Article

Borderscapes of external Europeanization in the Mediterranean neighbourhood

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Abstract
In this paper, we conceptualize external Europeanization as a multi-situated and selective process of differential inclusion. The aim is to contribute to recent research on the reconfiguration of "normative power Europe" through a more proper consideration of the dialogical positioning of different typologies of both recipients and transmitters of European external policies, and local economic actors, in particular. We show how the idea of the Mediterranean as a borderscape of differential inclusion allows for an analysis that extends beyond the restrictive inside/outside binary typical of many current interpretations of the Euro-Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy. This view is especially crucial in times of decreasing European Union leverage, internal crises and geopolitical turmoil in the Mediterranean and beyond. The attempt is, therefore, to shed light on the complicated geometries of Europeanization while also emphasizing the ways in which they entangle both symbolic projections and material interests. Such a conceptualization is then applied to a case study of the border between Italy and Tunisia.

Introduction

The analysis of relationships between the European Union (EU) and its Southern Mediterranean partners has been at the core of numerous studies coming from various disciplinary backgrounds, especially since the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in 1995. The external strategies of the EU have been regarded as oscillating from strategic and pragmatic approaches, instrumental to the pursuance of specific European interests, and "normative" approaches aimed at the promotion of universal norms, principles and reforms in partner countries. As such, much scholarly research has critically scrutinized the attempts to promote integration, regionalization and Europeanization in the Euro-Mediterranean through

both trade liberalization (Amoroso, 2007; Attinà, 2003; Gillespie, 1997; Latouche, 2007) and the placing of conditions for further integration and aid flows, based on the implementation of specific reforms (Balfour, 2012; Del Sarto and Schumacher, 2005; Emerson and Noutcheva, 2005; Jones, 2006; Manners, 2002). These two approaches are sometimes regarded as antithetical (Diez, 2006: 244), and have inspired a

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scholarly controversy between, on the one hand, proponents of a "realist" perspective that focuses on self-interest and rational decision-making and, on the other hand, proponents of a constructivist perspective that emphasizes subtler, more indirect and discursive means by which relationships between the EU and its partner countries are framed (Del Sarto, 2015).

The creation of a free trade area in the Mediterranean is still the main pillar of region-building efforts put in place by the EU. However, since Euro-Mediterranean strategies became a meso-regional component of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2007, a new wave of geographical and political research has shifted its focus from the prospects of economic integration and regionalization to the mechanisms and (territorial) effects of "normative power Europe" (Manners, 2002; for a review see Celata and Coletti, 2016). While initially limited to the promotion of economic reforms that were more or less instrumental to the liberalization of trade and foreign investments, in recent years, EU external strategies have developed an increasingly political dimension. Within the ENP, in particular, the approach of the EU has been strongly re-oriented towards the objective of promoting democratic reforms and "common values" in neighbouring countries. Past studies have emphasized the inherent contradictions of policies that end up reinforcing the same "dividing lines" that, on paper, they wish to eliminate (Bialasiewicz et al., 2009; Boedeltje and Van Houtum, 2011; Dimitrovova, 2010; Lynch, 2005; Zaiotti, 2007).

More recently, after the so-called Arab spring and the geopolitical reconfiguration of many neighbouring countries, such a normative approach has been de facto revised in favour of a more pragmatic, differentiated and less ambitious strategy, again putting economic integration between the EU and some more stable and pro-European Mediterranean partner countries at the top of the agenda (Balfour, 2012). The objective for commercial integration has been given even more prominence and integrated within a more general strategy of promoting "deep and comprehensive" free trade agreements (signed with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and, since 2015, in negotiation with Tunisia). Consequently, recent scholarly works have highlighted the many ways in which European policies in the Mediterranean go hand-in-hand with (or are instruments of) the protection of very practical European interests (Del Sarto, 2015; Smith, 2015).

