Border Regimes, Shifting Temporalities and Migrant Responses. An Analysis of the Route Between the Eastern Mediterranean and the North-Western French-Italian Border

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Abstract

The North-western French-Italian border is an important cross point for people coming from the Balkans and the Central Mediterranean routes aiming to reach Northern-continental European countries and the United Kingdom. According to the data we collected, in 2021 some 10,369 people, including 400 unaccompanied minors and 412 families, arrived at the Alpine border – twice the 2020 numbers, when around 4,700 stopped at the two shelters. Although in 2022 the figure had dropped to about 8,500 it remains high, confirming this border as highly relevant. Based on data collected between 2021 and 2022 in Oulx, a village in the upper Susa Valley, North-western Italy, this article aims to investigate the impact of borders on migrants' temporalities among people who cross the border with France wanting to reach Europe. Borders as a spatial mechanism for controlling people's movement are bound up with time: the time of displacement in camps, the time migrants spend attempting to cross the borders, the overall time their movement takes, which is also affected by mobility policies. This does not happen in a vacuum of migrant agency. People on the move respond to the constraints of border regimes in a variety of ways, including resorting to smugglers and changing family and household figurations. However, as this article aims to show, the kinds of responses adopted are not always freely chosen, but they are forms of adaptation to the circumstances and constraints imposed by the border regime.

Keywords: temporality, bordering, family migration.

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1. Introduction

This article refers to data we collected between 2021 and 2022 in Oulx, a village in the upper Susa Valley, North-western Italy, and aims to investigate the impact of borders on migrants' temporalities among people who cross the border with France wanting to reach Europe. This area has increasingly become a transit zone for migrants arriving from the Eastern Mediterranean route through the Balkans and, to a lesser extent, from the Central Mediterranean route through the Italian peninsula. In Oulx they stop for a few hours, sometimes a few days, and start the last leg of a journey that began thousands of miles earlier and in many cases lasted years. During the period these data were collected, people could find hospitality in three main shelters: the occupied building *Chez JesOulx*, which had been occupied by anarchist activists in December 2018 and evicted by police in March 2021, the shelter *Massi-Talità Kum Fraternity*, which is still open and run through private and institutional contributions, and the Waldensian *Diaconia*.

This flow is variously composed and changes over time. According to the data we collected, in 2021 some 10,369 people, including 400 unaccompanied minors[1] and 412 families, arrived at the Alpine border, twice the numbers of 2020, when around 4,700 stopped at the two shelters. By 2022, the figure had dropped to about 8,500, perhaps because the Balkan route has seen reduced flows in favour of the Turkish-Southern route, where people can avoid being stranded in camps in Greece or along the Balkans and can thus drastically reduce journey time. In 2021 the majority came from Afghanistan, followed by Iran, Kurdish areas, Pakistan, then the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. In 2022 this scenario changed quite significantly. While people from Afghanistan and Iran were still the vast majority in 2022 (47% of the arrivals), there was a rise in the numbers of people from Morocco (20%) and Algeria; and from Ivory Coast and other sub-Saharan countries.

Between periods of being stranded and sudden accelerations, the time people spent along the routes before arriving in Oulx could be two to three years – longer in many cases. The length of the journey depends on various factors. It can be a matter of choice, when migrants decide that their time in one place is over and it is time to move on, or a matter of migration policies, access to smuggling networks, family composition and age, and the need to work to support the journey. In our fieldwork we have come across a variety of cases: Afghans who spent years in Iran before making their way to Europe, families who were stranded between Turkey, Greece and the Balkans, or

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[1] Although the real figure is difficult to verify because people often arrive in groups and do not always declare their age, this number can be reasonably assumed.

unaccompanied minors who took only few months to reach Oulx. This variability is common for many migrant people whose projects are not linear space-time movements but are made up of multiple and discontinuous temporalities determined by both structural and subjective factors (Baas & Yeoh, 2019; Griffiths et al., 2013).

