealth of new governmental and non-governmental actors to the network.

#### **4.2 The EU- Tunisian migration governance network**

This section visualises the social network analysed in this research, with the aim of representing the various actors playing a role and the changing dynamics occurring as compared to the conditions discussed before, referring to Tunisia pre-2011 and Europe pre-2015. Rather than being just a description of a moment in time, this analysis complements the quantitative SNA material collected with extensive document and literature analysis, in order to reflect upon the changing context within which relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia are occurring.

This research has been clearly situated within a growing body of research that focuses less on hierarchies, more frequent in 'government' relations, and instead complements this vertical hierarchical analysis with horizontal relations between a growing number of actors assuming a role in this networked transnational governance of migration. As Lavenex suggests (2015:3), the rule promotion of the EU takes place through 'voluntary networked interactions between relevant units of the Commission, staff from the EU regulatory agencies, member states' ministries and third countries'. As such, transgovernmental networks become

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<sup>2</sup> Cassarino 2014: 104



'vehicles' of the EU's external governance (Lavenex 2014). The centrality of networks and networked relations emerges clearly from this body of literature, and yet few empirical studies have tested such theoretical propositions through the use of SNAs. Wunderlich (2012, 2013) is an exception, evidencing the relevance of this approach to contrast top down analyses of migration governance, which assume a clear-cut implementation chain whereby preferences from the political hierarchies are readily implemented as such vertically. Instead, following sociological approaches to the study of governance such as that of Brunsson (1989), bottom-up studies to migration governance are seen as capturing the fact that implementing actors are not simply tools of political hierarchies, and instead a variety of actors plays a role within a network which determines the outputs a policy will take, as well as its outcomes. As such, with policy being 'shaped along the way' (Wunderlich 2012: 488), many actors across the two shores of the Mediterranean emerge as playing a role in shaping and driving their development, justifying the relevance of the question that underpins this Chapter: who are the actors playing a role in this networked governance?

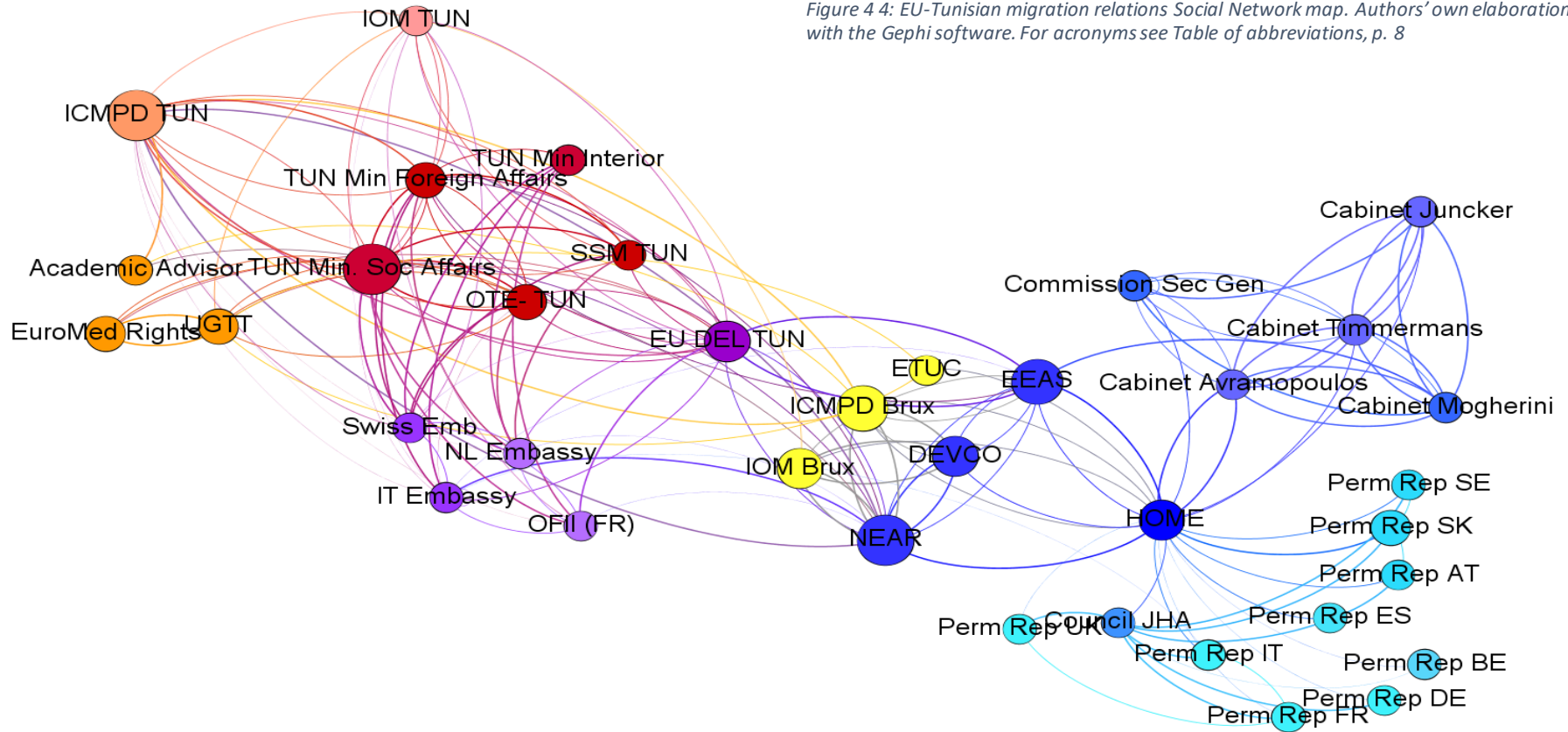
The map in Figure 4 seeks to visualise who these actors are, as well as the ties that define their relations. In doing so, the risk is that of 'homogenising ties between different actors in form and content, presenting them a static' (Wunderlich 2012: 492). The data represented does refer to a point in time when it has been collected, between 2016 and 2018. However, this does not entail that the analysis offered reflects that point in time only. While it is true that inter and intra organisational relations are not fixed in time but are rather dynamic, the literature and documents analysed shed light on the durability of such relations in an extended period of time.

As regards Tunisia, the limitations discussed in the Chapter 3 (p.86) impact this analysis, as very few primary or secondary sources are available to complement the data collected. However, enough evidence emerges for considering 2011 as a moment of change (see Chapter 2, p.48, and Chapter 6, p.169), from a centralised and hierarchical structure of migration government, to a shift to governance. Dynamics post-2011 have been largely fluctuating as regards internal dynamics, which inevitably are more susceptible to change compared to their representation in Figure 4, yet evidence collected points to the fact that relations with the EU have remained largely stable in relation to the services involved.

As regards the EU, political dynamics are largely associated to political cycles of its institutions, notably the Commission, which changes every 5 years. However, the literature and documents discussed in the previous Chapters highlight how there has been a continuation of political direction of the various Commission's in the past twenty years in relation to migration. What has mostly changed in time has been the funding structure of the 'implementation network' of the EU's migration policy, with relations defined by the Multi Financial Frameworks (MFF) adopted, which shifted power through allocation of funding from a service to another. The MFF emerges as playing a powerful role in shaping relations, that cannot be considered as occurring in a single point in time as it lasts for 7 years. Moreover, as Den Hartogh's (2016) analysis shows, changes do occur with the adoption of a new MFF, but many dynamics initiated live by their own momentum thereafter and continue in time. This adds further scope to analysing these relations, and using the available sources to complement quantitative SNA and understand to what extent these represent shifting organisational dynamics. This is also the reason why, in the following sections, quantitative representation will be supplemented by the qualitative component, to unravel the nature and direction of these relations, telling of the relative importance of the various actors represented.

Therefore, SNA allows to visualise the network that this research analyses, rendering the communication structures, part of the sensemaking processes analysed in this study, tangible and visible. Figure 4 clearly shows this, as although it's complexity renders necessary to unravel these relations more in detail in the following sections of this Chapter, it fixes the network that this research aims to analyse, showing the wealth of actors that play a role in this networked governance as well as the deep web of interactions that ties them together, channels for material as well as non-material products (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009).

Figure 4 4: EU-Tunisian migration relations Social Network map. Authors' own elaboration with the Gephi software. For acronyms see Table of abbreviations, p. 8



The map represents the network analysed of EU and Tunisian governance actors involved in migration relations, 2016- 2018. Individual actors are clustered in their respective services. This is based on data collected through snowballing sampling (see Chapter 3, p. 80), and therefore may not be exhaustive of all contacts and relations taking place given the limitations of this sampling technique. The different colours highlight the different ‘communities’ of this network, identified through the ‘community detection’ algorithm of the software and elaborated by the author: shades of blue, technical and political level of the EC; turquoise, MS sitting in HLWG; yellow, international organisations in Brussels; Red, Tunisian government actors; orange, non-governmental actors in Tunis; purple, EU (delegation and Member States) actors in Tunis. Ties are measured in 1 to 3 scale: 1, weekly contacts; 2, monthly contacts; 3, occasional contacts.

This SNA map visualises the different services and organisations playing a role in the network, representing those actors that within those organisational settings are responsible for EU-Tunisian relations on migration. The wealth of ties between actors shows how networked this system of governance is, in the EU and Tunisia and across borders as well. It also indicates the different dimensions which constitute each migration governance setting. In the EU, it clearly shows how different levels of actors play a role, also representing the centrality of DG HOME, responsible for the migration file, as point of contact of all the different levels. The political dimensions of EU external migration governance are represented by MS are grouped together, steering the work of DG HOME mainly through the HLWG. Moreover, cabinets internal to the Commission, notably of the President, Vice President responsible, HRVP and the delegated Commissioner, emerge as playing an important role in defining the political context within which relations occur. The visualisation of the network also helps in understanding how despite this power given by the high number of relations across the EU's migration governance system, DG HOME largely recurs to brokers for its relations with Tunisian counterparts. These brokers are first the services within the Commission dedicated to this, namely NEAR and the EEAS in relations to Tunisia, and DEVCO in relation to more general aspects of external governance of migration. Actors in HOME in fact relate with actors in those services to develop and implement policies on migration with Tunisian counterparts, defining the implementation side of the network. Moreover, a set of NGOs and IGOs is represented as playing a further role as brokers of relations, further away from the centre of the EU's migration governance in its political dimension, but still very tied to it as key actors of its implementation. Finally the EU DEL emerges as playing a crucial role, as the actor that, within the political control of the EEAS, lies in the middle of the cross border relations, based in Tunis but responding to Brussels. Its geographical location is cause of its distance from the political relations of the EU, but it determines an important role in the implementation network. Moreover, the EU DEL acquires further power in the EU's network through its ties with the political actors of the Tunisian migration governance system.

The Tunisian system is relatively less centralised and hierarchical compared to the EU, with a central governmental component being at its centre, with the variety of ministries involved in the dossier. Around this, a wealth of IGOs and NGOs emerge as entertaining ties with all the different governmental services, evidencing how open this system has become when comparing it to the information available regarding the pre-2011 revolution context. Relations with the EU emerge as ongoing between the various ministries and

the EU DEL, but also occurring with NEAR. Moreover, the size of ICMPD and IOM suggests how significant those actors are due to the high number of relations they have, as together with having access to Tunisian governmental and non-governmental organisations, they have access to EU relations thanks to their EU counterparts acting as brokers.

Figure 4 is a non-exhaustive representation of the myriad of networked interactions that take place in the constellation(s) of this governance system, but it offers a visualisation of the interactions between actors weighted by the interviewees to be the most significant. Given the complexity shown by the great number of ties represented between actors, these interactions will be analysed in more detail below. Before turning to the relations however, we first analyse in more detail the actors recognised to be playing a role in this network, highlighting considerable change from the dynamics reported before 2011 in Tunisia, and 2015 in the EU. In other words, before analysing who the *key* actors are in a wide web of power relations that define this network, we first assess the characteristics of the variety of actors that make up this networked governance system, combining SNA to the primary and secondary sources available to shed light on the characteristics of the actors involved.

#### 4.2.1- The EU

The extent to which the 2015 European migration crisis determined a moment of change in the EU's approach to migration policy making is debated, and it is probably still too early to draw definitive conclusions. Guiraudon (2017), argues that the crisis was not a turning point, and instead led to a policy inertia, which largely replicated failed solutions aimed at keeping irregular migrants outside of the EU, whilst giving very limited legal access for regular migration. While this research does not find—or look for—evidence to the contrary in relation to the policies implemented, the actor-centred approach taken by this thesis allows understanding of how different dimensions of change did in fact emerge during the 2015 migration crisis related to the composition of the network and actors' roles therein. The visualisation of the network clearly shows major differences as regards the centrality of actors that before scholars reported as being much more marginalised (see Den Hartogh 2016, Boswell 2008). Such actors are too far from the political environments to have the power to influence changes in the policy frames (see Chapter 5, p:126),

but nevertheless the effects of this new actor composition have an increasingly important role in steering the external work of the EU, specifically in the case of EU-Tunisian relations.

The first and most significant change emerges to be driven by the new composition of funding instruments in the MFF 2014-2020, and the impact that the crisis determined on these. After the evident failures of the distribution of power of the TPAM for 2007-2013, with HOME and DEVCO fighting over the same funding pot to finance their priorities, resulting in a predominance of HOME in steering the external work on migration; HOME, DEVCO and NEAR were all given their funding instruments to finance their external work on migration. Interestingly, HOME no longer had to fight for ‘hijacking’ the money aimed at development cooperation, but rather had its own instrument constructed in between the internal and external dimension, allowing HOME to fund external actions that were specifically ‘non-development oriented’, and served the interests of the EU’s internal objectives (AMIF regulation in Den Hartogh 2016: 16). However, the breaking out of the migration crisis altered the premise under which such division was devised, given that facing new priorities that needed new funding, HOME had to use much of its own funds under AMIF for more internal priorities, leaving little resources to fund its external dimension. As such, its quest for influencing allocation of funding from DEVCO and NEAR colleagues did not end, whilst having a significantly diminished competence over them because of the new regulations of the different funding instruments.

If the money HOME could direct to its external dimension shrunk comparatively to the needs of its internal policies and priorities, the money specifically earmarked for migration and asylum considerably rose for DEVCO and NEAR. This was the result of the establishment of the *EU Emergency Trust for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa* (EUTF), that was the main funding instrument for Africa specifically designed to fund external actions on migration. This instrument, that was largely funded through the European Development Fund (EDF) managed by DEVCO, was divided in three windows, the North African window, the Horn of Africa window and the Western African window, with NEAR managing the North African window, leaving the rest to be managed by DEVCO. With a promised budget allocation of €3.6 billion, this became the largest instrument specifically designed to fund actions on migration in Africa. What emerges, therefore, is that whilst HOME’s external dimension funds

were not adequate to respond to the increased attention placed on the external dimension of migration, DEVCO and NEAR were tasked with significant responsibilities in managing the EU's external actions and projects on migration, the bulk of its external governance in the absence of hard policy. This is clearly visualised in Figure 4, as such actors, particularly NEAR given the focus on Tunisia, becomes a very central broker of relations between Tunisian actors and EU actors, while also enjoying a certain distance from the political sphere of the Cabinets tasked with the migration portfolio, such as the Cabinets of Avramopoulos and Timmermans.

While these dynamics unveil the unfolding of power relations in the aftermath of the migration crisis as regards the control over the funding of the EU's external dimension of migration, the EEAS also started playing a significant new role, despite its limited involvement in the management of funding. In fact, if before the EEAS did never acquire a significant role within the EU's migration governance network, with the change in leadership in 2014, and with the unfolding of the migration crisis leading to a revived attention to the external side of migration policy making, the EEAS joined the other services with a new role in this policy domain. Interviews conducted clearly shown this change, with an EEAS high level official stating in June 2016 that 'it is true that we didn't have a role until yesterday, but from tomorrow our voice will be heard'. This position was reinforced by other EEAS officials which stated that the directions from their hierarchy was clearly to have a revived role vis-à-vis their colleagues from other services on the topic, taking back from HOME the steering wheel of the external dimension of migration. While the lack of management of own funds determined that this new role could not be as central as that of NEAR, officials across the EC confirmed this new position, at times displaying annoyance for these changing power dynamics. In particular, the EEAS could count on their direct control over the EU Delegations, also in the case of Tunisia, often a key player in brokering relations between actors in Brussels and in Tunis. This emerges in the network visualised in Figure 4, with the EEAS identified as holding a role that is much more prominent compared to what emerged in the documents analysed, namely a marginal role held in the years prior to the migration crisis.

The role of the EU Delegation clearly emerges in Figure 4 as highly central to migration governance. While the importance of EU delegations in TCs has always been politically significant (see Wunderlich 2011), with

the multiplication of projects, actions and thus relations with Tunisia, its importance has been magnified. In particular, despite it being under-staffed, with only two people working on the migration file, its centrality leads to access to a wealth of information that is highly important in the network, due to the fact that most officials in Brussels, from the institutions and MS alike, lamented a lack of knowledge of the overview of actions taken with Tunisia, having limited information mostly concerning the actions for which they were directly responsible. This well reflects what an interviewee from the EU Delegation reported, namely that actions taken by the EU overall were growing rapidly, but in a highly incoherent manner, without adequate monitoring of implementation and great duplication of efforts.

In this fragmented and incoherent landscape, international organisations emerge as having an important role, exploiting this to their advantages in their quest for funding from the EU to implement projects in TCs like Tunisia. Figure 4 shows how in relation to Tunisia, the main IOs taking up this task are IOM and ICMPD, which both combine a degree of knowledge of policy and political dynamics in Brussels together with local Tunisian dynamics, given their presence in Brussels as well as in Tunis. It is no coincidence therefore that the majority of the projects funded by the EU are managed by these two IOs<sup>3</sup>. UNHCR was also mentioned as having an important role in Brussels, although in relation with Tunisia it did not hold significant relations with the rest of the governance network, operating as an outlier in Tunis.

Finally, the politicisation of migration that followed the European Migration Crisis led to a stronger role assumed by the ‘political masters’ from the responsible Cabinets. While clearly the responsibility on migration issues laid on the responsible Commissioner Avramopoulos, with the Migration and Home Affairs portfolio, this was accompanied by the new role of the EEAS with its High Representative Federica Mogherini. Both of these Commissioners with their Cabinets were also reported by EC officials to be bypassed by frequent and direct involvement of the Cabinet of First Vice President Timmermans as well as directly by the Cabinet of President Juncker, clearly highlighting the highly politicised nature of migration. These relations mostly trickled down to HOME, that at the same time assumed a central role in relating with MS representatives at the HLWG, which steered the external agenda on migration. The closeness of this

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<sup>3</sup> This emerged from the analysis of scoreboards of actions funded by the EU, confidentially shared with the author by various interviewees.



relation between HOME and MS led various interviewees to evidence how HOME has aligned with MS position, reaching ‘a new position that is further away from the progressivism that the Commission has always had, and much more consonant to their priorities’<sup>4</sup>. It is important to note that the positions of MS are not as unified as they emerge in the network visualised, as various officials from MS interviewed report great internal dissonance when ‘going abroad’. However, the examination of such intragovernmental dynamics of MS go beyond the scope set out in this research, and the visualised relations consider their unified position in the frame of the HLWG.

#### 4.2.2- Tunisia

As detailed before, the 2011 revolution led to significant change in migration policy making in Tunisia and is still today a domain in which many changes frequently occur in the organisational structures of services tasked with migration. Figure 4 captures the most prominent actors in the years of this research (2015-2018), and focuses specifically on those actors that play a role in the networked relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia, rather than on Tunisian migration governance overall. As mentioned before, this is not a ‘snapshot’ only of a point in time, as the material collected shows that EU-Tunisian dynamics have been developing as such in the past years, and particularly after the Mobility Partnership structured relations within its frame. Nonetheless, in terms of individual actors and their relative importance, the picture here is much more fragmented and fluctuating compared to the EU, due to the frequent changes that occur within and across ministries.

If under Ben Ali migration was a highly centralised domain of policy making, with the democratic transition that followed the 2011 revolution this significantly changed. Some EU interviewees even lamented that if before there were too few actors having a say in this field in Tunisia, after the revolution they became too many, leading to inconsistencies and a difficult context for relating on migration issues. New actors started to work on this file both within ministries, with a growing number of officials tasked with this portfolio, as well as across ministries, with more services entrusted with responsibilities relating to migration. In relations with the EU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) was entrusted with political relations relating to negotiations

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<sup>4</sup> Interview EC official, March 2018.

on the Mobility Partnership as well as the readmission agreement and visa facilitation. However, despite political relations being channelled through the MoFA, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) played an increasingly strong role in relations with the EU, with officials in the EU recognising a number of high level Tunisian counterparts from this ministry as those ‘migration persons’ in Tunisia, those that had the power to change perspectives on issues. The MoSA itself has different bodies that work on migration, most notably the OTE, the State Secretariat of Immigration and Tunisians Abroad (SEITE), and the National Observatory on Migration (ONM). The OTE continued its work on relations with the Tunisian Diaspora, although given the prominence of this domain in the post-revolution migration agenda of Tunisia, and the fact that the OTE was established by Ben Ali and many officials were seen as too linked with its old leader, Diaspora issues started to be widely followed across different ministries, such as in the Ministry for international cooperation and development. The SEITE was created in 2012, soon after the revolution, under the new political drive for migration issues also given by leftist and Islamist politicians that returned after having been in exile during the Ben Ali period (Natter 2018: 11). Its primary role was to develop a National Strategy on Migration (NSM), in order to have a strategic and comprehensive action plan on migration as well as a discursive positioning of migration in Tunisian governance. This has never been ratified by parliament, as the SEITE became turf of political clashes between different ministries, being juggled between the MoFA and MoSA. While it was born within the MoSA, it was moved in Autumn 2016 to the MoFA, signalling the importance the external dimension was assuming, primarily vis-à-vis the EU<sup>5</sup>, in Tunisian migration governance. Finally, however, after months of resistance from the administrative apparatus of both Ministries, it was returned to the MoSA where it plans to stay in order to push for the ratification and implementation of the NSM.

While relations with Europe were carried out with greater frequency by those actors, both as regards political relations and on the implementation of projects relating to migration, the Ministry of Interior, of Justice and of Defence also played an important role in the post 2011 transition, opening up from what was a very centralised modus operandi imposed by Ben Ali. However, various Tunisian officials reported how this did not last long, and such ministries are now operating largely in isolation, from one another and from the other

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Tunisian government official, May 2018

actors identified in the network, mainly evidencing revived security concerns emerging from the regional instability, terrorism and the consequent movement of people across porous borders. While this leads to a focus on internal actions and affairs, external relations on border control and defence issues are held between such ministries and EU counterparts, through politically significant albeit infrequent relations.

Overall, the Tunisian institutional migration governance landscape emerges as even more scattered than the EU, with various actors assuming increasing competence on migration issues without there being an overarching (and functioning) organism to pull the strings together.

The institutional changes that followed the Arab Spring mirrored broader societal changes that occurred under the drive of a revived civil society, repressed until then under Ben Ali. This dynamism led various civil society organisations (CSOs), such as the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), to embrace migration issues that before were largely silenced, advocating for the rights of migrants in Tunisia as well as abroad. This was mainly driven by an increased salience of migration during and after the revolution, with this being intrinsically linked to migration as the number of Tunisians departures towards Italy hiked, together with the very significant arrival of refugees and labour migrants fleeing Libya. Boubakri (2013) and Natter (2018) evidence how these dynamics, together with the empowerment of CSOs, led to attention being spent for the first time on migrant workers in Tunisia, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and Libya. However, together with this internal advocacy work, significant attention was placed on the emigration of Tunisians, denouncing the deaths at sea as an output of the irregularity in which the Tunisian youth was forced, and on the rights of the Diaspora residing abroad, mainly in Europe. The actors identified in the network represent this drive, with EuroMed Rights acting as an umbrella for a great number of CSOs, ensuring that their voice was coherently heard by the Tunisian institutions, as well as the UGTT, the largest Tunisian Trade Union, that strengthened its interest on the conditions of the Tunisian workers residing in Europe. In either case, this resulted in a very critical stance towards the EU, considered at fault of creating conditions of irregularity that resulted either in perilous journeys leading to deaths at sea, or to exploitation of Tunisian workforce. It is under these premises that this mobilisation from the civil society was reflected in the political framework of the new Tunisian Parliament, with 18 seats out of 217 being dedicated to the

Tunisian Diaspora, that was politically represented also through a newly established Council on Tunisian Abroad.

Together with visualising these new dynamics and interactions of Tunisian actors in the network, Figure 4 also highlights the important role International Organisations (IOs) and international partners have acquired since the revolution. The IOM, UNHCR, ICMPD, the French, German, Swiss, Italian and Belgian embassies and/or development and cooperation agencies, all these actors filled the vacuum of the international presence and discursive agenda that before was heavily controlled by Ben Ali's regime. In particular, as regards relations with the EU on migration, IOM and ICMPD are found to be the most active, brokering the highest number of interactions between Brussels and Tunis, followed by the French cooperation agency OFII and the German GIZ that act as implementers of a variety of projects. Despite there being a clear competition in between these agencies, mostly related to the funding allocations given to implement projects in Tunisia, these IOs also coordinate their work together through a monthly meeting they hold. The presence of these actors is well received by Tunisian officials, that however didn't manifest confidence on the importance of the work these actors were carrying out, at times viewed as a constellation of good projects that evades the bigger question of political EU-Tunisian relations on migration.

The actors that play a role in this networked governance have thus been identified. First, these have been identified in the network visualised. Second, the SNA has been complemented with document analysis and qualitative interview material to capture the extent to which important changes that occurred in 2011 in Tunisia and in 2015 in the EU as regards the governance of migration led to the inclusion of important new actors in this networked governance system on migration. However, in order to reply to the overarching question of this Chapter, this is not enough, given the interest in understanding the *key* actors, that is unravelling the power relations that define the network analysed to understand in what way such interactions act as vehicles of both material and non-material products (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009). This entails expanding on the analysis carried out so far, which has already shown the intrinsic fact that the nodes of this network are not autonomous, but instead mutually dependent, and through their 'patterns of association' they define structures that 'enable or constrain the behaviour of nodes' (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009: 562). These structures constitute the strategically selective context in which situated actors, namely the nodes of this

network, need to operate, making sense of this environment so as to develop strategic action. As such, we now turn to the analysis of the political pressures that take place in the network, analysing the direction with which such power relations occur, allowing to then analyse the extent to which these bound actors in their actions.

#### **4.3 Power Relations in and in between the EU and Tunisia**

The actors on which this research focuses have been analysed, their relations visualised, and their role discussed in relation to the new context in which they operate. The representation of these relations alone, however, sheds little light either on their significance or on the ways in which these relationships define the situated contexts within which actors operate. Direction, content and meaning are all traits of these relations which need to be analysed in order to understand how the map visualised before constitutes the strategically selective context within which situated agents operate.

The visualisation and analysis of a network through SNA allows identification of the actors that compose the network and their centrality, on the basis of quantitative analysis of the interactions that they carry out. This section expands this quantitative visualisation, representing also qualitative perceptions of the interactions considered, allowing for a 'context sensitive interpretation of the social network' (Hollstein 2010: 17-18).

This means that power relations are not only be considered on the basis of centrality in the network, but also of qualitative interpretations of the pressures that constrain the work of governance actors. Actors interviewed, in fact, whilst often emerging as very central and thus powerful in the network on the basis of the access given to them by numerous interactions with numerous other actors, also reported a degree of constraint that underlies the structure of the environment in which they operate. For this reason, a qualitative approach has also been taken, to analyse how they understood and internalised the pressures present in the environment in which they operated. The visual representation that results therefore includes a quantitative component that builds the network and the central actors, whilst also including the direction of the pressures perceived by actors with the arrow pointing the direction of this, thus visualising also the power relations that define the relative importance of actors in the network.

### 4.3.1 The EU

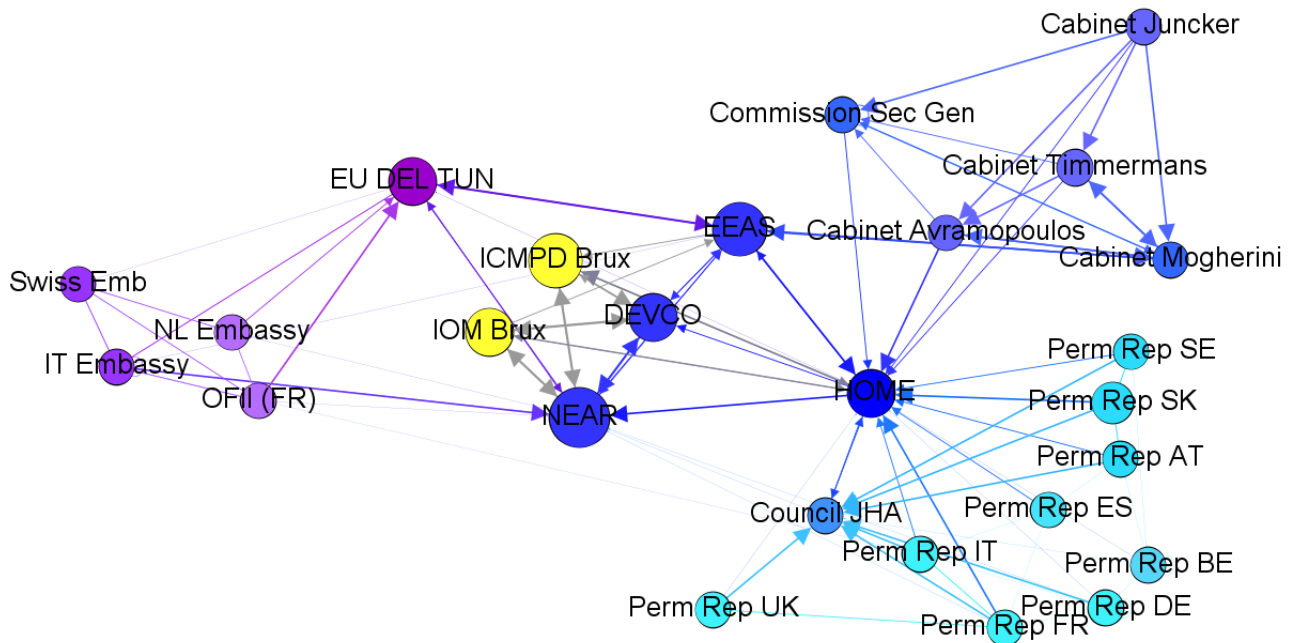


Figure 5: The EU's external migration governance 2016-2018. Weighted ties as in Figure 4, p. 98. Arrows indicate perceived pressure from actors in the network.

What emerges, not surprisingly, from the analysis of the network is that DG HOME assumes a very central role in EU based interactions. This is not surprising given the migration portfolio it was entrusted with especially with the Juncker Commission that in 2014 changed its name to include migration: ‘Migration and Home Affairs’. With the outbreak of the European Migration Crisis, it did in fact confirm its role as the centre of action and communication about the EU’s policies on migration, with a new directorate dedicated to the file, and a doubling of its staff. While this did give HOME a considerable central position in the network, this came together with the multiplication of interactions with the steering actors of this EU policy domain, namely the ‘political masters’ in the various competent cabinets, as well as the Member States that were very interested in exerting a strong control over external policies on migration. The research shows a high degree of interactions from cabinets with DG HOME, and actors in DG HOME overwhelmingly perceiving this political pressure as an important constraint to their actions. The arrows of Figure 5 capture this pressure felt by actors in DG HOME. This was due to constant efforts from the ‘political masters’ to impose a top down security-oriented policy line, communicating this to the public in a wealth of policy outputs, whose production had the effect of multiplying interactions between the DG and the competent cabinets. Adding to this, significant pressure was exerted from MS, through official channels such as during

the HLWG, as well as through non-official interactions. This added pressure to actors operating in HOME, given that they necessarily needed to take MS views into account, whilst also knowing that each MS developed its view on the external dimension of migration mainly from the lenses of the countries that directly interested them, therefore not necessarily responding to the needs of a coherent EU approach that officials in the EU institutions were trying to develop. This helps identify a distinctive element of this part of interactions analysed, namely that despite it being important for the political steering of political relations with Tunisia, these relations are overwhelmingly based on general concerns about the direction the EU's external migration policy should have, at best having a broad geographical scope differentiating between Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, the main origin and transit regions. This is in line with what was found prior to the European migration crisis by Wunderlich (2012: 487), which states that 'policy objectives are relatively undifferentiated between non-Member States in this internally motivated external policy field'. As such, with political guidelines being loosely clustered together for often very diverse countries, such as in the case of the MENA region, actors in DG HOME, which is essentially an internally oriented service of the EC, need to translate this into a policy line coherent for the context of a specific non-EU country, such as Tunisia. The limited knowledge of Tunisia that is intrinsic in a service that does not have adequate human resources to cover the topic, often results in actions that colleagues from different services perceive as being not enough tailored to the specificities of Tunisia, considered as a country with special needs given the democratic transition it is going through, and that the EU should support at its best. Despite these shortcomings, the organisational structure characterised by the political pressures identified above leads HOME to develop such priorities, that can be based on political relations, such as in the case of readmission negotiations, or based on actions and projects to fill the vacuum of hard policy, that is more difficult to put in place.

While the 2014-2020 MFF was thought to provide DG HOME with the independence to provide independently for both the internal and external dimension, the changes that came with the 2015 crisis and described in the section before led to the fact that DG HOME does not have the resources to develop and implement large projects independently, and needs the financial support of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, mainly through the windows of the EUTF they manage. In the case of Tunisia, this entails relating with DG

NEAR in order to find the funding for the actions needed to enact the priorities that synthesise the political pressure received. Moreover, also for international political relations, the increased role assumed by the EEAS led to less autonomy of DG HOME in carrying out these relations with Tunisia, which needed to consult colleagues in the EEAS and in their dependent delegations more frequently so as to agree on a mutual line, much to the frustration of actors working in this DG that feel constrained by yet another actor. Already from this analysis of the environment that frames the environment of DG HOME, it emerges that its centrality identified in the previous section was not sufficient to understand the situated context, the constraints and pressures which define the work of actors from DG HOME. While relating with many different actors in fact, DG HOME actors understand their position in the environment as constrained by a high number of pressures that define the boundaries of their work, in particular pertaining to the political directions of cabinets and Member States.

The position of DG NEAR vis-à-vis these political dynamics on migration is visualised as marginal, with very little direct contact with the political level, political pressures mostly channelled through colleagues from DG HOME. The direction of this interaction also signals that DG HOME has an interest in interacting with DG NEAR, rather than the opposite. Instead, DG NEAR interacts cautiously with DG HOME, as such relations are characterised by an imbalance of political power, due to DG HOME having the mandate and backing to implement its priorities from the highest political spheres and from leading MS. Of course, relations with DG HOME are unavoidable, and become the channel of the political pressures to which DG HOME is also constrained. For this reason DG NEAR tries to operate as independently as possible, within their existing power structure. While this is hard to do in relation to certain dossiers, as for example with the highly politicised actions taken on Libya in the aftermath of the Italian deals with the Libyan authorities and tribes in Summer 2017, in other cases less defined by political oversight this more easily occurs, as in the case of Tunisia. Communication links are needed from DG HOME to control EU funding imposing its priorities, and DG NEAR is careful of avoiding these relations in order to minimise this interference. As such, despite the many relations with other EU actors such as DG HOME, DG NEAR tries to minimise the pressure it receives and, especially in cases and countries far off of the political radar, it manages to build an environment that is less constrained by political interferences.



Finally, the EU's network is completed by the great number of NGOs and IGOs that operate in Brussels and play a role in the EU's external dimension. While many actors, such as the cooperation services from MS like OFII and GIZ, assume a greater role in the implementation of projects in Tunisia, the two actors that significantly assume a central position in this EU level network are the IOM's and the ICMPD's Brussels office. The relation that links these nodes to the institutions is visualised through a double directed arrow, as these actors work to have a greater role also in influencing actors operating in the institutions, and very often their closeness and access to these leads to counselling and providing important information that these actors lack and need. However, these relations are not only channels for transferring knowledge and information, but also —and most significantly— they include the funding of projects from the EU to the IOM and ICMPD, that act as implementers. As such, the power dynamics are clearly imbalanced towards the institutions, irrespective of whether from DG HOME, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, which use such IOs as implementers of their work and priorities, and from which these actors largely depend, for funding.