The aim of this paper is to contribute to this debate, as well as to more general attempts to problematize the geographical assumptions of European policies towards the Mediterranean. The spatialities of the EU's external relations are hardly captured by the state-centric perspectives that are typical of analyses of bilateral relationships, multi-lateral coordination or supranational integration. External Europeanization, as is stressed further in the next section, is always partial, selective and differential. Despite the emphasis on region building, EU policies do not create regions but establish or favour specific networks among some categories of actors and places, marginalizing other actors and other places. The complexity of these processes is rarely addressed in policy discourses and practices that tend to adopt a binomial and territorial representation of the "EU" versus the "others", and is best captured by adopting a polymorphic socio-spatial perspective that allows the analysis of territoriality together with places, networks and scales (Jessop et al., 2008). This also means that too strong an emphasis on bordering as a ubiquitous process of socio-spatial differentiation must be avoided. The concept of differential inclusion (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013), and the conceptualization of the Mediterranean as borderscapes (Brambilla, 2015), in particular, somehow permit a "re-materialization" of current perspectives, an avoidance of overly strict inside/outside binaries, an understanding of the dialogical and situated functioning of bordering processes, a reconciliation of the consideration of both the projection of material interests across European external borders and the importance of (geographical) imaginaries and subjectification.

In this paper we consider, in particular, the key role played by border regions that, on the one hand, constitute the final gates to the EU, facing heavily contrasted migratory pressures and, on the other hand, are key sites for the EU-guided, multi-scalar construction of a Mediterranean "region". In our view, border regions represent crucial sites to investigate the ambiguities and differential effects of European policies in the Mediterranean, as they are

assigned with relevant responsibilities in the implementation of the ENP.

The paper is based on 13 in-depth interviews with economic actors (eight based in Sicily and five in Tunisia) and five in-depth interviews with representatives of public authorities operating at and across the border (two in Sicily and three in Tunisia), as well as policy reports, official documents and newspaper articles. Our focus is on economic actors, as this permits the highlighting of combined actions and the ambivalent effects of promoting material interests while also projecting a specific normative identity in Euro-Mediterranean policies. The role of local economic actors has sometimes been discussed in geographical work on Europeanization (Clark and Jones, 2009), but only marginally considered within research on Euro-Mediterranean borderscapes.

We offer some examples of how the attempts to constitute a free trade area and the externalization of economic governance across the Mediterranean (Smith, 2015) work in practical terms, on the ground; how local actors at the border, both within and outside the EU, appropriate, contest, re-negotiate and re-interpret European policies.

The paper is organized as follows: in the second section we provide a re-conceptualization of external Europeanization and "normative power Europe" as a dispositif of differential inclusion. The third section presents the results of the case study conducted at the Italy-Tunisia border. In the fourth section, we provide a discussion of the main findings and some conclusions.

External Europeanization as differential inclusion

"Europeanization" is a contested term with different meanings. The concept has its genealogy in policy studies on integration and policy convergence within the EU, with a focus mainly on policy and, to a lesser extent, polity, while a proper engagement with the politics of Europeanization is missing. Moreover, Europeanization studies have been accused of being too state-centric, structuralist and neo-positivistic (Borzel and Risse, 2012). When applied to the relationships between the EU and its neighbouring countries, these limits become even more evident. The

study of external Europeanization – that is, the transmission of Western European policy and institutional models in non-EU countries – has been so far only marginally explored and is considered not fully theoretically grounded (Celata and Coletti, 2016; Schimmelfennig, 2009). Given that those countries have no prospect for a proper accession into the EU, attempts at their Europeanization are rarely effective in obtaining any substantial policy convergence, aside from some harmonization of standards and regulations between EU and partner countries regarding specific products and sectors where trade agreements have been signed. In cases where deeper economic or democratic reforms have been introduced, this can only marginally be ascribed to the incentives offered by the EU, as European institutions have also recently acknowledged (European Commission, 2015). Europeanization may occur but only insofar as some domestic actors consider European models appropriate and useful for pursuing their own interests (Borzel and Risse, 2012; Delcour, 2013; Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002; Noutcheva and Aydin-Düzgit, 2012; Van Hüllen, 2012), and not as a response to EU conditionality or a component of a wider path towards getting "closer" to the EU.