To go beyond an exclusively spatial approach, this article aims to look at migrants' journeys to Oulx as marked by fragmented temporalities. It will show that migrants' experience of time does not follow chronological patterns, but is constantly challenged by mechanisms of bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2020) which, while aimed at containing people's mobility also disrupt their temporality. Borders, being spatial devices, fragment the flow of time and migrant trajectories, making them discontinuous and unpredictable. They are therefore bound up with time: the time of displacement in camps, the time migrants spend attempting to cross the borders, the overall time their movement takes, which is also affected by mobility policies. Borders configure constraints within which migrants operate and try to respond.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this article contributes to the growing literature considering migration as a spatial-temporal process and discusses how this process is affected by encounters with borders. In the first section we offer the theoretical context of our article, with a focus on the link between temporalities and borders and on how a temporal analysis of borders can illuminate the role of agency. In the second section we explain the methodological approach used to gather information. In the subsequent sections, we address the main themes that emerged from the fieldwork: the link between the practices of bordering and temporalities, and the ways in which migrants respond in order to move on in their migratory projects and reduce their journey times. Migrants respond to practices of bordering and border constraints in multiple ways – for example, by resorting to collective and/or legal action. Although sometimes the result of a strategic choice from a range of options, these responses are often shaped by circumstances, resources, opportunities and constraints. Our focus in the last sections is on two of these: resorting to smugglers to cross borders and shorten journey times, and the construction of new alliances along the journey that we identify in terms of the configuration and reconfiguration of families and households. We aim to show how people on the move "cope with, negotiate and resist the multiple mobility barriers and limitations they face" (Papatzani et al. 2022) along their journey. However, without neglecting migrant agencies, we frame these responses as forms of forced adaptation to circumstances and constraints imposed by the border regime.

2. Temporalities, borders and social figurations

Much of the research and studies on migration have focused on mobility as a movement through space from one place to another, as if migrants moved across space but not in time, or as if forms of spatial immobility such as forced displacement and detention did not also have temporal dimensions. In other words, time is taken for granted in the migration literature (Griffiths et al., 2013).

Although there have been several works focusing on aspects of temporality before Griffith et al. (2013) highlighted the lack of attention to this dimension of migrants' journeys, and a "lexicon of time" (Smith, 2017, p. xi) that includes metaphors, descriptors and concepts has been widely elaborated (Smith, 2017, p.3), it is only recently that temporality has entered the research agenda of migration studies, with conferences, journal special issues, books and grants. There is now agreement among scholars that to have a better and deeper understanding of 'human agency' (Giddens, 1979) migratory movement should be situated not just in space but also in time to grasp the time-space relation inherent in it.

Temporality is defined as the state of existing and experiencing within, or having some relationship with, time. It refers to a notion of time that does not follow the uniform flow of astronomical and biological events (Nowotny, 1992, p.422), but is marked by the discontinuous and differentiated rhythm of social life. Most importantly, it is a time "divided into intervals that derive from collective social activities rather than being uniformly flowing". Temporality is a form of time that is neither objectively given as 'real' time (Rutz, 1992, p.3) nor as a "neutral medium in which events take place" (Adam, 2000, p.126), nor subjectively determined or chosen. It is constructed in the negotiations and mutual adjustments between agency (regarding migration we refer to migrants' subjectivity) and structure (policies and physical constraints) that accompany people's lives. Uniquely to human societies and social systems (Nowotny, 1992), temporality is constituted through webs of interactions situated in specific socio-structural contexts.

This general overview of temporality also applies to migration. Here, temporalities are shaped by migrants' encounters with borders and bordering practices creating different experiences of time characterised by forced displacement, long waits, sudden acceleration, and changes of plan. In contrast to the passage of chronological time, migrants' temporalities are the result of contentious interactions between actors with different agendas that transform borders into "battlefields" (Ambrosini, 2021). Time, being affected by the encounter with borders, is "political" (Acedera & Yeoh, 2019), and the

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incorporation of temporality into the migration research agenda illustrates and clarifies the power relations governing migration regimes (Sheller, 2019).

As has been noted (Baas & Yeoh, 2019), Saulo Cwerner (2001) was the first to identify this characteristic, linking border regimes and migrant mobilities and identifying the former as disciplinary tools. Visa regimes influence migrant temporalities. By introducing concepts such as strange, asynchronous, and heteronomous times, we can regard migrant trajectories as marked by "displacement, uprooting, and the rupture of daily routines" (p.20). Visa regimes put migrant lives on hold and require them to wait, leaving their futures uncertain and putting control over time beyond their reach (Baas & Yeoh, 2019). Similarly, according to Griffiths, Anderson and Rogers (2013, p.30) there is a "strong relationship between power, the state and management of time" (Griffiths et al., 2013). However, while the population in general is governed through temporal devices and rationalities, for migrants in particular bureaucratic procedures are marked by different and sometimes contradictory tempos. The lives of migrants are punctuated by state-established time deadlines, temporary permits, sudden and unexpected deportation decrees, or legislative changes that make permanence uncertain. The impact of borders on migrant temporalities is also emphasised by Ruben Andersson (2014), who shows that irregular migrants in the borderlands are not only subjected to extended periods of waiting, but also face an active usurpation aiming at migration control. This takes a variety of forms, including serial expulsions, retentions, and deportations far from the place of entry. Among these forms of time usurpation, we can include confinement in places such as camps and quarantine ships in place to protect European borders (Agier 2016; Montagna, 2023). In these places, migrants' temporalities are suspended in prolonged waits, emptied of meaningful activities until the authorities decide on their future. All these institutional forms of special-temporal controls, "produce specific experiences of time for migrants that interrupt teleological imaginaries of both life transitions and migration outcomes" (Robertson, 2019, p.181). Borders become temporal devices that, by disrupting and fragmenting mobility, challenge and transform their temporalities (Novak, 2017). The implication is that "migration and its antonym (non-migration) [are] not as contradistinctive phenomena but umbilically conjoined." (Baas & Yeoh, 2019, p.162). The temporal consequences of bordering practices such as confinement in camps and reception facilities, and on quarantine ships, as well as the time spent in every successful or unsuccessful attempt to cross borders are constitutive of migrant experience.