#### 4.3.2- Tunisia

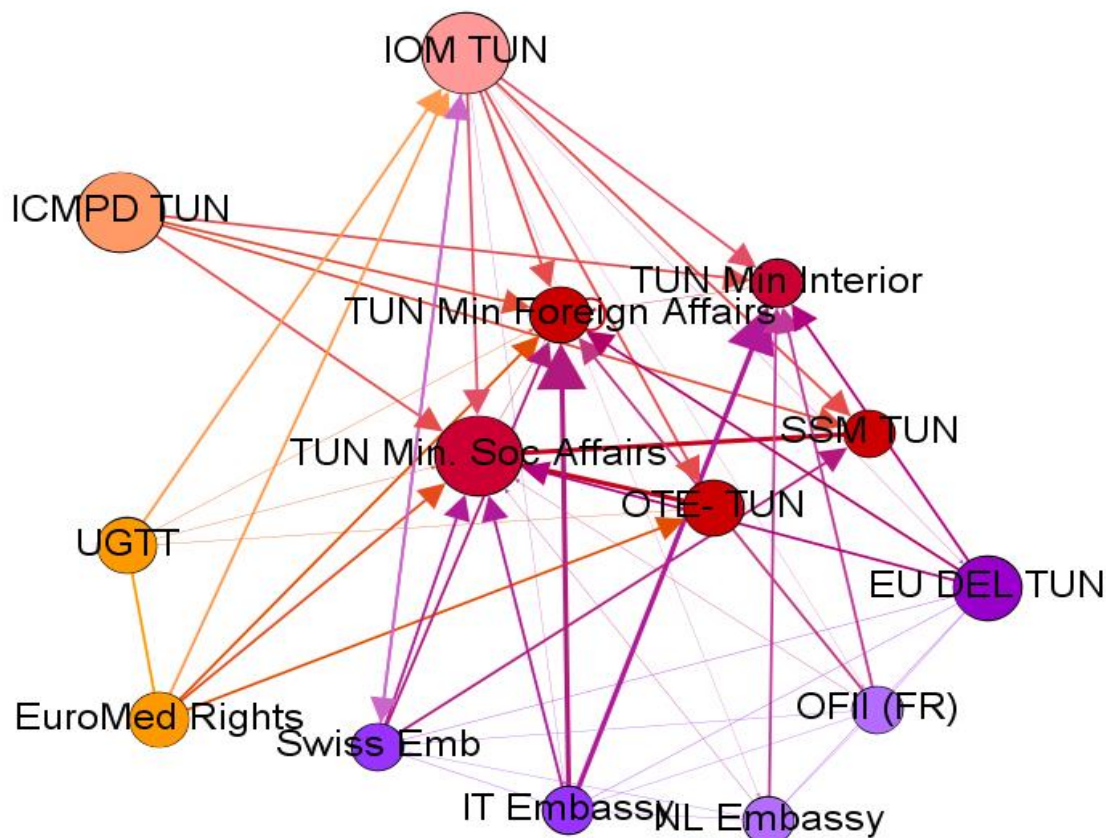


Figure 6: Tunisia's EU oriented external migration governance. Same explanation of nodes and ties .

As discussed in Chapter 1, the vast majority of the literature on EU external migration governance reflects a Eurocentric bias of EU policy making, and gives marginal importance to internal dynamics of non-EU countries as drivers of migration-related action (see also Collyer 2016). The analysis of the changes that followed the 2011 revolution showed the wealth of new actors that established themselves as important nodes in the network. This showed that rather than a reaction to the EU's externalisation objectives alone, Tunisia has important internal dynamics that define a networked constellation of actors, in a system of internal power relations that disproves the idea of a simple transfer of policies and priorities from the outside to a bloc of unified recipient actors. Visualisation of these dynamics facilitates understanding of the extent and direction of pressures between actors. However, as mentioned before, an intrinsic limitation emerges from the fact that their governance structure after the revolution has been volatile. Many changes have occurred, with 5 different heads of governments holding power in 7 years, and many changes in the leadership and direction given to migration, specifically through the SEITE, turf of political clashes between the Islamist party and secular party. These political clashes were also reflected in the internal organisation

and administration of the Tunisian migration governance network, with frequent changes in power dynamics as exemplified by the fight over the SEITE between the MoSA and MoFA. Thus, the power dynamics identified here may be susceptible to change in a short time period. Notwithstanding, their analysis highlights the extent to which these dynamics do define a Tunisian networked governance on the basis of local dynamics. Specifically, as mentioned above, relations with the EU have been structured around the Mobility Partnership, which gives a degree of stability to who the EU's interlocutors are and where they work.

Relations between different ministries and government services appear to be overall quite weak, resulting in a lack of coordination in the work of a significant and growing number of officials working on migration related issues. This emerges also in relation to the external dimension of migration issues, that while it is formally within the portfolio of the MoFA, given the predominant role it assumes in the Tunisian understanding of migration in relation to its Diaspora it becomes often scattered across services. The main findings show that despite it being granted increasing political legitimacy to lead on migration issues, the MoFA failed to operationalise this, finding great resistance and isolating its position in the network. This was particularly the case with the MoSA, that opposed the change in political leadership on migration, institutionally losing this to its MoFA counterparts in theory, whilst de facto keeping a central role within the network both as regards political relations with the EU, and on the implementation of various projects under the Mobility Partnership signed with the EU. The tensions are also reflected in the lack of ratification of the National Strategy on Migration (NSM), prepared largely within the MoSA but with ambivalent reception across the network, with no actor emerging as powerful enough to impose its line over the other services. In a number of events attended, the divergent positions on the NMS emerged clearly, with MoSA officials always insisting on its direct referencing and usage as if it were the common legal framework, and other actors, notably from the MoFA and the Ministry for International Cooperation and Development, resisting this use.

These divergences lead to a degree of isolation in the network, represented by the presence of weak ties amongst these ministries, other services have placed themselves even further away. This is the case of the Ministries of Interior, Defence and —to a minor extent— Justice. As reported above, after an initial opening following the 2011 revolution and the change in leadership, these services cut the ties with other actors

operating in this networked governance, moving towards a centralised modus operandi that goes back to that of Ben Ali's government. Their concerns, especially after the terrorist attacks in 2015, focused on security issues and border control needed to ensure stability to Tunisia in a turbulent region. While the high politicisation of the work of these actors gives them closer access to higher political levels, they don't use this to impose a security-oriented line on migration over the whole governance of migration. Instead, matters concerning EU-Tunisian relations on migration are often left to counterparts from the other services, becoming interested mainly when it comes to securing funding and additional resources from the EU for security purposes. While this allows more actors to have a role in networked governance, other actors — particularly within the MoFA— lament that the rise of their position in the migration governance network is just discursive, without means and resources to impose their position. Various interviewees in particular indicated the doubling of the funding given to the Ministry of Defence colleagues in 2016 as a clear indication of the government's priorities. This adds to the evidence that whilst assuming a greater role, the MoFA did not have the means to translate this in networked power and influence over other actors.

These weak relations between Ministries, with no clear direction in power relations, determine a low density of inter-organisational links. When this persists over time, it leaves a substantial gap within the network, a 'structural hole' emerges (Burt 2001). As Wunderlich suggests (2012), while representing a shortcoming this also creates an opportunity for organisations that have the means to act as 'bridges', becoming brokers of material and non-material resources for both sides. The map represented in Figure 6 shows how this role is carried out by International Organisations, that similarly to the Tunisian CSO found new space after the 2011 regime change. The section above detailed the emergence and importance of these IOs, highlighting a degree of competition between them. For this reason, relations in between these actors are present but not that strong, with only the IOM standing out as an organisation with the power to influence the agenda of others as well. This is mostly a result of its unique centrality, given its strong ties with governmental actors across the whole network. As such, IOM is also the strongest broker across ministries, even implementing a project called 'Mainstreaming migration', helping all relevant ministries include migration issues in their portfolio. Another IO that manages to place itself as a broker within the institutional structural holes is ICMPD, going beyond the role of implementer of projects and trying to act as a support for a coherent and comprehensive

migration governance of Tunisia. This is most evident in the cases of relations with the MoFA and MoSA, as it formally relates to the MoFA through its EuroMed IV project, but works widely also on a frequent basis with the MoSA, acting as a source of trusted knowledge and know how, especially as regards EU-Tunisians relations on migration. However, through projects financed by the EU, it also reaches out to the Ministry of Interior to support its security technical assistance at the border ('Integrated Border Management' project). This proximity between IOs such as IOM and ICMPD and Tunisian government services complements a body of literature (see for example Lavenex 2015) that recognises international organisation as key brokers of a discourse on migration constructed in the EU and often based on security-oriented perspectives. While the fact that these IOs do act as a channel for a particular discourse is confirmed by the power relations identified here, the extent to which this is 1) mainly based on security-oriented approaches and 2) that this is passively received by Tunisian counterparts, will be discussed in the following Chapters, finding a much more nuanced picture.

The IOM and ICMPD do not act as main brokers of an EU framing of migration also due to the fact that EU MS themselves are present and very active, or at least those that have identified a clear strategic interest with Tunisia, Italy and France above all, which use their presence to put high pressure on the Ministry of Interior as regards border control, and the MoFA as regards readmission of irregular Tunisian citizens. What is interesting to note as regards the EU MS relations is that the relations amongst themselves are very weak, as they all reported a lack of coordination. This is hardly due to the impossibility to relate more. The Swiss embassy for example has organised an informal meeting of international and EU partners in Tunis on migration, that meets regularly. Yet, the absence of further coordination shows a degree of self-interest by EU MS in establishing their own connections with Tunisian authorities.

Finally, the UGTT and EuroMed Rights, an umbrella organisation of civil society organisations active in Tunisia also on migration issues, evidence the active role that civil society has in bringing forward its position, mostly relating to protection of human rights. This was also reflected in interviews with officials from Tunisian Ministries, most notably the MoSA, which recognized the great pressure exerted by the civil society, often praising this as the most notable achievement of the 2011 Jasmine revolution.

### 4.3.3 EU-Tunisia relations

The two cases of the internal networks that define the migration governance in the EU and Tunisia show that there are important differences in power relations and pressures occurring within. The EU's networked migration governance is shown to be a turf of significant political pressures, from the 'political masters' and the MS, to DG HOME, and then to services more competent on the external dimension such as DG NEAR and the EEAS that try to escape them. This politicisation of migration inevitably has a strong external component that drives the establishment of directed ties from those who operate close to the political level, who works more closely in the implementation field. In contrast, in Tunisia this does not occur, as security driven actors have more internal priorities, and therefore do not need to put pressure on other governmental services to reach their objectives. This contributes to the various levels of isolation in the network, defined by the weak intra organisational ties that result out of the current organisation of Tunisian migration governance.

These dynamics in the EU and in Tunisia clearly impact relations between the two partners. From the EU, most political pressure is exercised internally, to establish a common narrative based on the security-oriented political priorities. However, in line with what Brunsson (1989) suggested, 'political masters' tend to be more concerned with the 'talk' needed for decision making that leads to policy formulation but are much less interested to follow up in their action. With this occurring, often actors like DG NEAR, the EEAS and its EU Delegation in Tunis, can act as brokers of relations with Tunisian actors enjoying a relative distance from politicised influences, that is anyway channelled by HOME but mostly concerns the countries that are considered as high priorities in political circles. Tunisia for most of the time following the 2015 crisis stayed below the political radar, only assuming a relative increase in political significance with migration flows rising in autumn 2017 (Lixi 2018).

Such relations, as already highlighted, are often brokered by IOs such as IOM and ICMPD, that together act as project implementers but also assume a role that is closer to institutional frameworks of Tunisian migration governance. However, EU institutional actors do relate directly with counterparts in Tunisia. This determines that personal connections are established between actors, relations of trust that form the basis of

such relations. Despite the fact that the EU holds the obvious upper hand as biggest donor of the Tunisian economy, they largely occur *inter pares*, given that the EU has long learned that its political and financial power is not sufficient as a means to reach the management of migration desired. Given this is an EU priority but not a Tunisian priority, this changes the power balance, leading Tunisia to not have a passive position vis-à-vis the pressures of the EU. However, the fact that these connections are established between individual counterparts, also means that the internal changes that frequently take place in the Tunisian institutional framework are often not registered in the EU. An example encountered in this research clearly shows this. A high-level official within the MoSA had been the contact point for EU counterparts in migration relations with Tunisia. Although the MoFA was then entrusted with a leading role in relations with the EU, such personal relations remained untouched, with this official remaining the contact point for EU interactions. As a result, the MoFA tried to recruit this official to its own administration, creating a clash with the MoSA, but without success. Later, with the SEITE returning to the MoSA, authority on the issue was also moved back. These power shifts suggest that personal connections across borders which are shown in the network represented, are very significant for the development of EU-Tunisian relations.

In parallel to these networked interactions, Figure 4 (p.99) shows how political circles in Europe, mostly channelled via high level actors in DG HOME, do try to entertain relations with Tunisian counterparts. However, given their lack of interest and concern for most of the issues that EU counterparts bring to the fore, these ties are very infrequent and weak, rarely leading to substantial action.

Overall, this section has examined the meaning of the relations between the actors identified and visualised in this Chapter. While SNA helps represent nodes and ties, the section complemented this with a qualitative approach to SNA that gave an understanding of the situated context within which actors operate, and the constraints that actors need to make sense of when developing their actions. What remains to be analysed is the extent to which these relations and these pressure act as vehicles of framings of migration. In fact, it is one thing to frequently relate with an actor, or to be susceptible to its pressure, and then act on the basis of a similar framing of the challenges and issues faced; it is quite another to frequently relate with an actor, and this notwithstanding, resist potential pressures and transfers of framings of migration, developing actions on the basis of different understandings. Therefore, following the analysis of the understandings of the actors in

this network of chapter 4 and 5, chapter 7 will then link this back to the SNA. By so doing, it will analyse what actors compose it, the pressures that define their situated context, and the way these impact on their development of a sensible environment in which to operate.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

To understand the factors that are shaping and framing relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia, the actor centred approach of this research posits that it is first necessary to understand which actors compose the migration governance network within and between the two cases. In line with the first sub-question of this research, it is then necessary to understand who plays a role in this migration governance system, and how. This Chapter focused on this, analysing the actors that operate and the environment in which they operate, focusing on how different actors relate with each other and on the consequences of this. From such analysis, three considerations have emerged.

First, a significant number of actors plays a role both in the EU and in Tunisia, warranting their analysis to understand how relations take place, given the high number of within and across border interactions identified. In the EU in particular, a more political constellation of the network has been identified, composed both by ‘political masters’ and technical officials working close to political dynamics such as in DG HOME; this network operates in parallel to what has been previously identified in the literature (Wunderlich 2012) as an ‘implementation network’, i.e. actors more involved with the implementation of policies and projects across borders, further away from the political dynamics which have shaped migration policy frames in the EU (Lavenex and Kunz 2008). The visualisation of the network has also allowed for a comparison with what emerge in primary and secondary sources as being the most prominent actors prior to the migration crisis of 2015 for the EU, and the Jasmine revolution of 2011 in Tunisia. It emerged that a significant number of new actors started playing a role in the respective migration governance systems: in Tunisia, a move away from centralised migration policy making of Ben Ali allowed for the inclusion of different ministries, IGOs, NGOs and civil society actors; in the EU, the new funding structures developed in response to the so called migration crisis have enshrined new relative power of actors that before were largely marginalised in the EU’s external migration governance network, such as DG NEAR and the EEAS.



Second, the Chapter considered that the visualisation of the relations offered by quantitative SNA was not sufficient to explain the situated nature of actors, unravelling the constraints and pressures of the environment in which they operated. Therefore, adding a qualitative component to this analysis, it visualised also pressures, mostly of political nature, that were embedded in relations identified as ongoing between different actors. This showed that very central actors, such as DG HOME in the EU, did in fact relate with many actors, for example with cabinets and Member States, but that such relations don't necessarily translate in more power. Rather, they embedded political pressures which created an environment full of constraints within which actors in HOME need to operate. Overall, this showed an effort of the EU political network to exert pressure over the rest of EU actors that acted as brokers in relations with Tunisia, and thus have this pressure transferred to Tunisia on the basis of their policy framings of migration and its challenges. This is however not a given, and the rest of this research will seek to understand if and how this takes place.

This analysis is particularly necessary given that in the literature reviewed in Chapter 1, it has been identified how much of the analytical focus has been placed on the EU's migration control externalisation efforts. As such, the actors assumed to drive these efforts are those close to security-oriented services, from the Interior and Home Affairs. This may have been the case at certain times over the past two decades, when the 'policemen were replacing the diplomats' (Guiraudon 2003: 267), with migration control being a niche topic in the hands of such actors. However, as different realities unravelled across the EU and its neighbourhood in the past years, the actors involved grew substantially, altering the composition of this governance network. To view migration governance as implicitly driven by security-oriented actors because outputs produced reflect such security-oriented policy framing is misleading, and it is based on the methodological flaw that this research seeks to correct. By looking at the network within which migration governance processes are developed, the Chapter clearly shows that the EU does not operate as a bloc when 'going abroad' with its external migration policies, and that Tunisia does not succumb to these security-oriented pressures, adopting such a policy frame of migration and its challenges.

The original approach used in this Chapter has thus been useful to identify, visualise and analyse the strategically selective context within which actors operate, and understand their position as situated agents. This shows the extent to which individual framing and sensemaking is bound by the social level, in line with

the methodological approach developed in Chapter 3. Having replied to the first sub-question of the research, it is now possible to delve into the other three sub-questions, analysing the ways in which such an environment plays an impact in individual processes of framing and sensemaking about the causes and consequences of migration and its crisis.

## **CHAPTER 5- THE FACTORS FRAMING AND SHAPING THE EU'S EXTERNAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE**

In Chapter 2, the literature reviewed considered, implicitly or explicitly, that actors in EU external migration governance have a strongly security-oriented perspective about migration. This reflects the existing research on the topic, largely focused on the externalisation of border controls on which most of the literature focuses upon. However, as the fieldwork of this research was carried out, more and more interviews and meetings were held with actors that, broadly speaking, had a 'progressive' view of migration, meaning an interest in the access of migrants to the EU and for their rights. Chapter 4 has already addressed the issue by visualising how different framings of migration are present across the network. This Chapter seeks to investigate these understandings and their drivers further, so as to explain how action is developed on their basis. Lavenex (2001) identified how since its inception in the 1990s, the EU's external migration governance has been shaped by a tension between a 'realist' frame, based on security and the protection of borders and sovereignty, and a 'liberal' frame, interested with the protection of human rights before borders. Recognising that the 'realist' frame was marginalising the liberal one, the scholar focuses on policy frames, as opposed to the 'cognitive beliefs of individuals' (Lavenex 2001:26). This chapter follows Lavenex's (2001) analysis of policy frames, but complements this by looking at the individual cognitive level, in order to explain micro-level drivers of migration relations with Tunisia. Thus, the actors operating in the EU are at the centre of this Chapter, which asks:

- 1) How do they understand migration?
- 2) How do they understand a 'crisis of migration', and in particular the European Migration Crisis?
- 3) How do these understandings then shape action in the EU's external migration relations with Tunisia?

By addressing these questions, the Chapter analyses framings of migration in their relation with framings of migration crisis, and how such diagnostic framings about what is going on in the environment are followed by a prognosis about what to do. Through this analysis, the Chapter shows the power of cognitive bias and dissonance as drivers of framing and action. In line with the work of Lavenex (2001) on policy frames, it recognises two main constellations of actors which frame migration either as a threat, namely understanding

migration as political, cultural, social or economic threat, or through a migrant-centred perspective, with actors being mostly interested with the experiences of migrants and on how to make these positive for them and all stakeholders involved. From this, the Chapter analyses how action follows linearly in cases where individual framings are aligned with frames which define the environment in which actors operate, driven by a cognitive bias which simplifies the complexity of migration presenting a possible shortcut on the basis of which to develop actions. However, when such alignment does not occur, cognitive dissonance shapes the action of actors which have an individual understanding of migration closer to a migrant-centred frame, but which operate in an environment largely defined by a security-oriented framing (see Chapter 4 p.120 for identification of this context in the SNA map).

The Chapter is organised as follows. First, an analysis of the security-oriented policy frame is offered, building on Lavenex's analysis (2001) and contextualising it within the European Migration Crisis, as it is against this background that—to varying degrees—actors within the EU's migration governance network operate. It then looks at the way actors have framed the effects of migration, identifying that while some actors frame migration on the basis of a threat, others have a 'human interest' and focus on consequences for the migrants. The section that follows focuses on how this applies also to understandings of migration crises, and how these act as triggers for action. Having defined these diagnostic understandings, the Chapter then analyses their prognostic implications to identify how via 'synthesising cues' from the individual and social level, the cognitive biases and dissonance either drive policy towards security-oriented action through a 'pull factor' bias that focuses on deterrence, or through a development-oriented bias that disregards political considerations to focus mainly on the migrants' experience, wellbeing and dealing with migration as an opportunity. As such, the Chapter shows the analytical value of the approach taken in this study, as it helps to understand how it is through the organisational process of migration governance that the challenges with which actors are confronted are defined, and action developed accordingly.

## **5.1 How Do Actors Understand Migration?**

### **5.1.1 The security framing of the EU's migration policy**

As defined in Chapter 3, in making sense of migration, governance actors are heavily impacted by frames that are present in the environment in which they operate. Drawing from the work of Lavenex (1999, 2001,

2004), Chapter 2 has shown how the European migration policy has been based on a security-oriented policy frame, working to keep irregular migrants and asylum seekers as far away from Europe as possible (see also Geddes 2005). Lavenex (2001) identified how this was shaped by a realist policy frame, which prevailed over a liberal frame and shaped EU external migration governance prioritising the protection of borders and sovereignty over the protection of migrants and human rights. With a substantial continuation of such framing today (Guiraudon 2017), a security-oriented approach is largely driven by perceptions of ‘uncontrolled migration’, where migration is intrinsically associated to crisis and disorder, in origin as well as destination countries. This emerges powerfully in the first paragraph of the ‘Communication from the Commission on the Delivery of a European Agenda on migration’ (European Commission 2017a), as migration is associated to crises in countries of origin driving migration, such as the ‘Syrian crisis, displacing record number of people, as did conflicts, instability and poverty in many parts of the world’, upsetting ‘the integrity of the Common European Asylum System and of the Schengen area of free movement for European citizens’. As such, the construction of a security-oriented narrative of migration is summarised, by picturing migration as an external shock and Europe as a passive recipient of this. Migration becomes a threat to the ‘integrity’ of the European (migration) governance system.

In this process of associating migration to instability and security concerns, perceptions on the politics of migration become key drivers of a security-oriented policy frame. As public attention to migration increases due to the increased visibility of migrant crossings in the Mediterranean, and the human tragedies that follow, migration, as Anderson puts it, becomes associated with ‘*problematic mobility*’ (Anderson 2017: 1532). Migration is intrinsically perceived as a problem in the popular discourse, with the iconic representation of migration as leading to chaos and a perpetual state of emergency.

It is against this background that we can see how the security-oriented policy frame on migration takes hold, with a wealth of political statements, such as the following from Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, made at the European Parliament:

The migration crisis has made us aware with full force, of the need to rebuild effective control of our external borders, while the aggressive behaviour of certain third countries,

and the destabilisation around Europe, had made us aware of the need to defend our territory (European Council 2017a) .

This cyclical and self-reinforcing security policy frame developed through the years underlies the developments of the European migration governance. While in 2016 alone 3.3 million regular permits have been issued by the EU's Member States for Non-EU country Nationals (TCNs)<sup>6</sup>, the legal and positive aspects of migration are not considered, and it is constructed as a problem, an external threat visualised in the chaotic situation of the Mediterranean represented as an invasion towards Europe. To varying degrees, it is against this background that governance actors operate, in an environment heavily shaped by this security-oriented frame. The extent to which such frames permeate the environment in which actors operate has been identified and visualised in Chapter 4 (p.120). In the social network map developed there, it is evident how a certain framing of migration defines characteristics and relations of the actors in DG HOME, Cabinets and Member States. It is in this politicised segment of the network that security-oriented framings of migration are the most present.

The security-oriented paradigm that frames migration in policy outputs increases the salience of problems and threats posed by migration, thereby, as Entman would put it (1993: 52) increasing the probability that those situated actors that operate in an environment where such frames are present perceived migration as such. This research follows Brunsson's (1989) suggestion and avoids taking this at face value, thereby not making assumptions about the functioning of governance on the basis of such outputs. Rather, it focuses on the way such frames permeate the environment in which an actor operates and become part of the sensemaking process of situated actors, rather than sole drivers of the decision-making process. For this reason, having now identified the security-oriented diagnostic understandings that underline the EU's migration policy frame, the 'ideational core of the policy field' as Lavenex (2001:26) puts it, the focus will be on individual 'situated' actors, and on how they relate with this policy frame in making sense of the effects of migration in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>6</sup> Eurostat, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_resfirst&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resfirst&lang=en)

### 5.1.2 Framing migration as a threat

A first constellation of actors framed migration largely following a security-oriented approach, and mainly worked in the services part of the ‘political network’ identified in Chapter 4, where such a frame was predominant. What defines their framing of migration is the fact that they make a strong division between two categories of migrants: 1) irregular economic migrants and 2) individuals seeking and needing international protection. While in the politics of migration leading to the policy frame discussed before, the blurring of the two categories was much more frequent, in their narrative actors did acknowledge this difference. The two categories however are constructed in a clash with one other, as an interviewee from a Member State affirms

if 10.000 arrive, and of these 3.000 are refugees, the problem is that I don’t have means to send quickly the rest back home. And so I can’t guarantee rights of the 3.000 adequately enough because I have to guarantee minimum standards to the others as well.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than holding EU institutions accountable for the problems relating to the management of mixed flows in the Mediterranean, irregular ‘economic migrants’ are held accountable for the EU’s failing asylum system. However, it emerges clearly how despite this change in the narrative used by such actors when introducing their views of migration, their attitudes to irregular migration emerge as much more salient than any other more ‘liberal’ consideration on the protection of refugees when understanding the effects of migration.

Consonant with the security-oriented policy frame shaped by the fear of migration, actors that frame migration as a threat are driven by perceptions of vulnerability to an uncontrolled migration and to an invasion that becomes part of the way migration towards Europe is conceptualised. This threat emerges in two inter related ways: 1) in relation to the actual magnitude of numbers and rapid increases posing a threat to the EU’s wellbeing and cultural values, or 2) relating to the politics of immigration in Europe.

As regards the magnitude of numbers, this way of framing the ‘threat’ posed by migration resonates greatly with the idea of ‘invasion’ in the security-oriented policy framing of migration. In particular, this becomes linked to the idea of irregular migration as a never-ending phenomenon, as the settlement of irregular

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with official from Member State, June 2016.

migrants attracts further irregular migrants. Although expressing the view that migration is part of human history, it being as ‘old as the bible’<sup>8</sup>, the preoccupation is on how sudden ‘floodings’ upsets the system and becomes a threat. As an official from the EU puts it:

I always use the example of a tap and floodings to show how we need to be careful as from a limited flow it can escalate having bad consequences, like floodings do.<sup>9</sup>

This way of referring to migration has been already recognised in the literature as being de-humanising and integral to a security-oriented narrative (Luu 2015). The above interviewee summarises this more widespread perception present in this constellation of actors, fearing the consequences of a never-ending migration. Together with the consideration of the magnitude of migration as constituting an invasion, the fear for such consequences emerges as having a cultural significance as well. A European Commission official put it as follows:

The perception of being invaded, especially by Muslim cultures that come in large quantities and take over Europe, that builds the threat of losing our own social and cultural identity. The real underlining perception in the EU population is this: if there are too many migrants from Muslim countries without possibility of integrating them successfully, and at the same time having this relatively aggressive Muslim approach with the west and our values, than this threat of becoming foreigners in our own states and losing our identity<sup>10</sup>.

It is notable that when asked about her/his own understandings of migration, this interviewee quickly refers back to the understandings upon which she/he builds a ‘sensible environment’ in which to operate. His/her personal reflection don’t appear to be the element that matters, but rather the focus is on perceptions about what constraints defines the work carried out. In this case, this related to the popular understandings about migration and its challenges as interpreted by this official, which is considered to construct the political context from which this work depends. This emerged frequently in interviews, especially with actors more likely to consider the impact of migration on EU politics.

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with European Commission Official, June 2016

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission Official, January 2017



While this way of framing the threat posed by migration takes issue with the perceived magnitude of migrants arriving, many more governance actors framed the threat deriving from migration merely as a political one, acknowledging its distance to actual numbers and facts. However, they recognised it as playing a pivotal role in changing attitudes towards migrants from European citizens, and thus driving European liberal democracies more and more towards racist and xenophobic populist positions. An increasing body of research (Dennison and Geddes 2017) shows how this argument is not as straightforward, with attitudes to migration even becoming more positive across the EU during the time of the migration crisis referred to. However, the point here is that irrespective of the actual evidence of such claims, this understanding is developed as a completely plausible explanation, on the basis of which their sensible environment is constructed. As a high-level official from the European Commission puts it,

The main characteristic of the central Mediterranean route is that it is extremely visible in terms of sea crossings, rescues and deaths at sea, rather than being a flux that is important at an absolute level, in terms of numbers. But it is very visible, also linked to an emotional response it triggers<sup>11</sup>.

It is this visibility that is considered to lead to negative perceptions about migration invading Europe, given that it leads to a ‘difficult political climate and tension that derives from immigration, turning a flow that is completely manageable into something from which great political instability emerges’<sup>12</sup>. Xenophobia and other tensions are seen as deriving from immigration, problematising this phenomenon as a whole. As an interviewee puts it, this is because it leads to

a crisis of values that had repercussions on the founding principles of the EU...and this has important implications, like the widespread xenophobia, but also an increased blatant racism that recalls bad situations of the past century in Europe<sup>13</sup>.

In comparing such dark times in European history with the ascent of far-right, anti-immigrant parties, various governance actors particularly close to the political circles where a security-oriented frame is developed and

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with an official from the EEAS, July 2016

<sup>12</sup> Interview with official of an EU MS June 2016

<sup>13</sup> Interview with official of an EU MS July 2017

reinforced, believe it is important for liberals across Europe to protect the liberal nature of the EU's democratic system, and that this entails clamping down on irregular migration.

This constellation of governance actors frames migration as a threat, whether it is because they understand the negative consequences of migration due to its magnitude, or because of the political effects this is having across Europe, supposedly eroding 'the founding principles of the EU'. While the latter view is not necessarily linked to an understanding of migration per se, it has powerful implications in the way actors construct the sensible environment in which they operate, and perceive the pressures as based on such understandings of migration. This way of framing migration has been identified as pertaining to actors caught in frequent political relations. However, these diagnoses emerge as quite limited within the network. As will now be shown, many more officials adopt a 'human interest' frame when understanding the effects of migration in the Mediterranean.

### 5.1.3 Framing migration through a human-interest frame

As suggested already, many governance actors interviewed across the network expressed largely liberal views about migration. These broadly referred to a more open idea of access of migrants to the EU, as well as significant attention to their rights. These actors, as opposed to colleagues that understood migration on the basis of a 'threat frame', did not differentiate in a significant manner between categories of migrants, and while recognising different drivers of migration, their diagnostic reflections on the consequences focused on mixed migration flows. Significant attention was placed on the effects of migration for migrants themselves. As an official put it,

First of all, the consequences are for those that migrate. These are migrations where during the journey all kind of human rights are breached, mass violations, some speak of genocide like situations, people dead in the Sahara of which we don't have numbers<sup>14</sup>.

It emerges that a central focus for this constellation of actors is laid on the migration journey, with the deaths at sea recognised by most interviewees as the foremost and most problematic consequence of the status quo (see p. 138 for a further reflection on this). In blurring the boundaries between migrants and asylum seekers,

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with official European Commission, June 2016.

the irregular condition of their journey is recognised as a threat to the rights and dignity of migrants, in every stage of their experience. As well as the loss of lives at sea, attention is placed on the conditions of irregularity upon arrival, which forces migrants to conditions of exploitation in the black market of European economies. As an official from a MS states,

it is clear that there is a market for those people that move, which end up contributing to the economy in a way or another. The problem is that often this occurs in the black market<sup>15</sup>.

This is not only in reference to a typology of migration that is directed towards Europe, but given their frequent concern for protecting the rights and dignity of individuals universally, significant emphasis is placed on south-south migration, given that

a lot of people don't want to move to Europe, and remain in countries like Tunisia and Morocco (...) that have a reticence to admit their role as destination country and offer dignified conditions to these migrants<sup>16</sup>.

These views lead to diagnoses of migration based on different understandings of its consequences, as a European Commission official states:

The problems are much more complex, and hiding all these elements gives a false perception of invasion that doesn't exist! If you look at the numbers and the global picture you realise that migration is a much bigger phenomenon compared to the few arriving at our door<sup>17</sup>.

As another official from the European Commission reports, this emphasis on 'the global picture' is something that is being pushed forward by actors and services that are new to the EU's migration governance network post-crisis, that reflect not only on the challenges of migration, but also opportunities, for non-EU countries but also for Europe. Building from this understanding in fact, such actors evidence how there is no

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with an Official from an EU MS, June 2016.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission Official, June 2017

<sup>17</sup> Interview with a European Commission official, July 2017.

point for Europe to close itself, given that the consequences of migration may be beneficial if migrant rights are protected ensuring their successful economic impact. As a European Commission official states:

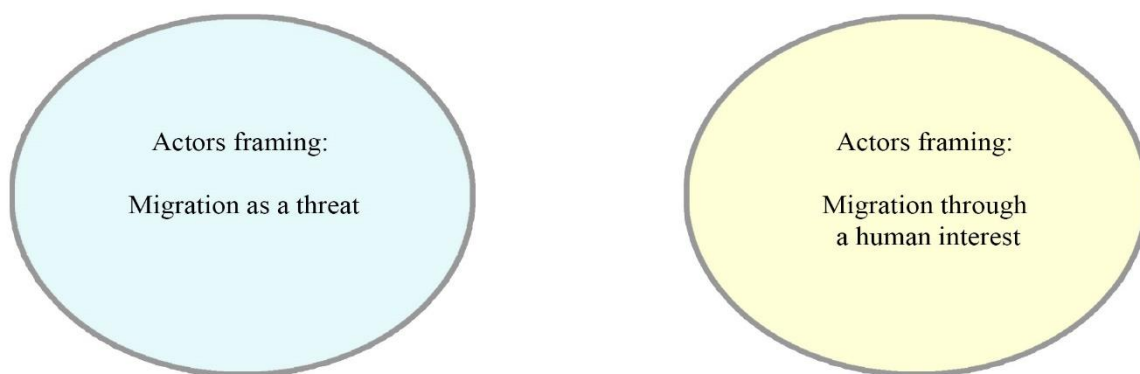
Personally I picture Europe as an old man that stays behind closed doors at home because it doesn't want to share the little that is left to him...this is my vision of Europe! We are more and more closing because Europe is a continent that is falling, and we are doing everything to keep our status, whilst today the production in terms of ideas and economic terms is elsewhere, not in Europe. So this is the consequence of a bad political vision of what Europe needs to become. There are a whole set of other states on the needs of opening up, also to migration. This conservative vision that is being pushed for is counterproductive. Of course, to include in our society a number of people that is quite different culturally and religiously, is not easy, and the challenge is there. But for me it is a lack of a political vision of what Europe needs to become not only now and in 2 and 3 years, but on the long term as well<sup>18</sup>.

It is 'conservative visions' that are problematic rather than migration, according to actors that frame migration as such. Clearly, such diagnoses have powerful implications for potential courses of action and the salience they assume in these understandings lead to bracketing elements perceived as positive while ignoring other issues recognised but marginalised, such as political problems that may emerge in European societies.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with an European Commission Official, June 2017.

The interest in this Chapter thus far has been on the different issue framings of migration and their effects, thereby concerning different interpretations of the problem, which, as Dekker and Scholten put it (2017:203), ‘leads to different implications with regard to policy consequences’ (see also Entnam 2003; Rein and Schon 1993). Two different evaluations and diagnoses of migration have emerged from two different constellations of actors: one that views migration through the lenses of a ‘threat’; another that keeps a ‘human interest’, with attention on consequences for migrants.



*Figure 7 :Two constellations of EU external migration governance actors*

While those that view migration as a threat are found to operate in highly security-oriented environments, i.e. the political network identified in Chapter 4 (p. 98), actors with a ‘human interest’ are much more widespread across the EU migration governance network. It is important to note that this framing analysis does not suggest that actors only look at migration through the elements described as either leading to a threat frame or a human-interest frame. Rather, the analysis has focused on the increased salience that a particular frame assumes in defining the position of interviewees. This means that situated actors did not only focus on the issues analysed above, but that elements traceable to such a frame were most evident, elevated in their salience in their diagnostic problem definition, either on the basis of their own understandings, or as a consequence of what they perceived to be the understandings driving their ‘sensible environment’. This is important for the purposes of this study in order to understand the factors shaping and driving action, given that the elevated salience of the dimensions identified increases the possibility that those governance actors will perceive migration, its effects and problems, on that basis, storing it like this in

memory (Fiske and Taylor 1991, Entman 1993). Given the retention of issues on that basis, Entnam (1993) suggests that frames not only play a role in the problem identification, but also in the diagnosis of causes, which then leads to prognostic understandings on possible adequate actions to be carried out. Before analysing what these are, we now assess the role played by crisis in impacting the actors' understandings of the EU's external migration network in light of unfolding events in the Mediterranean.