Particularly in its external dimension, Europeanization is always incomplete and selective insofar as internal and external pressures combine and produce mixed and differential outcomes (Clark and Jones, 2008). A more decentred approach has been consequently explored within policy studies, which shows how Europeanization functions partially and non-hierarchically via specific networks, policy communities and social learning processes (Borzel and Risse, 2012; Stone, 2012). A relevant body of geographical work has also been developed that stresses how Europeanization is entangled with the micro-geographies of the everyday life of actors involved both in the EU and in partner countries (Clark and Jones, 2008; Moisio et al., 2013; Rovnyi and Bachmann, 2012). This work of geographers has further contributed to the exploration of a "thicker" constructivist perspective on Europeanization, and the role of not only national governments and politicians, but also sub-national and non-governmental actors and lobbies (Jones, 2006; Kostadinova, 2009; Kuus, 2011; Moisio et al., 2013). On the other hand,

geographers have attempted to provide a more critical and multi-dimensional understanding of the peculiar territorialities that the EU projects both within and beyond its borders. While the use of the term "Europeanization" has been regarded as problematic by some policy scholars when referring to non-EU countries, given the above-mentioned limitations (Borzel and Risse, 2012), there is something very specific in the EU's (external) policy-making that distinguishes Europeanization from policy transfers originating elsewhere, that is, the projection of the political and territorial peculiarities of EUrope (Bialasiewicz et al., 2013; Celata and Coletti, 2016).

Despite these attempts at "decentring" the study of Europeanization, most research on the topic continues to adopt a territorial and scalar imaginary. Europeanization, in other words, is mostly portrayed as a progressive, unidirectional and strictly "bounded" process of vertical contagion.

Other specific assumptions that pervade most of the existing literature are to be reconsidered as well. Constructivist perspectives and more realist accounts about the external projection of the EU need to be reconciled, as Raffaella Del Sarto (2015) has recently stressed. According to the author, the "normative" approach of the EU towards its neighbouring countries is not necessarily incompatible with (or may even be considered instrumental to) the protection of very practical European interests (Del Sarto, 2015). This is especially evident in light of the "pragmatic turn" of EU external policies to which we referred to above and, given the increasing inadequacy of the rhetoric of region-building, non-accession integration and "common values" with the rapidly shifting ground of Euro-Mediterranean relationships in the post-Arab spring scenario. The increasingly complicated constellation of actors and political processes that characterize the area, the resurgence of Southern Mediterranean countries' civil society and the internal reconfiguration of the EU integration project imply going further in the appreciation of the multi-situated, multi-scalar, plural-actor functioning of EU policies, which does not fit very well with the state-centric perspective that has prevailed so far. On the other hand, while stressing the need for a more grounded approach to Europeanization studies, we

think that the focus on the micro-geographies of power should be, to a certain extent, complemented with a more proper consideration of (macro-)politics and material interests. In its external dimension, Europeanization is both a neo-colonial and a post-colonial strategy, which is heavily contested and continuously re-appropriated and re-negotiated by a plurality of actors. In this frame, Europeanization strategies are not only highly selective, but they are also potentially divisive. Pressures from the EU, as already mentioned, impact a problematic and changing internal balance of power, producing ambivalent results. What this implies is less focus on those actors and social groups who are more directly involved by European policies, and more on those excluded. The work of Browning and Christou (2010) and Morozov and Rumelili (2012) has clearly shown how the "constitutive power of outsiders" may produce controversial impacts on Europeanization. Previous research has already documented how different actors negotiate and adapt European rules to their strategies and aims, in particular as a way to implement – or avoid – domestic change, and as a form of "selective acquiescence" to Europeanization (Clark and Jones, 2009; Dyson and Featherstone, 1999; Jones, 2006). We argue that a more problematic and complicated interpretation of the role of "Europeanizers" should be attempted as well. European actors are not the mere transmitters of European values and norms, as most of the existing literature seems to suggest; they are often, indeed, insiders and outsiders at the same time, and the reluctant object of Europeanization themselves, as discussed in the next section.