However, not only does the analysis of temporal discontinuities and the dynamics of migratory journeys reveal the meso-level of border politics, but it also tells us more about the micro-level of migrants' agency and network

practices. The longitudinal qualitative approach implied in temporal investigation allows us to dig into the individual experiences of migrants, including their experience of change in personal and community networks (Ryan & D'Angelo, 2018). While people's movements and their temporalities are constrained within limits dictated by borders and policies of migration governance and containment, at the same time people behave as social actors. Migrants try to change the circumstances in which they find themselves through the continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of networks (D'Angelo et al., 2017), or through other tactics such as occupying abandoned buildings or creating informal encampments (Montagna & Grazioli, 2019), inserting themselves into economies (sometimes submerged, sometimes legal, sometimes public), and temporarily changing family and household figurations to ease the way and shorten their journey times (Etzold et al., 2019; Gorza et al., 2022). These attempts to challenge the border regime not only multiply spatiality and temporality, they also affect the social fabric of migrant people, producing complex figurations, influencing the forms of inhabiting journeys (Gorza et al., 2022), the route and the choice of destinations (Ambrosini, 2021; Castles, 2004; Della Puppa & Sanò, 2021; Koser, 1997; Montagna, 2018; Sanò & Della Puppa, 2021; Sanò & Zanotelli, 2022; Stierl, 2018).

We refer here to the concept of figuration (Etzold et al., 2019) to study the enduring displacement times that follow wars, famines, climate change and economic crises. The concept points to those dynamic social constellations that take place between interdependent individuals and are produced in the course of social interactions and transactions. As Etzold et al. (2019, p.5) write, "Displaced people are embedded in multiple social settings and networks of interdependence—what we call here 'figurations'. These range in scale and type: from the family, neighbourhoods, labour markets, nation-states that they left, passed through and entered into, to the global protection regime and the transnational diaspora. Individuals take on positions in such figurations that shape their behaviour, social relations and identities, while they, in turn, shape figurations. At the same time, different figurations are interdependent and influence each other."

As we will see in the following pages, the friction between forces produces new figurations and unpredictable assemblages, different from those envisioned by the actors in the field (Tsing, 2011). Such practices seek to make sense of the journey, which is not simply a movement from one place to another, within a framework of constraints and opportunities, but a period that may last for years and be characterised by transformations in migrants' personal and social lives. In such conditions, people produce, give birth, and grow within a particular geographical and relational space. And it is precisely in "inhabiting the way"

that people stubbornly resist being reduced to "discarded lives" to be confined or rejected (Bauman, 2003).

3.   Methodology

The fieldwork carried out for this article took place between 2021 and 2022 in Oulx and centred on the building *Chez JesOulx*, which had been occupied by anarchist activists in December 2018 and was evicted by police in March 2021; the shelter *Massi-Talità Kum Fraternity*, which is still open and run through private and institutional contributions and is where people who have arrived from the Balkans since the summer of 2020 are housed; and the Waldensian *Diaconia*, which has opened a legal assistance desk for migrants. In supporting migrants arriving in Oulx and trying to cross the border, the valley's network of volunteers from diverse political and cultural backgrounds plays a key role. Although there are relevant differences, goals, and roles, the shelters have built an effective collaboration in responding to daily emergencies over time.

During this period, about 80 open-ended interviews of varying length, observations, photographic and video reports, oral testimonies, messages sent using the WhatsApp mobile phone application and field diaries were collected to preserve memories of events or conversations. These data were collected with the purpose of understanding the migratory dynamics and processes of people arriving in Oulx and trying to reach other EU countries, and to understand the impact of borders on their trajectories. In particular, we aimed to investigate how the encounter with borders transformed the lives, paths, and temporalities of people on the move between the Balkans and the North-western Italian border.

