Resilient Borders: Reconstructing (in)visibility

Understanding the border and migration management of the EU through the concept of resilience: The case of the Central Mediterranean route

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Number of Characters: 113.911 (53 pages)

ABSTRACT

Resilience constitutes a concept that has become extremely popular over the last years. Deriving from the ecological systems "*as the ability of a system to absorb some disturbance whilst maintaining its cohesion* (Oppenheimer, Schech, Fathi, Wylie, & Cresswell, 2020, p. 12), resilience has occupied disciplines such as political science, international relations, and security studies. Recently, this concept made its appearance in the EU documents and policymaking. The aim of this thesis is to shed light on how the concept of resilience has become the facilitator of the EU´s interests in border and migration management. Through the connection of resilience with the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and regime of truth I established the resilience mechanism which aims in unravelling the causal process that reaches the outcome of creating a space of selective (in)visibility. In order to support my arguments, I turned upon the case of the Central Mediterranean route, something that led to my conceptualization of resilient borders where their construction is taking place through the push backs of the migrants at sea, the externalization of the migration management and the selection of what becomes visible and what not. This thesis could become a channel for further research to be done regarding the new buzzword that had occupied the international community, resilience.

Keywords: Resilience; Foucault; Border Management; Migration Management; Externalization

I.   T<small>ABLE OF</small> C<small>ONTENTS</small>

II. LIST OF ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
LCG	Libyan Coast Guard
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
EEAS	European External Action Service
ENI	European Neighborhood Instrument
DCIM	Libyan Department for Combatting Illegal Migration
EUTF Africa	EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
IDPs	internally displaced people
VHR	Voluntary Humanitarian Return
EUBAM Libya	EU Border Assistance Mission Libya
SAR	Search and Rescue
EUNAVFOR MED	EU Naval Force Mediterranean
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MOAS	Migrant Offshore Aid Station
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières

I. INTRODUCTION

The 18th of December signifies the international migration day. This year, the European Commission proceeded to the publication of a joint statement with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in order to celebrate their work in protecting the migrants with a *"comprehensive, balanced and cooperative approach"* (European Commission, 2020c). This approach is based on the cooperation with the countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination as well as with the regional and multilateral organizations, the civil society, migrants' and diaspora organizations (European Commission, 2020c). Furthermore, the statement continued by underlining that:

> *"On International Migrants Day, the European Union reiterates its strong commitment to protect the dignity and human rights of all migrants. Migrants bring value for our economies and societies, and we strive to ensure that migration takes place in a safe, legal and well-managed way"* (European Commission, 2020c).

However, this statement could be in dispute when the real stories from the sea borders of the EU come to the light of the publicity. On the 9th of February 2020, a ship with 91 passengers that had departed from Libya in an attempt to reach the European shores, found itself in a distress situation (Watch the Med, 2020). After calling the AlarmPhone of the Watch the Med organization to inform them about their position in the Central Mediterranean, the ship got lost with all the communication being unreachable (Watch the Med, 2020). The organization having informed the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) but also the Maltese and Italian authorities was waiting for an answer in regards with the safety of the people on board (Watch the Med, 2020). However, until the present day no answer has been given not only to the organization who made sure to pass all the necessary information to the responsible authorities but also to the families of the people on board (Watch the Med, 2020). After a year of this presumed shipwreck the responsible authorities are still denying replying on what happened that day (Watch the Med, 2020).

This story is only one out of many that quite often are taking place in the Central Mediterranean route. In fact, this route has been rightfully characterized as a dead zone (Cusumano, 2017) having

the highest numbers of deaths and missing persons in the whole Mediterranean Sea. In 2020, the number of deaths reached 779 for the Central Mediterranean, with 106 in the Easter route and 267 in the Western route (IOM, 2020). With the above-mentioned, the efficiency of the EU's migration policy and border management approach becomes questionable when it comes to the protection of the migrants´ lives, their safety, dignity and their human rights.

These questionable policies that have as a result the implementation of certain operations and missions in the Central Mediterranean and in collaboration with the country of Libya initiated my interest for the formation of this thesis. After a deeper searching, I came across the concept of resilience which has dominated a number of disciplines, including political science, international relations and security studies. By profoundly researching upon resilience in connection with the EU border and migration management I realized how this vague and malleable concept has been used to promote certain interests that are correlated with the externalization of the borders and the redirection of the operations from saving lives at sea to the dismantling of the smuggling business. As a result, the EU has proceeded to the creation of a place where visibility and invisibility is regulated according to its interests. The above-mentioned presumed shipwreck has become completely invisible even after a year of efforts made by the families and organizations in trying to find out what happened. Thus, this led to the formation of my research question: *How the use of resilience by the EU has created a space of selective (in)visibility in the Central Mediterranean route*.

This project first discusses the methodology that has been followed, continuing with the introduction of the typology on visibility which is embedded with the outcome that is being produced through the use of resilience by the EU. After, I will dive into the exploration of the resilience mechanism and its connection with Foucault's concepts of governmentality and the regime of truth in order to establish the linkage that will help me to move the discussion towards the EU´s operations and missions in the Central Mediterranean route. Additionally, I will turn upon the EU documentations correlated with the concept of resilience in order to unfold the above-mentioned mechanism. Lastly, I will continue with the presentation of the actual operations and missions, their connection with resilience and the proposed outcome of selective (in)visibility in order to establish what I call as resilient borders.

II. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will elaborate on the methodological process that built up to the formation of the research question of this project: *How the use of resilience by the EU has created a space of selective (in)visibility in the Central Mediterranean route*. First, I will introduce the concept of resilience that drove me to investigate how the EU has used it regarding policies that deal with border management and migration management. Secondly, I will briefly refer to the construction of the resilience mechanism and the produced outcome. In addition, I will also refer to the case that I use as a supportive source of data and the assistance that it will provide in my overall research on resilience. Lastly, I will introduce the method that I followed in order to answer the above-mentioned research question, the advantages and the limitations of this project.

i. POINT OF DEPARTURE

Initially, my attention was drawn by an article of Dorothea Hilhorst, in which she was explaining the two approaches of humanitarianism that have dominated humanitarian action, Classical Humanitarianism and Resilience Humanitarianism (Hilhorst, Classical humanitarianism and resilience humanitarianism: making sense of two brands of humanitarian action, 2018). According to Hilhorst, resilience is the idea that *"people, communities or societies in need, experiencing a tragic event or disaster, tend to adapt and survive by themselves"* (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 5). When I encountered the word "resilience" I started searching for answers regarding its meaning and how it has affected the implementation of humanitarian-oriented actions by the EU. After going through many EU documents, which will be further presented and elaborated in a following chapter, it came to my understanding that resilience has become the prevailed concept that has overshadowed and spilled over to many EU policies and operations, especially when it comes to the neighboring countries that constitute the external borders of the EU. At this point, it became inevitable for me to shift the focus of this project towards resilience and to construct my research question around the understanding of resilience as a mechanism that brings the outcome of selective (in)visibility. In particular, the research question that underpins this project is: *How the use of resilience by the EU has created a space of selective (in)visibility in the Central Mediterranean route*.

First and foremost, a pivotal point for my research was the spilling over effect of resilience that has been affecting the border control policies of the EU and its cooperation with the neighboring countries, since 2012. When it comes to migration and border management, EU´s approach has extensively praised the shift towards resilience in order to build resilient neighbors that could adopt a sufficient border management response, combating irregular migration, smuggling activities and addressing the root causes of the crisis (CSDP, 2017). Resilience, then, becomes connected not with the humanitarian response of saving lives at sea per se, but more with saving lives by destroying the inadequate means and the routes of the people on the move. As a result, migrants not being able to cross the treacherous routes will not be in danger anymore. This idea is rather problematic when it comes to the stagnation of migrants in authoritarian and unstable neighboring countries. Additionally, it ignores completely the fact that by closing off the only route that is used by people who have fled from severe situations such as war, famine and persecution creates, actually, the opportunity for the smuggling business to further flourish and the route to become even more violent and dangerous. This led to my conceptualization of what I consider to be resilient borders, a combination of border externalization policies and border control that created a space of selective (in)visibility, dressed up with the fluid and adaptable meaning of resilience.

Drawing upon the work of Lemberg-Pedersen and the concept of the European borderscapes (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2012) that was introduced in his article, I will move a step further by examining the impact of resilience on the border control operations, the externalized border management, the moving population and by elaborating on what I conceptualized as resilient borders. The European borderscapes constitute a fluctuating landscape of control practices within Europe, at Europe's external borders and towards third countries with the implementation of externalization policies (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2012). Being influenced by Lemberg-Petersen, resilient borders, are touching upon the European borderscapes when it comes to the border control and the externalization of migration and border management, constructing a space where visibility and invisibility become obscure and manageable according to the interest of the EU. At this point I would like to mention that externalization incorporates *the outsourcing of border control to non-EU countries, as well as the spatial extension of where EU governments and forces can patrol, thus a literal expansion of the borderline* (Cobarrubias, Casas-Cortes, & Pickles, 2010, p. 71).

Border externalization has been adequately researched by many scholars and it will not be further elaborated as it does not acquire an analytical position in this project.

Moreover, by extensively researching upon resilience in literature but also within the EU documents, I stumbled across the broad and vague meaning of this concept. That became the rationale of choosing the process tracing method, and more precisely the explaining-outcome research strategy. According to this process, as it will be elaborated also in the below section, the causal mechanism acquires a supreme position in the research project as it explains how an outcome was born through the cause. As I was intrigued by the ambiguity of resilience, I will closely observe how being a mechanism of border control, border externalization and migration management within the EU, brings the outcome of selective (in)visibility.

In order to unfold this causal mechanism, I will turn upon Foucault's concepts of governmentality and the regime of truth. By connecting resilience with a Foucauldian approach, I will establish the resilience mechanism that is further used by the EU. Consecutively, I will allocate the existence of the mechanism in the relevant EU documents starting from 2012 when it first appeared, and I will shed light on how it has influenced and dressed up the border management policies and operations. At this point I will separate the actions that I will further discuss in two axiss, the internal and the external, based on the territorial coverage of each operation. Furthermore, when discussing the actual implementation of resilience through the actions of the EU, the outcome of constructing a space of selective (in)visibility will become more obvious supporting my research question.