## 5.2 Understanding The 'European Migration Crisis'

The concept of 'Crisis' is central to this thesis. Chapter 2 identified crises as a key driver of substantial European integration on the governance of migration, since its inception in the late 1980s. Chapter 4 then showed how the 'European Migration Crisis' determined significant changes in the actor composition of the EU external migration governance network by bringing new actors to it. In the previous section of this Chapter, crisis emerged as a driver of the salience of politicised considerations on migration. Therefore, the concept of 'crisis' is embedded in many elements and frames analysed already. This section aims to make an analytical distinction between different ways of understanding crisis and diagnosing the problems that emerge from it, valuing in this manner its role in the sensemaking process. As conditions of uncertainty meet perceptions of vulnerability, actors feel the need to make sense of issues (see Chapter 3, p.67). However, it is misleading to consider this an exercise in grasping a pre-existing set of problems, dimensions of the migration reality unfolding in and around Europe. The framing of crisis cannot be separated from the analysis carried out above relating to the framing of migration, as each are causes and effects of the other. The causal loop in Figure 9 visualises this relation, showing migration is fulfilling frames on its crisis, and the framing of crisis fulfilling a particular way of understanding migration.

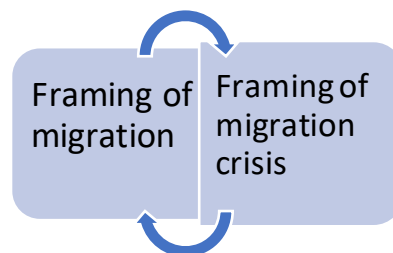


Figure 8: Framing migration and crisis: a causal loop

The section first looks at how this relation unfolds for situated actors prone to frame migration as a threat, then it focuses on how crisis is understood by those with a ‘human interest’ frame, concluding with an analysis of how these perceptions drive processes of sensemaking in the organisational settings under study.

### 5.2.1 Crisis as a threat for Europe

As noted before, the problematisation of migration manifested by certain actors led to defining unfolding migration flows as a ‘flooding’, an open tap that they were struggling to close. This idea emerges as a plausible explanation of the unfolding events, when considering that actors understood ‘crisis’ as a producer of very large fluxes of migrants. Migration was -and is- a phenomenon that is impacting European governance from the outside, and for which solutions need to be found. As an interviewee puts it:

the numbers obviously have increased...we were used to having 200-300 thousand, then 600, then 1.3 million...and scaling up your responses in two years’ time is not impossible but it is quite a challenge.

Yes, that’s a real challenge to scale things up in 6 months, more support, structures, people that do the interviews, etc<sup>19</sup>.

Through this diagnosis of ‘crisis’, the European migration governance system is seen as passive recipient of such numbers. In relation to Tunisia, this was particularly expressed in relation to the ‘2011 boom of Tunisians that passed through Italy to come to Europe’<sup>20</sup>. In fact, in the aftermath of the 2011 regime change, weak Tunisian border controls led to the departure of about 25.000 Tunisians to Italy. The Italian government responded by giving them provisional documents that de facto led to their departure to other EU Member States (Lixi 2017). This led to the first temporary suspension of the Schengen Agreement at the border between France and Italy, reinstating border controls to deter and stop this secondary movement of migrants. As an interviewee from a MS states,

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with an official from an EU MS, June 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with European Commission official June 2017.

No MS has the capacity to deal with these kind of numbers. Also, as I don't have the possibility to return those not having grounds for protection, the issue becomes even more complicated<sup>21</sup>

From the diagnosis of crisis follows a diagnosis of the problems caused by migration, with a powerful indication of what actions should be taken, namely return. These prognostic understandings will be analysed in the next section, but it is significant to note that such actions are considered as problematic to implement because of the big numbers of arrivals produced by crisis, rather than by the difficulty for the migration governance system to define alternative plans of actions. As such, little reflection takes place as to how the governance of migration plays a role in producing such numbers.

In reflections on the numbers of arrivals defining 'crisis', many references were made to the problematic issue of deaths at sea. However, these considerations were lateral, and never became the most salient element of their understandings that were more focused upon the problematic issue of 'floodings' and 'invasions'. This clearly emerged in various interviews carried out for this thesis in 2016, as interviewees treated the problems of deaths at sea as something of the past, for which already a lot had been done, despite 2016 being the deadliest year along the Mediterranean routes. In contrast to this, this issue of the loss of migrant lives at sea does emerge as the most problematic element of this crisis for situated actors having a 'human interest' frame, to which we now turn.

### 5.2.2 From a 'crisis of migrants' to a 'crisis for migrants'

A 'human-interest' framing of migration defines crisis largely in terms of the loss of migrant lives at sea, which, for the duration of this research, from 2015 to 2018, totalled respectively 3.771, 5.096, 3.139, 2.227<sup>22</sup>. Migrant deaths are therefore the centre of the problem, as this official from an EU MS states:

At the moment it [the problem] is the thousands who die in the Mediterranean. If we want to be serious about finding a solution, we need to understand what the problem is, namely people dying in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with an official from an EU MS, June 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Data from UNHCR Operational Portal, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>. Accessed on 14-04-2019.



This is a widespread belief in actors with this framing of migration, as they relate to the problem emotionally. As a European Commission official puts it,

Some of these things are quite emotional. If you see people dying at sea to which you can relate to (...) because they are middle class just like you, you can understand why they move, it's really hard to see them dying at sea, this really bothered me a lot in the past years'.

Various ways of interpreting this attitude and the plight of migrants emerge. First, some actors make a connection between the deaths at sea and the migration governance system. As another official from the EC puts it,

When the phenomenon leads to deaths at sea in large numbers then this inevitably has a strong impact in all of us, people that feel responsible for those things happening. Like if we could manage everything!<sup>23</sup>.

A link between the effect and the cause is hinted at in this statement, introducing the idea of the management of migration being responsible for those deaths, as opposed to viewing it as an inevitable element of large numbers of arrivals as noted instead above. This is taken even further by a colleague of the interviewee above:

Of course the dramatic things in the Mediterranean make you realise that there is so much desperation and this does influence your judgement on ethical grounds, on why we are still a fortress and why people need to pay smugglers to reach Europe, as this is the only opportunity.<sup>24</sup>

This sentiment is shared by various actors, with an important emphasis given to this concept of 'Fortress' when understanding crisis and the consequences for migrants.

While keeping the 'emotional' standpoint of these sentiments, other actors don't reach the same conclusions regarding the causes of migration, stating that 'I have a hard time in understanding at 100 per cent why they

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with European Commission official, June 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with European Commission official, June 2016.

make this journey in such big numbers to reach to Europe’, and that ‘I can’t believe that migrants don’t know what awaits them in these journeys!’<sup>25</sup>. This validates further the approach taken in this research, given that despite the uncertainty about the individual drivers of migration, actions are nevertheless developed on the basis of plausible assumptions as to why this occurs.

### 5.2.2 A crisis of governance

To varying degrees, all actors interviewed mentioned the fact that the crisis was one of governance, namely of the management of migration in the region. These considerations do not take away from the analysis made above about framings of the migration crisis, but rather, its implication reinforces the argument developed. The starting point of most of these reflections was the fact that it is only a crisis if you can’t deal or manage it<sup>26</sup>. As a European Commission official puts it,

the crisis means the inability to manage the flows, because the flows were here all the time, they gradually increased, so the inability to control the flows and to give a sense of control of these flows to the public, that they could see that the governments had control of the flows and people.<sup>27</sup>

This inability to foresee the unfolding of events is often cited as a problematic aspect of governance that has led to crisis, due to the lack of contingency planning carried out when the first bells of crisis rang in 2011<sup>28</sup>. This is what is considered to have caused the ‘intensification of a physiological problem, that did not just come out of the blue (...) and that then was transformed into pathological’<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with European Commission official, July 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Numerous interviews with officials from the European Commission and Member States.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with European Commission official, June 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with official from an EU MS, June 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with European Commission official, June 2016

These considerations, however widespread in the whole network, were not testimony of the understanding of migration governance as a cause and effect of the challenges they faced. Rather, it emerges clearly in the data collected how this was a discursive practice, that was defined by framings about what challenges were externally impacting this migration governance system. Those for which the threat of migration was highly salient, for example, focused on how governance was failing to cope with the numbers that were affecting it. Conversely, those whose focus was migrant-centred considered deaths at sea as dimension of crisis, a challenge impacting migration governance that was never held accountable for the occurrence of such deaths. At times, considerations were made regarding the need to increase efforts to reduce deaths, but these were never considered as part of a double relationship with migration governance processes and outcomes, which shaped the context that produced such loss of lives.

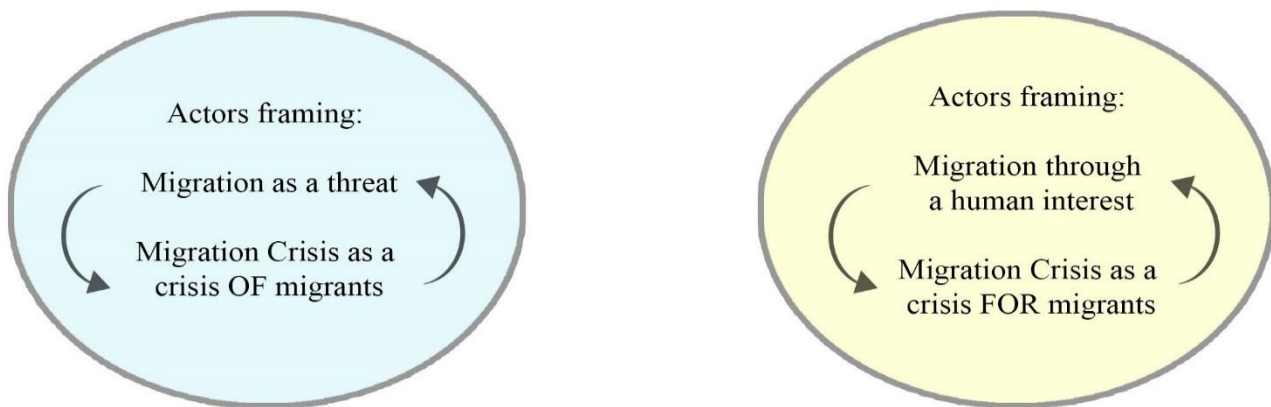


Figure 9: Two constellations of actors and the relational framing of migration and migration crisis

This indicates how such a widespread understanding of the crisis of migration governance does not come prior to cognitive structures through which framings of migration and its crisis are developed, but rather a consequence constructed on the basis of particular framings. This adds value to analysing such cognitive structures as drivers of action.

### 5.2.3 Crisis and the need for action

While it is important to understand considerations of crisis of migration governance as dependent on underlying frames about migration and its consequences, these are highly indicative of how governance actors built through such understandings the ‘sensible environment’ in which they operated. In other words, these considerations are indicative of how uncertainty was built and understood by governance actors operating in different environments, all part of the same migration governance network. Notwithstanding the

underlying framing driving such an understanding, the fact that the governance system in which they operated was perceived as in crisis triggered the need to make sense of it and develop new actions.

It is significant that an interviewee from an IGO close to the Commission reinforces this point by saying that

Crisis affected our modus operandi. Quite often we started asking ourselves whether our work actually makes sense. Especially in the external dimension the main thing that we do is that we facilitate political dialogue.

Well, thank you very much, but does it change anything?<sup>30</sup>

While challenges of migration governance in the Mediterranean region have not just emerged in the last few years, it is significant that the perceptions of crisis, in whatever form, disrupted the status quo, challenging governance actors to question the way they understood the challenges at hand and their solutions. The crisis not only triggered this process of making sense of migration, but also defined it as a process ultimately characterised by uncertainty, as an official from an EU MS that held the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the past years stated:

‘We had a very difficult year in (...), because we tried to prepare and foresee what was going to happen in (the next year), but given no one knew, it was total chaos for us. We were drifting to a very unpredictable presidency, with many fears from our side. It had a huge impact on the preparations! We did much more of it because of that, engaged with many partners, IGOs, NGOs and with the Commission right from the very start, meeting all concerned Heads of Unit the year before our presidency, very in advance. We saw in these meetings, and especially in those with the Juncker cabinet and other cabinets, that the situation was really of total crisis, and there were no actions being developed gradually or a medium-term plan of what to do really<sup>31</sup>.

This is one of many similar stories of chaos and uncertainty that shows the crisis context in which decisions were being taken, an ever-changing context in which actors did not feel in control, and fought desperately to gain an adequate understanding of what was occurring in a way that could be conducive to action. ‘Already

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with a high-level official of an International Organisation in June 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with an official from an EU MS, June 2017

one year ago is old now!’ said an official from the European Commission, stressing the fact that the situation was rapidly evolving both in terms of migration fluxes, given that ‘you start to work on one route, and then another pops up in two months’ time’, but also in terms of the policy and politics of migration, as policy production was multiplied greatly in the efforts of the ‘political masters’ to show control over the chaotic situation<sup>32</sup>. This resonates with what all interviewees reported, namely the fact that their work had increased massively, ‘turning our job into hell, having to write so many Council Conclusions, so many high-level meetings to prepare. And for achieving very little!’<sup>33</sup>. It is in light of this that new actors were brought into the EU’s migration governance network, as discussed in Chapter 4 (p.98), either with new services performing new roles or with new appointments to existing understaffed organisational settings. The consequence of this was to either bring in new understandings with new services approaching migration from different angles, or to lead to systematic biases emerging. This occurred as actors joined well established organisational settings of the migration governance network. Reflecting on the new colleagues joining the Unit, a European Commission official stated that ‘internal mobility is only good for personal reasons and career, but it impoverishes the competence of the issue. We are by definition incompetent!’<sup>34</sup>. As such, what emerges is that the organisational adaptation that followed perceptions of crisis and uncertainty led to dimensions of change in this networked migration governance systems. Chapter 4 identified the changing actor structure, but what is of interest here is that the crisis not only led to integrating new services in this migration governance system, but it also strengthened a way of organising the work on migration which was the product of crisis. However, to the many actors starting to work on the issue at that time, it represented their ‘normality’ as regards the external governance of migration, with an impact on the actions developed. In many cases, in fact, the actions developed and considered as ‘new’ products of ways of understandings migration were very much ‘normal’ in that environment, having constituted the *modus operandi* on many past occasions. The next section now focuses on the processes through which this occurred.

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with an official from the European Commission, June 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with an official of an EU MS, July 2016. Similar quotes emerged in many other interviews.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with an official from the European Commission, June 2016.

This section has highlighted the relevance of focusing on the sensemaking processes that emerge from the uncertainty that is intrinsic in a time of crisis, as they determine the need to enact control over this chaotic environment through action.

### 5.3 The Drivers Of Action In The EU's Migration Relations With Tunisia

The Chapter has thus far focused on the way actors of EU external migration governance have framed migration on the basis of its perceived consequences, and the relation of this framing process with that of crisis. Having tackled sub-question 2 and 3 of this research in relation to the EU, what remains to be addressed is how this translates into action.

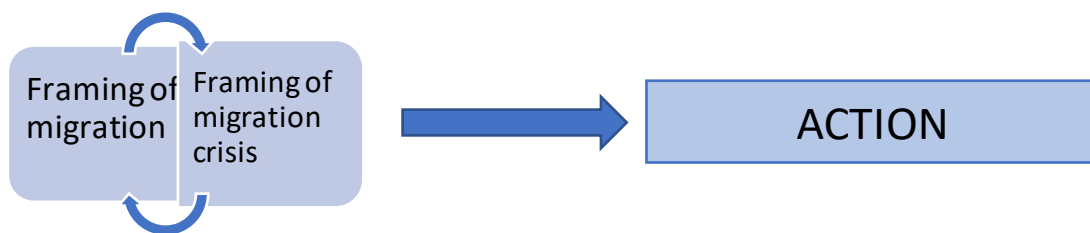


Figure 10: From framing to action

This section focuses on how from framings of migration and of migration crisis, actors in the EU's external migration governance network developed their actions. This is particularly relevant in relation to crisis given that, once again, failures to find internal solutions led to a renewed attention on the EU's external reach. As an official of an EU MS puts it,

Now the external dimension is growing not only because of that [magnitude of the flows], but also because we can't find internal solutions and solidarity, so we have to show results somewhere, and we have to stop the flow because we cannot agree amongst ourselves.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, this section first looks at the security-oriented policy frame and at how the security-oriented framing of migration that needed to 'show results somewhere' led to a prognostic framing based on deterrence. As such it lays out the content of the political pressures identified in Chapter 4 (p.108). Building from this, the section analyses how from a diagnosis of crisis and of the effects of migration, governance

<sup>35</sup> Interview with an official of an EU MS, June 2017

actors developed prognostic frames, defining the course of action to be taken in between their individual framing of migration and the socialised framing present in the environment in which they operated. It first recognises how the diagnostic framing of migration as a threat led to actions mainly aimed at its deterrence, recognising these as driven by a ‘pull factor bias’, a systematic bias towards the pull factors driving migration to be deterred in order to curb it. It also recognises a cognitive dissonance defining the action of actors that focus on human smuggling, diagnosing the plight of migrants, but also working on deterrence measures. It then complements this with an analysis of the new understandings that found a place in the EU’s external migration governance, with new actors being included therein as defined in Chapter 4. It concludes showing how actors understanding migration either through a ‘threat frame’ or a ‘human interest frame’ are not good or bad people taking good or bad decisions, as often assumed in the literature discussed in Chapter 2, but rather situated actors making sense of a complex issue in an uncertain and risky environment.

### 5.3.1 The need to show control

The segment of the migration governance system visualised and defined as the more highly political network (Chapter 4, p.98) of the EU’s external migration governance was highly permeated by the security-oriented policy frame defined in p. 126. This security-oriented policy frame was intrinsically political, as it was primarily developed in response to plausible explanations for the rise of xenophobic populist right-wing parties, considered as a direct result of increased and disorderly migration flows. As such, the prognostic understandings that followed were equally political in that they aimed to show control over the unfolding situation and externalise the blame for the migration crisis, i.e., not viewing the crisis as a failure of European migration governance. Responding to these two points, three main actions have been developed at a political level, and largely defined the environment within which actors part of this ‘political network’ operated: 1) short term deals externalising borders, 2) return, 3) the fight against human smuggling.

#### *Short Term Deals*

The most notable political actions taken to enact control over the chaotic unfolding of migration flows in the Mediterranean were, first, the EU-Turkey statement, and then the deals with Libyan tribes and government authorities made by Italy, France and backed by the EU. In each, the aim and the objective reached was to curb departures towards Europe. From the primary and secondary sources analysed, it is evident that this was

not a new strategy to solve political problems coming from disorderly irregular migration. As an official from the European Commission states,

It is a political euphemism to say that new actions have been taken [to respond to the crisis]. The only actions really taken have been the EU- Turkey deal, and the actions in Libya. These are not solving, but just finding another way to fill the hole. And it is not a new technique of course, we have seen it for 10 years, since Spain started in the Canary Islands. (...) This is what underlines our external dimension, the rest is blah blah.<sup>36</sup>

It is evident that ‘retrospection’, in this case looking back at how a moment of uncertainty was dealt with in the past, emerges to be a powerful driver of contemporary political framings of migration. A wealth of material collected indicates that these actions are very centralised and political, and that not many policy level actors of the migration governance network share their underpinnings. Actors operating in the external dimension are often confronted with countries such as Tunisia, of strategic geopolitical interest but that don’t offer the political conditions of Libya or Turkey to implement deals. Especially after the fall of Ben Ali, which determined the end of a ‘quid pro quo’ management of migration (Lixi 2017), Tunisia became yet another country with which different actions needed to be taken, such as the return and readmission of Tunisian nationals and Non-EU country Nationals and the fight against human smuggling.

#### *Return and readmission*

Return and readmission has been at the centre of the EU’s external approach since the early 2000s (Carrera 2016). This notwithstanding, few results after almost two decades have been reached, with only 27 per cent of return decisions actually implemented. Tunisia appears to be in line with this trend, with only 27 per cent of Tunisians found to be residing irregularly in the EU actually returned, and mostly from countries with which strong bilateral relations are in place, such as France and Italy<sup>37</sup>. In the aftermath of the crisis, these efforts on return have been revived, with a ‘New Action Plan’ of the Commission on return, and placing this at the centre of all relations with non-EU countries. In light of this, interviewees all highlighted the importance of return for present and future relations of the EU with Tunisia, manifesting the fact that the

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with European Commission official, January 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Data taken from Eurostat, databases *migr\_eipre* and *migr\_eirtn*, accessed on the 17/05/17. Calculations by the author.



shared commitments to return will determine the extent to which the EU is ready to cooperate and accede to Tunisia's requests for visa facilitation and legal migration channels for its citizens. This clearly emerges as a prognostic frame that follows the diagnosis of security-oriented policy frame, together with its political considerations. Tunisians arriving via the Central Mediterranean Route are a minimal number, 999 in 2016, and irregular Tunisians in the EU account for only 1.7 per cent of the total irregular migrants found in the EU in 2016<sup>38</sup>. Given the widespread difficulties in signing readmission agreements with Non-EU countries (see Cassarino 2009) vis-à-vis the actual numbers to be returned, it is evident that this strategy is not developed on the basis of accurate considerations of the migration problems emerging from Tunisia, but rather it is based on political considerations making plausible assumptions about migration trends and their political consequences. These plausible assumptions not only relate to the nature of irregular migration fluxes, but also of the drivers of the politics of migration. Focusing on the accuracy on the numbers noted above, it seems improbable that all irregular migrants would be returned. Yet this notwithstanding, this feeds in the much-needed narrative of political control over the unfolding situation in the Mediterranean. However, as stated above, these political considerations are not enough for officials implementing these actions, warranting further analysis in what drives their action on migration within such a security-oriented frame.

### *The fight against human smuggling*

Together with return, the EU's external actions on migration have always included as a top priority the 'fight against migrant smuggling' (see European Commission, 2015a, 2015b, European Council 2002, 2017). What underlies this is the reported need to go after 'ruthless criminal networks (...) that make substantial gains while putting migrant lives at risk' (COM 2015a: 1). This focus on smuggling 'externalises' the blame for the migration crisis, a political expedient to avoid picturing the chaotic situation as a product of the European migration crisis, but instead caused by external forces, such as smugglers. The framing of migrant smuggling thus deflects from the fact that given the lack of other means to reach Europe legally, to 'cut down the smugglers business model' (European Council 2017b) means by extension curbing migration, reinforcing the security-oriented political agenda of this policy frame. As such, this is always a prominent priority in relations with third countries, as in the case of Tunisia (European Commission 2016: 12).

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<sup>38</sup> Data from 'Cruscotto Statistico', Italian Ministry of Interior. Available at (accessed 20-05-2017): <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>

These policy ‘solutions’ discussed define the bedrock of the EU’s political security-oriented approach to external migration governance, and relations with Tunisia. It is against this political agenda contained in this security-oriented policy frame that governance actors across the EU’s network operate, and it is based on this agenda that relations between DG HOME and cabinets and Member States play out (see Chapter 4, p.98). However, the extent with which this policy framing impacts on the prognostic understandings of actors depends on how much these frames, embedded in political pressures, resonate with the actors’ individual understandings of migration as well as how much they are socialised in the environment within which the actors operate. In other words, such policy frames may or may not have a high salience in the strategically selective context in which actors have to operate, with this impacting the way these frames assume more or less power in shaping the actions situated actors carry out.

As such, this section shows that deterrence is prognosed not only by actors that diagnosed migration as a threat, but also by actors heavily impacted by security-based framing effects, that limits their sensemaking on migration defining the boundaries of their constrained action. Consequently, in new policy circles included in the EU’s migration governance (see Chapter 4, p. 98), that operate further away from security driven political pressures and within which migration is understood from a human-interest frame, actors have more space to develop actions following their diagnostic frames based on migration as a natural phenomenon and an opportunity.

### 5.3.2 Diagnosing a threat, prognosing deterrence

#### *Return*

As already noted, the data collected shows a degree of consonance in framing migration between the security policy frame and certain actors of migration governance.

As regards the framing of migration as a cultural/numerical threat, this is well exemplified by the statements of this European Commission official:

Seen from the EU angle, the migratory experience is seen as a threat, not even a challenge, but a threat. It is seen as a sort of a challenge of being invaded. The perception of being invaded, especially by Muslim cultures (...).

It is about identity. No one spells it out clearly, but the political priority and the way policy makers react to migratory challenges relates to this fact (...) In general, in the back of our minds migration is built as a threat.<sup>39</sup>

In developing this understanding of migration, this interviewee considers the framing that she/he interprets to lie at the basis of their work. In other words, this should be considered as an interpretation of the sensible environment this interviewee constructed, and within which she/he operates. This clearly manifests a tendency to distil the cultural and identity issue, considered to be the main challenge they face as policymakers. This framing is therefore influenced by the social level, but the bracketing of such factors amid the complexities of migration is mainly driven by an individual cognitive bias which increases the salience of the cultural and numerical threat to explain the difficulties of working on migration.

Other actors have already been shown to focus less on the dimension of this invasion, but to look at the political threat coming from the crippling of European governance overall, as well as a threat for the liberal nature of European Democracies, considered to be falling under the push of right-wing xenophobic populist parties.

Following the security-oriented policy frame highly salient in their environment, the actors that diagnose a threat, prognose curbing migration as its solution, as in figure 10:

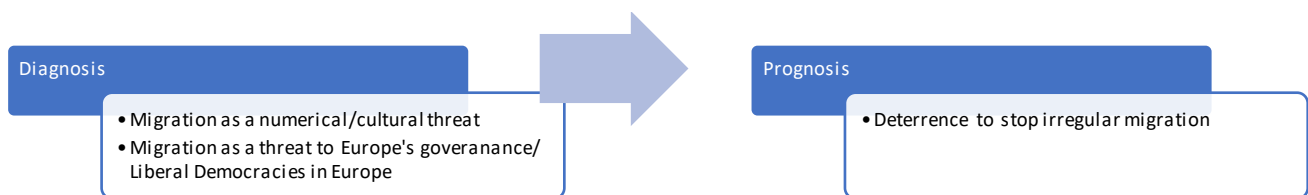


Figure 11: Diagnosing a threat, prognosing curbing migration

In this case, it is clear how diagnostic and prognostic frames converge, with a framing of migration as a threat leading to a belief that migration should be curbed. As noted above, although political actions to curb migration often amount to short term deals, officials understand these actions as cyclical and temporary tampons rather than solutions to problems. For this reason, rather than basing prognoses on such drivers of the politics of migration, they instead make considerations based on plausible understandings of the drivers

<sup>39</sup> Interview with European Commission official, January 2017

of migration, that is they relate the development of their actions to curb migration to how and why they believe migration takes place. From the data collected, what emerges is that actors that prognose return as a solution understand migration as being substantially driven by the possibility, for the migrants, to settle irregularly in Europe, as stated by this European Commission official:

A well working return policy is a key element for deterring irregular migration. As long we have the situation as it is today, with so little returns compared to irregular arrivals, the situation will continue. So as MS have recognised, the efforts in the external dimension need to be on making return more efficient.<sup>40</sup>

This emerges in many sources, like in this statement from Gerald Knaus<sup>41</sup>, architect of the EU-Turkey statement:

it is clear that irregular migration in the Mediterranean is being driven by the possibility of settling irregularly. To reduce migration, it is essential that returns are increased, creating a deterrent for further migrants.

In order to develop their actions, actors reach more specific understandings that are not only diagnosing the politics of migration, but rather the drivers of migration:



Figure 12: The pull factor and return

This driver of migration is not the only one mentioned by actors interviewed and fits more broadly within a complex explanation of how migration takes place, but the point is that its increased salience as an understanding then influences subsequent choices about courses of action. This is because actors, when developing prognostic understandings, extract and bracket particular diagnoses of the problem to be solved

<sup>40</sup> Interview with European Commission official, January 2017

<sup>41</sup> Speech of Gerald Knaus at CEPS, 10 October 2017. Knaus reports wide consensus on his suggestions across Ministries in Italy, France, Germany and the Netherlands, justifying the inclusion of non-governmental actors in the analysis of this research, as well as confirming the significance of this issue.

and develop specific courses of action in response to these understandings. The result is a ‘pull factor bias’ that increases the salience of the diagnostic understandings analysed before. Drawing from Weick’s sensemaking approach set out in Chapter 3, we now analyse how this is the result of an individual sensemaking process, that synthesises beliefs and cues from the individual level and the social strategically selective context in which an actor operates.

Pull factor bias:

The pull factor bias identified as the driver of actions governance actors carry out on return is determined by 1) the **identity** of actors and their individual framing of migration; 2) **retrospection**, based on looking at how one tackled similar problems in the past, either individually or as an organisation; 3) the **environment** in which an actor operates and the framing effects that define the pressures that impact their work.

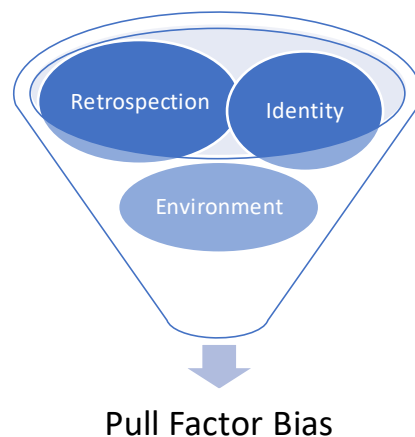


Figure 13: The pull factor Bias

The analytical and methodological approach of this research posits that the way an individual makes sense of the environment in which it operates is highly dependent on its **identity** and the factors that shape it (see Chapter 3, p. 70). This emerges clearly in relation to understandings of migration related to a pull factor bias. The simplification of the complexity of migration reflects the identity needs of such actors, leading them to extract a plausible explanation for migration which fits with the way they understand migration. Such identity needs are determined by how, on the basis of the situated actors’ own values, they make sense of the pressures of their environment. Within a vastly complex field such as migration, the focus of such actors was put squarely on Europe’s well-being, cultural identity and liberal system. Whether or not they personally believed migration was objectively a threat in and of itself, they were worried that migration posed a threat to

those elements they valued. This has a powerful effect in shaping the identity through which actors place themselves in such contexts, perceiving the need to develop actions to address these issues.

As defined in Chapter 3 (p.72), **retrospection** means forming understandings of challenges faced by an individual by looking back at how an issue perceived as similar was dealt with in the past. The return of irregular migrants offers many instances in which this occurred. As stated in the priorities of the Dutch presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2004 (Dutch Presidency 2004),

the development of a European policy on return forms an integral part of measures to combat illegal immigration, since it is the final part of these measures and also has a preventive effect, due to the message it sends out.

This demonstrates that return has been at the fore of the ‘normal’ way of dealing with perceptions of increased migration and crises of arrivals, with the objective to stem the flows.

Actors looked back to return measures built as a deterrent, to curb migration by reducing the possibility of settling irregularly, thus extracting this ‘easy’ driver of migration and increasing its salience in their diagnosis, and consequently in their prognostic framing of actions to be carried out. This overview of past actions was not only done at an individual level, by looking at ones’ own past reactions to problems, but also by looking at how the organisational setting in which an actor works —e.g. a particular Unit of the Commission— developed these responses, particularly in those already identified cases of new actors without prior knowledge taking up a new position in these settings. Like this, the importance of the environment in which an actor operates clearly emerges.

The strategically selective context in which actors operate is defined by the political pressures of curbing migration, as a framing effect highly salient in the **environment**. Chapter 4 (p.98) has already identified and visualised the web of relations of actors which largely share such diagnostic and prognostic framings of migration, recognising the political pressures that define the ties through which such understandings are shared, from cabinets and Member States to responsible officials in DG HOME. As actors developed their identities, or at least their organisational identity, on the basis of the framings defined in such relations, the link between diagnosis and prognosis is straightforward, as action follows understandings shared by the

individual and social level. The presence of such understandings in the environment greatly elevates the salience of these issues, having a powerful effect for how actors bracket particular causes and consequences of migration to carry out their work, driving this cognitive bias.

With the convergence of cues from identity, retrospection and the environment, actors build a course of action to follow on the basis of plausible explanation for migration. In fact, the pull factor bias that emerges explains simply a complex phenomenon such as migration, in a way that makes logical sense and resonates with an individual and social framing of migration. Given the complexity in which they operate, actors settle for these plausible explanations as short cuts that act as triggers for action. In an interview conducted, this very point was spontaneously suggested by a long standing leading official in an EU MS, which stated::

We like it [idea of pull factor] because they [political hierarchies] are convinced that it makes a big difference as a driver of migration, and we also like it because it is easy to understand. And sorry to speak like that but when you have worked for government for over twelve years, and you've seen how unprofessional instructions are sometimes and how little research lays at their basis, when you are sitting with, for example, the UK, FR, IT, DE, colleagues. You sit in the same meetings and you have these very standard arguments, and sometimes they are not even arguments, they are more like thesis being put out in the room, and then one someone asks, 'yeah but why?', it was never much substantiated.<sup>42</sup>

These remarks show how important these short cuts are in policy making on such a complex issue as migration. It also shows how officials are often left asking 'why?' of political instructions, and need to find answers to that question. As such, it is possible to explain how a systematic bias is developed, based on a particular understanding of the drivers of migration based on pull factors, related to the prospect of settling irregularly as something that attracts more and more migrants to Europe. Actions developed emerge to be based on what is readily available to actors, to face the challenges they need to 'solve'. Actors draw from available information and that fits with their framing of migration, devising responses to the problems that they face. Through this bias, action is developed to 'enact' a security-oriented environment that then

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with an official of an EU MS, January 2018.

redefines this bias, shaping through such action the development of migration outputs in the Mediterranean region.

### 5.3.3 From human-interest to deterrence: the fight against human smuggling

A second core element of the security driven agenda of the EU is the fight against human smuggling. As opposed to the linear analysis on return where security-oriented action was developed on the basis of a security-oriented framing of migration, what is interesting to note about smuggling is that security-oriented action follows from a largely ‘human-interest’ framing of migration. Actors that place attention on smuggling in their analysis of ‘what to do next’ emerge as placing central attention, as analysed in the previous sections, on those elements associated to the livelihoods of migrants and their well-being, their rights and dignity. As such, they move from a diagnostic human-interest frame to a prognostic security-oriented framing, as they reach the same conclusion as those that focus on return, namely curbing migration.

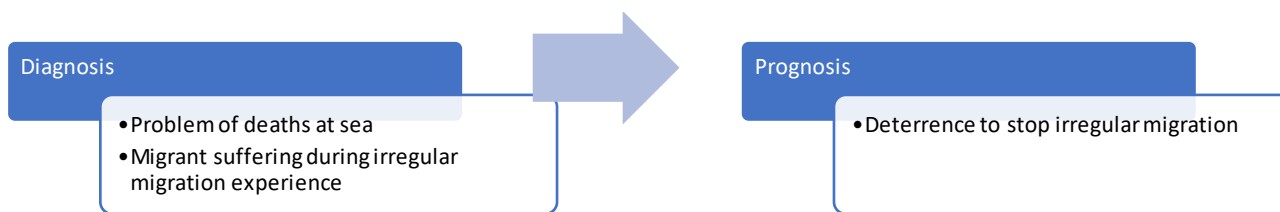


Figure 14: Diagnosing migrant suffering, prognosing curbing migration

However, as defined in the political construction of this narrative, the focus of these actions to curb migration are understood as efforts to save migrants from dying at sea, that is a humanitarian action to allegedly protect vulnerable migrants from unscrupulous smugglers. As such, reduction in the numbers of migrants are pictured as a success, as this becomes associated with a reduction in migrant deaths. As the President of the EC Jean-Claude Juncker stated in February 2018, ‘we now count a -63 per cent in arrivals in 2017 compared to 2016’<sup>43</sup>, showcasing significant efforts in this direction. Similarly, Simon Mordue, Deputy Director General for DG HOME, in February 2018 upheld the efforts to reduce flows clearly stating that these had a direct effect in diminishing the loss of lives at sea<sup>44</sup>. It is on this basis that officials with a human interest for migrants frame their actions in the fight against human smuggling. As with return, however, the

<sup>43</sup> Speech of Jean Claude Juncker at CEPS IdeasLab, 21 February 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Speech of Simon Mordue at Odysseus Annual Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2018.



focus on smuggling is not simply driven by political considerations on flows in the Mediterranean, but it becomes associated with understandings of migration as being driven by smugglers, that trick migrants into perilous journeys, people that otherwise may well have stayed in their origin countries without putting their lives at risk.