In the fieldwork we tried, as far as possible and aware of the differences in position and opinion, to keep the relationship on a horizontal level with a constant, daily presence. We felt that the experiences and choices of the people who shared their stories with us could not only be expressed and told through the dimension of the interview. People in transit have, therefore, narrated their paths independently of our questions, shared their oral testimonies, voice messages and written messages after the border meetings as a sign of trust in us to which we are indebted. In this way, we also tried to restore a longitudinal perspective of the narrative and movement. Of course, people have the right to share freely or not to share, to tell what they see fit, even to lie if they feel it is necessary for their safety or their cause. We limited ourselves, mostly, to 'recording' their stories, what they felt like telling us about their journey. We determined that people's confidentiality would be protected, omitting sensitive data and any circumstances or information that might have endangered the

safety of those who allowed themselves to be interviewed. To safeguard the identities of the people being interviewed, their names have been anonymised.

The perspective is seemingly marginal, in the sense of being on the margins, of the frontier, "as a space that attracts and separates, as an area of encounter and distancing, as a place of passage and differentiation (norms, languages, symbols), as a measure between a here and a there, as a gap between what is domestic and what is foreign, between an us and the others. The frontier as a historical and political construction of barriers and as a regulator of communication (economic, political, demic), but also a place of crossings that attest to its porosity. It is a place of 'misunderstanding,' thus of communication, of passage that narrates and denounces the territories of abandonment, departure and escape, but also those of desire and planning"[2]. Here, some of us collected dozens of stories, histories, and visual documents, discussed some of the issues arising and analysed using the different interpretive keys presented in the previous section. We give a summary of this work in the following pages.

4. Migration policy and disrupting temporalities along the Balkan and North-western routes

The migratory paths of people arriving in Oulx can vary significantly. While some cross the sea from Turkey to Greece and then to Italy, or even directly from Turkey to Italy, others come from the Central Mediterranean, and most go through the Balkans. Once in the Balkans some take the western route involving Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, and then Italy; others, after arriving in Macedonia, go east through Serbia and Croatia.

The temporalities of their journeys are by no means linear. The average travel time is two to three years, but many are on the route for four to five years or longer. At the border we met groups of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan who met during the journey and spent several months together before arriving in Oulx, as well as older men who have been travelling for 10 years and do not know how long their journey will last. Periods of stranding alternate with sudden acceleration and then periods of waiting for the right moment or opportunity to cross the border. While some manage to cross borders quickly, for example those who can rely on well-organised smuggling networks, others are stopped on the borders and pushed back. Such rejections can often be 'chained' (*a catena*) provoking further delays; people arriving in Trieste are sent back to Slovenia and from Slovenia to Croatia, and from Croatia back to Bosnia where they depart to reach the EU.

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[2] *Cosa, come*, in https://onborders.altervista.org/, accessed 1 April 2023.

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Samim, the oldest of seven siblings, together with his twin brother, after explaining the reasons why he and his family had left Afghanistan three years earlier, traced in temporal detail the stages of their journey, as if he had photographed both the waiting and moving periods. From his account emerge bouts of time-space dilation and stranding alternated with bouts of time-space compression in the journey's unfolding. After crossing the Afghan border into Pakistan and moving through Iran, Samim and his family spent a year and three months in Turkey, where he and his brothers went to school and their parents worked. From there, they crossed the sea in a dinghy with the help of smugglers. In Greece time stood still again. As he recounts:

> "We spent about a year in the Moria camp in Lesvos. This camp is very bad. There were so many people, too many. It was too small for all those people. It is terrible. In the morning, if you want to eat, you have to queue and you get your food after many hours. The same thing at lunchtime. If you wanted to eat, you had to queue in the morning and ended up in the evening queuing for food. You would queue, get food, eat, and queue again until the evening. Each time people would fight and fight."

In Europe, Samim and his family moved from camp to camp. As he recalls, it was a period where waiting punctuated the days and the passage of time. Abandoned and segregated in Moria until their fate was decided, they had to wait their turn for everything – to eat, to wash themselves, for their bodily needs – in an overcrowded situation. This period of stasis was followed by another month in a camp in Thessaloniki, "but there were no shops, there was nothing, because the city was too far from where we were. If you wanted to go into town you had to take a taxi and pay 10 euros." From there, time underwent an acceleration and the space-time relationship compressed, as Samim continued:

> "After a month, we left for Albania, where we stayed in a good camp for six days. Then we walked for four days. We had nothing left, even the water had run out. I only drank two days out of the four days we walked. We only drank and ate for two days. We walked all the time, without even sleeping. After the four days we arrived in Montenegro and then, always walking, in Bosnia. We never stopped. After two days, while we were walking, in Bosnia, they stopped us and took us back to Montenegro. When we left, we no longer passed through Bosnia and arrived in Serbia, at the Šid camp."