Regarding visibility, I will turn on Brighenti's typology which was introduced in his article *Visibility: A category for the Social Sciences* (Brighenti, 2007). Although, Brighenti established this categorization in three different types, the Social-Type, the Media-Type and the Control-Type, in this project I will focus on the third one which he describes as a transformation of visibility *into a strategic resource for regulation* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). My decision came as a result of the main backbone and discussion of this project which is the use of the resilience mechanism by the EU in policies and operations regarding border and migration management. However, the importance of the other two introduced types of visibility is being acknowledged and constitute a fruitful ground for further research.

With the aforementioned, I decided to choose as a case in order to further investigate and to support my main arguments the Central Mediterranean route which extends from the Sub-Saharan Africa to Italy (UNHCR, 2018). My choice was based on criteria of importance as it is considered to be the most active and treacherous route, facilitating the largest numbers of the population trying to reach the European shores (UNHCR, 2018). Libya constitutes the transit country and the point of departure for the largest part of the refugees, migrants and asylum seeking coming from Africa (UNHCR, 2018). The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) has implemented a resilience approach towards the collaboration with the Libyan state in matters of border control, border management and migration management, that will be further elaborated in a later chapter.

ii. METHOD

Following a process tracing method, I will try to find the knots and dots between the first appearance of resilience in the EU documents, its implementation in the Central Mediterranean as a new regime of truth and a tool of population management that brought as an outcome the creation of a space with selective (in)visibility. Process tracing, existing within the theory-guided research, focuses on certain causal explanations in order to develop elaborated descriptive narratives of the events taking place between the occurrence of a cause and an outcome (Beach, 2017). Under the umbrella of this method, the analytical proceeding is being redirected to the hypothetical causal process that links the cause with the outcome (Beach, 2017). In my case this causal mechanism is being considered as the connection of resilience within the Foucauldian concepts of the regime of truth and governmentality. In order to collect the necessary evidence to build the causal mechanism, I am going to follow the causal *process observation strategy* which uses observational within-case empirical material (Beach, 2017). In this project this would be the area of the Central Mediterranean route regarding the EU operations and policies which will provide an insight and the data of the actual context of the mechanism.

Furthermore, my main focus is aligned with unravelling the causal process and trace its parts within the empirical framework of my area of concern. As a result, I am following a *systems understanding* in which the main aspiration is to trace how things work, how the mechanism operates, as Beach describes *observing the empirical fingerprints left by the activities of entities in each part of the process* (Beach, 2017, p. 4). The benefit of following this take on mechanism is

that the causal inferences that are produced are more robust due to the fact that the causal process has been elaborated through evidence in a "real-world case" (Beach, 2017). By unravelling the causal mechanism, I will identify the entities that proceed in certain activities which produce the outcome in question. Entities are described as the actors or organizations taking part in this process by transferring power through the mechanism (Beach, 2017). The activities undertaken by the entities move the mechanism from *an initial condition to a certain outcome* (Beach, 2017, p. 5). In this case the entities can be traced within the EU, the agencies and the operations that are correlated with the actions taken in the Central Mediterranean. The mechanism of resilience has affected the missions and operations undertaken by the EU in this area bringing the outcome of the selective (in)visibility into the surface.

Following an explaining-outcome itinerary, I will take a theory-first path (Beach, 2017) where I will start with the explanation of what resilience actually represents and I will try to find the connection with the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and the regime of truth that formulate the mechanism discussed in this project. Then, I will include the empirical data from the use of resilience in the EU documents and its appearance in the missions and operations taking place in the Central Mediterranean route in order to elaborate on the outcome that is being produced. In explaining-outcome process tracing, a minimally sufficient explanation for the discussed outcome must be established (Beach, 2017). As resilience constitutes a new phenomenon that is now under scrutiny, I will try to establish a minimally sufficient explanation on how it has affected the perception of what can or cannot be seen in the Central Mediterranean route.

iii. LIMITATIONS

In this section I am going to elaborate on the limitations of this project by acknowledging the fact that the chosen method, the case and the time frame of the conduction of this research might have limited the scope of the matter in discussion. However, I will justify my choices and the benefits that might bring into the field of research as well as my consideration of this project as the initiation of further discussions that shall be formulated in the use of resilience.

First and foremost, and as Beach has underlined, an explaining-outcome itinerary within the process-tracing method undertakes a single case study in order to establish a minimally sufficient explanation of a probable outcome (Beach, 2017). The causal mechanism that is being discussed, can be located in the specific case that is chosen to build this research project, but it is uncertain if this mechanism could be present and validated in other cases. This leads to the construction of a limited scope, focusing only on this single case study. However, I will try to counter this disadvantage by generally presenting the use of the resilience mechanism into the EU documents before moving on to my chosen case. Furthermore, by creating a chapter with the further perspectives of this project, I will point out that the outcome of the creation of resilient borders as a space where selective (in)visibility is being rendered, is not only present in the Central Mediterranean, but can be found also in other routes. At this point, I will briefly refer to the situation that takes place in the East Mediterranean and the operations that are conducted between the Greek and Turkish borders.

Secondly, the case of the Central Mediterranean route constitutes an over-researched subject that has been discussed extensively over the last decades and examined through many different parameters. One could argue that there is not much to be researched in this area that could bring a new perspective on the subject. My justification, here, is aligned with the appearance of resilience, the new buzzword, that has dominated the EU discourses over the last years. By researching an already examined case, new elements could be discovered and provide a profound understanding of how the mechanisms are operating. In this case, this element is presented through the concept of resilience. As the crisis in the Central Mediterranean route is still evolving, resilience seems to acquire a prominent position on how the operations and missions should be deployed. It facilitates the modus operandi of the EU by framing its action with the resilience notion. After researching resilience, I stumbled across recent articles that are discussing this concept and how it has affected different fields of study. By understanding that resilience is still under close examination, I chose to proceed with this project focusing on the connection between resilience and the EU in a case that has been already over-researched in order to shed light upon another perspective.

Last but not least, the time frame of this research project was limited with a focus that shifted from something broader to something really specific such as resilience. The time consumption let me with the choice of examining only the Control-Type of Visibility, in Brighenti's introduced

Typology, leaving the other two types not discussed. I consider that all three types are well-connected and important to be examined in this case. Further research shall be done in order to investigate the Social-Type connected with the struggle for recognition made by the migrants but also the flash-halo mechanism of the Media-Type of visibility. However, due to the fact that my focus is turned towards the missions and operations introduced by the EU in the Central Mediterranean route, framed within the concept of resilience, I acknowledged that the Control-Type of visibility will be the ideal approach to support my case. In the next chapter I will briefly refer to the first two types as I would like to provide a better understanding of the discussed typology, before moving on with the Control-Type of visibility that will appear in a later chapter.

III. THE TYPES OF VISIBILITY

In this chapter I will refer to the types of visibility that were introduced by Andrea Brighenti in his article *Visibility: a category for the Social Science* (2007). He perceives that recognition and control are two opposing outcomes of visibility, and he argues that empowerment does not solely lie either with visibility or invisibility (Brighenti, 2007). Brighenti, describes visibility as *a metaphor of knowledge, but it is not simply an image: it is a real social process in itself* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 325).

Importantly, I will briefly discuss the Social-Type and the Media-Type but I will elaborate on the Control-Type of visibility as it is going to be useful for continuing with the examination of what the creation of resilient borders has brought as an outcome to the Central Mediterranean route and how it has affected the population on the move. I will move on by examining certain policies and operations that were implemented in this area, arguing that there is an imminent connection between Brighenti's visibility and the shift towards resilience that has underpinned the border management of the EU.

i. THE SOCIAL-TYPE

Brighenti connects the Social-Type of visibility with the notion of recognition which is being explained as a form of social visibility with significant repercussion regarding the relation between

minority groups and the mainstream (Brighenti, 2007). He acknowledged the existence of certain thresholds that encircle what is called *fair visibility* and when the subjects shift beyond or below them, distortion effects surface (Brighenti, 2007).

Moving below the lower threshold, exclusion, invisibility and deprivation of recognition is being rendered (Brighenti, 2007). He sets as an example irregular migration and the social invisibility, the exclusion that occurs regarding this group of people within the society (Brighenti, 2007). On the other side, moving over the upper threshold of visibility, all the actions taken are becoming enormous creating supra-visibility (Brighenti, 2007). At this point, it becomes forbidden to do what the social constraints require you to do, putting the individuals in a state of paralysis (Brighenti, 2007). Referring to supra-visibility, he presents the example of the correlation of migrants and criminals that takes place in the media (Brighenti, 2007).

ii. THE MEDIA-TYPE

Brighenti attaches to the Media-Type the flash-halo mechanism recognizing simultaneously the fact that this type might intersect with the Social-Type as described above (Brighenti, 2007). In the flash-halo mechanism the subjects that the flash points at are being removed, isolated from their primitive context and placed into a new one that runs with its own rules (Brighenti, 2007). Within this mechanism, visibility acquires two characteristics, it becomes both instant but with duration, an extension in time (Brighenti, 2007).

At this point, the importance of sites and subjects is being made due to the interaction that it takes place with each other (Brighenti, 2007). As a result, *social effects of visibility depend on who is more visible in which site* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 333). The author presents the example of mass media as a site of high visibility which is rendered to those who join them (Brighenti, 2007). He underlines that what matters is the styles and modes of access to the sites of high visibility rather than the access per se (Brighenti, 2007). In other words, the access itself does not make subjects visible but rather the access in a site that their voice can be heard, that they can have an actual representation and control over the image that represents them (Brighenti, 2007).

iii. THE CONTROL-TYPE

Brighenti describes the Control-Type as a transformation of visibility *into a strategic resource for regulation* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). Drawing upon Foucault's surveillance model, Deleuze's society of control model and Haggerty and Ericson's surveillant assemblage, he describes visibility as a *double-edged sword that it can be empowering as well as disempowering* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 335). While in the Social-Type visibility is expressed as a struggle for social recognition, here and by following Foucault's point of departure, visibility becomes a trap (Brighenti, 2007). In the case of the Central Mediterranean route, the trap has been created through the resilience mechanism, that will be elaborated later on, and has been implemented towards the population on the move, establishing a space where the individuals have lost their power of recognition. As this power is being controlled by the EU and the implemented policies and operations, the lenses of visibility have been shifted from the people who are in distress to what the EU considers as the root causes of the crisis. This shift was initiated within the resilience mechanism, something that will be further presented in the following chapters.