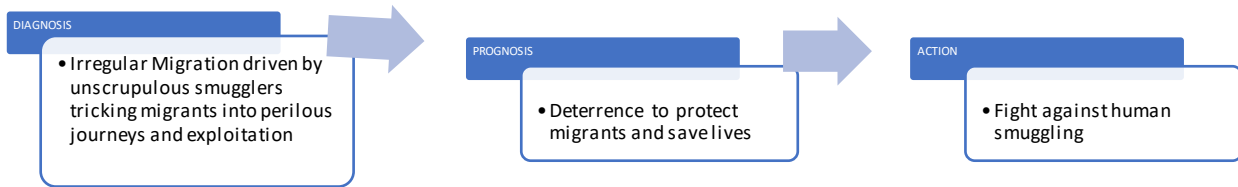


Figure 15: Deterrence and the fight against human smuggling

In this case as well, actors do not believe that smugglers alone are driving migration, but smuggling assumes greater salience within a complex understanding of migration and its drivers. Therefore, to understand the drivers of this focus on smuggling, it is necessary to understand how it is that smuggling is extracted from a more complex understanding of migration, to inform action. Once again, it emerges that action against smugglers is driven by a pull factor bias, namely the increased salience of smugglers as causing migration, being a pull factor for further irregular flows and loss of lives.

The analysis of the driver of action on return has already shown the importance of retrospection for increasing the salience of a particular plausible explanation for the drivers of migration, as well suggesting courses of actions to take. The same can be seen applying to smuggling, given the legacy of EU actions on smuggling dating back to 2002 and the ‘Facilitators Package’ comprising two directives targeting human smugglers (European Commission 2002). Since then, a lot of political capital has been spent on externalising the responsibility for problems relating to unordered migration flows to ‘unscrupulous’ smugglers, narrative that became very present in the environment where such governance actors operate. Whilst recognising the role retrospection has in providing for a normal way of dealing with an issue, it emerges that more significant for explaining the dissonance between diagnostic and prognostic framing on smuggling is the relation between identity and the environment.

While, for actors working on return, the most significant element defining their actions was a cognitive bias as a driver of action, what emerges in the work against migrant smuggling is cognitive dissonance.

In fact, actors with a ‘human interest’ diagnosis of migration placed attention on the experiences of migrants, with personal values and personal experiences of migration leading them to place significant attention on migrants’ livelihoods in origin, transit and destination countries. The fact that the action that follows these diagnoses is embedded in a security-oriented narrative of deterrence is because such actors operate in a similar environment compared to those working on return, which determines what strategic action actors may take. Constrained by a framing of migration that is fundamentally in opposition to their identity, actors extract and bracket the focus on saving lives at sea from the deterrence agenda, which resonates with the highly salient understanding of migrant deaths at sea as dimension of the migration crisis. As such, actors make sense of action that is embedded in a security-oriented logic and serves its end goal of curbing migration, by internalising a specific cue that may be considered to be consonant to their humanitarian objectives. By increasing the salience of the fight against smuggling, understandings of migration as driven by human smugglers are developed, in a way that allows to work towards curbing migration, thus saving lives at sea.

#### 5.3.4 Diagnosing and prognosing migration in a ‘liberal bubble’

As reported before, a European Commission official stated that ‘some officials can work from an ivory tower, thinking that they are in a liberal bubble’. This reinforces the analysis carried out in Chapter 4, evidencing how within the EU’s migration governance network, different officials operate under different political pressures. While, given the highly politicised topic, no governance actor is found to escape altogether such pressures based on the security-oriented policy frame identified before (see Chapter 4, p.113 and p.120 for an analysis of actors sharing such framing of migration), in various cases the organisational position of actors allows them to prognose actions that maintain the ‘human interest’ framing of migration. This divergence was repeatedly mentioned by many interviewees in the EU institutions and in MS, both in Interior ministries and Foreign Affairs ministries, stating how colleagues in the other services had significantly different views about problems and solutions. ‘I can give you the names of many colleagues in the Foreign Affairs ministry -reported an official from a MS- that will tell you the opposite of what we just discussed. They have been wasting money on development for decades without getting nothing out of it’.

Another official from a different MS that held the presidency of the HLWG during the years of the crisis reported that this was a particular problem in some countries like

France, where you can see how powerful their Foreign Ministry is. So even if a TC doesn't cooperate on an issue like return with us, you may have people from the Foreign Affairs still cashing out money to them, which of course has repercussions in our discussions and work of the HLWG<sup>45</sup>.

It is in light of statements like these that we can see how the inclusion of new actors detailed in Chapter 4 has also brought new understandings to the fore of the EU's external migration governance. This is not to say that these rivalries were not present before the crises of 2011 and 2014, given that, as noted in Chapter 2, the literature reported an internal ongoing clash between the 'comprehensive' approach of development services and a stronger security-oriented agenda (Boswell 2003). However, the importance of development and foreign affairs services was marginal, with HOME assuming the steering role and 'the policeman becoming the diplomats' (Guiraudon 2003; see also Papagianni 2013;). After the crisis, these different understandings assumed a new degree of power as political actors turned to them to find solutions to the problems they were facing, de facto giving them a new role in the EU's external migration governance network. This inevitably determined a higher politicisation of their work, as evident by the extensive use of development money to achieve migration management objectives (for a detailed review see OXFAM 2017). However, the 'human interest' of these actors largely remained as the most salient element of their diagnosis and prognosis of migration. The rest of the Chapter analyses why this was the case, recognising in the longstanding work on development issues of these services the driver of this approach, that fails to find synergies with a security-oriented framing on migration when developing the actions to be taken.

As noted above, actors that have been analytically categorised as developing a 'human interest' framing of migration focused on the migrants' livelihoods first and foremost when understanding migration and their diagnoses of the migration crisis. This means focusing on the migrant's livelihoods from the structural

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with an official of an EU MS, June 2017

conditions that lead migrants to emigrate, to their journey and stays in other African destination or transit countries, before looking at the minor number that then moves on to Europe.

The previous section has analysed how based on such understandings, these actors refute the idea of a ‘European migration crisis’. In fact, their knowledge of socio-economic and political conditions in origin regions leads to a comparison with those of Europe, concluding that the upsets caused by the ongoing arrivals are trivial compared to the issues at stake in the African continent. Consequently, migration is seen as a structural element emerging from these social, economic, political, demographic and environmental conditions of these origin regions. As such, the ‘crisis of numbers’ for Europe is largely ignored, and so are the political problems these have determined, recognised but marginalised in an understanding of migration in which migrant livelihoods and structural conditions are the most salient element that emerges. While acknowledging that it is a conversation that finds a lot of political traction, such actors are unconvinced that certain pull factors are leading to an invasion in Europe, and that by curbing the alleged pull factors one will be deterring migration. As an official of a MS told me

Of course, an area where there is free movement, where there are certain labour perspectives, certain rights, of course it will always be attractive, and that is the Europe we want! So, if we want to avoid being a pull factor, then we would have to wish bad things for Europe, and I don't think that this is what we would want. [Because of this] we [Member State] don't talk about pull factors, but more about underlying reasons why people move(...) we talk about drivers, opportunity (...)<sup>46</sup>.

It is based on such diagnoses that actions are developed, refuting the underlying assumptions of a prognostic framing based on deterrence, and valuing instead the importance of the ‘underlying reasons’ as structural drivers of migration. While this entails a very broad understanding of actions to be taken, three emerge as assuming a central role in relation with Tunisia: 1) Actions to support south-south migration; 2) Actions around the migration-development nexus; and 3) calling for legal channels for migration.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with an official of an EU MS, June 2017

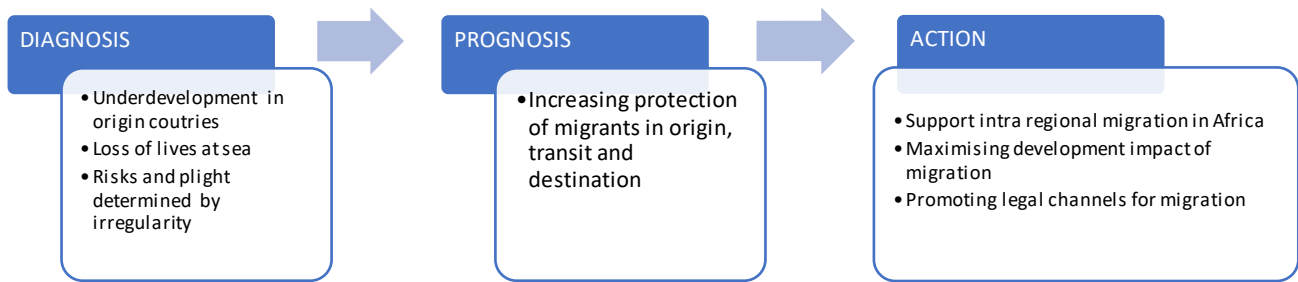


Figure16: A crisis for migrants

### *Looking at migration beyond Europe*

The prognostic framing of actions on **south-south migration** directly follows the understanding that migration is not only occurring towards Europe in consequence to its pull factors, but rather it is a widespread phenomenon in the African continent. As such, a country like Tunisia is seen by EU officials also as a destination country, as much as an origin and transit country. ‘We don’t know much about numbers and conditions of sub-Saharan in Tunisia’ stated an EU official, which also believed that ‘despite our approach with Tunisia is to fear a mass emigration of young Tunisians, I don’t think this would be the case’. Shifting the attention from the potential mass departures to the situation of migrants in Tunisia, the strategy to follow is reportedly one that helps Tunisia managing its own immigration in a way that is conducive to its development. As another EC official puts it,

Countries like Tunisia that push for legal migration actually have big labour shortages in their own labour market, but they don’t want them to fill them with sub-Saharan Africans, which would benefit their development<sup>47</sup>.

EU officials largely recognise the extent to which intra-regional migration in the African continent occurs, and are interested to ensure this mobility becomes an opportunity for economic development. This is developed in antithesis to security-based approaches that view migration as a problem for Europe, and seek to externalise a restrictive meaning of borders and their control, notwithstanding the fact that these are regions that have always experienced significant intra-regional migration.

### *Migration work in a development tradition*

<sup>47</sup> Interview with an official of the European Commission, June 2017.

This understanding of migration dynamics, mainly in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, leads many officials to focus on the structural conditions linked to the development of the region, dimension that, as noted above, becomes the most salient in driving their plan of action. This is not surprising, given that, as an official from the European Commission stated, it has always been their job:

We have always worked on development issues. Now they call them root causes, to put a label that is linked to migration, but really, it has been our job for years<sup>48</sup>.

While many actors do share this point, stating that the core of what they do is development cooperation, like in the past, an increased attention on the impact migration has for development emerges. Following the increased political attention on migration, this is manifested by a significant increase in funding allocations for actions directed to migration and development as noted in Chapter 4, and consequently by the increased number of officials working on a migration portfolio. The example of DG NEAR is notable, with the creation of the Centre of Thematic Expertise on Migration (COTE Migration), with the new post-crisis deployment of EC officials specifically on the migration issue and neighbourhood countries like Tunisia, whereas it previously was one of many tasks in an official portfolio. Through this we can also understand the increased amount of actions and policy outputs related to migration. Taking the case of Tunisia, we can see how this revived attention, in DG NEAR and beyond, led to a focus on the developmental impact of migration by focusing on the Diaspora. Chapter 6 will unravel the important role played by Tunisia in the post-2011 era in pushing for this, but what is of interest here is the way the diagnostic understanding of migration being caused by structural factors in origin countries was at the basis of this approach. As new actors and services were drawn into this network, these diagnostic understandings started to play an important role in framing actions to be carried out, with a renewed focus on maximising the impact migration can have for the development of origin countries.

#### *Repressing migration through development?*

While complementing a wealth of literature, critiqued in Chapter 1, that focuses on the EU migration-development nexus and analyses its ‘fight against the root causes of migration’, the findings of this research also challenge the often-made assumption that actors implementing such policies are unequivocally doing so

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with an European Commission Official, June 2016

in order to curb migration (de Haas 2007). All actors interviewed that placed significant importance on the link between migration and development in fact clearly manifested their knowledge that their work on developmental issues was not going to curb migration. As a European Commission official points out,

We know well that if we are successful and development levels of countries goes economically up, there might be more migration. (...) We are very aware of it, there are definite trends from research that point in this direction. (...) This knowledge should be transferred to (political) stakeholders, so they don't expect something that is unrealistic<sup>49</sup>.

This widespread understanding, translates in a different attention placed on 'root causes', as this other EC official states:

you will never end migration because of this... one of the strongest root causes is personal motivations!! I actually think that the more we work on development, education in particular, the more a young person may develop the need or willingness to move and satisfy its personal motivations<sup>50</sup>.

It is clear therefore that given these diagnostic understandings of migration that actors in these organisational positions have, the prognosis that follow cannot be meant to curb migration. This doesn't exclude the fact that the political narrative that frames these development actions is the same security-oriented narrative that aims in fact to curb migration, and as such it is based on the plausible understanding that more development will lead to less migration. But beyond the political rhetoric, the data collected in this study shows that this is not what shapes and drives action of the actors that are developing and implementing these development-based actions.

### *Legal migration channels*

Building on from these prognostic frames on migration as closely associated to African dynamics, structural drivers and developmental action, a striking difference that emerges in these actors compared to security oriented colleagues is their attention on legal migration channels. As Bhagwati asserts (2003), migration

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with a European Commission official, June 2016

<sup>50</sup> Interview with a European Commission official, July 2017

policy making is increasingly defined by how big the door is left open for migrants to legally overcome the barriers imposed by the walls of closed borders. It is because of this that a security-oriented frame is emerging as the driver of this process that like this became characterised by building the walls of ‘Fortress Europe’ (Geddes 2005). It is therefore significant that within the same organisations, while a security frame increasingly defines the nature of these walls needed to avoid the perceived threat of an invasion, other actors refute this idea and look at migration in a positive light, as ‘an opportunity’. Because of this, their human interest in framing migration leads to identify that the problems that migrants bear during their migratory experience, including the great loss of lives in the desert and Mediterranean Sea, are also a consequence of the fact that no legal ways are present to come to Europe in a safe and orderly manner. As a European Commission official states,

here is the problem of the approach we are having now. We should offer more legal ways to come and work here regularly, given that if someone has this option he would work hard to reach it rather than embarking in perilous journeys.<sup>51</sup>

As such, actors sharing these understandings believe that Europe is lagging behind in providing adequate legal channels for migrants, with a significantly negative impact for migrant livelihoods, and given the recognised benefits migration has for development, with a negative impact also for the development of the migrants’ countries of origin.

#### *The drivers of development-oriented actions*

While these understandings of migration and of the actions to be taken resonate with available data regarding global migration flows and migration fluxes within the African continent, the point here is not to evidence how ‘better’ or ‘good’ those actors that develop such plans of action are. As much as governance actors diagnosing the threat frame were not ‘bad people making poor decisions’ (see Chapter 3, P. 73) but rather individuals making sense of a complex phenomenon in an organisational setting, it emerges clearly that it is through similar sensemaking processes that such conclusions are reached by more actors having a human-interest framing of migration. It is through these individual and social processes that migration is understood in this way, with a consonance between the diagnostic and prognostic framing of migration based on human

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with a European Commission official, June 2017.



interest, namely placing central attention to migrants and individuals when identifying the problems and solutions at stake. Such processes, as in the analysis on the drivers of deterrence, emerge as being powerfully shaped by the previous work carried out within such organisational settings, based on development with a focus on non-EU countries. This leads to a socialised framing of migration that places attention on the structural dimensions that impact individual livelihoods, leading them to migrate, as well as other policy actions such as legal migration that play an important role in shaping the migrant's experiences. This marks the difference between the environment in which other actors that had a human-interest frame of migration had to operate in, closer to political pressures that defined the security-oriented framing of migration socialised in the environment. As such, actors embedded in development-oriented environments, and working very closely with their Tunisian counterparts on the implementation of policy and projects (see Chapter 4 p.98), can operate without needing to adapt their framing of migration to security-oriented political pressures, and although at times the politicisation of their work does entail a level of subordination to such a security-oriented framing, this did not change their understandings of migration that remained in opposition to the security frames of migration. This is most clearly exemplified with the narrative on 'fighting the root causes of migration', and the ambivalent meaning this Chapter shows that this assumes in the political narrative, and in understandings of actors developing and implementing the policies. It is in light of this that actors believe that the relabelling of some of their work as 'fighting the root causes' of migration is meaningless political rhetoric, weary of the fact that their actions will not contribute to reducing migration.

What is interesting to note is that also in these cases the understandings that are socialised in the environment where such actors operate play a role in determining a systematic bias in the way situated actors extract cues, in this case relating to the migrant livelihoods, the structural drivers of migration and their migratory experience. These understandings are in fact bracketed out of more complex understandings about the challenges posed by migration to Europe, that did factor in extensive reflections on the political problems caused by migration, and the consequences for political systems across Europe. These latter understandings, however, were excluded from the prognosis, as the organisational setting and the past work carried there within led situated actors to focus primarily on the elements more available to them from past actions analysed above, and thus much more salient. Like this, it emerges that another systematic bias that favours a particular set of understandings of migration operates in driving the actions situated actors carry out on

migration and development. It is through this bias that actions are developed, as it offers plausible explanations about the drivers of migration in a way that is consonant to personal identity as much as a socialised framing of migration, on the basis of many years of developmental work carried out in origin countries.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This Chapter has focused on the factors shaping and driving the EU's external migration policy, specifically in relation with Tunisia. It has developed an actor-centred perspective, analysing understandings of actors operating in the EU. In doing so, it asked: 1) how do they understand migration?; 2) How do they understand a crisis of migration, and in particular the so called 'European Migration Crisis'?; 3) How do these understandings drive their action in the EU's external relations on migration with Tunisia? The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 (p.27) implies that such understandings are based on security-oriented perspectives of migration which drive actions unequivocally designed to curb migration. This Chapter disproved this assumption, following from Chapter 4 and its identification of different framings shared across different segments of the EU's external migration governance network. A tension is in fact present between what was expected by following the analyses present in the literature, and what was found in relation to the values and understandings of actors. While some actors did indeed share a restrictive approach to migration governance, overall a contrast emerged between cosmopolitan 'liberal' individuals operating in an environment that is increasingly influenced by nationalistic influences and policies. This analysis was carried out by responding to the three sub-questions addressed in this Chapter:

First, actors understand migration by looking at its effects, largely through one of two main frames: 1) a constellation of actors framing migration as a threat to Europe, either because of a perceived numerical or cultural invasion, or because of the strain it is causing to Europe's liberal democracies with the raise of the far right parties; 2) another constellation of actors framing migration on the basis of a 'human interest', largely focusing on the effects the unfolding situation is having for migrants, their livelihoods and human rights.

Second, these understandings of migration are also impacted by perceptions of crisis. Understandings of crisis are conceptually largely intertwined with those of migration, but they have been analytically separated

in this Chapter. In understanding the European migration crisis, those actors that frame migration as a threat focus on the way crisis has been impacting on Europe, while other focus on deaths at sea or the risks coming from irregularity for migrants as the main problems defining the crisis.

Third, the Chapter has found that through processes of sensemaking these diagnoses that framed ‘what is going on’ were followed by prognoses about ‘what to do next’. This was developed through the identity/organisational identity held by actors, their retrospection of past actions, and the environment in which they operate, as well as the way actors understood their role within. While two constellations of actors were identified when considering the diagnostic framing of migration and migration crisis, three main groups of actors were identified as driving forward external migration policy with Tunisia. Two of these linearly followed through their diagnoses, either viewing migration as a threat or keeping a migrant centred perspective of the challenges they faced, and thus developing action driven by cognitive biases on which their prognoses were grounded. This determined the development of different actions that followed the different understandings of the EU’s network, thereby disproving the assumption often held in the literature that views the EU adopting a single approach when going abroad, based on curbing migration. These two groups of actors and actions however were joined by a third group of actors with dissonance between their diagnostic and prognostic framing. Their focus on the fight against migrant smuggling was in fact found to be driven by a human interest diagnoses relating to the plights migrants suffer at every stage of their experience, and yet followed a deterrence prognoses which largely permeated the environment in which they operated, fighting smuggling so as to stop migration and thus the suffering of migrants.

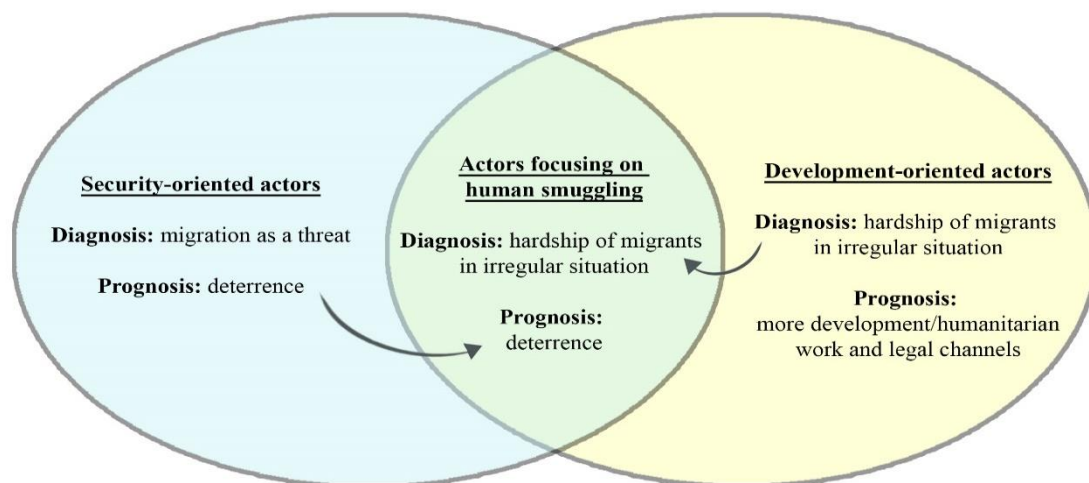


Figure 17: Three group of actors: framing dissonance and the fight against migrant smuggling

This allowed demonstration of a core innovation offered by this thesis, which is to demonstrate the added value that can be provided by analysing sensemaking processes and the relationships between actors and environment in which they operate as situated agents. This allows new insight into how these governance actors position themselves in relation to signals and cues from their environment and develop plausible (although not necessarily accurate) accounts that fit with what they perceive as their environment and provide a basis to act. In cases in which the two largely align, a bias is reinforced and actions developed accordingly; whereas the two do not align, dissonance will shape action as actors find plausible common ground between the two frames.

Such cognitive biases and dissonance are thereby identified as the main factors shaping and driving actions in migration relations with Tunisia. Their analysis has allowed to understand how these drivers are far more complex than what is assumed in the literature reviewed in Chapter 1, as different frames are developed by different actors across the EU's network which don't only seek to unequivocally curb migration. Through this analysis, we can understand how the EU's external migration governance system is not just responding to a migration crisis that externally impacts it, but rather it is playing a key role in defining the challenges it faces, thus impacting on the different kind of solutions developed. The next Chapter now unravels how such dynamics of governance play out in the Tunisian migration governance context.

## **CHAPTER 6- THE FACTORS FRAMING AND SHAPING MIGRATION GOVERNANCE IN TUNISIA**

We now turn our attention to Tunisia and, by doing so, challenge Eurocentric analyses of EU relations with non-EU countries by focusing on the Tunisian migration governance system and the production of frames therein that shape the way non-EU countries engage with the EU. Tunisia is a particularly interesting case, given its geographical position and political significance. Geographically, Tunisia is the closest African country to the European coasts in the central Mediterranean, bordering Libya, which since 2011, has been the main transit hub for unauthorised migrants trying to reach Europe. Politically, this case lends itself to the analysis of a system independently from EU actions; since the 2011 Jasmine revolution which overturned the regime of Ben Ali, Tunisia has been experiencing a democratic transition through which many aspects of its internal and external policy were reconsidered. Migration, traditionally used by Ben Ali as leverage with the EU and thus close to EU priorities, is a case in point. In order to give an equal analysis to dynamics of migration governance in Tunisia as compared to the EU, the same three sub-questions will drive this Chapter:

- 1) How do Tunisian migration governance actors understand migration?
- 2) How do they understand migration crisis?
- 3) How do these understandings shape action of the Tunisian migration governance system?

The driving assumption of the research underlying this Chapter is that given the tendencies of the EU to externalise its approach to migration governance (see Chapter 2) this extends also to the frames driving such governance. This then creates pressure for Tunisia to have similar frames to those found in the EU, and given the potential causal power of frames, this would translate into similar actions.

This Chapter disproves this, finding different dynamics operating in Tunisia. It recognises that following the changes that occurred in 2011 and the beginning of a new democratic government, a new rights-based framing of migration emerged, organising like this a new sensible environment. This was built on an old framing of migration as an opportunity for Tunisia that had existed since the 1970s, and was instrumentally suppressed by Ben Ali. This framing views migration in a positive light, in antithesis with what was expected

to be a security-oriented framing transferred from the EU, focusing on emigration, prognosed as an opportunity for migrants and for Tunisia. However, Tunisian actors operate in a constrained environment, which impedes expanding emigration channels towards the EU. As such, the Chapter recognises that the organisation of the prevailing frame in Tunisia leads to a sensible environment prone to inaction, rather than action. This is due to the impossibility to follow through their framing with action to facilitate emigration, which results in turning a blind eye for ongoing migration trends from Tunisia to the EU.

In developing this argument, the Chapter is organised as follows. The first section empirically frames the Chapter in pre- and post- 2011 revolution dynamics. The second section focuses on how actors of Tunisian migration governance frame migration. It finds a significant framing dissonance, with a rights based framing which understands migration as an opportunity developed after 2011, but also a parallel security-oriented framing inherited from Ben Ali, which views migrants as deluded individuals attracted to the ‘El Dorado’ Europe. However, as opposed to the EU, such framing dissonance was not an organisational dissonance, with different actors operating in different environments having different views. Rather, actors across the network embedded such dissonance, although the low salience of problems related to migration determined that the former rights-based approach prevailed. The second section thus focuses on the issue of salience, looking at whether actors understood challenges to migration as a form of crisis in a point in time, particularly in relation to the EU’s 2015 migration crisis. It finds that this was not the case, and that rather than part of a crisis, migration is framed as linked to socio-economic challenges which constitute Tunisia’s ‘normality’. The final section then builds on this analysis, finding that while the methodological framework of this research considered the power of frames in driving action, in Tunisia the sensible environment is organised differently, and a prevailing framing of migration is found to drive inaction. As Tunisian actors cannot implement actions which follow through their positive framing of Tunisian emigration, they choose not to act, and instead let migration dynamics unfold in the country, albeit irregularly, keeping only the level of control needed to ensure the stability of the country.

## **6.1 Tunisia Pre- and Post- 2011**

Before delving into the analysis of current understandings of migration held in the Tunisian governance system, it is essential to understand the impact of the 2011 revolution. Building from the SNA carried out in

Chapter 4 that defined the actors involved in this governance network, we will first focus on how migration was framed prior to 2011, to then analyse how the demise of Ben Ali and the democratic transition impacted this process, laying the ground for current dynamics of Tunisian migration relations with the EU.

### 6.1.1 Tunisia pre-2011 and Ben Ali's control

Chapter 4 (p. 94) highlighted the centralised nature of Tunisian migration governance during the leadership of Ben Ali. The scarce primary and secondary sources available show how, despite the fact that a variety of actors were formally included, the migration portfolio was a delicate political issue on which Ben Ali wanted to exert a strong control. This is because migration policy was a means to an end, whether internally to exert a stronger control over its population, or externally as a leverage in its relations with the EU. This also led to an ambiguous framing of migration during the regime.

Bel Hadj Zekri (2004, 2008), an official that worked at the Office for Tunisians Abroad (OTE), reports that many actors dealt with migration issues, mainly focusing on the Tunisian diaspora and those relating to emigration. As Cassarino shows (2014), this internal work and narrative was not opposed by Ben Ali, leaving space for a degree of involvement both from governmental services and agencies, and also, to a minor extent, from civil society organisations (CSOs). Governmental actors, led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the OTE there within, could develop a 'comprehensive' narrative on migration, touching upon various issues, but mostly engaging with diaspora politics and policies, in the effort of securing further economic engagement with Tunisia (Bel Hadj Zakri 2004). Likewise, CSOs such as the LTDH or the UGTT started to follow migration issues more closely, also focusing on migrants' rights, notably Tunisian workers abroad, as well as raising awareness of the problem of deaths at sea. While this may seem to run counter the centralised objectives of Ben Ali, the leader had no interest in overturning this internal public narrative, as the politicisation of migration and of the diaspora allowed for measures that suited its control-oriented ambitions. First, in relation to the diaspora, the strengthening of outreach policies carried out by the OTE allowed for increased scope of control of the diaspora, with which the Tunisian leader had always had an ambiguous relation (Cassarino 2014). As such, the OTE developed a strong central and regional structure in Tunisia, but also a widespread network of *attaché sociaux* that served the purpose of increasing the 'eyes and ears' of the regime. Moreover, internal policy changes led Ben Ali to place stringent control over actors that

were involved in migration issues in Tunisia, most notably through the Law 2004-6 on irregular migration. This law played on ambiguous terminology to criminalise ‘whoever’ facilitated and helped migrants entering or exiting Tunisia, as well as ‘whoever’ was attempting or even preparing to migrate irregularly (Cassarino 2014; Ben Achour and Ben Jamia 2011). As such, by passing this law that appeased the requests from the EU to curb irregular migration, Ben Ali managed to extend control through legal ambiguity inherent in the law, that could lead to the criminalisation of many actors involved in a migration governance system and that opposed the regime.

This law did not change the public discourse on emigration. Whilst wanting to control it to avoid security risks for its regime, emigration was still an important component of Tunisian society, and also seen by Ben Ali as a political and economic safety valve (Cassarino 2014; Natter 2014). This notwithstanding, Cassarino (2014) reports that as irregular migration started to be increasingly criminalised, the narrative within the Tunisian Government started changing as well, with a number of officials that started to frame migrants as deluded individuals, who were attracted and pulled to Europe by the dream of finding the ‘El Dorado’ (Cassarino 2014: 107). This narrative gained traction amongst actors working on migration, and was also echoed by the media, serving the objective of veiling severe deprivation, underdevelopment and underemployment of the Tunisian youth and pointing to external pull-factors as driving the emigration of deluded migrants instead (ibid.).

As such, we can observe how Ben Ali carefully played with migration policy and its framing in Tunisia in order to reach his own objectives. Whilst leaving space for a number of actors to take a role, rigid control was placed upon their work, and increasingly repressive legislation helped in taming down any actor that could prove to be a threat for the regime.

### 6.1.2 Tunisia post-2011 and a new migration governance

The literature relating to the Ben Ali era and the way it governed migration is scarce and relies on authors associated directly with the regime it was depicting. Therefore, the 2011 revolution led to new opportunities for scholars. Several studies (Boubakri 2013, Ben Achour and Ben Jamia 2011, Natter 2014) show the game-changing nature of the revolution, with the democratic transition in Tunisia leading to overcome a centralised government of migration toward much more comprehensive and inclusive governance. The revolution in fact



freed Tunisian migration policy making from the control of Ben Ali, leaving more space to relative numerous number of actors that followed migration issues, and especially leading to the inclusion of many new ones. All the interviewees included in this research in Tunis in fact evidence how this period did embed important changes as many new voices started to be heard, most notably those from the Tunisian Diaspora that finally could play an important political role in Tunisia without the control of the previous regime. This freedom in turn allowed CSOs, diaspora organisations and governmental actors to unite under a positive narrative on migration, focused on rights of emigrants abroad, on their journeys, as well as their involvement in Tunisia.

The transition of 2011 that followed the regime change was also a time in which changing migration dynamics led this to become a highly salient topic in Tunisia. The de facto absence of border controls that followed the revolution paved the way for 25.000 Tunisian emigrants to leave irregularly for Italy (Lixi 2018). After a few months, the situation was stabilised, with reinstated border controls leading to a fall in departures to a few hundred per year (ibid.). What is interesting to see is the response that this outflow of migrants produced on an expanding system of migration governance. Chapter 5 has shown how in Europe, when migration became highly salient in the past years, often actors reverted back to old ways of dealing with the issue, developing solutions on the basis of biases driven by such retrospection. The next section looks at what frames of migration emerged in Tunisia after 2011 and today defines this migration governance system, identifying how the challenge of the irregular departures of 2011 did not lead Tunisia to revert back to old frames from Ben Ali. Instead, these changes incentivised the (re)emergence of framings of migration that broke the tradition of a transactional relationship with Europe held by Ben Ali, as such new frames defined dynamics of Tunisian migration governance.

## **6.2 How Do Actors Understand Migration?**

Prior to the changes that occurred in 2011, policy transfers from the EU largely defined the migration policy of Tunisia, which was skilfully crafted by Ben Ali to respond to his needs (Cassarino 2014). In this context, framings of migration were largely driven by the leader, devised to serve a political approach to managing migration. After 2011, with the demise of the leader, this was no longer the case. The development of the migration governance context discussed before determined the importance of different ways of framing

migration, fitting the changes of a newly democratic and rights-based society. This section investigates such framings, and finds that this system of migration governance has been increasingly defined by a framing dissonance, widespread across the network (see Chapter 4, p.113). This is due to the constitution of a new predominant framing which understands migration as a 'right', emerging in a system that for many years prior to 2011 was defined by a security-oriented approach pushed by Ben Ali. Rather than substituting this old frame, the new rights-based perspective appears to have coupled it, but in doing so has also become much more salient across the Tunisian migration governance network visualised in Chapter 4. If in Europe a similar competition of frames has been identified, this was largely associated with organisational dissonance and divergences in the network, with different constellations of actors part of the network conceptualising different ways of understanding migration. Instead, in Tunisia what emerges across the network, for example from the Foreign to the Interior Ministries alike, actors manifest framing dissonance, in between old habits and new framings. However, while security-oriented framings of migration do persist and borrow from the diagnoses pushed by Ben Ali, these emerge to be largely dormant and overcome by new framings brought in by the new actors which constitute the Tunisian external migration governance system since the fall of Ben Ali. This section will unveil these framings, first focusing on a new rights-based perspective, and then moving to understand the role played today by a security-oriented approach to migration, highly sought for by the EU, but much less prominent in Tunisia.

### 6.2.1 Migration as a solution

The recognition of the opportunity that migration presented for Tunisia was not an element that emerged only after 2011. In fact, since the first flows of Tunisian emigrants under Bourguiba, and then under Ben Ali in the '80s and '90s, migration was publicly considered as an economic resource for Tunisia, albeit one upon which national control should be rigidly exercised in regulating it. In the 2000s, this understanding was dwarfed compared to the negative framing of irregular migration pushed for under the EU's influence and incentives. The Jasmine revolution thus represented a breakthrough from such dynamic. Today, as this Tunisian official asserts, migration is not a considerable problem for Tunisia:

When you are in front of officials in the EU tell them that they need to stop exporting their problems outside, because for us, migration is not a priority. (...) Here, people are waiting to solutions for their problems [living conditions], nothing more than that<sup>52</sup>.

Whilst in the EU this analysis related to problems of migration, in Tunisia the framing of migration departs from a diagnosis of the development conditions of Tunisia.

This quote suggests the different diagnosis on the basis of which migration is most significantly framed in Tunisia. Government actors operating after the 2011 revolution feel considerably challenged by the fact that the country is not offering opportunities to its citizens, and when diagnosing the challenges that lead to their actions on migration, they give an analysis of the underlying systems that determine migration, for which migration may be a solution. Most notably, unemployment stands out as the most salient problem Tunisia is now facing for all interviewees, as well as access to economic rights. As a member of a CSO stated:

Increasing access to social rights has not gone together with economic rights. Tunisia has 15% of unemployment rates, and 30% of unemployment for young graduates. People don't see a future<sup>53</sup>.

This shows the linkages between an economic system that is failing to offer opportunities, but also its relation to the demographics of Tunisia, that is increasingly seen as having a very young population with no future. This is also linked by many officials to urbanisation, which emerges as a powerful factor impacting this diagnosis. As an advisor to the State Secretariat for Immigration and Tunisians Abroad states:

Before the revolution, 80% of migrants were not graduated. Now this has changed. (...) at that time rural people migrated, now more urban people or near urban people. This can be linked to urbanisation in Tunisia, and to the fact that the economic crisis at the time touched more rural than urban, today it is the opposite. Services today are suffering in the cities<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Tunisian government official, April 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with a representative of an NGO in Tunis, April 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with a Tunisian academic, April 2017.