Among the people we encountered at Oulx were some who had applied for asylum in Italy but felt trapped by a system whose rules confine and abandon them at the same time. Research findings indicate that confinement in isolated places, limiting the capacity of social networks, and the rigidity of the reception

system negatively affect migrant opportunities to enter the labour market and gain stable employment (Perino & Eve, 2021). The alternative is to leave the reception system either in secondary movement (Montagna et al., 2021) or by occupying empty buildings (Montagna & Grazioli, 2021). Mohammed, who came from Ivory Coast and took the Mediterranean route, is one of those who chose the former option. We met him at the shelter because he had decided to leave the country after being in a *Centro d'Accoglienza Straordinaria* (Extraordinary Reception Centre) for 18 months. His disappointment came from his personal experience, which had been characterised by long periods of idleness in reception centres. He would have liked to work, but the rigidity of the system and control over migrants made this impossible (Perino & Eve, 2021). As Mohammed recounted, the reception system in Italy, "has kept me stuck for a year and a half, while I just wanted to have a job to send money home". Many young people we met at the border were like Mohammed: people who have to work to support families who have stayed behind and whose timing is not attuned to the long waiting times of the Italian and European reception system; people who cannot wait any longer.

5. Borders as temporal apparatus and border violence

Borders in their various forms, both as physical and symbolic spaces, are mechanisms for producing differentiated and complex temporalities (Little, 2015; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Montagna, 2023). As Novak (2017, p.61) puts it, borders "function not only as a spatial but also as a temporal device, designed to slow down the 'flow' of migrants and their entry into new labour markets (…) They consequently engender different practices."

The production of differentiated and complex temporalities by borders also takes place in the Balkans and on North-western routes and includes different forms, such as encampment in hotspots and the informal settlements discussed above, or illegal refoulment used along migration routes. To the empty time of passivizing and depersonalising oblivion in the camps, the waiting in long queues for anything, the frustration of being imprisoned on the margins with no way out and no time, and the prolonged stops in the camps, are added the pushbacks, sometimes repeated dozens of times, almost always accompanied by the violence of the Balkan police forces, primarily the Croatian and Slovenian. These mechanisms not only regulate spatial movements but also the times of these movements, resulting in further dilation and disruptions. This alternation of long waits in confined places with repeated attempts to cross the borders, both of which affect the times of movement is well-explained by Anastaziya, a Kurdish-Iranian 13-year-old girl, speaking on behalf of her father

and family, and throughout the journey the family member who maintained relations with the outside world, using English learned on the way:

> "We left two years ago from Iran and we are Kurdish-Iranians, we left for political reasons and with a smuggler who got us to Serbia (...) Then we went to Bosnia and stayed for a year in Bihać (...) We tried 14 times to cross the border (...) We did it by walking three days".

There are many, widely documented testimonies of repeated pushbacks along the Balkan route, particularly on the border between Bosnia and Croatia (Rivolti ai Balcani, 2021). Those rejected return to the camp each time to regroup and try again before attempting the 'game' to Croatia and Hungary again, often becoming victims of beatings and rejections. Obviously, these pushbacks involve further delays and a significant extension of time.

Violence on the part of the Balkan police, primarily the Croatian police, ranges from physical beatings to the destruction of items vital to those on the move, such as food or mobile phones. Saman, 22, from Afghanistan, recounts two episodes:

> "This time we went to the other side, to Bihać. We walked for six days, then we got to the railway and tried to walk following the tracks. At one point, while we were walking, two policemen appeared and attacked us and beat us with sticks (...) They took us to their office, they were monsters, they wouldn't stop beating us. I speak English so one of them was talking to me I had to translate (...) Then they took us to the border, they broke our mobile phones, watches, everything. They burned our food, our clothes, everything, and sent us back to Kladuša [*sic*].

For those who manage to cross the border between Slovenia and Italy, the route speeds up to Oulx, where individuals can stop at the *Massi-Talità Kum Fraternity* refuge for one night – as, per the regulations, people are not allowed to stay longer except for health reasons or unless they are travelling with their families. Crossing the mountains from Claviere, the small village between Italy and France, to Briançon is a gamble. People walk in the mountains, along paths that are often dangerous, especially in winter, very often at night and in adverse weather conditions. The mountains along this borderland, which can reach altitudes of up to 2,500 metres and are usually covered in snow in winter, are patrolled by Italian police and French gendarmerie, who are dedicated to detecting and pushing back migrants trying to reach France. Those who can choose higher altitudes, the more fragile take lower paths where they are more easily spotted. Once migrants are stopped and identified, they are escorted by

the police or the Red Cross back to the shelter *Massi-Talità Kum Fraternity* from where they then try to leave again. The deployment of forces searching for them is massive and highly technologised. It includes armed and camouflage-suited military personnel searching the forests, drones, infrared detectors, pickup trucks and snowmobiles. It is the most vulnerable who are intercepted and the hunt for the 'migrant' focuses primarily on families and the most physically vulnerable.