By using Bentham's panopticon, Brighenti explains that *being aware of one's own visibility status – and not the fact of being under actual control – effectively influences one's behavior* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 336). Nowadays, surveillance has evolved to a degree that implements actual control, methodical, systematic and automatic something that was made also possible by the appearance of new technologies (Brighenti, 2007). The tracking of flows and movement has become the new objective of surveillance, moving away from its initial goal which was the observation of human beings (Brighenti, 2007). This shift has given the right to surveillance agencies to regulate *access and denial of access to specific spaces for specific subjects* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 337). Surveillance is well embedded with the scope of the social classification of the population. A classification that even if it takes place through the procedure of individual identification, its actual aim is to continue with a division between the dangerous and the safe subjects (Brighenti, 2007). Therefore, surveillance and control lead to the creation of social categorization (Brighenti, 2007). In my case, the EU acquires the position of the surveillance actor as through its operations and missions in the Central Mediterranean route, that are also based upon surveillance techniques, proceeds to the social categorization and division between the safe migrants and the dangerous smugglers. By

connecting dangerousness with the smuggling activities, EU´s actions are constructed in a way to combat the danger and protect the European borders. Through this division the population on the move has been completely invisible when it comes to the obligation of saving lives at sea.

He further explains that in the sphere of governance, *a way of seeing prepares a way of acting and actively intervening upon reality* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 337). When we talk about power we have to acknowledge the fact that it does not lie explicitly with the two-way process of seeing and being seen but it is embedded with the style in which seeing and being seen occur and that brings forward the most significant repercussions (Brighenti, 2007). As he underlines, *the exercise of power is always an exercise in activating selective in/visibilities* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). As it will be also explained in a later chapter, EU´s implementation of certain missions and operations have paved the way for creating a space of selective (in)visibility in the Central Mediterranean route.

In this chapter, I discussed the typology of visibility that was introduced by Brighenti in 2007. By trying to explain why the Control-Type of this typology is considered to be a useful tool for the continuation of this project, I will now turn towards the creation of the resilience mechanism. Visibility will appear again in the discussion about the outcome of the operations and missions that have been undertaken by the EU in the Central Mediterranean route.

IV. UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

Over the last two decades resilience has emerged as the new buzzword which is associated with a number of disciplines ranging from engineering to socio-ecological systems science and psychology (Wagner & Anholt, 2016). In recent years resilience has acquired a prevailing position also in political science, international relations, and security studies (Wagner & Anholt, 2016) finding a fruitful ground for different interpretations and troubling the scholars with its great ambiguity. Its initial context derives from the ecological systems "*as the ability of a system to absorb some disturbance whilst maintaining its cohesion*" (Oppenheimer, Schech, Fathi, Wylie, & Cresswell, 2020, p. 12). In its adaptation in the different fields of study it presents a way to

describe "*the capacity to cope with change and uncertainty*" (Oppenheimer, Schech, Fathi, Wylie, & Cresswell, 2020, p. 12).

Among the scholars there is a differentiation when it comes to define what resilience actually means. Bourbeau describes resilience as "*the process of patterned adjustments adopted by a society or an individual in the face of endogenous or exogenous shocks*" (Bourbeau, 2015, p. 1958). While, Joseph's interpretation through a more moderate definition, connects resilience with "*the way that societies adapt to externally imposed change*" (Joseph, 2013, p. 39). Wagner and Anholt, on the other hand, do not engage with the definition of resilience as they believe that a definition would "*lead to premature analytical closure*" due to the ambiguity and the vagueness of the term (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, p. 419). They proceed with the definition given by the EU Commission in 2012, which describes resilience as "*the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks*" (European Commision, 2012, p. 5). With the above said and according to Duffield, "*resilience is a lingua franca—a common language—of preparedness, adaptation, and survivability, and is thus radically multi-disciplinary*" (Duffield, 2013, p. 55). As lingua franca, resilience's interpretation could vary in relation with the discipline that each time is being examined through.

Inevitably, resilience spilled over to the discourses of crisis management and humanitarian disasters expressing an esoteric transformation on our perception about the function of the world through the crises (Wagner & Anholt, 2016). As Cavelty et al. (2015) points out resilience expresses "*a new basis for engaging uncertainty*" in our world which is embedded with complexity (Cavelty, Kaufmann, & Kristensen, 2015, p. 5). As a result, the response to upcoming crisis and risks becomes enigmatic (Cavelty, Kaufmann, & Kristensen, 2015).

Joseph and Juncos, in their recent article about resilience, recognized four basic characteristics that are embedded with this term (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). This features are also diffused in the research of other scholars such as Dorothea Hilhorst, something that led to my understanding of their importance. Firstly, they discuss its complexity regarding the notion that societies are constantly changing, making the causes of the crisis obscure and unpredictable (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). This normalization of the crisis, living within uncertainty, constitutes a key factor that

forces us to understand the lack of predictable outcomes and easily identifiable solutions. The discussion has moved on from solving the problems of the crisis to living with them under the development of resilient human beings, societies and institutions (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). Supporting the contingency to reorganize, resilience reflects the flexibility and adaptability of crisis affected societies as the most prudent response to shocks and stresses (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). In other words, resilience rejects the separation between crisis and normality and incorporates crisis as the new normality (Hilhorst, 2018). The above-mentioned came as a result of the constantly increasing number of disasters, something that led, also, the international community to understand that intervention is not possible to take place in each case (Hilhorst, 2018). Mark Duffield has characterized the permanent emergency – normalization of crisis – situation as an economy where precarity flourishes (Duffield, 2018).

Second, resilience proposes a systems approach with the cooperation of different actors and institutions in order to manage the different levels and conditions of the complexity (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). Incorporating national and local authorities, private actors, service providers and the affected population as they constitute the first responders undertaking action in the appearance of a crisis (Hilhorst, Desportes, & De Milliano, 2019). Thus, humanitarian action and the aid provided focus on resilience building that expands between development and the establishment of a peace process (Hilhorst, 2018)

Third, resilience focuses primarily towards the local capacities introducing a bottom up approach which renders visibility to host governments and local institutions (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). Establishing a form of governance "from below" came as a result of the perceived failure of liberal peace and large-scale interventions from external actors (Hilhorst, 2018). This creation of a hybrid and neoliberal form of governance, leads also to the decentralization of power in favor of non-state or private stakeholders (Hilhorst, 2018). This characteristic of resilience can be described in two levels. First, with shifting away the responsibility from the international community and allocating it to the local communities which is now embedded with the notion of becoming resilient (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). Second, it moves away from the negativity of weakness, failure and fragility and grants responsibility to the local population within a framework of human agency and in a way to turn out positive and enabling (Joseph & Juncos, 2020).

Last but not least, resilience turns to a more human-centered viewpoint focusing on the human agency (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). The human-agency feature is wide dispersed in all the above-mentioned characteristics of resilience and cannot be seen as an isolated element (Joseph & Juncos, 2020). This shift towards a more individualistic path which connects directly the affected population promoting the idea of self-reliance, local capabilities and capacities rather than the exogenous aid provided by the international community, may occur in an era of austerity and budget cuts from the external actors. For instance, regarding the EU, it has been notably underlined the cost-effective aspect of resilience (Anholt & Wagner, 2020). This responsibility that lies with the affected population could become an intricate situation as the danger lurks in the neglect, especially of the most vulnerable, and the transformation of resilience to abandonment (Hilhorst, 2018).

Bourbeau identified the critical junctures that come across to studies about resilience (Bourbeau, 2015). He used the definition of Mahoney which concludes that critical junctures are *"choice points that put countries (or other units) onto paths of development that track certain outcomes—as opposed to others—and that cannot be easily broken or reversed"* (Mahoney, 2001, p. 7). He further explains that *"resilience does not take place in a vacuum, but draws on past experiences, collective memory and social history, as well as depending upon critical junctures at which agential powers decide to act (or not)"* (Bourbeau, 2015, p. 1963). By mentioning this, I recognize as a critical juncture for the EU, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, in 2011, where the understanding of the continuance of the humanitarian crisis in the Central Mediterranean came to the surface and led to the appearance of a more resilient approach towards the crisis management and the humanitarian action, something that will be elaborated more in a latter section.

Dorothea Hilhorst acknowledged also the fact that resilience caused a shift in the humanitarian action that was triggered by the technological innovations which worked in favor of the transformations in aid and the adaptation of the people in need (Hilhorst, 2018). In this context resilience focuses not only on the insecurity of the population that constitutes it as vulnerable through the existence of a threat, but also on the mechanisms that are deployed in order to maintain stability, survival and safety (Cavelty, Kaufmann, & Kristensen, 2015). She defines resilience as the idea that people, communities or societies in need, experiencing a tragic event or disaster, tend to adapt and survive by themselves (Hilhorst, 2018). *"Disaster, rather than being a total and*

immobilizing disruption, can become an event in which people seek continuity by using their resources to adapt". Entering the field of aid, then, creates a resilience approach to humanitarianism which started in the framework of disaster - relief, promoting the adaptation of the affected population, the local communities and the local response mechanisms (Hilhorst, 2018). This project was heavily influenced by the work of Dorothea Hilhorst on resilience and resilience humanitarianism, due to the fact that I am examining operations that are presented as a humanitarian action, placed in a space that has been humanitarianized during the last two decades. I am detaching myself from the military-humanitarian nexus that has been the key discussion over the EU operations in the Central Mediterranean and I am shedding the light into the resilience-humanitarian nexus that was developed the same time of the implementation of these operations.

In this chapter I tried to overcome the vagueness and ambiguity of the term "resilience" which has prevailed in the international community over the last years and in a variety of disciplines. In order to do so I followed the steps of the scholars that have extensively deconstructed resilience in their work, and I focused on the key characteristics that are becoming apparent in their multidiscipline articles. In the next chapter I will continue with relating the term "resilience" with the Foucauldian governmentality and the regime of truth. This connection will help me to proceed with the further examination of the EU operations and stance in the Central Mediterranean.