This emerged in many of the interviews carried out, as attention emerges to be spent mainly on young graduates believed to be a wasted asset for Tunisia, a ‘locomotive of change’ that is not being used. All actors thus hold an understanding of the challenges that they face as being consequences of underdevelopment in the economic and social systems. It is on this basis that migration is then framed, as a prognosis of the challenges Tunisia is facing.

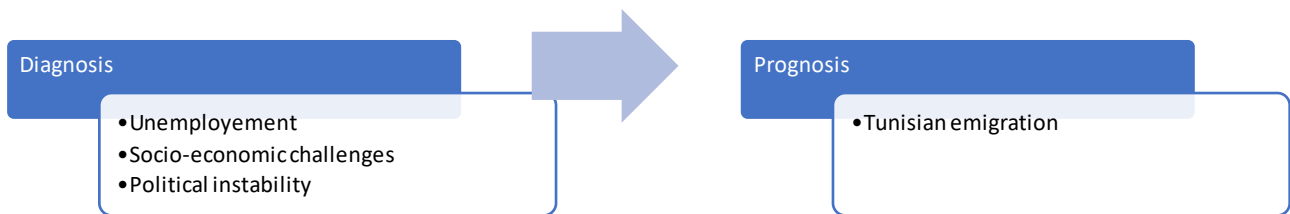


Figure 18: Framing migration in Tunisia

This prognosis emerges clearly in the data collected, well synthesised by a Tunisian official:

We need to give hope to the people that want to change, Tunisia as well as their life, so that they can see what is out there, so they can see beyond the black of their conditions. And co-development goes in this direction, a different approach to migration.<sup>55</sup>

The idea of ‘co-development’ is at the basis of these prognoses, as migration is in fact seen not only as a direct consequence of the failures of the above-mentioned Tunisian systems, but also as a possible solution for these problems. This concept was first coined by the French government in the 1990s, which suggested this as a scheme allowing for temporary migration flows that could benefit the destination country whilst also ensuring investments and return to the origin countries of migrants, thus contributing to its development (Lacroix 2007). In practice, this is what governance actors have in mind when talking about co-development, namely exploiting the developmental opportunities that migration offers for the benefits of Tunisian economic development. This emerged horizontally in the network as the rationale that drives any work on migration in Tunisia, bridging a diagnostic frame of underdevelopment with a prognosis of migration, an opportunity to be exploited. As a Tunisian official states, the consequences of migration are thus perceived in positive terms:

<sup>55</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017.

The first thing [on the consequences of migration] is about competence and expertise gained by migrants, and of the fact that people that go to Europe gain skills and know how, which is positive for migrants and countries of origin<sup>56</sup>.

This focus on social capital, such as upskilling and training, goes hand-in-hand with more attention placed upon the economic benefits that derive from remittances. While Ben Ali's ambivalent approach to its diaspora in the period prior to the revolution led to an environment less conducive to granting a substantial role to Tunisians abroad, including in investments, this has become a top priority for Tunisia after the revolution. As an official of an IO operating in Tunis states:

This is really at the centre of their attention at the moment, with most of the work we are asked to do relating to mainstreaming the developmental potential of migration and remittances in the work of government services<sup>57</sup>.

As such, it is evident how the framing of migration departs from a diagnosis of underdevelopment, to which a prognose of migration follows as a way to help solve the challenges that the Tunisian socio-economic system is facing. At the same time, migration offers a solution to problems that may otherwise arise at the political level as a consequence of these socio-economic failures, as this Tunisian official states:

it is true that we have many problems in the labour market, and we don't see the end of the tunnel, so emigration can help us in relieving this pressure!<sup>58</sup>

The political nature of migration emerges, with difficulties of the Tunisians authorities to decrease hope for their young people, as this official states:

given all these problems its citizens, and especially its youth, are facing, it is hard for the Tunisian government to also tell them 'you can't go', while from some areas of the coast you can even see Sicily!<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with an official of an International Organisation in Tunis, April 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017.

This is also well recognised by EU actors working in Tunisia, as this official from an MS states:

We know all very well that for them letting people out of Tunisia is convenient. They are ‘getting rid’ of potentially problematic people that are not seeing a future here, and which are very likely to contribute sending money back.<sup>60</sup>

Across the Tunisian migration governance system, the framing of migration is based upon the idea that this is an opportunity for Tunisia, a solution for the challenges evaluated by actors of this governance network, and which they face in their daily work.

The changes brought on by the revolution of 2011, however, don’t only relate to the re-constitution of an old framing of migration as an opportunity. Rather, the new opening for such an understanding was largely driven by considering migration as an integral part of the rights-based approach that defined the democratic transition of the African country and was enshrined in the constitution adopted in 2014. Showcasing the re-organisation of migration in Tunisia’s new sensible environment, in referring to the opportunities of migration, all interviewees also reflect on the fact that the only way is to think about its opportunities, as there is no alternative: migration is a right of the Tunisian people. This was demonstrated by this interviewee from an international organisation which has worked on human rights and migration with various Ministries of the Tunisian government:

At first, our efforts were needed to frame migration within a new perspective based on human rights. And while we are still fighting to attain results as regards the migrants in Tunisia, Tunisian officials have very much engaged with the protection of Tunisian migrants(...) you often hear them speak about the ‘right to mobility’, which was an extension of our emphasis on human rights. We would like them also to focus on the rights of migrants living today in Tunisia (...)<sup>61</sup>

The framing of migration as a solution to socio-economic problems therefore greatly embeds an understanding of migration as a right of Tunisian citizens who wish to do so. As this Tunisian official clearly puts it:

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with an official of an EU Member State in Tunis, May 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with an official of an International Organisation, May 2018.

We can do our best to control our borders, but we can't brutally force them to stay in, nor force them to come back...they are just exercising their right to mobility! <sup>62</sup>

Following the same argument, a leader of a CSO stated:

To understand the causes of migration is important, but only after one recognises the right a person has to move!<sup>63</sup>

The causes of migration, such as underdevelopment and unemployment, are considered key drivers of migration, migration which however is first and foremost considered as a right. When those conditions driving migration arise, such as lack of employment opportunities, many actors of Tunisian migration governance feel it is the right of that Tunisian individual to look for opportunities elsewhere. It is important to stress the fact that such considerations were discussed while keeping in mind Tunisian emigration. In fact, as the interviewee from the IO reported before stated, this was the only focus for many Tunisian officials when discussing causes and consequences of migration.

Having ascertained the way in which migration is largely framed as an opportunity in the Tunisian migration governance visualised in Chapter 4 (p. 113), we now analyse how these diagnostic and prognostic framings of migration are based on powerful assumptions of how migration unfolds.

When prognosing migration as a remedy for their diagnosis of the underdevelopment problems that they are facing, Tunisian governance actors are implicitly or explicitly driven by their understandings of causes and effects of migration. For example, to say that migration can lead to co-development, an assumption is embedded regarding how Tunisian emigrants embark on their journey, keeping strong ties with Tunisia and wanting to return and contribute to its development. Therefore, how is it that actors make sense of migration as an opportunity in light of their underdevelopment problems? The sensemaking approach taken in this research helps to show how these understandings are the product of 1) the interaction between the individual and social identity of actors of Tunisian migration governance after the 2011 revolution, 2) retrospective considerations of the role of migration in Tunisian society in the past 50 years, and 3) the consequent

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian government, April 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with an officer of an NGO in Tunis, April 2017.

plausible assumptions about the drivers of Tunisian emigration and how it occurs. This results in a process that leads to making sense of migration as an opportunity, which, as opposed to the EU, is not based on particular shocks but rather has been ongoing since the revolution of 2011. Each of these dimensions will be further analysed below.

#### 1) Individual actors and the post-2011 environment

Understandings of actors of the Tunisian migration governance system are first and foremost grounded in a strong Tunisian identity, a sense of belonging to the country and a responsibility to its progress. The first implication of this is taking a very close consideration for the conditions of Tunisian emigrants abroad, as this high-level Tunisian official states:

They are our brothers and sisters. It is really sad for us to learn that they suffer, or that they are not treated well. For this and for them we have to work<sup>64</sup>.

This attitude toward their Tunisian compatriots does not only include considerations of their conditions, but extends to believing that Tunisian emigrants and residents abroad exchange this feeling with a strong relationship to Tunisia. As another high-level official puts it:

Tunisians love Tunisia, whether they live there or elsewhere. They always think of coming back, and many do so in fact, also contributing greatly to the development of Tunisia. [...] For them leaving is always a hard choice, and often this goes hand in hand with belief of coming back one day<sup>65</sup>.

The individual identity of governance actors is enacted in the sensible environment that surrounds them, based on this Tunisian 'pride'. While this is well linked with the narrative imposed by Bourguiba and Ben Ali in previous decades, this assumes an even stronger consideration when it is framed in the construction of a new sensible environment post-2011 revolution. In making sense of this and framing their position within, Tunisian officials in fact feel it as their individual responsibility to ensure the success of the democratic transition that followed the demise of Ben Ali in 2011. This has become engrained in the way actors

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, April 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, April 2017.



understand their individual identity and position in the Tunisian governance system, enacting with their actions this new ‘rights-based’ environment that has developed in the past 7 years. This quote from a Tunisian official, that summarises elements that frequently emerged in interviews in Tunis, clearly shows this fact:

Since our 2011 revolution we adopted a human rights approach, which is enshrined in our constitution. Our work on migration as well is based on this, as we consider migration to be a human right, the right to mobility. [...] Our National Strategy on Migration follows this rights-based approach.<sup>66</sup>

From the post-revolution environment to the individual actor, migration becomes embedded in a new rights-based narrative, which merges with a sense of Tunisian identity and bridges with the social context in which actors operate. The work of actors is thus directed to re-enacting this sensible environment they constructed in Tunisian society. As such, actors emerge to be working towards what many defined as ‘making migration a choice, not a necessity’, as they work for Tunisian development whilst upholding the right of Tunisian people to migrate.

## 2) Retrospection

The majority of Tunisian migration governance actors don’t form their understandings of the issue on the basis of particular events over the last few years, but instead go as far back as the 1970s to evaluate dynamics of Tunisian emigration. As a long-standing Tunisian official states:

Europeans came to recruit Tunisian workers in the 1970s, Tunisians greatly contributed to Europe’s progress and development. This initiated flows of migration from Tunisians to Europe, and now we have 12% of our citizens that reside abroad, mostly in Europe. You can’t just go back now that it has become a problem for you.<sup>67</sup>

This is echoed by a representative of a trade union:

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, April 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, April 2017.

I remember when visas were not necessary to come to Italy. Tunisians went back and forth, moving when and where they had the possibility to work in a circular migration that was beneficial for all. As you Europeans chose to look East rather than South in your enlargement, you blocked this and migration started to assume increasingly irregular ways(...).<sup>68</sup>

A point that emerges to be very salient across interviewees is that when Tunisians had the opportunity to leave more freely, they never did in massive numbers; they only moved where a job was available for them, and also maintained a strong relationship with Tunisia, wanting to come back. It is on the basis of these retrospective analyses that actors believe that today migration would unfold in the same way, without any risk of a mass exodus of Tunisians. When challenged and confronted with the fact that approximately 25.000 Tunisians did in fact emigrate as soon as they had the chance in 2011, actors interviewed still point to this as an example of how migration dynamics occur on the basis of their understanding:

In 2011, about 25.000 Tunisians left as soon as controls were diminished. However, most of them came back anyway after not that long. It is clear that they were just curious of seeing what was on the other side, and as they saw that they didn't have many opportunities there, they came back.<sup>69</sup>

No evidence was provided to support such statements, manifesting how it wasn't their accuracy to have a powerful effect in shaping the views of migration of such actor, but rather their plausibility, driven by broader understandings of migration present in the environment in which the interviewee operated.

This explanation of more recent events thus fits a retrospective framing of migration, viewed as embedded within Tunisian society, that never led to a mass exodus and never will.

### 3) Plausible drivers of migration

What emerges strongly is that migration becomes framed as an opportunity on the basis of plausible understandings of its drivers, extracted and bracketed so as to make sense according to the individual identity

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with a representative of a trade union, April 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, April 2017.

of actors, the environment in which they operate and their retrospective considerations of the phenomenon. It is on this basis that all other issues discussed in the interviews as playing a role in driving migration, like current record unemployment rates or globalisation, are marginalised when thinking about how migration takes place. Instead, migration is largely understood by looking to the past, looking at the Tunisian diaspora community abroad and on the basis of a strong Tunisian national pride that unites all Tunisians with the objective of developing their home country.

Migration is thus constructed as an opportunity for Tunisia, as it is recognised that migration appeals only to certain segments of Tunisian society. This framing of migration is defined by the belief that Tunisians operate as rational actors when choosing to migrate, seen as moving on the basis of job prospects and by doing so keeping a strong attachment to Tunisia. This emerges in opposition to security-oriented European perspectives that were more prone to view migration as an unconditional consequence of the possibility of doing so. Reflecting on this, a high-level official when considering Tunisian emigration criticises the EU:

The EU should have more consideration of Tunisians and Africans more in general. Why do they think that they would migrate to end up in the street? They really need to change perspective on migration.<sup>70</sup>

The idea that all Tunisians might leave runs counter to the opportunities that are available to them, and as rational actors, not all will embark on a journey without the prospect of it being a success, ‘risking living in the streets of Europe’<sup>71</sup>.

Thus, actors of Tunisian migration governance make sense of migration as an opportunity to resolve their underdevelopment problems, constructing such a sensible environment on the basis of their Tunisian identity, commitment to a human rights approach that includes the right to mobility, and their considerations of past migration dynamics from Tunisia. This migration governance system since the 2011 revolution is therefore not the product of a sensemaking process triggered by a shock that needed to be understood, but rather an ongoing process of Tunisian commitment to solve problems related to its economic and social development. This emerges horizontally in the actors interviewed across the network, operating in a variety

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, May 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with an official of the Tunisian Government, May 2018.

of different environments. This notwithstanding, many actors, especially government officials, are still operating in a structure that has many continuing factors with the administration of the Ben Ali regime. It is because of this that a framing dissonance was manifested by the majority of actors, and particularly from those who operated both prior and after the revolution. As well as embracing this new framing of migration, such actors manifested a tendency to revert back to old security-driven paradigms when migration management is problematised.

### 6.2.2- The security concerns

When discussing migration issues with actors in the EU, overwhelmingly their first reaction was to distinguish among categories of migrants, such as asylum seekers, irregular migration, 'economic migration', and legal migration (see Chapter 5, p.129). In Tunisia, instead, this did not occur, and when identifying migration as an opportunity and as a right, migration issues were generally considered without making any categorical distinctions. However, what was most interesting to note was that when prompted on irregular migration and its challenges, Tunisian government officials, and most of other actors interviewed in Tunis reverted instinctively back to a framing very close to the security-oriented framing brought forward by Ben Ali. This revealed a framing dissonance; despite embracing a new understanding of migration as a right, another intuitive framing was offered to account for the challenges of managing irregular migration.

When confronted with problems related to controlling over sea borders and the increasing irregular departures of Tunisian migrants in 2017 (for details of the flows see Chapter 2, p. 51), various Tunisian actors reverted to the diagnostic framing of migration previously identified in this Chapter, characterised by the restrictive approach to migration control adopted by Ben Ali. In fact, all interviewees in Tunisia, to various degrees, mention the power of 'El Dorado' Europe, following the narrative put in place by Ben Ali to overemphasise pull factors, veil push factors and drive a more security-oriented approach (this Chapter, p.169; Cassarino 2014). By reverting to these understandings of migration, actors adopt a perception of migrants as deluded and ignorant of what is awaiting them, rather than rational actors motivated to improve their situation. As a Tunisian official puts it:

They don't even know what is out there, but they just want to go and see without thinking about any consequence.<sup>72</sup>

This divergent understanding posits migrants as actors motivated by Europe's pull factors. Instead of taking the position of viewing migration as an opportunity, this way of framing fixates on security and focuses on the idea that increased border controls are needed to avoid the risks that uncontrolled emigration could lead to.

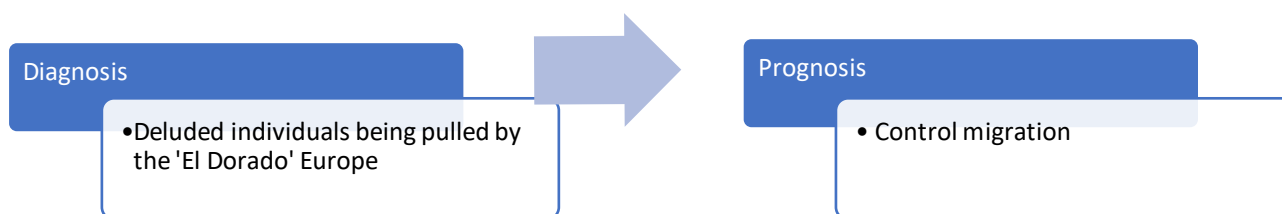


Figure 219: Framing dissonance and migration control

This understanding emerges most clearly in relation to rural migrants from inner parts of Tunisia, the 'harraga', those that 'burn the frontiers without even knowing what they are doing and why they are doing it'<sup>73</sup>. Yet, the understandings discussed in the previous section considered today's Tunisian emigrants as largely comprised of educated unemployed youth, an element that was very salient in most discussions about Tunisian migration across the network, in and outside government. This suggests that although present as a framing of migration, the security-driven perspective is marginalised by a very low salience, as it is considered to be applicable to only a small number of poor and desperate individuals, seen as deluded individuals driven by a myth that is not there, rather than rational actors driven by economic considerations.

Despite the marginalisation of such frame, driven by the low salience of the diagnosed challenges to which it applies, its existence shows how such intuitive frames are developed. As in the case of Europe, this security-oriented narrative is based on a shortcut that simplifies the complexity of the migration phenomenon into an easy diagnosis that calls for linear restrictive action on migration issues. This prognostic framing is intuitively considered by Tunisian actors on the basis of what is readily available to them, in line with the 'availability heuristic' of Tversky and Kahneman (see Chapter 3, p.64). Actors, when faced with a question that creates a level of uncertainty as it deviates from their newly-developed sensible environment, intuitively

<sup>72</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, May 2018.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017

react by bringing forward old paradigms, to deal with a situation that they perceive as similar to one they have faced before. Given that in the past this framing was imposed by Ben Ali as their *modus operandi*, when confronted with problems that resonate with the challenges they perceive as similar to those faced previously, they intuitively use this retrospective approach to bring forward the same solutions as before. It is also important to note how this may apply to many officials of the Tunisian government, which worked for the Tunisian administration both before and after the demise of Ben Ali. To expect a complete radical change of narrative and *modus operandi* would be too ambitious, as this official of an EU MS working in Tunis states:

We should be more careful when discussing changes in Tunisia after the revolution. It is like it was in [EU MS] after the dictatorships of the 1940s, the change did not happen overnight [...]. It is true that while before it was unthinkable for an EU MS official working in an embassy to pick up the phone and call a Tunisian counterpart, now I can easily do that, but still the administrative apparatus in place is very similar to the previous one. You can really see traces of old mentality and habits still present today.<sup>74</sup>

It is against this background that the framings of migration aligned to previous narratives developed by Ben Ali should be analysed. As such, the ‘El Dorado’ narrative developed by the previous leader continues to emerge strongly when migration is problematised in discussions of Tunisian migration in the context of this migration governance system, stored in the cognition of actors and intuitively referred to when presented with a situation which fits that framing. However, the very low salience that these kind of challenges have in current understandings of migration across the network signify that these security-oriented frames remain marginalised vis-à-vis new frames which embrace migration as an opportunity and a right. In other words, no elements shaping current framings of migration in Tunisia’s newly developed sensible environment triggers to revert back to such understandings.

What is again interesting to observe is how these considerations that determine the salience the ‘harraga’ have are grounded on plausible interpretations of migration dynamics in Tunisia, rather than accurate considerations reflected in the data available. One example of this lies comes from interviews collected in

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with an official of an EU Member State, May 2018.

April 2017, which were framed by an irregular migration context that counted less than a thousand irregular departures per year. In May 2018 interviews took place within a changed context defined by a 400 per cent increase in departures since September 2017 (Lixi 2018). Numerous reports (Macé 2018) have shown how this increase in departures has little to do with changing regional dynamics and changing smuggling routes for sub-Saharan migrants, but that it largely concerns Tunisian emigrants feeling the brunt of unemployment in the less developed and urbanised South of Tunisia. Moreover, research (Zuccotti et al. 2018) has shown that university graduates have been a minor proportion of Tunisian departures over the past years, resonating with reports which highlight how an increasing number of migrants comes from the rural south, where closing factories have led to a greater scarcity of job opportunities. Notwithstanding all these considerations, and the increase in departures which alarmed EU policymakers, the salience of this kind of irregular migration remained very low in understandings of governance actors in and around the Tunisian government. The dissonant framing of migration is shaped by the different salience attributed to the different dimensions of the challenges associated to migration, which determines the emergence of rights-based framing to the expense of security-oriented frames. This framing is largely driven by plausible interpretations of migration dynamics which are bracketed out of more complex unfolding dynamics, as they fit a new environment that emerged after 2011. As Tunisian actors focus on the democratic transition, they bracket a particular understanding of migration that fits with this changed narrative and context, which has less to do with unfolding considerations of what is taking place at Tunisian coasts. Plausibility, rather than accuracy, associated with what makes sense to actors situated in a particular environment, emerge to be the driver of the salience of the challenges associated to migration, which elevates the importance of a frame to the expense of the other. As such, it is possible to appreciate the impact that post 2011 dynamics have in the constitution of the Tunisian migration governance system and its underlying frames.

This section has shown how a changing system of migration governance in Tunisia has been based on two dissonant frames, a rights-based framing of migration which considers migration as an opportunity and on which basis a new sensible environment has been organised, and a security-oriented perspective related to irregular migration and its control. However, as opposed to the EU, these frames do not define understandings of actors and relations of two different constellations of the network analysed, but rather they

are both widespread across the whole network. Given the methodological limitation of not having carried out interviews with Interior and Defence ministry officials (see Chapter 3, p.86), it may be that the salience of more security-oriented frames increases in such services. However, interviews collected with actors operating in close contact with such services clearly highlight the predominance of understanding migration as an opportunity for Tunisia. Moreover, it is also important to consider that while in the EU cases of cognitive dissonance were shown, when a diagnosis from a migrant-centred framing was followed by a security-oriented prognosis, a more widespread framing dissonance emerges in Tunisia, with two distinct diagnostic and prognostic frames developed. This context defines the constitution of the post-2011 migration governance system in Tunisia, and is in turn also shaped by the rights-based environment that emerged after the Jasmine revolution, which drives understandings of migration which impact the salience ascribed to diagnoses relating to one frame over the other. As such, the next section considers the issue of salience by looking at the meaning that migration crisis assumed in Tunisia. In so doing, it turns the telescope to Tunisia. Rather than abiding to EU frames about migration and its challenges, post-2011 Tunisian frames have been developed on the basis of local Tunisian dynamics, far away from the EU migration crisis, with a sensible environment constructed as a very different place for migration as compared to the EU.

### **6.3 How Do Actors Understand And Perceive (Migration) Crisis?**

The previous section identified the low salience of migration in Tunisia. This already suggests a significant difference compared to the analysis of the EU carried out in the previous Chapters. Chapter 4 demonstrated how there were strong pressures from the political network of the EU to actors relating directly with Tunisia, pressures driven by perceptions of crisis analysed in Chapter 5. Either by considering ‘crisis’ as a crisis of migration or as a crisis for migrants (Chapter 5, p.136), perceptions of migration crisis played an important role in the EU. Following the ambition of this Chapter to turn the telescope around and analyse Tunisian dynamics freed of a Eurocentric perspective, this section identifies how the 2015 EU migration crisis played no role in shaping the dynamics of migration governance in Tunisia. Rather than 2015, it recognises the year 2011 as the ground-breaking moment for the constitution of the Tunisian migration governance system, albeit also showing how this was not perceived as a moment of crisis but of transition and change. In other words, this was a time of re-constitution of the sensible environment by Tunisian actors of migration



governance. Framings of migration are detached from those of crisis in Tunisia, with actors rather referring to dimensions part of their normality, such as socio-economic problems and unemployment, as defining the context within which migration occurs. Even security concerns, which have been high in the African country following a series of terrorist attacks in 2015, are identified as not feeding into a securitisation of migration; migration remains framed as an opportunity, also to relieve some social pressure also from a difficult socio-political situation.

### 6.3.1 Migration and the 2011 revolution

As reported above, the revolution of 2011 was indeed a ground-breaking moment for the Tunisian migration governance. A network of migration governance was in fact freed from centralised control of a leader, and new understandings of causes and effects of migration found a new place. This was also a time in which significant emigration and immigration dynamics occurred, ‘as we had to manage together 20.000 departures of Tunisians, with increased political pressure from EU counterparts, and also a massive inflow of 350.000 Libyans and Africans [i.e. sub-Saharan Africans] in the south’. However, as an official of an IO states, Tunisians did not ring the bells of crisis and effectively dealt with the situation:

They are proud of their work and rightly so, they were quite effective in dealing with the influx from Libya. [...] These dynamics also accompanied the development of a different approach to migration.<sup>75</sup>

Rather than determining a security-oriented response to migration, the migration challenges that emerged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring were framed within a new rights-based approach of post-revolution Tunisia. It is since then that this approach has been enshrined in the Tunisian constitution and the (not yet adopted) National Strategy on Migration. The fact that this was not defined as a migration crisis is emphasised by Tunisian actors, as this Tunisian official states:

In Africa you often have states dealing with large number of migrants or refugees, but never have we called for a migration crisis. Why should Europe? <sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with an official of an IO in Tunis, April 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

The point is that as opposed to reactions to the migration crisis held in the EU, no period emerges in which a time of migration crisis forced a reconsideration of their approach to the issue. Rather, this reconsideration was the product of changes in the government of Tunisia, and the democratic transition it produced. While like in the EU a security-oriented frame has been recognised to be existent, the frequent perception of threat and vulnerability which drove EU actors to turn back to that framing of migration was absent in Tunisia, and as such Tunisian actors never have reverted back to that frame when developing their policies.

This decoupling of migration and crisis also has implications for the ways Tunisians understand the European migration crisis. Interviewees overwhelmingly objected to the fact that it was a crisis of migration, as this high-level Tunisian official remarked:

Let's face it, Europe's crisis is not of migration, but of its politics and also its economics  
[...] Just think of the fact that Europe needs the labour of our Tunisian citizens, who is  
going to work in the fields in southern Italy? Not to mention how old you are as a continent  
[...] And for us, it is a crisis of development, not of migration. <sup>77</sup>

Understandings of migration are not driven by perceptions of threat, but rather by considerations of the underlying systems of migration, such as the European political, economic and demographic system. The same applies for migration dynamics in Tunisia, which, rather than framed by crisis, are largely considered as embedded in a lack of socio-economic development in Tunisia, therefore part of their 'normality', rather than a sudden moment of shock and forced change.

### 6.3.2 A 'crisis' of development

Essentially, all Tunisian interviewees turned the table around in discussions about crisis, and instead started talking about what can be defined as the 'normality' of the Tunisian social and economic system. All the actors interviewed insist that when the EU brings up the 'migration crisis' in negotiations, for them this is an

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

empty word in their context, because their perceptions focus rather on the high unemployment rates and lack of opportunities for their citizens. As a Tunisian official states:

our crisis is that our youngsters don't have opportunities in Tunisia, and we are not able to turn their force into a resource for Tunisia. This is our main problem, as otherwise we would have a great advantage coming from our young population, our locomotive for change.<sup>78</sup>

As another Tunisian official states,

We are paying the fact that during the regime, they built a narrative of progress that was based on an advanced education system, with many university graduates, that served only to veil deeper problems. As such we now have deep economic problems, and also we don't have the skills needed for our development, in our workforce.<sup>79</sup>

This is echoed by another official which adds

With a labour market that doesn't give opportunities to our youth, or that requires other kind of skills, we have a 15% unemployment rate and 30% for our youth, even worst for women. How do you think we can develop if we have so many people out of work?<sup>80</sup>

These quotes represent perspectives that emerge in all interviews held in Tunisia, which fundamentally drive the framing away from crisis, and rather embed it in structural problems Tunisia has been suffering for decades. Migration, in other words, is a consequence of more structural development challenges, and not a challenge in itself. It is for this reason that the challenges of migration retain a very low salience in framings of migration, as the challenges diagnosed are other, and part of the ongoing Tunisian normality. For example, departures increased significantly in late 2017, from less than 100 irregular departures per month until August 2017 more than 6000 departures by December 2017 (Lixi 2018). However, this did not increase the salience of the challenges that drove the diagnostic framing of migration of Tunisian actors. Rather than conceptualize migration through a lens of concrete numbers of migrants, migration is understood by a

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

diagnostic framing related to Tunisian normality which forms the sensible environments in which actors organise their experiences. As noted, this is based on the socio-economic problems which do not call for migration control prognoses.

It is interesting to note that these understandings and framings of migration as distinct from crisis are reported to also be part of the approach of the most security-oriented forces in Tunisia, included the Police, the National Guards and the Navy. As a high level official from an IO that works closely with these corps stated,

All people that follow migration from a security perspective even acknowledge this, any police officer or navy official, the first thing they tell me is ‘look at unemployment in Tunisia, what do you expect’.<sup>81</sup>

This shows that even in those more security-oriented services, after the revolution, the security-oriented framing inherited from Ben Ali did not become a driver of action. The low salience of migration issues in their framing of challenges Tunisia faced did not lead to its resurgence. This is particularly interesting when comparing Tunisia to the EU, given that, as opposed to the EU, an increase in security concerns did not drive an increased salience of migration.

#### *The security emergency*

Albeit not because of the European Migration Crisis, 2015 was a significant year for Tunisia. Three terrorist attacks occurred in March, June and November, which led to a state of national emergency that has been in place ever since. With 73 deaths and more wounded, this was considered as a moment of considerable crisis, in its relation to security and capacity of the newly democratic state to protect its citizens, and with implications for the economy, as Tunisia stopped attracting tourists, and has not yet recovered. As this EU MS official in Tunis states

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with an official of an IO, May 2018.

It was clear that this for them was a major challenge to which they reacted very strongly.

Today after three years all seems to be settling, but it only takes another gunman on a beach to make the whole system fall again.<sup>82</sup>

As migration fitted into the remit of many security forces that were dealing with migration, this did provoke an overturn compared to the openness of such services developed after the 2011 revolution, as an advisor to the Secretary of State on migration asserts:

2015 was clearly a moment which changed the modus operandi of security services, and led them to close themselves back, as during the regime from Ben Ali.<sup>83</sup>

However, the securitisation that followed this moment of crisis did not lead to a securitisation of migration as well. As an EU MS official in Tunis states

It has been interesting to see how migration has nevertheless been kept aside [...] This is also due to lack of resources, but not only. Although of course if you have limited resources, you place 90% of them on what is your priority, and 10% in something that you don't see as a priority such as migration. <sup>84</sup>

Migration is therefore not included in diagnoses of the challenges, not even in relation to a security emergency. Instead, what can be found is that even in relation to security issues, migration -regular or irregular- can be a solution rather than a problem. As this EU MS official in Tunis asserts:

You need also to consider that those leaving are potentially the most problematic cases that could lead to social unrests, which are already recurrently taking place. [...] These protests don't constitute a crisis, but the risk posed do suggest that Tunisian security forces have all the interest to let their 'worst' cases out, rather than keeping them in<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, April 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

To relieve socio-political pressure, it appears that Tunisian officials understand the opportunity of letting out individuals who wish to leave, and that could otherwise potentially become problematic.

By considering how migration does not feature in the Tunisian security crisis, it is possible to understand how a security-oriented framing of migration does not assume a greater importance, even in security-oriented services. What emerges is that migration, across the whole network, is simply not diagnosed as a problem.

Rather, other challenges are diagnosed as problematic, whether in relation to structural socio-economic problems, or to Tunisian security, to which prognosis is increasing, rather than curbing, migration.

Migration, is therefore not considered in relation to crises, but rather quite the opposite, as part and parcel of Tunisia's 'normality', a solution to ongoing problems in different Tunisian systems. As such, migration is framed as an opportunity associated to rights-based frames that are highly salient in the newly-constituted Tunisian democratic environment. The next section will look at the extent to which such frames are followed by action, finding constraints present in the Tunisian migration governance system. As opposed to the EU, migration framing largely leads to inaction and is the product of the sensible environment produced by Tunisian actors of migration governance.

#### **6.4 From Framing Migration To Action**

By focusing on how migration is framed by considerations of 'normality' rather than of crisis, the previous section identified the low salience migration has in Tunisia. Low salience means that migration is framed within broader considerations of much more salient problems of a socio-economic nature. As such, the sensible environment of the analysed actors is based on the prevailing framing of migration in Tunisia understood as a right of Tunisian citizens and as an opportunity for Tunisia. Tunisian governance actors overwhelmingly frame migration focusing squarely on emigration. This entails that the migration governance system analysed in this Chapter is largely externally oriented, as much of its emphasis is laid upon emigration and emigrants. The external governance of migration is, therefore, the main priority of the whole migration governance system, which focuses less on the internal dynamics of migration. However, stark differences emerge in relation to how this external interest translates into action compared to the EU. This section focuses on this, assessing how in Tunisia, the constitution of migration framing as a right and opportunity leads to inaction, rather than action.

#### 6.4.1 ...or rather, inaction

This research has been based on an interest in framing, given the causal significance ascribed to frames as drivers of action. By associating the framing analysis with a sensemaking perspective, the thesis shows how, having framed issues, actors decide ‘what to do next’. Chapter 5 has shown how in the EU this equated to ‘action’, whether security-oriented or more development focused. As the literature discussed in Chapter 2 largely considered the way in which European trends were externalised to non-EU countries, it was expected that this causal link would emerge also for Tunisia. However, the previous two sections have suggested that the picture is more nuanced, as the framings of migration present in Tunisia are the product of internal dynamics rather than external influences. As such, it is possible to understand how as opposed to the EU, where framings of migration and its challenges led to do something about them, in Tunisia the sensible environment constructed by governance actors led them, consciously, not to do something. In other words, it recognises inaction as being the result of present framings of migration, a distinctive feature of the Tunisian migration governance system.

As discussed before, Tunisian governance actors in framing migration don’t diagnose challenges of migration, but rather different sets of issues pertaining to socio-economic systems which underlie and drive migration. This means that migration is seen as caused by such factors, but nevertheless migration in and of itself is seen as a potential solution, relieving pressure on such systems in Tunisia and investing in the skills of Tunisian emigrants that may eventually become productive and conducive to development in their home country. In the EU, prognostic framings were shown to have powerful effects in shaping action, whether relating to deterrence or more developmental approaches to migration governance. In Tunisia, given that emigration is prognosed as a solution to the main challenges that Tunisian actors face, the best thing for actors to do is very often letting the situation unfold on its own. As this Tunisian official states:

We can only look at things unfold, and wish we could do more! <sup>86</sup>

This is powerful as it clearly shows that the sensible environment constructed by governance actors, based on such framing of migration as well as by the understandings of the constraints to

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017, Tunis.

their action, leads to the perception of having limited room for developing actions that follow their prognosis, and thus lead to emigration and co-development through migration. Even in the EU many actors felt pressures of the environment when developing their actions, but nevertheless found ways to develop actions which resulted from their framing of migration. In Tunisia, actors feel strongly constrained to develop the actions that follow their framing, as this Tunisian official states:

To put in place such actions is important for us to support the legal migration of our citizens, but we are left without the possibility to do so! Mobility has been largely absent from our discussions with the EU, despite it being the title of the partnerships underlying our engagement<sup>87</sup>.

Some instances were also shown in the EU in cases where actors could not follow through their diagnostic framings of migration due to pressures present in their environments that led them to take certain actions which needed to be embedded in their sensemaking processes (see Chapter 5, p.148). In Tunisia, this is not the case, because such inaction appears to be reflected also at the political level. Interviews with Tunisian officials all suggest that their actions are not greatly scrutinised nor pressured by the political sphere, largely reflecting a lack of interest for migration issues. In Tunisia, the widespread and prevailing framing understands migration as a right. Given that Tunisian politicians recognise that they don't have the power to carry out actions in this direction, no one appears to want to take responsibility for developing actions that would be subject to popular backlash should they go against such a framing. Lack of leadership and political direction follows, contributing to the overall inaction produced by this system of migration governance regarding policy outputs and its implementation. Concurrently, this lack of leadership and political direction determines that individual framings of migration held by actors operating in this system are even more important, as they have more power to operate without strong political constraints.