6. Relying on smuggling to circumvent borders and interrupted temporalities

A number of factors affect migrant temporalities, including the resources paid to the smuggling industry. It is not possible to start the journey without considering the cost of smugglers, with whom people on the move have complex relationships that cannot simply be attributed to exploitation (Gilardi, 2020), to facilitate crossing the border with less risk and in less time. From Turkey to Greece or the Balkans, or directly to Italy from Bosnia to Croatia to Slovenia, all the migrants we met had at some point in their journey, perhaps after countless pushbacks, paid for a cab or a guide so they could continue. Families, especially, could not get through without relying on these networks.

The reasons why and places where migrants turn to smugglers can vary and depend on the country of departure. While there is very limited, if any, smugglers' activity on the border between Italy and France, it is much more significant along the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes. Here, costs vary although they are generally high. The cost of the journey under a truck from Greece to Milan is €4,000, while a cab from Bosnia to the border with Italy is about €4,000 per person; the cost of the journey from Croatia to Italy, which is just a few hundred kilometres, is about €800 per person: part by bus, part by car and, from Slovenia, on foot. These amounts are standard and were confirmed by all the people we interviewed. The cost for a place on a boat from Turkey to Crotone, Italy, is much higher – between €7,000 to €8,000 euros person, while children generally journey for half that sum. This is clearly a longer sea route, but the cost is worth it because people do not risk being trapped in Greek camps for months or years, and once in Calabria – usually the region of destination – reaching Europe through the Italian peninsula is easier. This had become a popular route by 2022. About 18,000 people arrived directly from Turkey, that is one-sixth of the total. Among those arriving in Oulx we came across groups of unaccompanied minors who had left Afghanistan through parental, friendship and village collaboration, and are on a journey that is time-consuming and costly, but which could be tackled by the group of origin.

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They arrived in Turkey with smugglers, stayed in Istanbul, were smuggled to Izmir, Smyrna or Bursa, where they were accommodated in safe houses and finally taken "blind" to embarkation. In these cases, the journey to Italy, not considering the previous stops, can take between five and seven days on sailing boats (or motorboats) and, depending on the amounts paid, the crossing takes place on boats of different quality and capacity.

Smuggling networks can contribute to the compression of time and space, but they can also disrupt movement and provoke unexpected delays. It is easy to fall victim to fraud and robbery, as Hirad, a 38-year-old Iranian, said:

> "In Turkey we contacted people who promised to get us to Serbia. It was me and my children and another family who wanted to leave with us. I paid €9,000 (€6,000 for me and €3,000 for my children), they paid €15,000 because they were three people. A place was fixed for the exchange of the money (...) When the smugglers we had arranged with told us that we had to move the money to another warehouse, we trusted them. But they stole the money and we lost everything (...) Eventually, I contacted another smuggler who said he could help me. We left (...) we went from Turkey to Montenegro [*sic*]."

While the exploitative rationale behind smuggling should not be underestimated, the role of the smuggling industry and the use of its services is often misunderstood (Gallien & Weigand, 2021; Keshavarz & Khosravi, 2022). Several studies have highlighted that these networks are not organised internationally with "branches in several countries", arguing instead that they are "loosely connected" groups with limited internal hierarchy or none, that "communicate and cooperate […] horizontally" across the different stages of the process (Demir Sever & Kahya, 2017, pp. 384–385; see also Campana, 2020; İçduygu & Toktas, 2002). Migrant smuggling appears to be the result of the complex interactions of large numbers of smaller-scale actors, flexible and efficient at piecemeal organising (Baird & Van Liempt, 2016), who migrants ask to assist them with crossing borders to reduce risks and journey time. As Raineri (2021, p.317) argues, smugglers and migrants are tied by motivations and mutual interests that debunk the myth of a normative polarisation between, respectively, ruthless predators and poor victims: "To be sure, abuses and scams are not uncommon in migrant smuggling, but their exhibition and media overemphasis – often with sensationalistic tones – has all too often led us to overlook the positive interactions that are frequent between migrants and smugglers."

Migrants themselves, particularly young people, offer to act as smugglers along the Balkans and guide others across the border, in exchange for a small

percentage, risking arrest. We also heard the testimony of a single mother with a young daughter who acted as a guide to finance her own journey. Behind this use by migrants there is a rationality: despite everything, costs are lower as are transit times and risks. On the other hand, smugglers act as agents who know the market, guarantee the outcome and are accountable in terms of marketing and entrepreneurial interests (Gorza et al., 2022).