V. RESILIENCE, GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE REGIME OF TRUTH

By examining resilience in the above section, it became inevitable for me to connect it with the concept of governmentality. Drawing upon Foucault's lectures, in this chapter I will explain how we can perceive resilience as a contemporary form for governing populations and how it can be described as the new regime of truth that has dominated the so-called humanitarian action of the EU in the central Mediterranean.

i. RESILIENCE AND GOVERNMENTALITY

In his series of lectures Security, Territory, Population, in 1978, and the Birth of Biopolitics, in 1979 Foucault introduced a new term, the term of governmentality (Oksala, 2013). Being inspired

by the distinctive regime of power of the 18th century and the rise of the liberal state, Foucault's consideration of governmentality differentiates from the sovereign and disciplinary power while it acquires its own rationality, aims and means (Oksala, 2013). By referring to rationality, he perceived the laws, rules, structures and discourses being constructed by the state in order to reshape the civil society "*from a passive object of government to be acted upon and into an entity that is both an object and a subject of government*" (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p. 652). For Foucault, government deviates from the institution of the state and becomes a process, a "conduct of conducts", which is encapsulated with a variety of techniques and practices, performed by different actors, aimed to shape, guide, and direct individuals' and groups' behavior and actions in particular directions (Sending & Neumann, 2006). With this concept, Foucault elaborated on the methods used by the states in order to proceed to population management.

Defined with great ambiguity and vagueness, its meaning altered from describing historically a form of governance aligned with the modern state to a more general and abstract interpretation (Oksala, 2013). Importantly, Foucault's intention was not to publish these series of lectures, as he considered his presented ideas as a working hypothesis, a work in progress (Oksala, 2013). By stating this, I am not trying to undermine his work, but rather to explain that it is this ambiguity which has inspired the scholars to engage with the concept of governmentality and connected it with different fields of studies. In his own words Foucault describes governmentality as it follows:

> *By this word 'governmentality' I mean three things. First, by 'governmentality' I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instruments. Second, by 'governmentality' I understand the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre- eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline and so on – of the type of power that we can call 'government' and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses . . . on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges. . . . Finally, by 'governmentality' I think we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice . . . became the*

> *administrative state . . . and was gradually 'governmentalized'.* (Foucault, 2007, pp. 108-
> 109).

As Joseph underlines, *"in order to make sense of the rise of resilience, we have to see it in the context of new discourses of governance"* (Joseph, 2013, p. 41). At this point I will return to resilience since it has been interpreted by many scholars as a neoliberal form of governance (Joseph, 2013) (Bourbeau, 2015) (Hilhorst, 2018) (Wagner & Anholt, 2016) that aims at managing the affected population from a distance by shifting the responsibility to the local community and decentralizing power. This is aligned with the thought of Foucault, that new forms of governance are trying to manage populations "from a distance" (Joseph, 2013). Resilience, as it has been described in the above section through its main characteristics, calls for self-preparedness, shedding the responsibility to the individuals, the local communities and the local actors. Those features are aligned with the neoliberal approaches of governance which articulate that individuals should govern themselves shifting the responsibility towards them (Joseph, 2013).

As Oksala underlines, governmentality, in a neoliberal form of governance, has become more wide-ranging and rooted within our way of living (Oksala, 2013). We have become entrepreneurs of our lives competing in the free market called society (Oksala, 2013). In other words, governmentality succeeds by creating responsible and active individuals, enterprising themselves. Resilience advances this idea by calling for reflexibility, awareness and self-preparedness of the crisis-affected population. Through a complex and constant changeable environment where crises have been normalized, are unpredictable, uncontrollable and unsolvable, the population is being called to take responsibility for their own well-fare and act for their own benefit. Complexity promotes the idea of survival through adapting. As a result, and although resilience proposes a system approach, as it was described in the previous section, the focus is turned on the adaptability of the individual, the unit (Joseph, 2013).

ii. RESILIENCE AS THE NEW REGIME OF TRUTH

Foucault perceived power and knowledge as two well embedded entities that are always related with each other. He referred to the regime of truth as a fundamental part of the formation and function of each society that constitutes "*an ensemble of rules according to which the true and the*

false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true" (Foucault, 1980, p. 132). The regime of truth introduced a battle, not about what is true per se but about the status of truth and what it represents in the political and economic sphere (Foucault, 1980). He supports that power can be facilitated by forms of knowledge and scientific discourses that are broadly accepted by the society. As he points out:

> *"Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true"* (Foucault, 1980, p. 131).

Foucault underlines five essential characteristics of how truth appears in our societies. First, *"truth is centered on scientific discourses and the institutions that produce it"* (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). In this project the truth is being formulated within the EU discourses and documentations which are placing resilience in a prominent position, transforming it into a panacea that cures every crisis. Second, *"truth is subject to constant economic and political incitement"* (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). In this case, resilience is used to support the political motives of the EU through the externalization and border management policies and to promote the cost-effectiveness, which is being represented by this term, along with the capacity building of the local communities. Additionally, Foucault expressed his view on truth as something that acquires distinct forms and can be broadly translated into different fields (Foucault, 1980). Resilience has dominated a number of different policies, from the actions taking place in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel to the creation of the Resilience Marker which regulates the humanitarian operations and has been incorporated in programs with the purpose to combat the challenges which appear within an internal and external dimension (European Commission, 2013). Furthermore, truth, for Foucault, is born and spread, within the political and economic actors (Foucault, 1980). The truth of resilience is being established within the EU and the EU institutions, but it is also transmitted to the local communities and the countries that the EU is collaborating with in order to promote resilience and to counter the ever-appearing challenges. The fifth characteristic places truth as an *"issue of a whole political debate and social*

confrontation" (Foucault, 1980, p. 132). Resilience and as it was also presented in the previous chapter, has troubled the academic society on its meaning and implementation, especially when it comes to the use of the term by the EU.

As a result, resilience has been depicted as the new regime of truth within the EU, which frames the policymaking and the relations between the EU, its institutions and external actors, in a way to serve its interests. Resilience is well embedded with the exercise of power when it comes to the borders of the EU and the implementation of certain policies, facilitating the aims and purposes of the operations taking place. This new regime of truth creates spaces of (in)visibility and regulates the margins of what can and cannot be seen.

VI.   RESILIENCE AND THE EU

In this chapter I will elaborate on the continuous presence of resilience in the EU policy documents in order to examine the connection between the ambiguity of this term and the spilling over to the entire operational processes of the EU's external action and in general the policy-making.

The gradual appearance of the term was initiated with the European Commission's communication in 2012. In this document a definition is constructed, describing resilience as *"the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks"* (European Commission, 2012a, p. 5). As, rightfully, Anholt and Wagner point out, the lack of strategies, means and instruments for accomplishing resilience is quite noticeable and probably purposeful in order to maintain its openness and ambiguity towards the implementation of practices and priorities (Anholt & Wagner, 2020).

After its first arrival in the EU documentation, resilience dominated a number of other documents such as the 2012 EU Approach to Resilience, which describes the EU's participation and action in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel (European Commission, 2012b), the 2013 EU Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries, which initiated the formation of the EU resilience forum that takes place every year (European Commission, 2013), and the EU's 2014 Resilience Marker, which *"assess to what extent humanitarian actions funded by the Directorate-General for*

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) integrate resilience considerations into their projects" (European Commission, 2014, p. 3). Importantly, on the Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020, EU allocates resilience within the political decision-making level, acknowledging the incorporation of this term in many programs that are established in order to combat the challenges which appear within an internal and external dimension (European Commission, 2013).

The cornerstone underlining that resilience is here to stay came in 2016 with the EU Global Strategy. The EU Global strategy differentiates in some degree with the previous documentation of the European Security Strategy of 2003. In the former the notion of resilience was completely nonexistent whereas its focus was turned unconditionally towards security (Council of the EU, 2003). However, in the latter the word resilient/ resilience appeared 41 times and compared with human security which was discussed 4 times and human rights which were mentioned 31 times, turned resilience into the number one priority of the EU (EU, 2016). This is not to say that security became a secondary interest for the EU in the 2016 Global Strategy, but rather to state that after the realization of the continuance and constant appearance of new crises especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the so-called migration crisis, the EU shifted towards a less normative discourse.

The need for security has been redirected towards the responsibilization of the local communities and the individuals. This shift was facilitated by the incorporation of resilience which as Wagner and Anholt point out it represents *the perfect middle ground between over-ambitious liberal peacebuilding and the under-ambitious objective of stability* (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, p. 419). In addition, we should acknowledge the fact that at this point Europe was going through an economic crisis that had affected especially the countries of the South. Resonating with resilience that produces a cost-effective apparatus, it became a fruitful ground to lower budgets and efforts towards the external action of the EU. Furthermore, I should not exclude from this discussion the appearance of the word migration/migrant which surfaced 28 times in the EU Global Strategy in 2016 (EU). Comparing with the European Security Strategy of 2003 where these words appeared only 5 times, it becomes obvious that migration management has become a pivotal point of the new strategy of the external action (Council of the EU, 2003).

Last but not least, by referring to the challenges that shall be addressed, EU includes also, the organized crime and the external border management (EU, 2016). Subsequently, it proposed the cooperation of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and operations with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) regarding the strengthening of "*the border protection and maritime security in order to save more lives, fight cross-border crime and disrupt smuggling networks*" (EU, 2016, p. 20). By connecting resilience with security EU underlined the importance of a "*coherent use of internal and external policies, in order to counter the spill-over of insecurity that may stem from such conflicts, ranging from trafficking and smuggling to terrorism*" (EU, 2016, p. 30).

In the latest report about the implementation of the EU Global Strategy agenda, resilience makes its appearance once again not only as a single word but more as a concept that governs and guides the entire document. After having elaborated on a previous section about the key characteristics of resilience it came naturally to allocate them also in this report. Words such as complex, complexity, responsibility, awareness, local, civil society etc. have exhaustively emerged through the different sections, while the word resilience is used 39 times, in comparison with human rights which in this report appeared 17 times, human security 1 time and migration/migrant 25 times (EU, 2019). From the introduction where Federica Mogherini, the former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy addresses the complexity of our world by stating that:

> "*Three years ago, we described the world as 'complex and contested… Today the world is in no better shape than it was … But Europe is increasingly perceived as a global point of reference… Our international missions have better command structures and we have committed to investing more in our civilian action*" (EU, 2019, p. 4).

until the conclusion where the report acknowledges what has been already accomplished in the realm of resilience:

> "*We have backed regional cooperation in Central Asia – in particular on trade, counter-terrorism and on the Afghan peace process. We have invested in resilience and prosperity, supporting democratic reforms, clean energy and higher education*" (EU, 2019, p. 48).