This analysis of the effects of migration frames in Tunisia provides an important explanation to the underlying drivers of such a system. In doing so, it corrects a tendency which has permeated a Eurocentric approach to the European external migration governance and relations with Tunisia; namely the belief that

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017, Tunis.



Tunisian actions on migration are associated with the correct ‘incentives’. By this understanding, if Tunisia did not act, it must, therefore, have been because it was not incentivised strongly enough to do so. This then leads to more aid packages, or if seen as a problem of means, more ‘technical support’. This Eurocentric vision doesn’t consider the causal power of frames that drive inaction in Tunisia. These are not matters of incentives, but of understandings.

In critique to the externalisation literature that assumed that frames were successfully externalised by the EU to Tunisia, this Chapter shows that such understandings are developed differently in Tunisia, on the basis of local dynamics rather than EU prescriptions. Inaction is the product of the sensible environment constructed which perceives emigration in a positive light, and thus leads to consciously opting for the strategy which more closely aligns with such a framing, considering the constraints part of such environment. The rest of this section will now examine some practices which exemplify the extent to which inaction plays a role in this migration governance system, focusing on border control and on the development of the National Strategy on Migration.

#### 6.4.2 An intermittent border control

As shown in the previous sections, the increase in migrant departures that occurred in the second half of 2017 and that continued throughout 2018, did not drive a reaction towards security-oriented migration perspectives. The framing of migration inherited from the Ben Ali era and based on a security-oriented approach to deterring departures did not emerge, and therefore did not drive security-oriented action. Rising irregular departures, in fact, were not framed as a challenge. Rather than being diagnosed as a problem, such departures were just considered as a consequence of ongoing ‘normal’ problems relating to Tunisian socio-economic problems. This meant that such departures did not increase the salience of security challenges of migration, as attention was laid squarely on the systemic problems driving migration, diagnosed as challenges to be solved. With this framing, such departures were actually seen as fitting prognoses of migration understood as an opportunity, despite their irregular nature. Challenges of border control did not significantly raise in salience across the Tunisian migration governance network, and therefore remained of low importance. This determined that such increase —perceived as a shock in the EU— did not lead to turning back to old security-oriented framings which understood migrants as deluded individuals attracted

from the 'El Dorado', rather than understanding migrants as individuals rationally looking for better opportunities from which Tunisia could benefit as well.

The consequence of such a framing which prognosed migration as an opportunity for migrants and Tunisia is increased migration. However, as Tunisian officials do not have the means to carry out actions conducive to this, inaction results and assumes an important role in their behaviour. As an EU MS official in Tunis stated,

We can see that for them it is an opportunity to let people out, although they tell us that they are doing a lot to prevent departures. But they also don't shy out in pointing out how those leaving don't have opportunities in Tunisia. <sup>88</sup>

This resonates with what another interviewee from an international organisation states:

It is clear that rather than keeping individuals which could become problematic, they have an interest in leaving the possibility for them to leave... it is not a matter of resources, we work closely with them and are always ready to assist.<sup>89</sup>

As another EU MS official in Tunis adds,

I am not sure it's only a matter of resources. I mean, we have proof that technical equipment paid for by the EU is kept in hangars and is not being used!<sup>90</sup>

The point is that following their individual and socialised understandings of migration, Tunisian services dedicated to border control often choose inaction. However, it is also important to clarify that this doesn't extend to an open borders policy where anyone who aspires to migrate irregularly may do so. Tunisian authorities frequently report their interceptions of irregular migrants trying to leave, despite carrying out such work in a limited way. As an EU MS official in Tunis puts it:

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with a representative of an IO, May 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

They tell us that they have intercepted about 9000 irregular migrants in 2017, with 6000 making it officially. But this is not the whole picture and we know it, ‘ghost departures’ that are not accounted for are a very common thing (...) <sup>91</sup>

This means that despite an overall positive attitude toward migration that drives inaction at the borders, still, at least officially on record, only 1 in 3 migrants manages to leave irregularly. This may seemingly go against the analysis suggested, as such apprehensions are the consequences of border control actions. However, what emerges is that these are not part of a security-oriented approach to migration, but are linked to security concerns in Tunisia at large. As analysed above, high-level security concerns have arisen since three terrorist attacks occurred in 2015. As such, the stability of the country is highly important, and in light of regional dynamics leading to greater departure difficulties from Libya for sub-Saharan African migrants wanting to reach Europe, Tunisia wants to avoid becoming the next gateway for irregular migration from Africa to Europe. Consequently, this security dimension emerges to ensure control over the Tunisian coasts. Yet, the power of the prevailing positive framing of migration may help once again understand why, as soon as they intercept Tunisian emigrants attempting to irregularly migrate to Italy, they are soon let go. Severe security-oriented legislation has been in place since the Ben Ali era which would allow for imprisonment and other punitive actions to deter any future attempts. Instead, interviewees report that Tunisian officials let migrants go, freeing them if they are Tunisians, and handing them over to IOM or UNHCR if they are foreigners. As this leading official of an international organisation states:

They just let them go. They are only interested in making the departure more difficult, but they let them go and we know many try again until they manage to leave. <sup>92</sup>

Inaction, i.e. lack of punitive action provided for by legislation, once again becomes the best possible choice for Tunisian officials, notwithstanding a wide range of security actions at their disposal. These security actions would be dissonant to their framing of migration, not fitting with the sensible environment they seek to re-enact. This is not to say that all actors are driven by the same understandings and operate on that basis. Nevertheless, the research shows how this framing that drives inaction is predominant across the networks at

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with an official of a EU Member State, May 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with an official of an IO, May 2018.

different levels, from the political level to the technical/operational one. Such a frame permeates this migration governance system, and defines the environment in which actors operate, in a way that is conducive to such inaction.

Especially since the rise of departures in 2017, this has profound effects on relations with the EU, as the EU pushes for deterrence measures and erroneously considers the lack of action from the Tunisian side as a consequence of a lack of resources. Not opposing this overtly given the constraints that they have, Tunisian actors prefer an ambiguous approach driven by considerable inaction.

Given this widespread recurrence to inaction because of a framing of migration that is rather concerned with broader socio-economic problems, few examples are found of substantial work manifesting a relation between framing and action. As reported before, the work on the National Strategy for Migration has been a first attempt to codify this new approach to migration, defined by the 'right to mobility'. However, the work on this has stalled for some years, and given its lack of adoption, it serves as further proof of the prevailing framing of migration that has not led to action thus far. Once again, this example suggests the immobility of a system of migration governance that doesn't allow for the action of the actors operating therein, as rather than putting in place which don't follow their framings of migration, would rather not act. The few actions taken largely relate to projects implemented by the EU, which mainly involve IGOs and NGOs in their implementation, and despite not being seen negatively by Tunisian officials, they are not considered important. As this Tunisian official states:

Yes, the EU does push for many projects. These are even all good, but in Tunisia we all know these are not very important...they all lack what we actually want: mobility!<sup>93</sup>

This section has shown that because of the prevailing framing of migration as a right and an opportunity, and because migration is not associated with sudden crises needing prompt responses but rather as part of problems representing an ongoing socio-economic 'normality' in Tunisia, this migration governance system is largely defined by inaction. In fact, as migration is prognosed as a possible solution to socioeconomic problems diagnosed, Tunisian governance actors find themselves constrained by the impossibility of carrying

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, May 2018.

out actions to further emigration and ensure its beneficial impact for migrants and Tunisia alike. As such, not openly going against pressures coming from the EU, inaction is preferred, continuing a migration trend — albeit irregularly— that is considered integral to Tunisia’s continual development, and a safer political strategy.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This Chapter develops new insight into EU external migration governance by focusing on dynamics ‘within’ the Tunisian migration governance system that challenge the assumption that the EU manages to successfully externalise its frames and dictate the modus operandi of Tunisian migration management. By turning the telescope around and raising the same questions that guided the analyses for EU external migration governance dynamics, the Chapter finds that the prevailing framing which stemmed from post-2011 revolution dynamics is markedly different from an EU security-oriented perspective. The Chapter thus disproved the assumption which emerged from the literature reviewed in Chapter 1 relating to the EU’s externalisation of migration control, which assumed that EU frames were externalised to non-EU countries which then drove actions that furthered EU objectives. Neither the successful transfer of a policy frame, nor the action that should have followed, were found to take place. Rather, three elements have been recognised as playing a role in shaping and driving the Tunisian external migration governance.

First, a prevailing framing of migration has been identified, which stemmed from a rights-based democratic transition. Building on the longstanding consideration and contribution of migration in Tunisian society, dating back to the 1970s, this framing considers migration as an opportunity. This is then coupled to the new rights-based narrative that emerged after the Jasmine revolution of 2011, with migration being considered as a right, the ‘right to mobility’. It is on this basis that a sensible environment is constructed in Tunisia, in a considerably different way than the EU, creating a different context for actions on migration issues. This sensible environment grounds the whole network, also in those services dedicated to security-oriented issues. This notwithstanding, a framing dissonance is recognised in most actors, especially those that operated under Ben Ali, with a security-oriented framing of migration also found to be present across the network. This perspective understands migration, particularly irregular migration, as something done by deluded individuals who are attracted by an imaginary ‘El Dorado’ which is Europe. As such, curbing this emigration

follows as a prognosis necessary to ensure control and stability. Despite its emergence when prompting actors with the challenges posed by irregular migration, it is evident that this narrative is passively inherited by Ben Ali, and the low salience of migration challenges diagnosed marginalises this framing to the benefit of a new rights-based approach. This positive framing steers attention of the Tunisian migration governance system towards the 'external', as the sole focus become emigration of Tunisian citizens, rather than an interest in migration more broadly.

Second, the Tunisian migration governance system is grounded in framings of migration as normality, rather than crisis. As opposed to the EU, and with no evidence suggesting that the EU's migration crisis had an impact in Tunisia, the prevailing framing of migration is based on a diagnosis that considers the challenges of Tunisia's socio-economic system. Issues such as lack of opportunity and unemployment are considered elements for which emigration is a prognosis, rather than a challenge. In the absence of highly salient challenges of migration which constitute a migration crisis, these challenges, as part of Tunisia's ongoing normality, underlie the positive framing of emigration. As such, a security-oriented perspective does not significantly emerge, not even during a 'security emergency' which has defined the state of Tunisia since 2015. The terrorist attacks that occurred in 2015 had no reason to lead to a securitisation of migration, aside for a general increased emphasis on maintaining stability in the country. Rather, even a security perspective considered emigration as an opportunity, letting out individuals which could otherwise become problematic in Tunisia. As such, emigration is framed through considerations of Tunisia's normality, ongoing and long-lasting challenges of socio-economic nature rather than shocks or crises warranting a reaction.

Third and finally, the Chapter shows the implications of 'migration as normality' on actions. Contrary to the assumption made by the methodological framework of this research, the causal significance of the framing of migration held by actors of Tunisian governance is inaction, rather than action. Their prognosis of socio-economic challenges diagnosed was in fact emigration, seen as an opportunity for individuals and for Tunisia's development. While in the EU actions followed prognoses, in Tunisia actors feel constrained by their sensible environment, situated agents that cannot develop what follows their framing of migration. Consequently, inaction is seen as stemming from a prevailing understandings of migration, offering an explanation for the ambiguous approach held by Tunisia on border control. Despite the widespread

assumption, at least across policy circles, that departures of irregular migrants were caused by lack of resources or incentives to act, this Chapter demonstrates how the inaction of actors dedicated to border control largely follows their framing of migration. Even when apprehending migrants, to avoid uncontrolled departures, the security tools at their disposal inherited by Ben Ali are not used, and rather Tunisian emigrants are let go freely, with many attempting to depart again towards Europe. In other words, rather than ‘to do something’ as mostly posited by the sensemaking literature, their framing of migration leads them to consciously ‘not do something’, as no challenges of migration are diagnosed which need to be addressed.

The Chapter therefore confutes claims that suggest that a non-EU country like Tunisia is a passive recipient of orders from the EU. It also demonstrates a Eurocentric bias of such an understanding, and, in contrast, studies migration governance dynamics in Tunisia as linked to ongoing developments in the country, informed by specific frames that have particular and local effects. Given the difference between these positive framings of migration and those which define the political level of Europe, which largely pivot on security considerations, the next section will untangle these relations, exploring if and how they represent a clash of two worlds.

## **CHAPTER 7- THE FACTORS FRAMING AND SHAPING EU-TUNISIAN RELATIONS ON MIGRATION**

The previous Chapters have focused on the dynamics of the external migration governance systems in the EU and in Tunisia, which has meant analysing their structure, processes and ideas. This Chapter brings the considerations from these two different worlds together. Two main implications emerge from the analysis carried out so far. At an empirical level, it is necessary to analyse the impact of two different dynamics of migration governance that need to come together when relating on migration. At a conceptual level, the analysis carried out so far sheds light on two units of analysis of migration governance, which allows us to draw out considerations on dynamics of migration governance.

The first section focuses on empirical implications which emerge from the two cases, as regards relations on migration with each other. In line with the overarching question of the research, the previous Chapters have focused on the factors ‘framing and shaping’ such relations, focusing on in-case dynamics. This section analyses the impact of these dynamics for relations, understanding how the need for such relations arises and with what effects. Building from the network analysis of the previous Chapters, it does so by focusing first on political relations in between political actors, and then on operational relations, namely those carried out by actors tasked with role of implementing policy and political decisions. It recognises that political relations are based on a clash between two different worlds, two ways of understanding migration which are also a result of two different pressures coming from perceptions of popular attitudes to migration. Actions considered are largely driven by EU interests, which are failing to ripen results hoped for as they focus on pushing Tunisia from inaction to action by giving incentives and resources, rather than understanding the sheer difference in the way they frame Tunisian emigration, and the effects of this. A wealth of projects and actions carried out, which structure the operational level, confirm similar dynamics. As opposed to what emerged from the literature available, the fact that the relations are shaped by EU priorities does not entail that actions and projects developed act as vehicles for transferring frames. Tunisia remains anchored to its own position, shedding important light on the great agency played by non-EU countries in relations with the EU, which is often lost in Eurocentric accounts of such dynamics. The section illustrates this by using the SNA of chapter 4, visualising how a great dissonance is present in the network between political actors in the



EU and actors operating in Tunisia. Hence, the section evidences how finally these relations fail to act merely as vehicles for transferring the EU's more security oriented framing of migration.

The second section then analyses how the empirical data collected informs and furthers our understanding of migration governance dynamics. It recognises three main implications. First, how migration governance is anchored in framings of migration's causes and consequences. Second, it recognises how such frames have effects which may lead to action, reaction and inaction, on the basis of plausible stories developed about migration driven by cognitive biases and understandings of their position in the environment. Finally, the section reflects on the role of uncertainty in such processes, analysing the important role played by perceptions of turbulence. The interpretive element in making sense of such turbulence is also recognised to play an important role in driving ambiguity within organisations, with a decoupling between discourse and action, politics and implementation.

### 7.1 Empirical Implications for migration relations between the EU and Tunisia

So far, the thesis has analysed the factors framing and driving the migration governance systems of the EU and of Tunisia. This section now looks at the implications this framing has for migration relations between the international actors, and asks what implication do those framing of migration and migration crises have for migration relations between the EU and Tunisia?

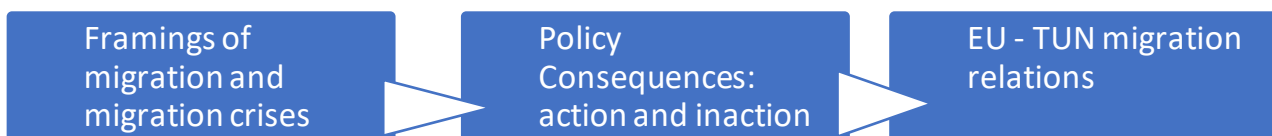


Figure 20: Framing migration and cross border relations

First, it is important to consider how dynamics in both systems drive a necessity to go 'external', and engage with relations with the other partner. In the EU, this has been recognised to be part of the toolbox since the late 1990s, trying to control migration from a distance (Lavenex 1999, 2004; Geddes 2015). For Tunisia, the need for relations with the EU on migration is embedded in the 10 per cent of Tunisian citizens living in the EU, and the willingness of others to do so. It also needs to be noted that in such relations, it is the EU which is manifesting a stronger drive to establish joint tools for governing migration. This is not surprising given that while the EU has considered migration as a crisis to which a solution needs to be found, Tunisia surrenders to its impossibility to do more to enhance legal migration for its citizens, and is less active in

seeking relations with the EU partners, which they are well aware do not come ‘for free’. In light of this, relations between the two actors are largely structured around actions pushed forward by the EU. A superficial observation of this might lead to consider that the EU by setting the agenda is exporting its policy frames to Tunisia. The previous Chapter has shown that this is not the case. Relations are in fact structured on EU perceived priorities, but this does not entail that such relations act as simple vehicles for policy transfers.

Chapter 4 has already visualised the network analysed, recognising different levels, considered as the ‘political level’ and the ‘implementation level’. The SNA map in Figure 21 goes back to that analysis, setting the scene for the study of relations at the two levels by visualising the extent to which relations lead to a frame convergence or not as regards the causes and consequences of migration.

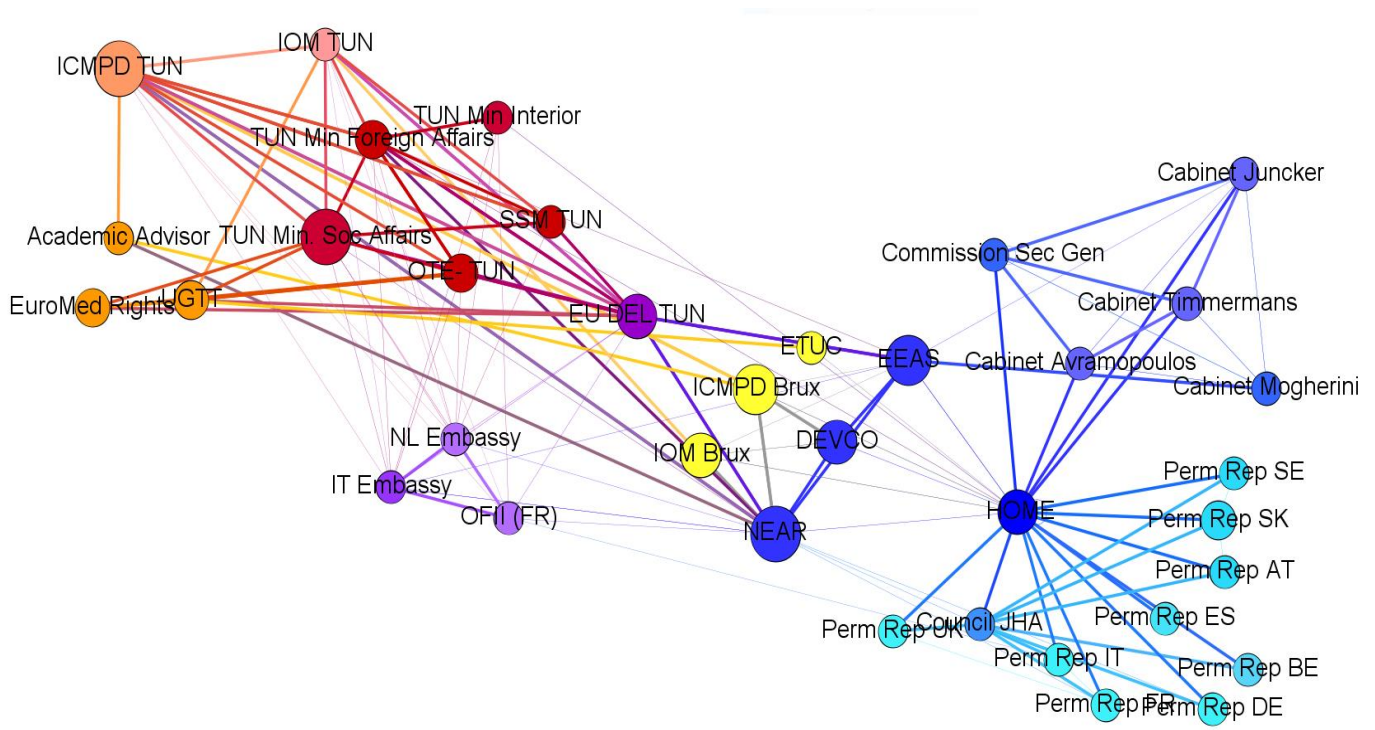


Figure 21: Framing consonance in EU-Tunisia migration relations. Interpretation of the author from the qualitative data collected.

Figure 21 shows the consonance of framings of migration between actors by visualising weighted ties, with a thick tie indicating a broad shared framing of the causes and consequences of migration, and the light tie indicating divergence. This visualisation emerges from a qualitative approach to SNA, examining whether actors interviewed based their relations upon similar or diverging views about the causes and consequences of migration that were at the centre of the semi-structured interview. What emerges is that there is a striking

division between actors operating in the network. On one side a constellation of actors rotate around DG HOME and the more politicised relations in the EU, and on the other they compose what has been defined as the ‘implementation network’ of the EU’s external dimension (see Wunderlich 2012), namely those actors that translate EU level policies into action in non-EU countries, in this case Tunisia.

What emerges from Figure 21 is that the clearest divergence is not between the EU as a whole and Tunisian actors. Rather, the clearest line of divergence is between the political network clustered around DG HOME, Cabinets and MS, and the implementation network comprising both EU and Tunisian actors. What is interesting to note is the degree to which the new actors that have joined the EU’s migration governance after the 2015 crisis (see chapter 4) have different understandings of migration compared to colleagues that operate within a highly politicised environment, and which were traditionally the ‘policemen replacing the diplomats’ (Guiraudon 2003: 267). These actors such as DG NEAR and the EEAS have acquired a new degree of power, but nevertheless are shown in Chapter 4 to be under heavy pressure from colleagues in DG HOME, which in turn develop their strategic action in response to the political environment that surrounds them. What this visualisation of framing consonance shows is that despite being brought into this network and acquiring a role which puts them in contact with certain politicised domains of migration policy making, these ‘new’ actors recognise a substantial difference in the way they understand migration compared to their colleagues. DG HOME has become very close to the positions of political masters in the cabinets, as well as to the MS, due also to the long-lasting and well-established ties that predate the crisis. Actors operating in DG NEAR, DG DEVCO and the EEAS overwhelmingly report that they think of themselves closer to either the IOs with which they work, or to Tunisian counterparts in their views about migration. This is highly significant as it shows that these actors operate under diverging views about the issues at stake, and as such the EU cannot be treated as a single actor when analysing its external relations on migration.

While political relations retain importance and their priorities are defined in political circles, the networked interactions visualised that ensure implementation of actions in Tunisia are found to largely escape certain political pressures, and when these occur they have a minor impact on how such actors that take EU policies abroad make sense of the issues they are confronted with. It is for this reason that the body of literature discussed in Chapter 1, which overwhelmingly focuses on the externalisation of EU security priorities, needs

to be complemented with an analysis of the wealth of networked interactions visualised and analysed above, which are changing the context within which political relations take place.

Conversely, in Tunisia, the whole network appears to be grounded on shared understandings about migration, and even the Ministry of Interior, which works in greater isolation, is not reported to recur to security-oriented framings like in the EU, as Chapter 6 has shown. The only divergence appears to be with EU MS operating in Tunis, which although at times appeared to have a much more nuanced perspective compared to the security driven framings of their colleagues in Europe, ultimately held beliefs which were quite different compared to their Tunisian counterparts.

Building on this visualisation, this Chapter analyses the relations between the EU and Tunisia based on interactions either of a political or technical/implementation nature. We now turn to analyse the implication of the framing analysis in Chapter 5 and 6 at each of those two levels.

### 7.1.2 EU-Tunisian political relations on migration

Both the Chapters on the EU and on Tunisia offered an analysis of the level of politicisation of migration. The EU emerged as spending far more political attention on migration issues compared to Tunisia, in which migration did not feature as a priority. The level of political attention spent on migration was found to have an important impact upon the constitution of the environment in which individual actors operated, and how they clustered in different constellations which shared similar framings of migration. Albeit more impactful for actors working in close contact to them, political framings were found to play an important role overall. Such framings define political relations between the EU and Tunisia, which because of this emerges to constitute a ‘clash of two worlds’, an interaction between actors with widely opposing views about migration. More specifically, an opposing understanding about migration in the Mediterranean is present, which for the EU constituted a threat, and for Tunisia, at least concerning its own citizens, an opportunity.

The EU’s political interactions have all been largely framed by a security concern relating to migration from Tunisia to the EU. This is because, as analysed in Chapter 5, EU political actors built a sensible environment that framed their actions and also their interactions with Tunisia, based on an understanding of migration as a threat. This does not mean that all political actors interacting with Tunisia share this understanding, but rather that they feel constrained by it given the pressure they perceive from negative popular attitudes to

migration across Europe. By making sense of the environment in which they operate in such a way, a policy framing that complies to this is developed, which leads to security-oriented priorities such as return and border control.

The problematic aspect of relations with the EU is that in Tunisia, largely an opposite framing drives actors. Like in the EU, Tunisian political actors build a sensible environment based on perceptions of people's attitudes to migration, which are grounded on a new rights-based narrative that emerged after the 2011 demise of the Ben Ali regime. As such, they feel pressured to respect such popular sentiment, which includes a consideration of migration as a right to which Tunisian citizens are entitled. Moreover, it has clearly emerged how all across the Tunisian migration governance system, migration is considered as a socio-economic opportunity for Tunisia, with much less divergence between services and actors in the networked governance compared to the EU. On this basis, lack of action has characterised such migration governance system, given that while feeling the pressures which defined their sensible environment, Tunisian actors also feel constrained by EU pressures which define their relations, structured on those which are of EU interest. Inaction, therefore, emerges as the best option to navigate both sets of pressures part of their 'sensible environment'.

Political relations emerge to focus on border control, return and the development of regional disembarkation platforms for African migrants in Tunisia. Quite clearly these all reflect EU priorities, and legal migration, which would be of Tunisian interest, does not find a significant space.

Externalised border control represents the bedrock of the EU's ambition to prevent irregular migrants reaching the coasts of Europe. As such, and especially given the geographical position of Tunisia, this has been a key priority for the EU. It is interesting to see nevertheless how this prioritisation and attention fluctuated for the EU. At times when the hopes of the democratic transition were still high in Tunisia and departures were thus low, the EU did not pay great attention to this issue, being attracted by far greater flows in other areas. The rise in departures occurred in the second half of 2017, with Tunisian emigrants becoming the first nationality of irregular arrivals in Italy, therefore constituted a turning point for the EU, which turned to Tunisia once again to find 'solutions' for its migration problems. Driven by this new perceived

vulnerability, political actors worried about finding the right tools and leverages to convince the Tunisian counterparts to clamp down departures that were rising from their shores. Two elements made this difficult. First, a strategic consideration from the Tunisian counterparts deprived the EU's promises of value. The EU in fact, for some time already, had based its relations on Tunisia on a 'more for more' approach, whereby the EU was allegedly ready to offer more of what Tunisia wanted in exchange for ripening success with addressing its own priorities. However, as an EU official defined it<sup>94</sup>, this started a chicken and egg of who was to start to give 'more'. The failure to find compromise is partly due to this stall, also driven by the lack of trust Tunisians have for Europe when it comes to migration. For years after the revolution, departures from Tunisia were low, and never has the EU agreed to give in to Tunisian interests on migration, such as furthering mobility schemes for Tunisians. This clash of interests once again underlies a different framing of migration, a different diagnosis as well as prognosis, with interests of curbing migration opposed to those of furthering it.

As highlighted in Chapter 6, such framing represents the second and most significant dimension driving divergences between the two international actors, shaping any relation held. Tunisian actors are firm in considering emigration as an opportunity for them, as well as understanding their local constraints for treating migration as a right Tunisians have, and embedding all aspect of it in a human rights perspective. Resources and incentives do very little to sway Tunisian political actors, especially because, as highlighted before, such incentives are never consonant to a Tunisian framing of migration, and as such are often considered as unimportant in light of the bigger picture.

This divergence in political priorities becomes most obvious when the politicians from the two partners meet and report about the outcomes of such meetings. In fact, despite giving a joint press statement that includes some general elements that concern migration and its control, they then report back to their media outlets taking away from the meetings what most serves their interests in their 'sensible environment'. This was the case, for example, with the meeting between Youssef Chahed, Prime Minister of Tunisia, and the president of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani, in Brussels on the 24-04-2018. After including in their joint statement a general commitment to work to reduce irregular departures (European Parliament 2018), the

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with an European Commission Official, May 2018.

focus from President Tajani was focused greatly on migration, whilst at the same time an analysis of the media reporting of the story in Tunisian outlets and through interviews from President Chahed don't even mention migration as a priority discussed (see for example BusinessNews 2018). Whilst there is no way of officially knowing the level of commitments rhetorically agreed upon, although the reality of growing trends leads to suggest not much was agreed, what is most interesting to note is how the output of these relations is largely meant to serve the political needs of the actors taking part. Quite clearly, two different worlds remain apart, framing migration in opposite ways, and driven by their understanding of the sensible environment in which they operate as pushing them further away.

The return of irregular Tunisians in Europe also lies at the bedrock of EU political priorities. This serves the double purpose of showing to the EU's people that a functioning migration system for governing migration is in place, as well as being driven by the belief that by enhancing return, deterrence of further irregular migration will be reached. As analysed in Chapter 5, a plausible understanding of the causes of migration is extracted to fit a political objective, with the pull factor of settling irregularly being considered as a significant driver for migration. Such diagnostic framing, whether or not political actors share it individually, defines relations with Tunisia. Tunisia however, as noted already, has a widely different approach to migration and thus to the forced return of its own citizens. In understanding migration as an opportunity, Tunisian political actors have a keen interest in not alienating the Tunisian diaspora abroad. Condoning the forceful deportation of friends and family members of Tunisians abroad is therefore perceived as counterproductive, leading to a break with the diaspora community which also holds considerable political power and influence in Tunisia since 2011. Again, rather than addressing the Tunisian concerns emerging from their way of framing migration and understanding its opportunities, EU actors try to find incentives for this to occur. Such a strategy is bounced back by a different framing of migration, supplemented by strategic considerations, as the remittances sent back to Tunisia from its diaspora account for almost 5 per cent of its GDP<sup>95</sup>. This is the opportunity which needs to be exploited, and offers brought to the table by the EU are not grasping this, falling short to be considered more than 'peanuts'.

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<sup>95</sup> Data from the World Bank estimated 1.9 billions. World Bank, Migration and Remittances data. Available at (accessed on 14-04-2019: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>)

Tunisians also perceive that EU actors always want more. This is particularly the case in relation to bilateral agreements with single Member States, such as with Italy and Germany, which are in place and do allow for a limited number of returns to occur on the public eye. As such, the approach held by leading political figures of these countries was perceived as wildly out of place. Matteo Salvini, Interior Minister of Italy, accused Tunisia of not doing enough to prevent departures and to take its own citizens back as sustained levels of irregular flows unfolded in 2018, being very outspoken about its intentions to make Tunisia align to its priorities. Previously, soon after the terror attack in Germany in December 2016, Merkel went to Tunisia to publicly state that Germany was going to start deporting increasing numbers of Tunisians. As an EU official in Tunis stated,

look at what Merkel did when she came to Tunisia after the terror attacks in Germany. She came here and told the Tunisian people that things were going to get tougher for them, more returns, and all that... this created a problem for the Tunisian government, it is not a good idea!

This quote and positions from EU leaders suggest that there is a lack of understanding in regards to the framing which drives Tunisian actors to work on migration issues, as well as the sensible environment in which they develop their constrained action. As such, the EU does not find ways to sway Tunisians into cooperation, compensating with political public positions which worsen relations; on the other hand, Tunisians protect themselves through inaction, preferring not to do anything amid such a difficult context in between two different and opposing pressures and frames, the EU's and its peoples'.

Together with return and border control, the consideration of Tunisia as a safe country and a country of regional disembarkation of migrants rescued at sea plays an important role in EU-Tunisian relations. This idea dates back to the 1990s, at the very inception of the EU's external migration governance (see Lavenex 1999), and is based on the attempt to prevent irregular migrants from reaching Europe by creating a buffer zone around its borders, of non-EU countries which host apprehended migrants who were directed to Europe. One of the first proponents were the Austrians in their 1997 presidency, when they developed their 'concentric circles approach', with the EU protected by different levels of 'buffer zones' where migrants were to remain (see Chapter 2, p.42). It is interesting that after years, this idea was prominently back in vogue, with the Austrian presidency of the EU in 2018. This has been based on fears which go beyond those



of Tunisian migration, and rather bring in Tunisia in broader regional dynamics. The unfolding of unorderly migration in the Mediterranean, ascribes a role to the country in light of its geographical location and proximity to Libya, a pivotal departure hub of irregular migrants. The map below, taken from a communication of the EC in follow up to the requests of the European Council's meeting of June 2018, clearly shows the objective of the EU.

## DISEMBARKATION IN THIRD COUNTRIES: THE LEGAL SITUATION

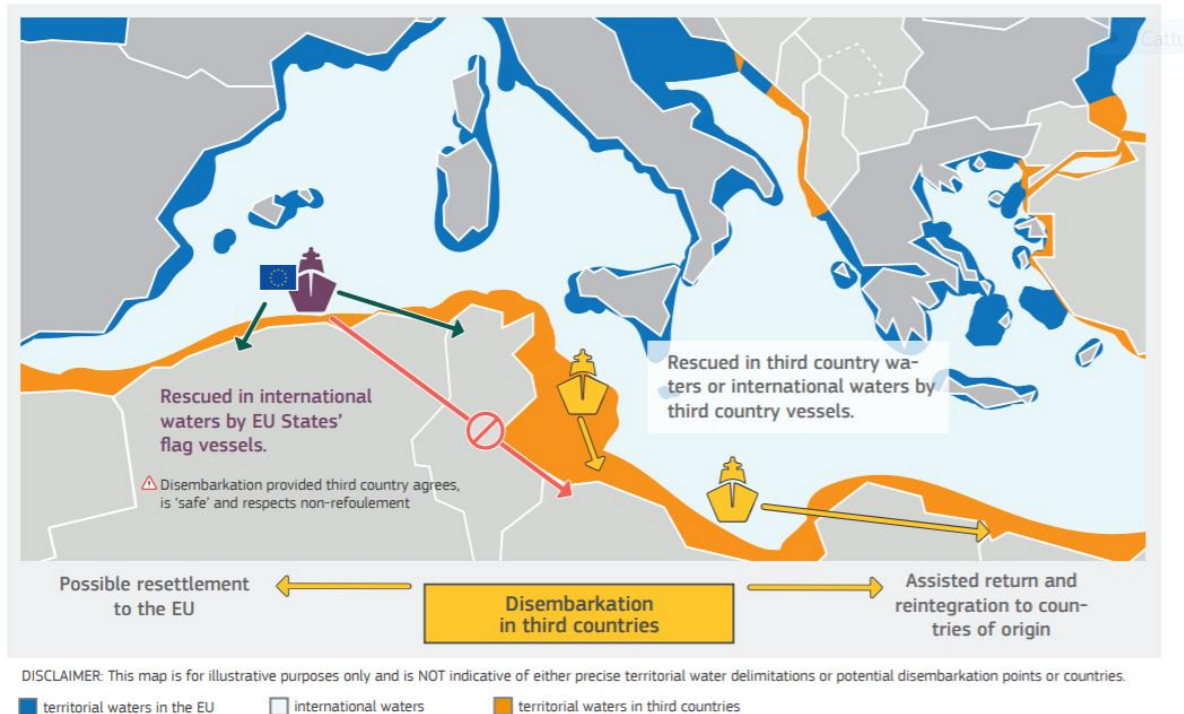


Figure22: Disembarkation in third countries Map from European Commission (2018b).

Moreover, this map also shows how the EU was trying to drag Tunisia into a discussion about regional migration governance which Tunisia had no interest in joining, notwithstanding they found themselves represented as a possible candidate for such a scheme. This pressure, exemplified by this map but predating and longstanding it, has had a considerable impact in Tunisia, contributing to the inaction of its migration governance system. In fact, Tunisia felt that great attention was placed on the development of its migration governance system, with an interest to declare its functionality for the objectives of establishing regional disembarkation hubs. As such, Tunisian actors were very careful to not adopt and implement policies and actions which could bode to this Eurocentric narrative. Some interviewees, for example, suggest that the very slow progress in developing the National Strategy on Migration in Tunisia is also due to the fact that the government wants to display an image of unorderly governance of migration to protect itself from further

pressures from the EU. The same applied, and emerged much more strongly in interviews across the network, for the law on asylum, which has been developed for some years now and has been ready for adoption since 2016. Given the implications this bears with turning Tunisia into a ‘safe third country’ of disembarkation for the EU, the government has stalled and is not willing to move forward with it.