7. 'Doing family' along the journey: family and household figurations, intergenerational and gender relations

While the journey from Turkey to the southern Italian coasts and on to the North-western border may take a few days, the journey from Greece and the Balkans can vary from between two and six years, much of it spent in camps and reception centres. During this time, the horizons, bodies, thoughts, and gestures of people in movement are transformed by events and their encounters with other people and with borders. Family and household configurations are affected as much as individuals by these transformations and respond in various ways to the space-time disruption of their journeys provoked by the multiple borders encountered along the way – including reconfiguring themselves and their family networks. This may happen temporarily, when families divide strategically to respond to border violence and to cross with less risk in less time, or permanently. Here, Osman, 13, from Afghanistan, describes a dramatic strategy of temporary breakdown:

> "To cross the border, we hid under the train cars. We did not want to go to Croatia because the camps there are very bad. The accommodation under the train was very dangerous. If we had fallen, we would have died. Under the train we were divided: my dad with some of my brothers under one car; my mum, me and my sisters under another car (...) We put ourselves over the wheels of the train, in a small space: two of us in one place was cramped (...) I was with my little brother and one of my sisters, my mom was with the other three sisters, two sisters with my brother and my dad alone. In this way we arrived in Slovenia, however at the border they caught us and deported us to Croatia."

These temporary changes in family and household configurations emerged from the stories of the women we met. Mona from Afghanistan had crossed the Croatian border with her children while her husband was stranded in Bosnia. In Croatia she sought asylum and managed to get him to join her. While Fahime from Iran managed, alone with children, to join her husband in Italy from Slovenia.

However, the journey can also involve permanent changes, with separations at departure or along the way, like Leila from Afghanistan, who, separated from her husband in Bosnia, no longer knows where he is, has no contact and does not know if they will be reunited, but she continues alone. Salim left Iran with his wife, and together they arrived in Greece. There, his wife met another man, left Salim, departed Greece, and is now expecting a child with her new partner in Germany. Salim told us about it with bitterness.

Among permanent changes, the establishment of new family and household relationships beyond traditional boundaries can also be included. The aim of this sort of 'doing family' along the journey is to build alliances to better cope with the possible risks. If they cannot be considered 'family' or household relations in the strictest sense, it is often the members of these units who perceive and present themselves as such. These reconfigurations and 'family-making' become necessary both as strategies to escape border controls and thus continue the journey, whereby people belonging to the same households divide to make transit easier, or for providing one another with support to better manage the journey's risks. Raya is from Afghanistan and started the journey alone with her two children. Along the way she met Halima's Iranian family. They have been walking together ever since, have been in camps together, have been rejected together, have been subjected to Croatian police violence together, and arrived in Oulx together. Raya recounted that she would never have made it without them. Halima, much younger than Raya, calls her aunt, and the names the two families give each other when talking to each other are those of kinship relations. When they arrived in Oulx they presented themselves as a family unit.

This and other examples show how, within the groups presenting themselves as 'family', there were more than one family unit, meeting by chance along the way. If they are not 'families' in the traditional sense of persons bound by kinship relations, they are not just relationships of simple solidarity between people walking together. These 'familial' reconfigurations can certainly be read as strategies to escape border controls and thus continue the journey, where families divide to make transit easier, as we have seen, and as a form of mutual support, whereby new figurations are formed to better cope with the risks of the journey. However, they also reshape the self and wider relationships into a qualified life project that is not deferred until arrival. Although these reconfigurations are often problematic – many accounts tell of the difficulty and pain of separations, the increased costs, the lengthening time until reunification, and concern for those left behind – they can become existential projects. Migrating is not just a movement between two or more places, but a temporal journey constituted by events that transform both the intimate and

relational life of people on the move. The temporal analysis examines how these events unravel in the lives of people in a space-time movement.

Finally, while some families reconfigure their boundaries either by splitting up strategically to keep moving or to cope with the roughness and difficulties of their journey, or by networking with others, there is also a process of transformation from within, for instance when traditional roles are challenged and reconfigured in the face of new circumstances. This is especially true in those households on the move for a long time in which children and adolescents grow up during the journey and become the protagonists. Because they can communicate, often in English, they draw and follow maps, they offer themselves as referents and often claim this role even *vis-à-vis* their parents. We mentioned earlier the Kurdish-Iranian 13-year-old girl Anastaziya, who had to deal with the police in English on behalf of her family. Other examples include Radin, 14, in the camp in Greece where he had been stranded for some time with his family, who had studied English and Greek, which he was passionate about. His native language is Pashto, but he is also fluent in Dari and Farsi. Many others turned to him for translations, and in the family he is relied on by his father. Zora, 13, from Afghanistan, is also the English-speaker in her family. During our meeting in Oulx she told us about the experience of the journey, shushing her father several times while her mother laughed. Setting out on the journey also requires other skills: Etara, 9, recounted that, during the journey from Afghanistan, she was the one who studied the route and decided the points through which to pass, something she was very proud of. Within what we have called family and household reconfiguration, in some cases it is the minors who leave first, precisely because they think it is easier to cross borders: they pave the way for the rest of the family to follow them. In other cases, it is minors accompanied by an adult. Nadir from Afghanistan, 14, who arrived at the shelter with his father was entrusted to a volunteer to put him on a bus to France. The rest of the family, the mother and younger siblings, had remained in Greece. The father retraced the Balkan route back to Greece and left again with the rest of the family to join Nadir in France.