The diffusion of resilience in all the practices implementing by the European External Action Service (EEAS) becomes apparent and quite clear to allocate. By referring to this and to the continuance of the EU external action towards a resilience approach starting from 2012, I am underlining that resilience is not just another buzzword as it has been depicted by Joseph (Joseph, 2013). His perception of resilience concluded with the interpretation that *"resilience is a shallow concept; it is also a shifting concept"* (Joseph, 2013, p. 51). My argument formulates in the second part of his characterization that it is this shift that surrounds the concept of resilience that makes it easy to use, to manipulate and to implement in a variety of policymaking. This easily manipulated term that can proceed to the governing of the population through the EU operations of the EEAS and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency as it will be further elaborated in the below chapter.

In this section I presented the course of resilience through the EU documentation which turned the vague substance of this term to actually govern the policymaking of the external action. Connecting it with the Foucauldian concept of the regime of truth, as it was previously described, here I presented the first behavior of resilience as the new regime of truth, *centered on scientific discourses and the institutions that produce it* (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). This step will help the reader to follow my disengagement with the military-humanitarian nexus of the Central Mediterranean and my elaboration on the resilience-humanitarian nexus that will proceed below. The next step of this project is to present and connect the notion of resilience in the EU operations taking place in my area of interest which occurred chronologically the same period with the appearance of resilience. By claiming this I am returning to what Anholt and Wagner underlined that the deliberate openness of this term assists the incorporation of it in different practices (Anholt & Wagner, 2020). As it became obvious also in the latest report of the implementation of the Global Strategy, it is not the word resilience articulated through the different policy fields but more the representing meaning that comes across a variety of different expressions.

VII. THE CREATION OF RESILIENT BORDERS

In the previous section I extensively elaborated on the appearance of resilience in the EU documents as a panacea to cure multiple and different complex crises that are constantly appearing in our ever-evolving environment. In this section I will examine what this panacea actually does in the Central Mediterranean route. As Wagner and Anholt have pointed out resilience is *"abstract and malleable"* and *"fluid enough to be applied in various contexts, adapted to different institutional visions, and translated into diverse strategies"* (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, p. 422). Only by asking questions such as 'Resilience to what?', 'Resilience of whom?', and 'Resilience by what means? We will be able to understand the fluidity of this concept and how it is actually used (Wagner & Anholt, 2016). Moving a step further from those questions posed by Wagner and Anholt, my question when it comes to the case of the Central Mediterranean route has been constructed as what is the impact of resilience regarding the migrants crossing, how it affects the people in need. By asking these questions and after the connection of resilience as a tool to govern populations and the new regime of truth that has been occupying the EU discourse I will draw upon Brighenti's typology of visibility and more precisely the Control-Type of visibility in order to further understand the impact of resilience on the population. I will now examine how the operations undertaken by the EU in order to achieve resilience affect what becomes visible and what is not in the Central Mediterranean.

I will turn to the actions taking place not only internally but also externally in order to construct what I refer to as resilient borders. Moving away from the military-humanitarian nexus that has been already discussed, I am shedding the light on the resilience-humanitarian nexus implemented in the area of interest. My argument here is that resilience has spilled over to the actions undertaken and has shaped the response of the EU towards operations focusing on the dismantling of the smuggling business instead of the provision of aid in order to save lives at sea. Through the presentation of resilience in the EU documents in the previous section it became apparent that this term is well embedded with the security logic, the migration management and has affected the operations taking place in multiple levels.

I will closely examine the relationship between the EU and Libya through two axiss, the external and the internal. The external axis includes the European Neighborhood Policy and all the actions

undertaken in this framework and the internal axis depicts the spilling over of resilience into the missions taking place in the Central Mediterranean which substituted the Mare Nostrum operation. Those two axiss contribute to the creation of what I call resilient borders.

i. THE EXTERNAL AXIS: THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was initiated in 2005 in order to establish and evolve the political and economic relations with the EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbors (EEAS, European Neighbourhood Policy, 2016a). After the Arab Spring the ENP was reviewed proposing additional reforms towards the partner countries while in 2015 and through a number of challenges that touched upon issues of stability, prosperity and security the ENP was once again reevaluating its purpose aligning with the implementation of the European Global Strategy and aiming at *"the stabilization of the EU's Neighborhood through building the resilience of partners"* (EEAS, European Neighbourhood Policy, 2016a).

In the latest update of the ENP the strengthening of the state and societal resilience of the EU's Neighbors has become an important priority in order to cope with the fears and pressures of migration and mobility (EEAS, 2016a). The ENP provides the partner countries with a distinguished access in internal agencies, programs and regulatory frameworks (EEAS, 2016a). In the years of 2014 until 2020, EU's support reached over the 15 billion euros, an amount that is allocated by the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) (EEAS, 2016a).

In a recent announcement the EEAS when discussing the Neighboring countries pointed out that security has become a political priority and the funding provided by the EU has helped to build the resilience of the regions (EEAS, 2020). Simultaneously with the cooperation in security-related actions, the EEAS announcement proceeded with stating that the EU is maintaining human rights and good governance at the center of the discussion with the Neighboring countries (EEAS, 2020). The above mentioned provide a profound understanding of how resilience is embedded in the core of the actions undertaken in the security and migration framework. Under the ENP umbrella, the EU promotes extensively the stabilization of the EU Neighborhood through security (Badarin & Schumacher, 2020). In this case, building resilience becomes the tool to achieve this goal,

responsibilizing the Southern and Eastern Neighbors to take action upon threats with the funding and cooperation by the EU. The recent ENP undertaken by the EU has rigorously focused on the fighting against multiple threats proceeding, also, in establishing cooperation with authoritarian regimes (Badarin & Schumacher, 2020).

When it comes to the route of the Central Mediterranean the ENP provides a plethora of actions that are connected with Libya. Since 2014 the EU has actively engaged with the Libyan state regarding migration management and the dismantling of the smuggling business. This came as a result of the new political turmoil in the country that created instability and a fear by the EU that an increase in the migratory flow towards Europe might take place (Cusumano & Hofmaier, 2020) (Villa & Varvelli, 2020). Libya represents the transit country, the point of departure for the majority of the population in Africa trying to reach Europe (UNHCR, 2018). The importance of this route lies with the activity taking place and its treacherousness as it has been registered with the largest number of people moving towards Europe by sea and has been characterized as a dead zone due to the number of people who have lost their lives while trying to cross it (Cusumano, 2017).

a.   *The Bilateral Cooperation with Libya*

The Bilateral Cooperation which is funded by the ENI has allocated approximately 98 million euros since 2014, aiming at the provision of assistance in sectors such as Governance, Economic Development, Health, Support Civil Society and Youth (European Commission, 2020a). When it comes to the funding of establishing good governance and providing support to the civil society it becomes contradicted regarding the unstable, not recognized and authoritarian government that is being established in Libya.

In fact, the EU has received plenty of criticism and has been characterized as complicit to a series of human rights violations by providing funds and support to the Libyan authorities (Amnesty International, 2020). Specifically, Libya constitutes a country that has not, yet, implemented legal protection for refugees or migrants and does not acquire any practical infrastructure for the protection of asylum seekers and victims of trafficking (Amnesty International, 2020). In addition, the Libyan Department for Combatting Illegal Migration (DCIM) which belongs to the Ministry

of Interior of the Government of the National Accord that controls the western part of Libya, is also responsible for the detention centers where refugees and migrants are held arbitrarily and indefinitely with many reports exposing and expressing their concerns about grave human rights violations that range from torture to starvation and rape (Amnesty International, 2020). The detention centers represent the primary and only migration management system of Libya (Amnesty International, 2020).

Moreover, a recent report of the Amnesty International presented data about cases of abduction of migrants and refugees through these detention centers, stating that in 2020 were reported thousand cases of enforced disappearance after being transferred to unofficial places of detention (Amnesty International, 2020). The above-mentioned practices are taking place by the command of a Government of National Accord-affiliated militia (Amnesty International, 2020). As a result, all these human rights violations and all these practices that are well-known to the EU and the member-states are putting the life of the migrants and refugees in danger not only by sending them to the detention centers but also by sending them to the hands of militias. Hence, by collaborating with the Libyan authorities in keeping migrants and refugees in Libya, without making any effort to combat the human rights violations and abuses or to even push for a recognition of the existence of refugees, EU has demonstrated that resilience lies with its occasional interests and priorities which in this case is to shut down the Central Mediterranean route.

Although, and as it was presented above, resilience focuses primarily towards the local capacities introducing a bottom up approach which renders visibility to host governments and local institutions, when it comes to an authoritarian host government which is well-known for the human rights violations that become problematic. The EU approach to resilience at this point becomes a tool to achieve the goal of destroying the Central Mediterranean route at any cost. Evoking Brighenti's Control-Type of visibility, *the exercise of power is always an exercise in activating selective (in)visibility* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). In this case the authoritarian government of Libya becomes invisible in the process of achieving the interest of halting migration. On the other hand, invisibility is rendered, also, to the people in need, who with all the struggle and effort that they have been through, they are experiencing significant abuses with the EU being complicit and inactive at the same time.

b. *Support in the field of migration under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*

In order to provide support in the field of migration management, the EU assists Libya through the EUTF Africa (European Commission, 2020a). This Emergency Trust Fund was established in 2015 with the total amount reaching 455 million euros aiming to help the most vulnerable, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities (European Commission, 2020a). The measures implemented included voluntary humanitarian repatriations and humanitarian evacuations for people in need of international protection, community stabilization programs and capacity building of the relevant Libyan maritime border management authorities in the field of search and rescue through the provision of equipment and training (European Commission, 2020a). At this point I will elaborate on the voluntary repatriation measure as the assistance of the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) will be further examined combined with the other actions of the EU that will be presented below.