In the effort to push back claims it could be a safe place for disembarkation of intercepted migrants, Tunisia denied its ports to the Sarost 4 supply ship in July 2018, which had rescued 40 migrants in the Maltese search and rescue zone. Having already been denied authorisation in Italy, France and Malta, the Tunisian-flagged vessel was left at sea for 22 days. Only as the conditions of migrants on board deteriorated and the situation was untenable, the Tunisia government had to surrender, but making it clear this was not going to become the norm. Once again, all these examples clearly illustrate how inaction was the best choice to protect their interest, which stemmed from their understandings of migration and what constituted as a challenge. These examples also help to understand how this inaction pertaining to migration is linked to a particular frame rather than to a lack of ability and means of the government. As a high level Tunisian judge stated,

You can really see the difference when something wants to be done. The law on human trafficking is a great example... it really represented a new vision that emerged from 2011<sup>96</sup>.

Approved in 2017, this law is based on the protection of victims of human trafficking, linked to a very progressive protection of the universal rights of individuals. This shows that when a consonance is in place with the framing of migration, actions may be successfully carried out even in a difficult Tunisian political context. The EU’s approach, in other words, has been building an environment in which the best strategy is inaction. Rather than lack of incentives or resources, it is a lack of willingness to operate on the basis of a framing of migration which is not shared by Tunisia actors that drives inaction.

### 7.1.3 The Implementation level

As already noted in Chapter 4 (X), relations between the EU and Tunisia go far beyond political interactions between political actors. The EU agenda setting of relations with Tunisia is not limited to some occasional political interactions when security concerns increase in salience. As Cassarino (2014) notes, the revolution

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with a Tunisian government official, May 2018.

of 2011 brought down a system of relations based on a hierarchy of priorities defined by the EU, and established through a quid-pro-quo between Ben Ali and European leaders. With the fall of such a system, the EU had to promptly put in place an alternative to avoid disruption. This is what Cassarino (2014) defines as ‘extreme profusion’, an attempt to shape all interactions in order to avoid disruptive courses of action taken by the newly established government of Tunisia, without coercion but through a very intense flow of data, information and communication, so as to subtly transform decisions already made into shared options or values. This was done through the establishment of numerous workshops, meetings and learning opportunities for Tunisians, financed by the EU, and also through what Collyer (2016) noted to be the ‘normal’ modus operandi of the EU’s external migration governance, by establishing a real wealth of projects. According to the scoreboard of projects shown by an interviewee, more than 100 projects have so far been carried out within the frame of the mobility partnership, showing in practice how even within the same country a ‘fragmented and incoherent’ funding landscape emerged. Even EU actors interviewed were very critical about the development of such projects, given their inconsistency and duplication, considering such projects as not being organised under a coherent approach. This notwithstanding, it is through these projects that actors across the two sides of the Mediterranean developed what Lavenex (2015) referred to as ‘frequent interactions’, which build the networked system of governance under study. Given the wealth of ongoing activities, the regularity of contacts established is needed for operational purposes, ‘horizontal relationships’ with counterparts abroad to complement the more political relations (Collyer 2016:620). The actors which carry out such interaction below the political level may be considered as implementing actors, part of an implementing network which drives forward the wealth of projects and actions developed by the EU in Tunisia.

This thesis complements this cited literature, and particularly follows through the analysis of Tunisian dynamics carried out by Cassarino (2014), which asserted it was too early to judge the likelihood of relations becoming engrained in the ‘hierarchy of priorities’ and the resulting narrative, imposed from the EU. However, despite recognising the new role of the civil society in creating a new context within which such relations occur, Cassarino (2014) considers that it was already possible to note a lexicon of priorities which draws from the EU agenda. Similarly, Collyer (2016:620) notes that in such established networks, the

‘contact is at least as important as the content’, suggesting that such contacts are of great importance for furthering the EU’s migration control objectives in the Southern Mediterranean.

This research was based on this body of literature, considering that the establishment of this network was a powerful vehicle for framings of migration, with the policy implications that these bear. However, by focusing on the governance processes which define such relations, it is shown that such relations are significant, but despite they may lead to a range of action established through an EU-driven agenda about priorities of migration, these don’t act as vehicles for also transferring the underlying framings of migration. As such, their influence is found to be minimal in impacting the Tunisian migration governance system, establishing a set of actions which Tunisian counterparts do not value as important, as they evade the bigger question which interests them, that of mobility. The recognition of this implication is highly important, as it imparts agency to Tunisia and non-EU countries in shaping the meaning of relations with the EU and does not see them simply as passive recipients.

The rest of the section builds this argument by analysing the processes that constitute this network, complementing therefore the analysis of Chapter 4 and not stopping only at recognising its establishment but also inferring conclusions about the nature of those processes on that basis. As stated before, this is done by understanding how significant differences are in place between policy frames and dynamics at the political level, and those defining the environment at the implementation level. This also corrects the tendency of the literature previously critiqued that ascribes a significant degree of unity to the EU, which is instrumental to then considering the actions and networks developed as the product of one single policy frame. This highlights the value of the methodological contribution of this research. If Cassarino (2014: 111) made plausible claims about how Tunisian dynamics were not ‘properly valued by EU officials’ on the basis of the analysis of the context of these relations, this research looks at the attribution of such ‘value’ by analysing the processes which build such understandings, considering actors at their centre. By so doing, Chapter 4 has shown how a disconnect is present between framings of the political level in the EU and those of other actors dedicated to brokering relations with Tunisia; Chapter 5 has then focused on the causes and effects of such policy frames in the EU. This leads to valuing the different approaches that may underlie relations carried out at the political and implementation/operational level. Importantly, this does not mean that the latter occur

in a vacuum, given that as it has been shown, political framings play a role in shaping the environment of actors across the network, albeit to varying degrees. For this reason the actions carried out in the wealth of projects implemented do not only reflect a development oriented approach recognised to lie at the core of various EU actors relating directly with Tunisia. Rather, they reflect more comprehensively the approach held by the EU in relation to its external migration governance as recognised by Cassarino (2014) and Collyer (2016), which thus also reflects a security oriented approach. More specifically, the section turns to their analysis by thematically clustering projects relating to return and smuggling in relation to a security oriented narrative, and to development, diaspora and mobility as regards a more positive outlook to migration.

### *Return and readmission*

The importance of the return of irregular migrants in political policy frames has already been repeatedly discussed (Chapter 5 p. 145). As noted before, the issue of the return of irregular Tunisians bares an important message of control, literally taking back those that cannot stay. Chapter 4 has identified how certain actors operating closer to this political level need to make sense of this political objective to deliver actions relating to it. As such, Chapter 5 showed how in the EU, a constellation of such officials understand return as an integral part of a much needed deterrence strategy. As migrants are diagnosed to move due to the possibility of settling irregularly, it follows that by limiting this possibility migration will be curbed.

However, just as with other parts of this deterrence strategy, return is highly dependent on the willingness of Tunisia to accept their citizens. Given that, as shown above, there is a strong aversion to this kind of action across the network in Tunisia, implementation of return actions is not significantly in place with at the EU level, and what takes place follows bilateral and limited arrangements with Member States of the EU. Yet, interviews in the EU and in Tunisia at all levels exposed return as being very significant in shaping the relations held between the two countries, with negotiations for the ratification of an agreement having started in 2014.

The stall and divergences which emerge from the numerous meetings which follow these relations between officials ultimately crystallises the intrinsic differences in approach and framing to migration governance. This emerges most clearly in relation to the 'Third Country Nationals' (TCNs) clause of the return

agreements that is being demanded and negotiated by the EU. This clause has caused great problems to the EU in different negotiations for return agreements, and in many cases, such as with Morocco, it has hindered the negotiations driving them to a stall which has been ongoing for 17 years. Yet, as it is based on an integral component of the policy framing that underlies deterrence measures, the EU seems incapable of dropping it. This clause essentially aims to extend the agreement on returning Tunisians irregularly staying in Europe to any irregular migrant that has transited from Tunisia when reaching Europe. According to the framing of the EU, the return of irregular Tunisians would allegedly lead to less Tunisians migrating, supposedly addressing a plausible driver of migration. This entails that according to the EU's framing, the return also of irregular migrants having transited through Tunisia would lead to curbing the inflow of such irregular migrants to Tunisia, and thus to Europe. Chapter 6 has shown how Tunisia still holds a security driven approach in relation to immigration of 'African' migrants in Tunisia. Therefore, this should be seen as an 'opportunity' from the Tunisian official to curb such inflow. Yet, it is not, and all officials involved in negotiations and meetings on the topic refute this clause wholeheartedly. By taking a Eurocentric vision to this and following its security-oriented frames, this would go against the Tunisian interest of controlling their borders and immigration. Tunisians however do not perceive it as such, given their distance from the plausibility of this argument which does not resonate with their framing of migration, as this does not focus on such pull factors as drivers of migration and considers rather push factors leading migrants to move. As such, the TCN is not understood by Tunisians as a potential solution for controlling their borders, and rather considered as an interference with their sovereignty and stability that is not acceptable. This leads us to understand the important effects different framings of migration have, even amid a similarly security context of relations and negotiations. Even such Tunisian circles, the developmental potential of migration trumps over security-oriented perspectives. It is possibly because of this that far better results are ripened in relation to assisted voluntary return (AVR), compared to forced return.

AVR is framed within a developmental narrative, which aims at exploiting the potential of returning migrants for the economic development of Tunisia. Projects of the sort are thus very welcomed in Tunisia. It is because of this that certain actors, especially in Tunisian civil society, have manifested worries for how through this the EU is normalising a discourse based on return. However, little evidence is found of this, as the positive framing of AVR is very dependent on the developmental perspective which underlies their

framing of migration. Moreover, also on the EU side the security aspects of such projects are found to be very weak. Though pushed for from security oriented actors, such projects are a clear manifestation of the dissonance between ‘talk’ and ‘action’, and how implementation of projects occurs far away from where policy frames determined their need. Often times in fact, such projects are implemented by implementing services, with a certain amount of pressure coming from the political level to include these in their approach. However, it is dubious whether the EU operates as a security-oriented bloc as a result of such pressures. Actors in Tunisia have in fact manifested their doubts relating to the EU’s interest in the security aspects of such projects, as this advisor to the Tunisian government puts it:

Assisted Voluntary return (AVR) programs are a joke! I don’t believe that they are developed with the objective of actually solving something. I understand they are attractive to some governments that want to capitalise on return numbers through AVR, but they are a joke. I have met so many migrants that have profited from the support of these programs 2 or 3 times<sup>97</sup>.

The point that emerges is that although developed due to a security-oriented policy framing of migration, their implementation is carried out by actors which bear different framings of migration with different effects. As such, the focus emerges to be laid more on the developmental component of return, rather than on the security aspect, and allowing even for repeated back and forth journeys of returnees. This suggests that the EU is not operating as a security-oriented monolith, even when actions emerge to be driven by a security-oriented policy framing.

### *The fight against human smuggling*

While the discussion in Chapter 5 has placed smuggling within a security-oriented framework brought forward by the EU, it has also identified how the framing of migration that leads to action on smuggling is different from that of return. In fact, rather than building a public deterrent to stop migration, actors are moved by the idea that smugglers exploit migrants by forcing them to embark on perilous journeys, and as such cause migration. Their actions to curb migration, therefore, need to target such smugglers rather than

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<sup>97</sup> Interview, Tunisian Academic, April 2017

build public deterrent mechanisms at odds with the interests of Tunisian politicians and officials, in order to save migrants from the perils imposed upon them.

Tunisian officials manifested good awareness about smuggling, but never considered this playing a significant role in migration dynamics in Tunisia. Their fervent consideration of the fight on human smuggling mainly related to security concerns, as smuggling networks in Tunisia have been found to smuggle—more than people—drugs and arms, at times being entangled with terrorist organisations present in southern Tunisia. As such, from a security dimension, the fight against human smuggling is an important element to account for. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 6 (p.), despite there being a new positive framing of Tunisian emigration, change has not yet materialised in regards to a new attitude towards immigrants from sub-Saharan Africans which rely in Tunisia to smuggling networks. As such, any action to curb irregular entry to Tunisia is generally considered positively by actors still influenced by a framing of irregular migration of sub-Saharan immigrants that was held under Ben Ali. This notwithstanding, while never in open disagreement, relations between EU and Tunisian actors on the fight against human smuggling has never ripen the practical results EU actors hope for. Most significantly, the EU has been trying for some time to establish a joint investigation team with Tunisian counterparts to closely monitor smuggling networks in Tunisia, but find resistance from their counterparts.

What emerges from the interviews conducted in Tunis is that this may be related to the fact that while negatively viewing the smuggling of irregular migrants to Tunisia, Tunisian officials are weary of the fact that EU colleagues would closely want to monitor networks in place that lead to the departures of Tunisian nationals. In interviews, these have been greatly downplayed by actors that work closely on the topic, considered as very small in nature, and close to being structured around family relations more than criminal networks. As these are not considered to be a significant security concern, and rather directly related to the departure of some of their citizens, Tunisian officials avoid taking practical steps to cooperate on what could become a powerful instrument for curbing migration of their own citizens. In addition to this, they simply do not consider human smuggling as a key driver of migration, not warranting a significant place in discussions on the topic. Thus, considered to be part of a security-oriented framework from the EU to curb migration, little cooperation is practically found in Tunisia on the topic.



## *Development and Diaspora*

The EU's support to Tunisia goes far beyond migration. In a turbulent region, Tunisia's stability is highly valued by the EU. From 2011 to 2016 for example, 2 billion Euro were devoted to assistance grants and macro-financial assistance, with a particular focus laid on growth and competitiveness, democracy and sustainable regional and local development, with a special focus on youth<sup>98</sup>. Within such a frame, a growing interest for migration issues has driven a re-labelling of various initiatives, as this official from the European Commission shows:

We have always done development! Now we call it 'root causes', but essentially, we are very much continuing doing what we have always done!<sup>99</sup>

This resonates with what Cassarino (2014) considers as the 'extreme profusion' of a particular lexicon, a 'right' way of dealing with migration which reflects the EU's interests and priorities. In light of visible failures of strengthened migration relations in other areas, significant efforts emerge to be spent on issues on which a stronger interest is found in Tunisia, such as on the migration and development nexus, including a focus on the diaspora. A strategic interest in this choice is clearly evident, as the 'rebranding' of actions serves the scope of diffusing a Eurocentric approach to the governance of migration. However, in recognising this fact, scholars such as Cassarino (2014) and Collyer (2016) refer to the EU as a whole, an actor having a single set of interests and operating as a bloc. This research has shown how this is not the case given the great contestation of frames which takes place in the EU. In developing such actions, the effects of such contestation emerge when 'going abroad'.

A case in point may be a clash of interests and priorities between actors from the security-oriented 'political network' and development-oriented 'implementation network' actors in autumn of 2017, when irregular departures were on the rise (see Chapter 2, p. 51). In fact, worried by such a sudden increase in departures, security actors from the political network insisted for the quick deployment of funds in order to step up migration control in Tunisia. However, actors in the development oriented implementation network reported to have opposed such a view, insisting on the fact that it wasn't an issue of means, and that Tunisians still

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<sup>98</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/tunisia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/tunisia_en)

<sup>99</sup> Interview with an European Commission official, June 2017

had ‘EU paid-for lorries in their garages’. At the same time, a project was prepared to assist Tunisia in the development and implementation of their National Strategy of Migration, which as recognised (Chapter 6, p.188) was heavily grounded on a different non-security framing of migration. The main axes of such a project also reflect this, focusing on ‘socio-economic opportunities for young Tunisians in the regions most affected by emigration, mobilising Tunisians abroad to invest in the country, and creating a platform for sustainable reintegration’<sup>100</sup>. Partly due to the changed power dynamics that followed the new post-2015 crisis funding landscape (see Chapter 4), this alternative action to a security approach was put in place. Although, of course, such actions remained framed within a politicised and thus security-oriented context of the EU’s external migration governance, and therefore largely based on that language and narrative, this is significant as it shows the internal competition driven by fundamental differences in understanding migration, and its effects.

Amid such a context, a wealth of projects developed by a number of IOs and NGOs reflected the above mentioned priorities which bring together development and the diaspora. The Lemma project is another prominent case of this, established in 2016 and funded with 5 million Euro from the EU, counting also the support of six implementing Member States, namely Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Sweden. Framed in a language very close to the EU’s GAMM, this project nevertheless focuses mostly on developmental aspects of migration, including three main axes, of which two dedicate to maximising the migration potential of Tunisian emigration by mobilising the diaspora abroad, and maximising impact of return migration. These projects do share a common narrative close to the EU’s priorities, reinforcing the fact highlighted above that they serve to fix an agenda setting which follows EU priorities. However, their development and implementation are carried out by actors with different framings of migration, and therefore cannot be considered a simple execution of EU’s unanimous priorities.

By not stopping at the analysis of the establishment of such projects, but going deeper into the processes which define them, it is possible to understand also the important role played by Tunisian actors in preventing such projects from becoming vehicles of policy transfers. Showing a strong unanimity compared

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<sup>100</sup> See: <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/tunisia/favoriser-la-mise-en-oeuvre-de-la-strategie-nationale-migratoire-de-la-en>. Accessed on 16-05-2019.

to the EU in fact, all Tunisian actors largely downplayed the significance of such projects, highlighting an intrinsic difference in the framing of migration which is not moved by the narrative pushed for by the EU in the projects and supported by its millions of Euro. Tunisian actors interviewed do not go against such actions and are in favour of their objectives. Nevertheless, their importance in light of the 'bigger picture' is considerably downplayed compared to the enthusiasm of EU actors. In regards to the developmental potential of such actions, Tunisian actors widely believe that their magnitude is too little to have a significant impact, and while accepting these are first steps, they appear to be weary of how much forward the EU is willing to support their scaling up. In terms of migration, Tunisians are very sceptical of the fact that such projects do much in the wider context of its governance of migration, and of migration relations with the EU. Clearly, what interest Tunisian actors are opportunities for mobility, which is also reflected in the very name of the 'Mobility Partnership' and the motto of the Lemma project, 'together for mobility'. The projects implemented are therefore measured against their impact in furthering such mobility, recognising that such projects are quite irrelevant in moving relations towards such a context.

What emerges is therefore that the EU is not successful in transferring its security oriented policy frame given that first, internal divisions lead to a difference in approach, and second, Tunisians do not buy into such an approach which largely leaves aside their priority: mobility.

#### *Legal migration and mobility*

As an interviewee put it, relations on migration between the EU and Tunisia resemble a 'chicken and egg' situation. If return is the chicken, legal migration is the egg. With the EU insisting on the former, and Tunisia on the latter, little progress has been made in accommodating requests of the other side, with Tunisia far from being a pawn of the EU's security-oriented external migration governance. This research shows how such positions are not simply strategic, i.e. part of a negotiation strategy to reap what is most wanted, but rather the effects of more profound differences in the way migration is framed. As an official of the EU reported, almost a decade ago the first calls for softening the EU's stance on return emerged, and yet they still have not overcome the framing of migration of which it is cause and consequence. Similarly, Tunisia is neither capable nor willing to let go of its insistence on legal migration, given it is the product of a framing of migration which defines the environment across the whole network, at the political, implementation and

popular level. In their view, allowing for legal migration would lead to a controlled, limited and beneficial flow of Tunisian emigration, given that this is what has always occurred in the past, before the visa requirements established in the 1990s for Tunisians in Europe. Rather than being based on ‘accurate’ reflections of migration dynamics, the plausibility of such claim has already been analysed (see Chapter 6, p.X), constructed without considering changing realities of Tunisia and the more connected world, which are present in their overall understandings but not elevated in their salience when constructing such plausible prognosis. Irregularity lies at the core of the ongoing problems, a condition in which their citizens are forced in and in which they suffer. This understanding is even shared by a number of officials in the EU which point to the lack of legal migration when accounting for the drivers of the problems emerging from unorderly migration. However, their work is constrained by a policy frame which is built in antithesis of such an understanding of migration.

In such a context, mobility emerges as the banner of the EU’s actions in Tunisia, but fails to reach meaningful results. This is what lies at the basis of the disengagement of Tunisian officials with EU actions and projects on migration, given that, as recognised before, they believe that ‘mobility is just on the title of our relations’<sup>101</sup>. Looking into the wealth of projects and documents that are produced through such relations, it is hard to find evidence of the contrary, confirming the finding of Zanker (2019) in the review carried out of policy outputs produced in the EU and in the African region, which identifies the promise of ‘legal migration’ as a rhetorical expedient. EU wide level actions which lead to mobility are largely absent also in Tunisia, and the only limited actions are established bilaterally between certain MS —notably France and Italy— and the African country. Of these, only the MENTOR project between the city of Milan and Tunis is found to be financed by the EU, leading to the temporary mobility of only 20 migrants for traineeships.

In a communication of 2016 on the future of relations with Tunisia (European Commission 2016), the Commission mentioned the possibility of soon opening pilot projects for legal migration between Tunisia and EU MS. Despite lack of awareness about the details of this initiative was manifested by actors across the network, in January 2018 another factsheet from the Commission affirmed that by May 2018 pilot projects on legal migration would have be put in place (European Commission 2017b). These were meant as efforts

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with a Tunisian Government official, April 2017.

to put together MS offers for legal migration to Tunisia, building an EU wide offer under the banner of the ‘Mobility Partnership Facility’, a fund developed to support the work of the mobility partnership<sup>102</sup>. Tunisian officials also mention they had been informed about this opportunity in a series of meetings, and that however, at the time of the interviews in May 2018 had still not heard anything more from the EU. To date, no evidence of projects being developed with Tunisia has been found. Yet again, Tunisian fears were confirmed, as the EU’s interest for legal migration was largely rhetorical.

However, it is interesting that in such a context, interviews showed that actors operating in DGs closer to Tunisian counterparts were building a project meant to expand the labour mobility between the EU and Tunisia. This project is supposed to count on wealthy funding from the Trust Fund, but nevertheless has been blocked at the political level right before its adoption, and is currently on hold. This shows once again how in the EU, certain actors are indeed motivated by a framing of migration closer to that of Tunisian counterparts, and at times find the space to develop their actions, although ultimately operating in the politically constrained environment which defines the EU’s external migration governance.

The result of this approach to legal migration, and the ambivalence from the EU’s side on it, multiplies the disillusionment of Tunisian counterparts. It is as such that it contributes to drive inaction, as actors across the network have interiorised that it is highly unlikely they will ripen any success in this dimension with the EU. In light of this, it was significant that an official of an EU MS, stated

We need to be careful with the expectations we build from our Tunisian counterparts. We often state something and then we can’t meet it, raising the expectation of what they can achieve in relations with us on legal migration<sup>103</sup>.

This resonates with the situation found, as Tunisians are largely frustrated by this way of doing, with the EU making unmet promises. However, this feeds into very low rather than high expectations, as Tunisians already know they are not going to get what they want, and they shape their modus operandi on that basis, rather than the opposite. For example, while interviewees in the EU discussed pilot projects on legal

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<sup>102</sup> See: <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/capacity-building/european-and-global-initiatives/mobility-partnership-facility-mpf/pilot-projects-on-legal-migration-call-for-proposals/> Accessed on 16-05-2019

<sup>103</sup> Interview with an European Commission official, January 2018

migration as a potential new way of dealing with legal migration with Tunisia, Tunisian actors interviewed thereafter did not even mention this scheme. Only when prompted did they recognise it had emerged in a number of meetings with the EU, however without resulting in any action.

Another useful example which enshrines the differences of understandings of such issues is the visa facilitation negotiation. Started soon after the ratification of the mobility partnership, it was meant to be the ‘carrot’ countering the ‘stick’ developed with the negotiations on return. What was interesting to note in perspectives from the EU and Tunisians is the fact that when discussing visa facilitation, the objectives of Tunisians pertain to visas for legal migration. The EU however, considers ‘visa facilitation’ as the facilitation of short-term visas for a maximum of three months. This was an interesting difference to note, as it reflects the two ‘partners’ are sitting on the verge of two different worlds.

Similarly to what Cassarino (2014) and Collyer (2016) stated, an architecture of projects and actions on migration is found in between the EU and Tunisia, which largely reflects the EU’s ‘hierarchy of priorities’ (Cassarino 2014). However, this section has shown how this does not lead to an externalisation of frames, as both actors remain engrained in their internal dynamics driving their different framings of migration. The effects of these frames are at significant distance between two ways of approaching work on migration governance, at least in relation to those relations more dependent on the EU’s political steering. In fact, the section also finds that the transfer of a security-oriented policy framing of migration from the EU is weakened by the fact that the EU is not a monolithic bloc in pushing for such an approach. Rather, various actors in the EU’s external migration governance network with frequent relations with Tunisian counterparts are found to operate on a basis of a different understanding of migration, closer to Tunisian counterparts than EU political levels, as visualised in figure 24 (see below). The implication of such analysis is that this research ascribes a much stronger degree of agency to Tunisia compared to studies which focused on a Eurocentric analysis of the EU’s external migration governance, based on outputs and outcomes. Stopping at the analysis of the actions in place this externalisation seems to be the case, but by understanding the framings driving action and their effects on relations, a strong divergence is found which takes away validity from the claim that the EU is transferring a modus operandi to Tunisia, and points to the importance of Tunisian internal dynamics as causes of powerful framings of migration, which drive their action. This

represents a significant empirical finding of this research, which disproves the belief that the EU externalises its frames and as such the effects of these, and instead points to framing dissonance in the EU and Tunisian internal dynamics as shaping a polarised context in which EU-Tunisian migration relations take place.

## **7.2 Implications for migration governance**

This research analysed migration relations between the EU and Tunisia and its associated migration governance dynamics. This section now reflects on the implications of the empirical findings for enhanced understanding of migration governance dynamics more generally as a structure, process and set of ideas. This research has contributed to a body of literature that focuses on the structural analysis of migration governance, which analyses its network as defined by outputs and outcomes. However, it has done so by emphasising the ideational level, analysing processes which define such outputs and outcomes, which pivot on actors and their understandings of the problems they face. Three main implications are identified: the anchoring of migration governance in the actors' framings of migration; the way these inform actions, reactions and inaction; and, the role played by turbulence and ambiguity. We now consider each of these in turn.

### **7.2.1 Migration governance's anchoring in frames**

While the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 accounts for the importance of frames in governance processes, this research focused on a specific application of this to migration governance. Frames have long been recognised as the 'conceptions of the acts, the outcomes and contingencies associated with a particular choice' (Tversky and Kahneman 1981:453). Frames therefore offer a schemata of interpretation of the issue governance actors face, and which they need to make sense of. The analysis carried out stresses the importance of this sensemaking process in migration governance. Migration is identified as a particularly complex phenomenon, linked to developments and change in a number of systems, mostly the political, social, economic in the case of this research, but also environmental and demographic systems. Governance actors confronted with issues of migration understand such complexity, and feel the need to simplify it through easier frames which may inform their work. Together with its complexity, migration is a significantly value loaded issue, i.e. it is linked to values of actors which lead to consider elements of all the

systems relating to migration in specific ways, which are likely anchored in cognitive biases. Intuitive understandings on the basis of such individual cognitive biases are identified to play an important role in shaping the way actors understand and shape the issues with which they are confronted. This means, for example, that a same issue -such as the arrival of irregular migrants from the sea- may lead to understanding this as a challenge to the stability of the receiving country, or as a problem for the migrants taking that journey in perilous conditions.

Like for any other issue, however, migration is not only framed on the basis of individual cognitive biases, but also in relation to the environment where an actor operates. Migration is recognised as a topic which is easily politicised, and as such an issue defined by numerous framing effects present in the context in which actors are situated. Such politicisation is not objective, but rather dependent on the way migration is being framed as an issue. In fact, despite a Eurocentric analysis potentially leading to ignoring this fact, the environment defining a migration governance system may be just as well be based on the predominance of a security-oriented frame which largely oppose migration, as on a framing of migration -or particular forms of migration such as emigration- that are favourable to migration. The salience that a framing of migration has in the environment is found to significantly impact the way governance actors understand migration issues. This salience in the environment, however, is found to be driven in turn by the way migration governance circles understand and act upon a particular understanding of migration. As such, migration governance can be considered as defined by this causal loop. In this process, actors are in need of reducing the complexity of migration and of the challenges they face, in a way that is consonant to their position in the environment. This is because in this framing process, actors build a particular interpretation of the environment in which they operate, constructing a 'sensible environment' on the basis of which they need to make sense of migration issues. Such sensemaking therefore depends on how actors perceive the sensible environment that surrounds them.

Political actors, for example, are found to be more worried about the politics of migration, as they understand their role as pressured from popular attitudes to migration, which however are in turned influenced by the way such political actors react to such issues, reinforcing this causal loop. Officials at the operational level therefore need to build a sensible environment which takes into account the political pressures of actors



which in turn feel pressured and constrained by the politics of migration. The particularity of migration is that, across all these understandings but more particularly in cases of actors which need to operationalise political frames, an assumption about how migration unfolds is present. Whether with the objective to facilitate migration or to curb it, governance actors develop understandings of the drivers of migration which increase their sense of being in control of unfolding issues. As such, some EU actors for example understand their position as being defined by the need to enact the deterrence measured developed at the political level. Their understandings of the drivers of migration increases the salience of issues which not only explain how migration unfolds, but does so while also making sense of the pressures which the actors feel as defining their role and position. In this process, it is its plausibility that is important, rather than its accuracy.

Plausibility emerged as a central element constituting the ideational level of migration governance. Rather than focusing on right and wrong, good or bad, it is important to understand that the complexity of migration is distilled by actors into much simpler understandings that may be operationalised more easily. This process is based on plausible interpretations of perceptions, which creates a 'story' of migration which diminishes the equivocality and is supported by at least some available data, which may thus provide an impression of accuracy. Bracketing out of the identified complexity particular cues which build this story, actors of migration governance reduce its complexity and position themselves with a diagnoses of the issues they face. In such organisational dynamics composed of individual cognitive processes, framings of migration are developed. Acting as cause and consequence, migration governance is anchored in such frames.

### 7.2.2 Migration governance is driven by frames: action, re-action, inaction

Diagnostic frames, which provide an explanation for what is taking place, also have a prognostic implication, linking a diagnosis to a potential course of action to take. Migration governance emerges to be driven by the effects of such frames. As discussed before, such frames are dependent on the environment, but also play an important role in defining this environment through discourse, and shaping it through action. This research showed how the high political value migration has leads actors to seek for ways to make sense of it in a way which may increase their control over the situation, developing thus prognoses on what to do. The framing literature mostly focuses on how frames lead to action; however, this research empirically shows how the effect of frames may also be inaction.

Action emerges as a consequence of the need to make sense of a challenge, so as to develop a potential solution which increases the degree of control over the environment and reduces uncertainty. This is based on a plausible understanding of what may reduce such uncertainty, which has been found to relate often to previous ways of tackling certain issues. A bias towards 'safe' courses of action has emerged as a distinctive driver of action of migration governance systems, a course of action which has already been utilised in similar circumstances and as such is more 'readily available' in cognition, resonates with the environment and is low risk. The perception of such risks, and the need to minimise them in order to reduce the uncertainty that defines migration, thus lead to re-action, rather than pro-action. Re-action is here understood as a course of action which reacts to a challenge by re-acting previous ways of dealing with that challenge, that in time became part of the 'normality' of such a system. By so doing, an impossibility to anticipate shocks and prepare for them emerges in a context shaped by the fear of taking risky courses of actions.

Action however is not always the effect of framings of migration. In fact, in those cases in which actors perceive that they are constrained and cannot implement the prognosis which followed their diagnostic framings of migration, than inaction emerged to be a better choice. Actions on migration are always associated with a degree of risks by actors taking such choices, and therefore, where inaction better serves their framing of migration, it emerges to be a better alternative. Rather than 'rocking the boat' and risking actions which may bear significant costs, especially politically, dynamics of migration are left to unfold.

### 7.2.3 Turbulence, crisis and ambiguity in migration governance

Issues relating to risks and uncertainty have repeatedly been shown in this thesis and this Chapter as elements playing a key role in defining courses of action taken by actors of migration governance. This is highly linked to a more general element that has been found as distinctive of migration governance processes. Whether due to a particular crisis or not, migration governance emerged to be intrinsically linked to turbulent contexts. Reflecting a tendency to react rather to act ahead, governance actors overwhelmingly felt impacted by such dynamics, rather than impacting them. In other words, they largely considered the issues they faced as exogenous to the system of migration governance in which they operated, rather than a product of the way these systems make sense of them, and then act accordingly.

Migration governance has been defined as being driven by understandings about causes and consequences of migration in relation to the operation and effects of the social and natural systems that underly it. It has also been highlighted how migration governance is defined by such understandings about migration, and understandings about the environment in which migration takes place, often considered turbulent. The research shows, however, that rather than being objective and measurable, such turbulence highly depends on the sense that is made of it. In other words, migration governance systems may be seen as both causes and effects of turbulence. If it is true that actors are significantly impacted by the environment, this is a 'sensible' environment constructed by their own understandings of issues relating to migration, rather than issues solely 'out there'. By developing action on this basis, they tend to reinforce the framing of such environment in such a way. This emerged clearly in relation to crisis in this research. In the EU, to varying degrees the migration governance system was recognised to be in crisis since 2015, and references to crisis have been used to refer to other previous situations in which relative increases in arrivals of irregular migrants occurred. However, showcasing how migration flows alone do not constitute objective dimensions of crisis and turbulence, crisis was rarely used by Tunisian officials to refer to situations, such as 2011, in which challenges of regional displacement as well as significant emigration occurred. Even when numbers were similar, interpretations were largely different, and followed the way actors perceived their environment to be shaped at that point in time, thus interpreting what pressures defined their position and their work. It is in light of this interpretive exercise that it is possible to clearly observe how migration governance is both cause and effect of turbulence and crisis.

The perceptions of turbulence, and the actions which follow, are highly dependent of the environment in which an actor operates in. As such, actors which are closer to political dynamics may perceive different pressures compared to those further away. This emerged as a distinctive dimension of migration governance, particularly evident in the EU where a framing dissonance between different organisational actors emerges to drive an ambiguous external migration governance. Ambiguity thus emerged as an important element of migration governance. Given the different position of actors in the organisation and migration governance network, different understandings and interpretations of causes and consequences may arise. As this research shows that such differences in diagnosis have implications for prognosis reached, this plays an important role in defining organisational action. A decoupling in migration governance occurs when different actors in

different positions of the same organisations, or part of the same network developing common action, develops different understandings which leads to different action. Ambiguity becomes like this a significant element of migration governance, and it emerged how this may lead to a gap between politics and implementation, discourse and action, with outputs of political dynamics being implemented often by different people, with different views, in a different time and context.

Migration governance is therefore demonstrated to be defined by causal loops between individual framings and the environment, which define the meaning of it as well as of the challenges it faces.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Building from the analysis of what could be seen as two different worlds (the EU and Tunisia), the Chapter has focused on the empirical implications which emerge when they come together in migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, as well as highlighting the wider contribution offered by this research to our understanding of migration governance dynamics.