Such situations are reminiscent of the more general 'role reversal' that can occur during the period of the journey between children who have been schooled in the country of arrival and their immigrant parents. While several authors see this as a 'crisis' of parental figures (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 1998), a close examination of these practices does not confirm to the idea that they necessarily damage family relationships (Lahire, 1995). We do not have enough findings to enter this debate, but we were able to observe in the families that passed through Oulx a change in child-parent relationships, an assumption of responsibility by minors, and their active participation in the migration journey.

Border Regimes, Shifting Temporalities and Migrant Responses. An Analysis
of the Route Between the Eastern Mediterranean and the North-Western
French-Italian Border
Nicola Montagna, Piero Gorza, Rita Moschella, Maria Perino

8. Conclusion: disrupting temporalities to build a hostile Europe

The temporalities of migratory journeys change in the encounter with the border. In this sense, borders not only regulate spatial mobility, forcing people to stay in one place or diverting migratory routes, but also become devices that affect the timing of migratory projects, disrupting them in an increasing differentiation between life and biological and social times. In this sense, we can argue with Agier (2016) that borders, in addition to being spaces that demarcate people's movements and social relations that define belongings, have a temporal dimension. However, while Agier (2016, p. 18) considers the temporal dimension to be a characteristic of the border, in 'the sense that the place and the community have not always existed', for us it is a place that regulates social times, norming migrant journeys and their temporalities. Therefore, through policies of confinement at the borders or through continuous pushbacks, borders become temporal devices that norm migrant journeys and their temporalities. The condition of abandonment in which the person on the move is often left by EU bordering policies is not only spatial (the camps) or social (inaccessibility to social relations outside the camps) but also temporal: the time dilation, the long waits and intervals between movements, the unexpected stops etc. The temporality experienced along the journeys accentuates the distance between natural and lifetimes and social times, revealing tensions between the two and turning the former from being a discrete period of time into something uncertain and not depending on migrants' choice. The disruption of time for people on the move is a further contribution to that hostile Europe the goal of which is not so much to block migrants at the EU border but to filter their entry, not only to reassure European public opinions that the EU borders are under control but rather to racialize migrants, lowering their expectations and transforming them into subaltern subjects.

However, bordering practices such as those identified in this article that aim to delineate foreigners' access to membership and to demarcate categories of people do not act in a vacuum of agency. On the contrary, they are challenged through migrant attempts to recompose the temporal fracture between natural lifetimes and social times. In this sense, borders and migrants' temporalities are in constant negotiation and change, although irreducible to one another. While it is true that the border governs routes, in the encounter with the border migrants become actors, emerging in their agency beyond the limitations set by multiple borders. Consequently, the analysis of migrants' journeys tells us not only about the constricting force of borders and border practices on spatial-temporal movement; but also illuminates the agency of people on the move in their attempt to continue their journey and recompose time that is fragmented and disrupted by their encounter with borders. This agency takes a variety of

different forms, from protest to reliance on the costly services provided by smugglers. In this article, we have seen that these forms include resorting to smugglers and strategic changes in family and household figurations faced with the relentless bordering action produced by national and European institutions. The migrants we came across in Oulx faced constraints and found opportunities by paying smugglers for their services and remodelling original domesticities when needed in order to continue their journey, or by altering gender and intergenerational relations, parental and friendship networks, in attempts to construct their own temporalities against those imposed by the borders. Agency can, however, also be identified in the routes that migrants choose. Since 2022 we have seen a significant increase of people crossing the sea from Turkey to southern Italy instead of taking the Balkan route. While the journey along the latter takes several years, the former is much faster. Along this route, migrants do not risk being trapped, spatially and temporally, in the camps that punctuate eastern Europe's borders. It is a considerably more direct route, although it can cost more and be more dangerous, as the shipwreck on the Calabrian coast in late February 2023 demonstrated. Having said that, agency and migrant responses, including those analysed in this article, are constrained by circumstances they find in their journey rather than being the outcome of free choice.

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