So far, more than 50.000 people have received assistance to return from Libya to their home countries (European Comission, 2020b). Although the program, known also as VHR, could be a life-saving solution for those who wish to return home harmlessly, its voluntary character and actual economical support is under discussion. Being constrained in the detention centers as they were presented above with the numerous abuses and human rights deprivations, returning to their home countries seems the only prudent solution for the migrants and refugees. In a recent report, the Human Rights Watch, had underlined that as "*access to VHR is one of the few ways detainees can regain freedom from the abysmal conditions and treatment in detention fundamentally undermines the voluntary nature of the program*" (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Additionally, through this program the participants are receiving economical support and counselling to help them reintegrate in their home countries (Montalto & Creta, 2020). However, this support has been outlined as insufficient and has been perceived by the returnees as a temporary solution until they will find another way to begin again their treacherous trip towards the Mediterranean route (Montalto & Creta, 2020). The inadequate funding of the VHR is quite contradicting regarding the amount of funds that have been allocated to the EUTF Africa.

One of the characteristics of resilience is based on the human agency as it describes a shift towards a more individualistic path which connects directly the affected population with the idea of self-reliance. In this case, the agency of the people is rather ignored, as voluntary repatriation becomes their only exit plan from the abusive environment of the detention centers in Libya. Furthermore, the cost-effective character of resilience is being applied only when it comes to the provision of assistance to the migrants and refugees in need, while there is an extensive funding regarding the Libyan border management. As it was presented also in a previous section the cost-effectiveness of resilience could create an intricate situation with the possibility of neglecting the most vulnerable and transforming resilience to abandonment. The VHR represents a form of abandonment, with its only purpose to push people further away from the European shores and completely vanish the so-called migration problem. Implementing the Control-Type of visibility at this point the population in distress has been rendered completely invisible when it comes to their own agency and their willingness to find a safe place and a better life. As Brighenti point outs, surveillance agencies regulate *access and denial of access to specific spaces for specific subjects* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 337). In this case EU constitutes the actor who decides who is granted or denied access to a certain space and it becomes apparent that by implementing "voluntary" repatriation the access is being granted only to spaces that are located as far away from the European shores as possible and denied when it comes to the Central Mediterranean route.

c. *ENP and the Common and Security Defense Policy*

The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) introduced two missions that were incorporated in the ENP (European Commission, 2020a). The main focus of both operations was the provision of assistance to the border management of Libya with the first operation taking place in Libyan territory and the second covering the area of the internal Libyan waters and the high seas of the South Mediterranean (European Commission, 2020a).

The first mission, the EU Border Assistance Mission Libya (EUBAM Libya), was initiated in 2013 as an integrated border management mission (European Commission, 2020a). The headquarters of the mission were relocated from Tripoli to Tunis in 2014 due to the worsening of the security situation, but they gradually returned in 2017 (Villa & Varvelli, 2020). Having an annual

investment of 17 million euros, the mandate of the mission is to contribute to the dismantle of the organized criminal networks, including smuggling, trafficking and terrorism, to support the Libyan authorities in border management, including maritime security, by providing their expertise, training and mentoring of the Libyan officials and to assist on capacity building and strategic planning of the relevant authorities (European Commission, 2020a).

The second operation is the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini which was launched in 2020 with an amended mandate from its predecessor, to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya and to combat the networks of human smuggling and trafficking by implementing surveillance techniques via patrolling planes in order to gather the necessary information (European Council of the European Union, 2020). The mandate of this operation completely vanished the humanitarian purpose of saving lives at sea that was framing Operation Sophia, something that depicts the unwillingness of the EU to participate in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations (Carrera & Cortinovis, 2019). Nevertheless, SAR operations were considered and condemned as a pull factor by the EU, that put more lives at danger rather than actually saving them (Cusumano, 2019), something that will be elaborated in the next section.

Operation Irini replaced the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia which was initiated in 2015 as a part of the EU response to the increase of the migrants crossing the Mediterranean and after one more shipwreck offshore Lampedusa that caused the death of over 800 migrants (Cusumano, 2019). The operation's mandate was including the combat of human trafficking and smuggling by disrupting criminal networks and their business model and the cooperation with the Libyan Coast Guard regarding capacity building and saving lives at sea (Villa & Varvelli, 2020). The deployment of the operation took place in three phases, including two supportive tasks (EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, 2015). During the first phase which was completed in the same year, 2015, the focus of the operation was turned towards surveillance and evaluation of the smuggling and trafficking networks that already existed in this area (EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, 2015). The other two phases that took place simultaneously included a more active engagement of the operation's assets, targeting directly the smugglers' boats (Bevilacqua, 2017). Specifically, the second phase involved the boarding, search, seizure and diversion of the suspicious boats in high seas but also in the Libyan territorial waters (Bevilacqua, 2017).

Additionally, the third phase gave the right to the EUNAVFOR MED Sophia to take all the necessary measures against the suspicious boats, which included the destruction of the vessels in order to become inoperable, something that would take place, also, in the Libyan territory (Bevilacqua, 2017). Lastly, the supportive tasks included the provision of the necessary training and assistance to the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard and the enforcement of the UN´s arms embargo to Libya that became the main focus of the operation EUNAVFOR MED Irini, which succeeded Sophia in 2020 (Cusumano, 2019)

EUBAM Libya and operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia could be characterized as the epitome of the implementation of the resilience approach in the Central Mediterranean route. As it is explicitly stated in the Handbook of the CSDP, the border management should shift from the EU to the neighboring countries in order to become more resilient, combating irregular migration and the smuggling activities and addressing the root causes of the crisis, not just the symptoms of it (CSDP, 2017). That becomes contradicting when discussing the complexity of resilience. As it was mentioned, also, in a previous section, one of the main characteristics of resilience is that the causes of the crisis become obscure and unpredictable when it comes to a constant changeable environment (Joseph & Juncos, 2020), promoting the idea of living and adapt within the crisis that has become the new normality. Hence, addressing the root causes of the crisis, in this case the dismantling of the smuggling business becomes problematic and inefficient.

The main scope of Operation Sophia was to keep the migrants away from the European shores, initiating a form of governance from a distance and creating a blockage of migrants in the transit countries, and in this case in Libya (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2017). By dismantling the smuggling business and destroying the means of transportation, the EU was aiming at the eventual shut down of the Central Mediterranean and the destruction of the only escape route of the people stranded in Libya. However, the above-mentioned would not stop the people who had fled from war, famine or persecution to stop trying to cross the Central Mediterranean but rather it would create a more dangerous and violent route (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2017). According to a confidential EEAS report which was leaked in 2016 by the StateWatch organization, the destruction of the vessels led to the adoption of a new modus operandi by the smugglers (EEAS, 2016b). Rubber dinghies without engines and overloaded, defective boats became the new means of transportation putting the migrants trying to cross the Central Mediterranean at a higher risk and danger (Cusumano, 2019)

The insufficiency of the EU approach to "save lives by reducing crossings' (EEAS, 2016c), destroying the means of transportation and trying to combat the smuggling business was depicted also in a report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to the UNHCR., even though the number of migrants trying to reach the European shores by departing from Libya has been reduced in comparison to 2017, proportionally the number of people who died by undertaking this attempt has risen (UNHCR, 2018). At this point, the toll in human lives should not be examined only through the shipwrecks that take place in an attempting crossing of the Central Mediterranean, but also through the blocking of departures, the disembarkations and the push backs towards the Libyan territory. The human rights violations and abuses that occur in the detention centers, as it was mentioned also before, should be included when we talk about the human cost of the Central Mediterranean route. EU´s migration and border management has focused on preventing shipwrecks by keeping the population in Libya and destroying the smuggling vessels preferably before being used in order to address the root causes of the crisis. Smugglers have become the scapegoat and the only thing visible in the implemented policies and operations. Reflecting on the Control-Type of visibility, EU´s way of seeing the root causes of the crisis in the Central Mediterranean route, formulates the way of acting and actually intervening upon reality, a reality that makes completely invisible the struggle of the people on the move.

Additionally, with the provision of resources, assets and training to the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) both operations are trying to safeguard the EU´s migration management approach which, based on resilience, is externalizing the border work in order to address the core issues of the crisis. LCG, with the assistance of the EU intercepts, "rescues" and returns to Libyan territory the migrants that are found on their way to reach the European shores (Amnesty International, 2020). Since the beginning of the EU´s cooperation with the LCG, the number of migrants that managed to reach the shores of Italy and Malta drastically dropped from 181,461 in 2016 to 14,877 in 2019 (Amnesty International, 2020). Importantly, the number of people who were captured and returned to Libya during the same period of time rises to over 60,000 with 8,435 counted only from January until September 2020 (Amnesty International, 2020). The above-mentioned numbers indicate that the aim of the EU to shut down the Central Mediterranean route and to decrease the migrants crossing has been quite successful and the cooperation with the LCG has assisted to achieve this goal.

However and by taking under consideration that the European rescue ships have been largely immobilized or withdrawn, as it will be discussed also in the next section, the death rate of the people attempting to cross rose in 2018 and 2019 (Amnesty International, 2020). Furthermore, those intercepted and returned to Libya will face again numerous human rights violations increasing the rate of casualties in numbers that unfortunately cannot been measured. Lastly, the violations and the insufficiency of the LCG has been pointed out by many NGOs such at the MSF and Sea Watch which have experienced harassment and excessive violence against the migrants but also against the NGOs which are trying to provide assistance to people in distress (Amnesty International, 2020).