The empirical section focused on the effects which result from the way the two different cases construct two different approaches to the governance of migration, and more specifically of Tunisian migration to Europe. Building from the available literature discussed in Chapter 1, the the initial assumption was that the EU was driving relations on migration with Tunisia, imposing its own priorities and through this exporting a particular framing of migration, linked to its security-oriented approach. Three considerations have emerged which disprove such an understanding of how these relations unfold. First, the EU is not a monolithic bloc in its external relations on migration. While political actors do prioritise security measures, this is not found to be the case of all actors in the EU which play a role in the relations, especially those which are closer to the implementation work on the ground. As such, the EU's efforts to externalise a security-oriented discourse is weakened by the fact that not all the relations carried out are framed by such a security-driven understanding of migration. Second, the work of actors across the whole migration governance network in Tunisia is driven by a considerably different framing of migration compare to a security political narrative of the EU, as rather than a threat migration is seen as a right of Tunisians and as an opportunity. Political relations are driven by the clash of such different 'worlds', but this also trickles down to various actions carried out at lower implementation levels, such as in the case of return and the fight against human smuggling. Feeling the

pressure from the EU, instead of abiding to it, Tunisia prefers inaction, avoiding taking any steps which the unexpected consequence of could have strengthening the EU's claims over its migration governance system. Third, a constellation of different projects carried out by EU actors with a non-security oriented perspective are also identified, and as stated before, contribute to weakening the EU's transfer of security-oriented narratives on migration. However, while this is changing the context in which other political relations occur, Tunisian actors are not swayed by them and not drawn closer to the EU as a result, given that they consider such projects and actions financed by the EU and implemented by a variety of international partners as negligible in light of the bigger picture. Most importantly, despite it being in the title of all actions, mobility is largely absent from actions implemented, therefore leaving this Tunisian priority largely frustrated. In light of such considerations, the section shows that as opposed to studies which focus on outputs and outcomes, which assume that the EU is imposing its modus operandi given it shapes relations on the basis of its priorities, by analysing frames of migration and their effects a different picture emerges, visualised in this Chapter through an SNA analysis of framing consonance in the EU-Tunisian migration governance network. Given the causal power of frames, as they lead to action, it is most significant that despite operating in a system shaped by what appear to be EU priorities, the EU fails to transfer framings of migration, and as such the two partners operate with largely different understandings of the challenges they face on migration, leading to quite different policy consequences. The methodological contribution of this research, which focused on individual and organisational framing processes rather than outputs and outcomes, allowed thus to disprove the assumption and highly value the agency Tunisia holds in migration relations carried out with the EU.

The second section reflected on the conceptual implications that emerged from this analysis of frames. It confirms the fact that governance actors feel externally impacted by migration and its challenges, and pressured by their environment to find solutions to such challenges. However, this research allowed to understand how this tendency does not reflect the structural and ideational composition of migration governance. Rather than being externally impacted by it, it is through processes of migration governance that the 'challenges' of migration acquire meaning through discourse, and on this basis a course of action is developed. This research empirically demonstrated that migration governance is anchored in frames of the causes and consequences of migration, developed by actors on the basis of individual cognitive biases as

well as the way they make sense of the environment in which they operate and their position therein. As migration is a complex topic associated to change in different social and natural systems, such frames help governance actors to simplify complex issues in plausible stories, which, providing a sense of accuracy, include prognostic implications for courses of action to follow. This emerged to be most important in cases where perceptions of turbulence drive actors to find solutions and enact control over the unfolding chaos to restore its 'order'. In this process, reaction was shown to be particularly relevant given that actors perceive the risks of reaching unintended consequences given the complexity of migration, and thus fail to act ahead of issues and often look back at the rulebook of actions previously carried out. Where such turbulence is less distinctive of the migration governance system, it has also been demonstrated how inaction may also emerge as a plausible effect of a particular framing of migration, as part of a strategy to achieve the prognosis which follow particular diagnosis of migration. Action and inaction are as such highly tied to perception of uncertainty, as the complexity of migration multiplies the fear that potentially negative consequences may arise from their actions. Finally, the analysis of framing allowed to understand how ambiguity is also a distinctive character of migration governance systems, also in the same organisational context such as the European Commission. As actors are impacted by the environment in which they operate when framing migration, this leads to diverging frames on the basis of the environment and the pressures that constituted this environment, as well as the way actors perceive their role in it. This was found to be reflected in the decoupling of discourse, especially of a political nature, and action, namely the implementation of such policy frames at a different time, space and possibly by different actors with different understandings.

The Chapter thus identifies key contributions of this research. At an empirical level by substantially demonstrating the constitution of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia. At a methodological level through the development of an approach that located 'situated agents' in their organisational context to understand more about how they respond to signals and cues from their environment. And, at a conceptual level, showing the ways in which migration governance endogenously gives meaning to the world with which it is confronted and on that basis frames actions.

## CHAPTER 8- CONCLUSION

This thesis opened with a quote from Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in which he manifested his seeming surprise that the number of Tunisians reaching Italy irregularly was rising, despite the lack of famine and conflict in the country. This embedded a powerful assumption about the causes of migration, as famine and conflict were depicted as the two potential drivers of migration, in absence of which migration was, allegedly, inexplicable. The study aimed to unravel these understandings about migration, its causes and consequences, studying dynamics of migration governance on their basis. In other words, the study sought to understand the link between the structural factors that drive migration and the organisational factors that shape migration governance. An actor-centred perspective was adopted, which identified and analysed situated governance actors, their understandings and the limits of their agency. Through this approach, the research analysed the case of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, equally focusing on both systems of migration governance in order to shed light on the factors framing and driving relations between the two international partners.

The EU's external migration governance was identified as a topic which, due to its growing role in the EU's migration governance system, attracted increasingly more scholarly attention over the past twenty years. However, the thesis recognized how this was largely carried out by focusing on outputs and outcomes, examining the policies produced and their consequences (see Chapter 1: pp.12-20). This focus led to ignore the processes by which such outputs and outcomes came to be, thereby not considering the powerful role played by the endogenous framing of migration by this governance system. At the same time, this led to focus on available outputs and their outcomes that by and large were a product of the EU (eg. Cassarino 2007; Carrera et al. 2016; De Haas 2008), thereby often disregarding the very active role played by the non-EU countries with which the EU related, such as Tunisia. This thesis addressed these two issues, by focusing on processes of migration governance through an actor centred approach. It thus identified the way in which actors in the EU as well as in Tunisia frame migration in different ways, and on that basis develop their work in relation with each other. This concluding chapter develops this point, first discussing the findings of the research in relation to the research questions it raised, then discussing implications for research to policy dialogue, and finally identifying the implication of the approach adopted for other research.

## 8.1 Discussion of research findings

The inquiry of this research was based upon one overarching research question and four sub-questions. This section synthesizes the findings for each question raised, by first discussing the findings of each sub-questions, and finally discussing these in relation to the overarching question of the research.

Sub-Question 1: Who are the key actors involved in the governance of migration between the EU and Tunisia?

This question was largely addressed in chapter 4, through a Social Network Analysis which included a quantitative component to map out the network of actors analysed in this research, as well as a qualitative component to better understand their situated position, its constraints and the limits this imposed to their agency. Through this, it was shown that a high number of interactions are present in and between the two cases, which define their migration governance systems (Chapter 4, p.98). In the EU especially, these interactions occurred on two clearly recognizable levels: the political level and the implementation level. The political network of actors was composed by the ‘political masters’ —i.e. the politicians, their cabinets, and high level bureaucrats— as well as by those technical officials who were connected to these actors by a high number of interactions, recognized to be mostly working in security oriented services such as DG HOME in the EC or Interior Ministers in MS. These officials at the implementation level of this political network were identified as being central in the EU’s migration governance system. However, while a purely quantitative SNA would suggest this would increase their power, the qualitative analysis showed that such interactions multiply the pressures and the constraints which they need to account for in the network, rather than their influence in the rest of the network (Chapter 4, p.98). This study in fact shows that although political actors do retain importance, the implementation level is developing greatly, tasked with carrying out many actions and projects, inserted in a political narrative, but implemented at an organisational distance from it. This complements and expands the work of Lavenex and Kunz (2008), which point to the importance of policy coordination and the institutional contexts where frames are developed and contested, by going deeper in examining the individual and organisational processes through which such frame production and contestation occurs. The differences between these levels are important when the EU relates with Tunisia, as these relations become highly impacted by political security oriented dynamics, but are then increasingly



implemented on the ground by actors with different sets of understandings on migration. These actors in the EU and in Tunisia are recognised as playing an increasingly significant role in these relations, altering the idea that the EU operates as a single security-focused monolith, unlike what is often assumed by the literature that focuses on the externalisation of the EU's migration governance (see Chapter 1: p.12). Zanker (2019) for example, in her analysis of outputs produced by the EU and African institutions, claims that the rhetoric included in EU papers is even less security-oriented than the practices through which it is implemented. While the research shows that in some instances this may well be the case, an actor centred analysis of these organisational dynamics allows to show how the picture is not that linear and is much more complicated, with a significant disconnect between frames driving the work at the political and implementation levels.

Sub-Question 2: How do governance actors understand migration?

The thesis has shown that in order to understand dynamics of migration governance, it is important to analyse the ways in which actors that are part of those processes understand migration, and the wider context within which they operate. The study has also shown how this occurs. Actors situated in migration governance systems have been identified as working hard to make sense of the pressures present in their environment. At the same time, these actors are building a sensible environment (i.e. an environment constructed by actors on the basis of their understandings and perceptions of what goes on around them), which requires consideration of those pressures to which actors perceive they are accountable. This may be associated with political pressures, but also with organisational and hierarchical pressures. It is on the basis of such sensible environments that actors frame the consequences of migration either in terms of the threat migration may bear for their sensible environment, or as an opportunity. Stemming from the construction of such sensible environments, actors extract cues that are plausible to such framing, and that may provide an explanation for the causes of migration. This is usually strictly linked with the way actors perceive their position in the sensible environment in which they operate, i.e. it provides a simple shortcut between understandings of causes of migration and actions to be carried out.

In the EU, the migration governance system is shown to be framed, as recognised by much of the literature available (eg. Lavenex 2001), on security-oriented policy frames (see Chapter 5: p.126). Politically, these are

shown to be built out of plausible interpretations about people's attitudes to migration understood as negative, as actors at the political level frame their experience (i.e. their position in relation to this sensible environment) based on perceptions about popular sentiment. However, it has also been shown that other actors escape such pressures and manage to work on migration issues at the centre of EU policymaking circles by constructing a different kind of environment that makes sense to them, based on different constraints and pressures. These are mostly developed on the basis of pressures which do not relate to security issues nor to negative political attitudes to migration, and as such, although at times organisational pressures forcibly drive their work, the environment in which such actions are developed is framed in a different way. Lavenex and Kunz (2008) recognised the contested nature of the institutional context of EU external migration policy, but focusing mostly on policy frames, at a meso-institutional level. Boswell (2007) offered a first examination of such internal organisational processes and contestations, and Wunderlich (2012) also accounts for such dynamics when considering implementation of EU external migration policy. However, much of the literature reviewed, while shedding light on many other aspects, otherwise does not include this significant consideration in the various analyses it carries out (eg. Cassarino 2011, Collyer 2016, De Haas 2008, Carling and Hernandez Carretero 2011).

In Tunisia, governance actors created a new way of making sense of migration following the changes that came with the Jasmine revolution of 2011 (Chapter 6). Within a new rights-based democratic platform that became the basis of Tunisia's transitioning political order, migration featured as a right Tunisians were entitled to. Governance actors thus understood their position as bound to these newly emerged understandings. At the same time, continuing a longstanding tradition that was only artificially interrupted by Ben Ali in the mid-2000s, migration is seen as an opportunity for Tunisia, an economic resource as well as a political safety valve. What is perceived to constrain the Tunisian environment and the actions of actors therein is not migration but issues of socio-economic development, to which migration may be a solution rather than a problem. As such, migration governance in Tunisia is externally oriented, as it largely pivots around framings of migration as linked to Tunisia's own socio-economic development, and is much less concerned with immigration to Tunisia, for which framework is much more anchored on previous security-oriented approaches of Ben Ali. The scarce literature available on Tunisia has focused on immigration dynamics and policies in Tunisia (eg. Garelli and Tazzioli 2017, Natter 2018). This thesis fills the knowledge

gap on the dynamics of Tunisian migration governance externally oriented towards the EU, ie. the biggest portion of its migration governance, that have remained largely understudied.

Sub-Question 3: How do governance actors understand migration crisis, and how does this impact understandings of migration?

Migration crises are shown in this thesis to play an important role in migration governance systems. This is because they increase the sense of uncertainty that needs to be made sense of, and that governance actors feel they need to reduce. As such, actors look for actions to carry out to achieve this, and although a body of literature on crises suggests that these may be moments of ground breaking new ideas (eg. Hay 1996), this study shows that mostly these times are opportunities for sensemaking, a process that more often than not is based on intuitions anchored in existing framings of migration, which leads to reversion back to old and 'safe' courses of actions. However, the thesis has also shown that contrary to what is often assumed, crises of migration do not exist exogenously to the migration governance system that plays a crucial role in defining what these are. This was most evident with the comparison of the EU and Tunisia, which had very different understandings about migration crisis. This point fills a knowledge gap in the literature, as the extensive focus of the literature on the EU migration policy production does not account for the construction of different meaning ascribed to 'migration crisis' in non-EU partner countries, not only in the case of Tunisia.

In the EU, migration crisis was the beginning, the middle and the end of a framing process on migration (Chapter 5: 136). Highly dependent on post 2015 dynamics of EU migration governance and of its crisis, either by framing migration as a threat or having a more positive approach to it, actors were driven by the urgent need to develop actions to face the 'migration crisis'.

In contrast to this, in Tunisia migration was not considered as in crisis by the actors operating in it (Chapter 6: pp. 186-192). The changes that came with the revolution of 2011 were not seen as a crisis, but as a moment of change, and even the migration dynamics that unfolded, such as 25.000 irregular departures to Europe, or the million individuals arriving from Libya, were not pictured as a 'crisis'. This clearly exemplifies that it is not the entity of the migration dynamics which create a crisis, but rather an active framing of it as such. This focus on Tunisia helped turn the telescope away from the EU, analysing dynamics

of migration governance without the overarching framing of crisis. Rather than crisis, in fact, migration was related to ideas of ongoing normality, such as the socio-economic problems for which migration could be an opportunity. The absence of crisis in the framing of migration bears profound implications for the development of actions of governance actors. As opposed to the EU, no urgency was felt for developing new actions, paving the way for choosing inaction instead.

Sub-question 4: How do these understandings drive migration governance?

The analyses of the migration governance systems of the EU and of Tunisia have shown the importance of diagnostic frames, that is the importance of plausible interpretations of what is going on, understandings that then affect the way actors construct their interpretations of a sensible environment in which they operate. The research shows that, critically, diagnostic frames have also prognostic implications. When an actor extracts certain cues about the causes of migration, consequentially to its situated position, this also bears implications on the courses of action to take. For example when a situated environment favours curbing migration, actors may extract, amongst the complexity of the drivers of migration, the pull factor of the possibility of settling irregularly as an explanation for the causes of migration. This allows then to work towards curbing migration by eliminating that alleged pull factor. Consequently, this research has identified how through their prognostic implications, diagnoses about the causes of migration drive migration governance, through the actions of situated actors. It is through this micro level analysis that this research sheds light on meso-institutional and macro-systemic dynamics, as actors through their diagnoses, framed by the constraints that they perceive from the sensible environment that they construct, shape their work which builds organisational and systemic modus operandi. Scholars have tried to explain action and reach conclusion about migration governance dynamics, but these have mostly been based on analyses of outputs and/or outcomes (eg. De Haas 2008; Guild and Bigo 2010), and have not accounted for the organisational and individual processes which define the actions taken. This research shows the value of a sensemaking approach to understand such dynamics of migration governance.

The analysis carried out has shown that when triggered by the perceived need of reducing uncertainty, actors re-enact those understandings of migration that provided plausible explanations for its drivers. It is this causal loop that explains policy actions, as actors operating in an enactive environment re-enact their

understandings of migration through their actions, understandings which are heavily impacted by the frames present in that very environment.

However, it is also important to consider that the research has crucially shown that inaction is also a possibility, and that prognostic implications do not always lead to action. Rather than being a passive choice, inaction emerged as an active decision carried out by actors who felt that by not taking any actions they could best follow their diagnoses of the problems at stake, and respond to the pressures of their sensible environment. It is because of this that the research explained the causal power of frames as drivers of migration governance, not only as drivers of action, but also of inaction, correcting a tendency, mostly evident in policy circles, to ignore inaction or consider it as external to the active framing of the challenges governance actors faced.

Research Question: What are the factors framing migration governance and shaping relations between the EU and Tunisia?

This research showed that to respond to this question, an analysis of the organisational and individual-cognitive processes is required. This is because through such processes, sense is made of the structural factors which have great uncertainty associated to them, meaning that they possess an important intersubjective component. As such, the factors shaping migration governance in the EU and in Tunisia, and determining their position vis-à-vis each other, are to be found in individual and organisational understandings about the causes and consequences of migration. The discussion of the four sub-questions clearly explains this, showing how these migration governance systems are defined by the way actors make sense of causes and consequences of migration, and how on that basis they decide upon what to do. Different actors operating at different levels are found to have different understandings about such issues, developed in accordance with a different interpretation of the sensible environment in which they operate, and the ways in which this constrains their work. However, in all cases, these understandings shaped the governance systems in which actors operated. The discussion before also clearly evidenced how this does not entail that actors autonomously frame their individual experiences, but rather frame and enact the environment in which they operate. Such environment is constituted by structural factors which are intrinsically ambiguous, and because of this it is constituted by the way actors develop their own understandings about uncertain issues, such as

migration flows. Rather than objectively pre-existent, the environment in which situated actors operate is 'sensible' to them, i.e. it is constructed on the basis of their interpretations of what occurs around them. This represents the conceptual contribution brought forward in this research, and although similar approaches have prominently flourished in the past decades across the social sciences (eg. Fiss and Hirsch 2005), they were yet to be applied to analyses of migration governance.

This conceptual contribution allowed this research to bring forward the important empirical contribution, namely the non-Eurocentric analysis of migration between the EU and Tunisia. Most of the literature analysed in Chapter 1 (pp.12-20) held an EU bias which departed from the analysis of EU policy outputs and outcomes. Rather, the focus on processes allowed to understand what shapes relations between the EU and Tunisia beyond the simple consideration of a Brussels-based outlook. Implicitly or explicitly, much of the literature believed these kinds of relations to be shaped by an EU externalisation of priorities and meanings on migration and its challenges (ibid.). However, this research has shown that by analysing these relations by giving equal consideration to Tunisia, a different picture emerges. Such relations are in fact shown to be the site of profound contestation, shaped by a fundamental difference in framings of migration and of migration crisis, which ultimately leads to a clash between the EU's action and Tunisia's inaction.

The EU, although far from being a monolith, is driven by a framing of migration related to crisis, whether this may be a crisis for Europe that sees migration as a threat, or a crisis for migrants themselves. In this context, actors are pushed to reduce uncertainty through their actions, and significantly with actions relating to the external dimension of migration governance. In this process, actions are developed following a narrative that is not context specific for each non-EU country, but rather builds on broader general framings of causes and consequences of migration. In this context, the wealth of actions recognized by scholars such as Cassarino (2014) and Collyer (2016) emerge to attempt to externalise an EU 'proper' way of conceptualising and dealing with migration. However, the EU is not as strong as expected in this 'profusion' of its ideas because the research finds these are contested within the EU itself. Many actors implementing actions with Tunisia are in fact found to have different views on migration compared to the political policy framings, leading to a profound disconnect and ambiguity between the political 'talk' and the 'action'.

Moreover, and very importantly, Tunisia is not merely a recipient of frames, but plays an active role in framing its own position on the basis of which it shapes its relations with the EU on migration.

Tunisian actors profoundly resist the adoption of actions which are dissonant to their own understandings of migration, which, after 2011, are based on a rights based approach which include the right to mobility, and a view of Tunisian migration as an opportunity for the country. Although the EU does engage with Tunisia through actions with which it can agree, such as development oriented initiatives, Tunisia fails to take this seriously and frame its relation with the EU on that basis, as ultimately at any level, the EU is not able to provide the mobility for its citizens that Tunisia demands. It is in light of this that Tunisian actors choose inaction, preferring the status quo to the courses of actions imposed by the EU. This important element is largely missed in accounts of EU externalisation of migration governance, as they do not adequately consider the ways in which the other international partner reacts and shapes its own preferences. As such, these relations are characterized as a clash, between the products of EU framings of migration, such as return and readmission, and Tunisian ones, such as increasing mobility for its citizens. As Tunisia emerges as less concerned about migration dynamics, and is mostly keen to capitalize on migration for its development, it would appear to be the EU's responsibility to find a way to move such relations forward. However to date, this research has found that this has not been the case.

## **8.2- Policy Discussion and implications**

The academic community is increasingly being asked to be 'policy relevant', with this being a condition of many funding opportunities available. During the course of this research, I have attended numerous seminars and meetings in which a variety of actors, mostly working in policy circles, asked researchers to bear the responsibility of being useful to the public with our studies, given that the public was funding them.

However in building my experience as a researcher, I have developed a strong scepticism for the 'shopping list' policy recommendations that many of these officials were calling upon me to write. My relation with policy as a researcher has been nevertheless an integral component of my PhD experience, part of the process, not just of the output. Before starting the PhD, I spent six months in the European Commission, DG Migration and Home Affairs; during my PhD, I took a leave of absence of six months to go back in the same DG and work as temporary policy officer on the external migration relations of the EU with African

countries. I have also worked as a consultant for the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, and for the Transatlantic Council on Migration, organised by MPI. I wrote for MPI and MPI Europe a policy report and a policy paper, and collaborated with the MEDAM team working at CEPS on the publication of another policy paper. It is through these documents and personal work that this research has informed a substantial dialogue with policymakers. Mostly, at the core of such advice, lay the conviction that most actors working on EU external migration relations have been missing the fact that countries like Tunisia frame migration on the basis of their own local dynamics, and keep pushing for an EU-based approach through a set of incentives. The research shows clearly that it is not a matter of finding the right incentive, but a matter of setting a table for discussion on the basis of the recognition of legitimate framing differences and interests. Much of the policy advice given in the past years builds upon this consideration.

Therefore, rather than concluding this research with a set of policy recommendations, what is most useful to tease out for a policy discussion is the relationship between the practice of research and policy advising. In fact, the research studied policymaking and policymakers, and the organisational and individual processes through which migration is understood. This includes an analysis on the biases that drives such a process, and the space available for research and evidence to play a role in shaping such perspectives.

This research has focused on conditions of uncertainty in migration governance, and how policymakers in such situations try to make sense of what is going on. In this context, research evidence would seem to be an excellent tool to navigate organisational turbulence and clarify causes and effects of the challenges faced.

However, the research has also shown how, rather than by carefully examining a body of research and suggesting different courses of action, policymakers are looking for easy ways to simplify the complexity of migration, in line with the framings that define their environment. As such, it is crucial to understand that policymakers are not looking for findings and recommendations that maximise adherence to evidence. In contrast to the accuracy of research findings, policymakers are more likely to settle for plausible understandings of migration which provide a good enough justification to carry out the actions which are expected from them. As Cairney (2011) puts it, this is not an open opportunity for policy advice, as rather policymakers are looking for ways to ignore most of the evidence researchers provide to them, finding just what they need to 'make choices more decisively'. Discussing this concept with various policymakers and



researchers alike, a few manifested scepticism, not wanting to acknowledge the limits of our situated actions and rationality as individuals. However, this research has built on a body of well-established literature to show that even in migration governance circles, this is an inescapable reality, as much of what is done is driven by what appears plausible in relation to the cognitive biases that situated actors develop, rather than something that can be claimed to be objectively true. To understand policymaking in a way that may be conducive to understanding the space there is for policy advice, it is necessary to understand how such biases are developed in that particular context of migration governance. The aim of this research has been to study the organisational and cognitive processes leading to such biases in the case of migration relations between the EU and Tunisia, understanding the power of cognitive shortcuts, and the ways in which they helped to simplify complexity. The policy advice given on the side of this research was thus based, first and foremost, on such considerations of how policy making takes place.

In practice, these considerations translated into particular attention being paid to the understandings of migration that framed the conversations held with policymakers. The impression developed was that in various occasions researchers suggest what course of action to take. These are prognoses based upon particular diagnoses about the challenges and issues surrounding migration, embedding also an assumption about its causes and consequences. However, policymakers have their own frames of migration, which are developed in the situated environment discussed in this research. In response, a researcher is unable to offer a set of policy solutions that present a different conceptualisation of how migration unfolds, such as its drivers and consequences. So either the researcher adapts the conversation to the framing of the policymaker, or when this is ethically dubious or impossible to reconcile, he or she needs to take a step back and first tackle the diagnostic framings, before suggesting specific prognoses. If this is the case, to avoid considerable frustration, it is also important to remain realistic about the possibility of changing this diagnostic framing, understanding that this is not only the product of autonomous individuals, but of situated agents.

The research has analysed the context that surrounds the work of situated agents, in relation to the case study, but also sheds light on broader dynamics about situated action. Ultimately, in giving policy advice, the implication of this situated action is that policymakers may have limited room to change the policy frame that a researcher is calling them to modify. This is often the cause of malcontent, not only for researchers that

fail to see operationalised what they develop through their research, but also by policymakers which get frustrated when researchers hold them accountable for things which they themselves feel bound by. This shows the importance of understanding the context in which situated agents operate, and their role therein, when considering in what way they can take up certain policy findings. This leads to developing a form of ‘empathy’ for individuals working in policy who are levelling with their own frustrations.

The case analysed in this research, and in particular the analysis of the EU, shows that policy framings are often the product of political considerations from political actors, which become ‘framing effects’ present in the environment of officials at lower and/or more technical levels. It may well be that personally an official does not agree with such framings, as shown with actors working on smuggling in the EU, but the complexity of migration is simplified in a way that also takes this into account, limiting the options actors have. That policymaker, when reflecting more broadly on migration issues and challenges, may also manifest frustration for certain frames which are embedded in the very work carried out. For this reason holding him accountable for the underlying paradigms of such choices is likely to lead to a clash, rather than a productive policy dialogue. Grappling with such frustrations, and helping navigate the space for change at her/his disposal with research evidence, is likely to be the best option for successfully engaging with policymakers in a contested turf such as migration governance.

### **8.3- Implications for future research**

This research adopted a conceptual approach to the study of individual and organisational behaviour that is well established in the social sciences, but had not been yet applied to the study of migration governance. As such, it showed how framing and sensemaking offer very important analytical tools to analyse dynamics of migration governance. Rather than needing an output or outcome from which to depart, these approaches allow one to focus on organisational processes by departing from the situated actors that operate within these processes. Importantly, these approaches best reflect the nature of situated agents, that is highly accounted for in the social sciences literature, offering tools to analyse it. This means accounting for the importance of both the social and individual level, by focusing on how frames are developed to make sense of what occurs and what challenges a situated agent and its organisation faces, and how these are operationalised through sensemaking in order to decide what to do next.

This research adopted also an innovative use of framing and sensemaking by associating it with a Social Network Analysis. This has been seldomly done in previous studies, but this research has shown how this framework can be used to best account for the social level and dynamics of power, which otherwise remain considered but not reflected in the operationalisation of the analysis of frames and sensemaking. SNA in fact allowed visualising the context within which situated actors, better understanding the importance of the constraints present in such environment, and defined by a set of relations and their meaning. In turn, framing and sensemaking provided a qualitative component to a quantitative mapping of the system's network, adding meaning to the relations represented, such as framing convergence or divergence between actors, which otherwise would have not said much about the nature of the ties established between different actors.

Future research that aims to enhance understanding of decision-making processes on migration could benefit from adopting a similar approach, which can be operationalised at any level of the complex multi-level migration governance. Given the intrinsic and complex cross-border nature of migration policy making, this research has shown that such an approach may be also used for shedding light on international migration relations, better understanding the processes through which positions of the different international partners are developed. At all levels, this would help to understand how and why the analysed systems came to be. This would advance considerably our knowledge on migration studies, as rather than making assumptions on migration governance based on policy outputs and outcomes, it would allow us to fully understand in scholarly fields the context in which such policies are accounted for and produced.

Together with its methodological underpinnings, the approach adopted in this research was based on the objective of overcoming a Eurocentric bias in analyses of migration governance and of EU external migration governance. Especially in regards to migration research at large, the desire to overcome such an EU bias is nothing new, with a number of studies attempting to avoid taking European perspectives as starting point of analyses, thereby overcoming the representation of migration through the lenses of the European nation state alone, with its socio-economic and political implications (Vollmer et al. 2015). However, less studies have focused upon the EU's own external migration governance without adopting an often implicit EU bias. As Collyer points out (2016: 608), much of the literature produced relies on EU documentation and EU based interviews with civil servants and similar elite interviewees. By doing so, EU

top down studies have mostly analysed the EU's external migration relations, which lead to a rich literature on externalisation of border control. However, this does not give adequate importance to the dynamics between non-EU and EU countries, ultimately shaping such relations just as much as the EU's own position. This research has adopted a framework which allowed to correct this tendency. It did so by giving Tunisia an equal standing in the research design. Just as the position of actors in the EU and their relations with Tunisia are a product of framing processes, the same applied equally in Tunisia. As such, both processes, in their organisational and individual cognitive dimensions, have been analysed. Previous studies on the externalisation of EU migration governance often assumed, implicitly or explicitly, that the EU was successfully exporting its frames of migration. The analysis here shows that this is not the case, and that relations of the EU with Tunisia do not act as vehicles of EU migration frames, as Tunisia engages in such relations on the basis of different meanings given to migration. By taking actors seriously in studies of dynamics of migration governance and cross border migration governance, this research showed the importance of accounting for the perspectives of those actors with which EU actors relate to, given that the wealth and international power of the EU does not automatically translate into the externalisation of frames. Further research of the growing body of EU external migration governance could benefit from taking this into account, and considering the methodological importance of giving adequate consideration to dynamics of non-EU countries as active shapers of relations with the EU, rather than just being seen as passive recipients. The adoption of this approach should however be considerate of the conditions of the case selected. It is important that, like Tunisia, a system of migration governance, rather than government, is in place. The importance of understandings of situated actors in highly centralised structures, such as Tunisia before the Ben Ali era, is likely to be diminished and its analysis may not be helpful in understanding its dynamics, steered by the preferences of a very limited number of actors.

Finally, in its analysis of the EU, this thesis could not fully exploit the data collected due to ethical constraints. Analysing frames and understandings at the EU level, only a limited account of organisational differences from the various DGs could be offered, not being able to associate quotes with the DG and service of the interviewee to avoid any risk in breaching anonymity. However, this was only due to the fact that the interviewees worked directly on Tunisia, and given the small number with such portfolio in each

DG, this was an insurmountable risk for their anonymity. A comprehensive study of the European Commission which uses the approach developed in this thesis to examine the intra organisational processes and contestations at DG level, would add significantly to the literature of EU external migration governance, escaping the ethical constraints given the large number of people that work on this domain.

#### **8.4- Conclusion**

When Italian Prime Minister Salvini started a series of direct attacks on Tunisia and its migration governance system in summer 2018, such as the statement with which this thesis opened, his Tunisian counterpart responded with surprise for the ‘lack of awareness’ manifested from Salvini for Tunisian migration dynamics and for how the country governed them (Tunisie Numerique 2019). This thesis has shown that such lack of awareness is not only prevalent in the provocative words of Salvini, but rather underlies much of the work the EU carries out in Tunisia. Rather than being confined to actions and instruments on migration management, it defines a much wider divergence when it comes to understandings of causes and consequences of migration.

This thesis has shown the importance of framings of migration, of its causes as well as its consequences, in migration governance dynamics. It showed that just like Salvini in the opening quote of this thesis, all actors of migration governance systems frame their actions on the basis of understandings about the issues they are facing. The research also showed how such understandings are not simply readings of an objective reality, but constructions of situated actors about the environment they are part of. This means that such interpretations vary, and are highly dependent on the environment in which they are produced.

Such understandings are significant because as shown for the EU and Tunisia alike, they play an important role in driving the work of the two migration governance systems. Such diagnoses, developed and placed in constructed sensible environments, embed prognoses of what line of work to carry out next. It is because of this that Salvini, contrary to what he announced, did not ‘solve the issue’ of irregular arrivals from Tunisia, as the difference in understandings drives a divergence about the line of work needed. Having developed such an analysis of migration governance dynamics, it comes as no surprise that while the EU pushes for action, Tunisia largely opts for inaction as a strategy best aligned with the conceptualisation of migration it developed in the post-2011 revolution sensible environment. By looking at such drivers of migration

governance, this thesis has shown a recognition is needed about the importance of different ideas about migration, parting from an EU bias, in research as well as in policy, which takes understandings of causes and consequences of migration for granted. This would go a long way in creating shared platforms that reach across borders, and in which the challenges and opportunities of migration could be better addressed and exploited.

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## ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>	<b>Location of interview</b>	<b>Position Held</b>
EU1	22-06-2016	Brussels	European Commission Official
EU2	23-06-2016	Brussels	European Commission Official
EU3	29-06-2016	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU4	05-07-2016	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU5	07-07-2016	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU6	07-07-2016	Brussels	European Commission Official
EU7	12-07-2016	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU8	12-07-2016	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU9	12-07-2016	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU10	12-01-2017	Brussels	European Commission Official
TUN 1	27-09-2016	Brussels	Official from the African Union
TUN2	04-04-2017	Tunis	Official from an IGO
TUN3	05-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN4	05-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN5	05-04-2017	Tunis	European Commission, Official
TUN6	06-04-2017	Tunis	Officer from an NGO
TUN7	07-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN8	10-04-2017	Tunis	Officer from a Tunisian Trade Union
TUN9	10-04-2017	Tunis	Official from an IGO
TUN10	11-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN11	11-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN12	14-04-2017	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN13	14-04-2017	Tunis	Academic

EU11	22-06-2017	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU12	23-06-2017	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU13	05-07-2017	Brussels	European Commission Official
EU14	25-07-2017	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU15	13-03-2018	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU16	14-03-2018	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU17	21-03-2018	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
EU18	03-05-2018	Brussels	EU Member State, Official
TUN14	15-05-2018	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
TUN15	16-05-2018	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
EU19	21-05-2018	Tunis	EU Member State, Official
TUN16	21-05-2018	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
EU20	22-05-2018	Tunis	EU Member State, Official
TUN17	23-05-2018	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
EU21	23-05-2018	Tunis	EU Member State, Official
TUN18	24-05-2018	Tunis	Official from an IGO
TUN19	24-05-2018	Tunis	Official from an IGO
TUN20	24-05-2018	Tunis	Tunisian Government, Official
EU22	21-06-2018	Brussels	European Commission, Official
EU23	21-06-2018	Brussels	European Commission, Official

## ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

The interview was structured in two parts. The first part was made up of semi-structured questions, where I asked about the understandings of migration and its governance, and of the crises of migration. The second part took the form of a short survey, in which questions were structured to collect data on the interactions that take place between members of the migration governance network. Initially, interviewees were asked to complete the second part themselves. After 4 interviews, I decided to change approach and use a more qualitative account of Social Network Analysis, compiling the questionnaire myself. Interviews were carried out in English, French and Italian.

### First Part:

- 1) Can you tell me about your professional career, your present role and how these relate to international migration issues?
- 2) What do you think are the main drivers/causes of migration?

*Possible prompt, if covered different professional roles on migration or on different geographical areas: have these perceptions changed since your change in position?*

- 3) What do you think are the main effects of migration?

*Possible prompt, if covered different professional roles on migration: have these perceptions changed since your change in position? Prompt on the Mediterranean if it does not come up.*

- 4) Can you point out to some particular events or incidents that you think affected your judgment of migration, its drivers and effects?
- 5) What do you think are the key risks and uncertainties that can lead to the outbreak of a “migration crisis”?
- 6) How do you think these will develop in the future?
- 7) In what ways do you think the uncertainties that derive from this time of Crisis have a role in your work?

*Possible prompt: have you witnessed any other instances in which you felt that migration governance was under crisis?*

8) In your view, how effective have the responses been in addressing these Crises?

9) How effective do you think you have been, as an institution, in addressing the issues you have been facing?

*Possible prompt: enquire about intending Crisis as a moment of decisive intervention within the institution*

10) What do you think are the main achievements and obstacles in the development of a European External Migration Governance?

11) Who do you think are the key actors that influence your work in dealing with issues relating to Mediterranean migration and its Crisis, and in what ways?

**PART 2 QUESTIONNAIRE: NETWORKS**

**Participant No.**

I am now interested in knowing with what actors you have been discussing issues relating to migration and its governance in the past year. In each sheet I will give to you, please write the name and position of the person you have been discussing these issues with, and reply to the questions.

Who do you relate with in the frame of your work on migration and EU-Tunisian migration relations?	How often have these discussions taken place?	Who is more likely to initiate this contact, you or XX?	Do you feel pressure from this actor with which you relate?	Why? (qualitative)	Do you share the same understanding of the causes and consequences of migration as this interlocutor?	How similar?	Why do you say that? (qualitative)
Actor, institution, position	<input type="radio"/> Weekly <input type="radio"/> Monthly <input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Me <input type="radio"/> The other actor	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	○1○2○3○4	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>
Actor, institution, position	<input type="radio"/> Weekly <input type="radio"/> Monthly <input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Me <input type="radio"/> The other actor	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	○1○2○3○4	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>
Actor, institution, position	<input type="radio"/> Weekly <input type="radio"/> Monthly <input type="radio"/> Occasionally	<input type="radio"/> Me <input type="radio"/> The other actor	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	○1○2○3○4	<i>Transcribe Answer</i>
<i>Add rows as necessary</i>							