By collaborating, funding, providing assistance and training to the LCG, the EU is becoming complicit to the suffering of the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers that are trying to reach the European shores. According to Brighenti, "*surveillance agencies regulate access and denial of access to specific spaces for specific subjects*" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 337). At this point. EU acts as the agency which controls the access to the Central Mediterranean. The LCG has been given the tools to access this area and remove the subjects that are being denied access which have been rendered completely invisible. The only space granted to accommodate the migrants is as farther away as possible from the European shores. Moreover, as Brighenti connects surveillance with the social classification of the population and more precisely with a classification between safe and dangerous subjects, EU´s social classification in the Central Mediterranean does exactly the same. The separation between smugglers and migrants regulates the operational aspect of the EU to focus on the dangerous subject which is the smuggling business. The safe subjects, migrants, are comprising one social classification that are becoming completely invisible as long as they are located in the space where their access has been granted. Importantly, though, EU does not take into account that the mixed migration of the Central Mediterranean route is considered to be one of the most versatile, including asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants etc. (UNHCR, 2018). By proceeding to this social classification, EU renders invisible the population comprising the mixed migration group and creates a space of selective (in)visibility where the dismantling of the smuggling and trafficking business is being on the spotlight.

ii.   THE INTERNAL AXIS: THE FRONTEX OPERATIONS IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN

As it was discussed also in the previous chapter, the EU´s Global Strategy that was published in 2016 underlined the correlation and cooperation of the CSDP and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, which is the new name of FRONTEX (EU, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, 2016). The document elaborated by underpinning that "*the CSDP missions and operations can work alongside the European Border and Coast Guard and EU specialized agencies to enhance border protection and maritime security in order to save more lives, fight cross-border crime and disrupt smuggling networks* (EU, Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, 2016, p. 20)." Analogously, as in the external axis was also discussed the resilience approach undertaken by the CSDP mission in the Central Mediterranean, in the internal axis I will move the discussion on how resilience has affected the EU response regarding the operation Triton which was implemented by FRONTEX. Focusing again on combating the root causes of the crisis and dismantling the smugglers business, I perceive that resilience has spilled over towards the FRONTEX operations, shifting the lenses of visibility from saving lives at sea to chasing the smugglers.

Internally, the active engagement of the EU in the Central Mediterranean Sea started in 2014 with the replacement of Mare Nostrum operation by Operation Triton. At this point I will briefly refer to the situation in the Mediterranean Sea prior to Operation Triton in order to comprehend the shift from saving lives to chasing the smugglers.

Historically, unofficial search and rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean count years before the Cap Anamur incident that took place in 2004 which signifies the humanitarianization of this particular space and the initiation of discussions regarding SAR operations. Since 1995, the Italian border guards with military and police vessels were patrolling and undertaking the duty of rescuing people in the international waters of this particular area (Cuttitta, 2014), with the assistance of merchant vessels and with international NGOs providing aid to the suffering of large migratory waves (EPSC, 2017). In 1997, the Italian Schengen-Europol Parliamentary Committee published a document with the statement of the Italian border patrols claiming that migrants were

sinking their own vessels asking for help and expressing their legal obligation to rescue people in distress that were locating in the international waters of the Central Mediterranean and not divert them back to North Africa (Cuttitta, 2014).

Since 2002, the number of the naval vessels that were deployed with the purpose of migration control, were increased (Cuttitta, 2014). Even when suspicions arose that the ships were implicated with smuggling activities almost none of them were pushed back but rather escorted to Italian ports where further investigation was taking place (Cuttitta, 2014). Although, at that year the Italian immigration law was amended focusing more on security rather than humanitarian concern, the first priority was still placed to safeguard human life and to respect human dignity (Cuttitta, 2014).

In 2004 the German humanitarian ship, Cap Anamur, proceeded to the conduction of a rescue operation near Sicily when it found 37 people in an inflatable dinghy ready to sink (Cuttitta, 2014). This action caused an enormous dispute between the states of Italy, Malta and Germany regarding the disembarkation of Cap Anamur (Cuttitta, 2014). As a result, the ship had to wait for eleven days at the sea borders of Italy with the supplies running out and the mental health of the passengers to deteriorate (Cuttitta, 2014). After disembarking without the authorities' consent at Porto Empedocle, in Sicily, the crew was prosecuted for facilitating illegal immigration and the NGO had to stop all actions (Cuttitta, 2014). Due to the engagement and the debate that took place between the three EU member-states, Cap Anamur draw an extraordinary media attention. Newspapers such as the Tagesspiegel, the Frankfurter Rundschau and the Süddeutsche Zeitung expressed doubt regarding the rescue operation, characterizing it as a PR stunt and framing the migrants with the notion of illegality that should be denied the entrance to Europe (Kreickenbaum, 2004). In the end, all 37 migrants were deported to their home nations (BBC, 2009) although UNCHR had criticized the process and had raised concerns *"over serious flaws in the subsequent handling of the asylum claims"* (Colville, 2004).

After this debate, the European Council acknowledged that the insufficiency in managing migratory flows could lead to a humanitarian disaster and the EU urged the member-states to proceed with regional cooperation in order to prevent further tragedies at sea (Cuttitta, 2014). In other words, the Cap Anamur incident led to the appearance of the European humanitarianism of the sea borders and it was the first turning point regarding the SAR operations in the Central

Mediterranean route where rescuing lives at sea became a part of the EU agenda of border control (Cuttitta, 2014). However, the media attention drawn on the Cap Anamur incident led to the reluctance of the NGOs to further participate in SAR operations and even merchant vessels were not willing to risk a potential prosecution by the Italian State (Cuttitta, 2014). My purpose of referring to the above mentioned is to declare that rescuing lives at sea through unofficial search and rescue operations is a phenomenon that counts years before the implementation of certain operations and policies by the EU, the states and the NGOs.

Although both the EU and the states of the Central Mediterranean had recognized the need of a more synchronized plan and the necessity of humanitarian action that should take place in this area, it was not until 2013 that they decided to proceed with large-scale operations. The event that urged all the actors to adopt a more drastic approach was the capsized of a boat loaded with migrants near the island of Lampedusa, Italy, causing the death of close to 400 people (Lemberg-Pedersen, Effective Protection or Effective Combat?, 2017). After this tragic event, Italy proceeded to the implementation of a large-scale SAR operation and launched Mare Nostrum, a humanitarian and security mission with aim to save lives and capture smugglers (Cuttitta, 2014).

Mare Nostrum was praised, initially, by humanitarian organizations, Italian political parties and European institutions due to the fact that in only 10 months of operating it managed to save approximately 100.000 lives (Cuttitta, 2014). On the other hand, the military character of the operations, with hundreds of smugglers detained, raised questions regarding the implemented procedures (Cuttitta, 2014). Italian authorities have been accused of trying to gather information in order to detain presumptive smugglers rather than find missing people (Cuttitta, 2014). However, the first and most important priority was still the provision of aid and assistance to people in distress and the disembarkation towards a safe place in the European shores. Mare Nostrum ceased its operations after only a year due to financial constraints and the heavy criticism that had received constituting its operations as a pull factor of irregular migration (Smith, 2017).

a. Operation Triton

In 2014 and after the halt of the operation Mare Nostrum, EU decided to act in regard to the tragedies that were continuously taking place in the Central Mediterranean. Implemented by

FRONTEX, Operation Triton was basically a mission that focused on border control with patrolling activities (Del Valle, 2016). However, the mandate and the assets deployed by the operation were not enough to replace the humanitarian scope of Mare Nostrum, something that was aligned with the intentions of the EU to limit the migrants crossing (Cusumano, 2019). The operational radius of this mission was, initially, 30 nautical miles from the shores of Italy (Cusumano, 2017). The decision of the limited territorial scope was made in order to avoid the establishment of any pull factor, encouraging more migrants to cross the Mediterranean (Llewellyn, 2015). The operation received heavy criticism from activists, academics and the European Parliament who shouted that the withdrawal of assets will result in more casualties (Cusumano, 2019) . This led to the revaluation of the operation in 2015, with an increased budget and a significant extent of the territorial coverage, reaching both the SAR zones of Italy and Malta (Smith, 2017).

Nevertheless, the mandate of Operation Triton was still border control but dressed up with the humanitarian scope of saving lives at sea. Although this scope is heavily presented in the website of FRONTEX and through the communication of the operation which explicitly states that "*search and rescue remains a priority for the agency*" (FRONTEX, 2016), the operation's actions indicate otherwise. When it comes to rescuing lives, Operation Triton covered only the 24% of the total amount of rescues in 2015, with a significant decrease the following years to 13% (Cusumano, 2019). These numbers depict the fact that even though it was framed as a SAR operation by the EU, the ultimate mission of the operation was the patrolling activities of the borders and the anti-smuggling surveillance (Amnesty International, 2020), creating a humanitarian gap that pushed the NGOs to engage and to provide the necessary assistance to the population in need.

The insufficient role of the Operation Triton regarding the mission of saving lives at sea could also be elaborated in the fact that FRONTEX's assets were regularly placed outside of the operational area and allocated in the northern parts of the Mediterranean Sea were the involvement in SAR operations was improbable to take place (Cusumano, 2019). This decision is well connected with the consideration of the SAR operations as a pull factor which would lead to an increase of the migrants crossing by facilitating the smuggling business. Moreover, the so-called search and rescue operations taking place by the EU have been additionally limited since 2018. Operation Triton was renamed to Operation Themis with a significant difference on its mandate that has

excluded the automatic authorization to disembark the people being saved to Italian ports, making disembarkation even more difficult by implementing the necessity of permission (Vosyliute, 2018) with further withdrawal of naval assets taking place and focusing extensively on surveillance (Amnesty International, 2020).

The above-mentioned demonstrate the shift towards resilience that was introduced by the EU through the Global Strategy and previous documentations. The problematic connection of resilience with addressing the root causes of the crisis, in this case the dismantling of the smuggling business has influenced the operational character of FRONTEX in the Central Mediterranean. The disappearance of the search and rescue operations was aligned with the framing of such operations as a pull factor that will lead to more casualties than rescues. Facilitating the scope of the missions taking place in the Libyan territory, Operation Triton was not there to become a "pull factor" but rather to patrol and try to keep the boats away from the European shores.

Revoking Brighenti's Control-Type of visibility, migrants one more time have become invisible while smugglers assume a fundamental position in the deployment of the operations. By intervening upon reality, the EU frames the search and rescue operations as something that puts the lives of the migrants trying to cross the Central Mediterranean at risk while the disappearance of such operations and the strengthening of the border control will contribute to the saving of the lives of the migrants. Furthermore, Brighenti connects the surveillance techniques with social classification (Brighenti, 2007). He elaborates that classification is connected with the division of safe and dangerous subjects which is fundamental when it comes to the surveillance activities (Brighenti, 2007). In this case, the division takes place between the dangerous smugglers and the safe migrants. As surveillance focuses on allocating what may be considered as a threat, EU´s operations based on surveillance techniques have redirected their focus on the smuggling activities, rendering invisibility to the population in distress.

As it was mentioned before, the humanitarian gap that was created by FRONTEX urged the NGOs to actively engage in SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean Sea (Smith, 2017). In 2014 the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), a Maltese NGO, performed the first SAR operation (Smith, 2017). During the next year the MSF operational centers of Barcelona and Brussels and the Sea-Watch, a German association created by private citizens in 2014, launched their vessels in

the area (Smith, 2017). In 2016 more NGOs decided to engage in SAR operations raising the number of vessels from four in 2015 to thirteen in 2016 (Smith, 2017). In the beginning of their engagement in rescue missions, the overall contribution could not be sufficient enough in comparison with the contribution made in the previous years by the Italian Navy's Mare Nostrum operation, the Italian Coast Guard, and merchant vessels (Smith, 2017). In 2015, though, the operations taking place by the NGOs had exceeded in number those that were made by the merchant vessels and during 2016, they had outweighed the Italian Coast guard (Smith, 2017).

In the end of 2016 and even though the humanitarian aid provided by the NGOs in the Central Mediterranean was supported by both the states and the EU, a change in the political discourse towards their actions took place (Smith, 2017). Allegations that their practices were facilitating irregular migration, constituting their operations as a pull factor and insinuating their cooperation with smugglers, rose (Smith, 2017). Moreover, FRONTEX directly accused the NGOs for facilitating human smuggling, delegitimizing their actions and considering them as an important factor in the deployment of a humanitarian crisis (Wintour, 2017), something that led to the reduction of their funding and to the engagement with the legal authorities of the relevant states such as Italy which started investigating NGOs in 2017 (Smith, 2017).

In 2018 the constraints of the NGOs' SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean started to occur. During March the ship and the crew of Proactiva Open Arms were detained by the Italian authorities after their denial to deliver the migrants that had been rescued to the LCG (Del Valle, 2020). Although the detainment did not last long and all the charges were finally dropped, the NGO decided to cease all actions (Del Valle, 2020). Reaching the summer of the same year, the only ship that was still participating in SAR operations was the Aquarius, administered by the MSF and SOS Med (Del Valle, 2020). After conducting a rescue operation, in June, and having on board 629 migrants, Aquarius was denied disembarkation in the Italian ports and stayed adrift for a week before it was accepted to disembark in Spain (Del Valle, 2020). MSF and SOS Med had halted its operations for three weeks leaving the Central Mediterranean without any NGO´s vessel conducting SAR operations (Del Valle, 2020). The final call for Aquarius came in September 2018, when having 58 migrants on board and being in international waters, received the command to hand over the people to the LCG (Del Valle, 2020). The NGOs were fully aware of the situation taking place in the Libyan detention centers and denied to follow the instructions (Del Valle,

2020). This led to the immobilization of Aquarius while at the same time its crew was under investigation (Del Valle, 2020). Although the charges were eventually dropped, the ship never resumed its activities (Del Valle, 2020).

The criminalization of the NGOs' operations occurred simultaneously with the revaluation of the EU actions in the Central Mediterranean. EU´s aim to address the root causes of the crisis and its active engagement in this area constituted every SAR operation as a pull factor that will lead to further casualties. The NGOs being aware of the human rights abuses taking place in Libya and being regularly harassed and intimidated by the LCG (Del Valle, 2020) could not become complicit with the actions of the EU. The externalization policies and the systematic border control, combined with the containment of migrants in Libya all dressed up with the concept of resilience have a negative impact on the migrant population and have facilitated the loss of human lives, something that the NGOs could not be a part of. Converting the Central Mediterranean to a space where selective (in)visibility is taking place. EU´s intervention upon reality with the framing of the NGOs and their actions as delegitimize, depicts the transformation of their visibility *into a strategic resource for regulation.* A regulation that was forcing them to cooperate with the LCG and to adapt into the new modus operandi introduced by the EU. By not fulfilling these expectations, the NGOs acquired the position of the dangerous smugglers where their visibility became a trap. As Brighenti describes, visibility *can be empowering as well as disempowering* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 335). In this case, NGOs lost completely their power, with all their vessels being immobilized, their crew charged with various accusations and their mission to save lives at sea halted. The EU as the facilitator of access and denial of access in certain spaces for certain subjects, has proceeded to the denial of access in the Central Mediterranean not only towards the migrants crossing but also to the NGOs trying to assist their efforts.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Resilience has facilitated the interests of the EU regarding migration and border management in the Central Mediterranean route. It represents *the perfect middle ground between over-ambitious liberal peacebuilding and the under-ambitious objective of stability* (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, p. 419) while at the same it, and as Joseph has pointed out it represents *"a shifting concept"* (Joseph, 2013, p. 51). This shift that surrounds the concept of resilience makes it easy to use, to manipulate and to implement in a variety of policymaking. By saying this I am returning to what Anholt and Wagner underlined that the deliberate openness of this term assist the incorporation of it in different practices (Anholt & Wagner, 2020).This became apparent with the elaborating of the internal and external axis, a separation that I made based on the territorial coverage of the deployment of the missions and operations taking place by the EU. In the external axis I further presented the European Neighborhood Policy and all the missions that have taken place under this umbrella and in collaboration with the Libyan state. In the internal axis I discussed the Operation Triton implemented by FRONTEX, after making a small historical overview of how the unofficial or official rescue operations were taking place in the Central Mediterranean route. By doing this my goal was to identify the spilling-over of resilience in the internal operations of the EU and to provide the connection with the criminalization of the SAR operations that the NGOs were trying to conduct in this area.

Therefore, security, migration and border control, the fight against smuggling, and consequently the management of threats emerging from the southern neighborhood space have become the key priorities of ENP and FRONTEX. The above-mentioned actions undertaken by the EU have shifted the interest from saving lives at sea to combating irregular migration and dismantling the smugglers business. This shift is being directed by the resilience turn as a means to build resilience borders and address the root causes of the problems as it has been clarified by the EU documents. Measures such as the voluntary repatriation and the return to the Libyan authorities of ships that were trying to cross the Mediterranean shows explicitly how the EU is implementing the externalization of the EU borders by outsourcing the "problem" of migration towards the Neighboring countries, and in this case Libya. This use of resilience in migration and border

management towards the external partner countries but also through internal operations led to the conceptualization of what I call the resilient borders. The impact is well embedded with the selective (in)visibility that is being produced by the EU. Thus, at this point I am referring again to the Control-Type of visibility introduced by Brighenti in order to reach the outcome that has upon the population in the move. Hence, resilience as a tool of managing population and the new regime of truth that it has been broadly used by the EU, provides the necessary power to *actively intervene upon reality* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 337). When we talk about power we have to acknowledge the fact that it does not lie explicitly with the two-way process of seeing and being seen but it is embedded with the style in which seeing and being seen occur and that brings forward the most significant repercussions (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339). In this case what is being seen is merely stumbled upon the smuggling business and the framing of migration as a security threat for the EU, rendering invisibility to the struggle of the population trying to reach the European shores. Resilience precisely represents *the exercise of power which activates selective in/visibilities* (Brighenti, 2007, p. 339).

The ambiguity of this term has made it possible to become fluid enough and to adapt into the connecting borders between Libya and the European shores which constitutes the Central Mediterranean route. This has an important impact on the population trying to cross the treacherous route of the Mediterranean Sea that either will cost their lives or will be returned and stranded in inhumane conditions in the Libyan camps. The impact is well embedded with the selective (in)visibility that is being produced by the EU. The chasing of the smugglers in an attempt to address the problem in the root causes and to provide security to the European community has rendered invisible the struggle and fight of the migrants to survive at sea and reach a better life. Criminalizing the search and rescue operations and collaborating with the Libyan Coast Guard which has received criticism regarding the human rights violations articulates my arguments about the activation of selective (in)visibility. In this case a resilient border is being constructed, through the push backs of the migrants at sea in the internal axis, the externalization of the migration management in the external axis and the selection of what becomes visible and what not.

IX. FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

In this project, my interest was turned towards the investigation of resilience, first within the EU documents in order to allocate the connection of the concept with the migration and border management policies and second within the implementation of the operations in the Central Mediterranean route. This examination led to the establishment of what I call resilient borders, a space where selective (in)visibility is being rendered through the use of the resilience mechanism. However, resilient borders can be traced not only in the area of discussion but also through all the external borders of the EU. This fact relates to the spilling over of resilience that was elaborated on a previous section along with the appearance of resilience in the EU documents.

First and foremost, similar operations have taken place all across the Mediterranean. In particular, Poseidon constitutes an identical operation to Operation Triton, taking place in the sea borders between Greece and Turkey. The aim of the operation is to *"support Greece with border surveillance, saving lives at sea, registration and identification capacities, as well as combatting cross-border crime"* (FRONTEX, 2020). This scope is well-connected with the previous discussion of the results that brought operation Triton in the Central Mediterranean. Border control constitutes its main focus in order to proceed to the dismantling of the smuggling activities. Additionally, a recent post by the organization Aegean Boat Report refers to new allegations that were made by the Greek government regarding the criminalization of the NGOs for participating in the smuggling activities (Aegean Boat Report, 2020). The above-mentioned follows the same tactics with the criminalization of the NGOs that took place in the Central Mediterranean route.

Secondly, in this case, Turkey is taking the position of Libya when it comes to the European Neighborhood Policy and the implementation of certain missions. Importantly, in 2015 a Joint EU-Turkey Action Plan was established aiming at the management of the migratory flows and countering irregular migration (European Commission, 2020d). The focus was once again turned on *"breaking the business model of smugglers and offer migrants an alternative"* (European Commission, 2020d). The alternative that was mentioned was based on the project "The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey" which with a 6 billion euros budget would provide *"a joint coordination mechanism, designed to ensure that the needs of refugees and host communities in*

Turkey are addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner" (European Commission, 2017). However, human rights violations have been regularly reported in the detention camps that were established with the assistance of the EU (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam , 2017). This confirms once again that EU collaboration with authoritarian states creates a rather problematic situation when it comes to migration and border management.

By referring to the above-mentioned case, I tried to point out that the creation of resilient borders as a space where selective (in)visibility is being rendered, is not only present in the Central Mediterranean, but can be found also in other routes. Of course, further research is needed in order to provide substantial evidence and to support my idea of resilient borders. However, the deployment of the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean route extensively resembles what it has already been discussed in this project. Greece and Turkey have dominated the reports when it comes to the migrants´ human rights violations something that could be the point of departure for a future project.

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