From this perspective, Europeanization is indeed a powerful dispositif – that is, a "heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, (…) propositions" (Foucault, 1980: 194) – of socio-spatial differentiation and bordering. Its functioning cannot be only understood in terms of inclusion or exclusion. What is more appropriate, interesting and challenging is to look at how these policies simultaneously include and exclude on both sides of the European external borders, favouring certain flows and relationships while repressing, marginalizing and stigmatizing others without any strict contrapositions between the European "self" and the neighbouring "other". In this, the concept of "differential inclusion" proposed by

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) in their work on "border as method" may be particularly useful. The concept indicates how "inclusion in a sphere, society or realm can be subject to varying degrees of subordination, rule, discrimination and segmentation" (p. 159). Building on this work, Adrian Smith (2015) has recently discussed the externalization of economic governance towards neighbouring countries, and particularly in Tunisia, as a specific form of external Europeanization, and as the projection of state and corporate power across a multiplicity of boundaries. The externalization of the frontiers of capital across the Mediterranean, according to the author, challenges the usual inside/outside distinctions and the territorial logics of political-juridical borders, allowing the differential projection of some specific interests to the detriment of others, within and across different places, scales and networks. The aim is, somehow, to recover a sense of political economy in the study of Euro-Mediterranean relations, in line with the above-mentioned "pragmatic turn" in European external policies.

The concept of borderscapes has also recently diffused (Brambilla, 2015; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Perera, 2007), parallel to a more general attempt to, somehow, "re-materialize" critical border studies (Jackson, 2000). This concept calls for a more situated engagement with specific sites where the political technologies of bordering impact and produce space, and on *how* and *where* these technologies are endured, challenged, adapted and contested, not only between the EU and its outside, but within neighbouring countries and within member states as well, depending on different interests, alliances and positioning. As suggested by Chiara Brambilla (2015: 19), borderscapes are "places where different ideas of space, territoriality, sovereignty as well as identity, citizenship and otherness in and across the nation-state boundary lines are formulated, reformulated, negotiated and 'acted' to react to the violence of the territorialist epistemology". Within such a multi-situated borderscape, discourses and imaginaries are contested, and new imaginaries and practices emerge, challenging the visibility/invisibility of the subjectivities of hegemonic as well as marginalized actors.

Focusing on borderscapes as sites of differential inclusion, as shown in the next sections, may help in overcoming the Eurocentrism, cartographic anxiety and territorial logics of border politics, as well as of both critical and policy-oriented research on the European external borders and the Neighbourhood Policy. This is particularly crucial, we believe, in light of the peculiarities of "EU"rope as a (trans)territorial entity with increasingly variable geometries, the decreasing leverage of "normative power Europe" and ongoing transformation in the European neighbourhood.

Borderscapes of differential inclusion across the Italy-Tunisia border

Notwithstanding the fact that deadlines for the constitution of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area have been repeatedly postponed, European countries have signed free trade agreements with all of their Mediterranean external partners, with the exception of Syria and Libya. The transfer/diffusion of European norms–and of the so-called *acquis communitaire*–have been the most successful, consequentially, in the harmonization of standards, regulations and laws regarding specific products and sectors. Tunisia has always been one of the least reluctant partners of the EU. After the coup d'état of 1987, former President Ben Ali started a process of economic restructuring based on the diversification of production, the promotion of export and the attraction of foreign investments. This made Tunisia a relevant commercial partner for European countries, despite the lack of strategic natural resources – in particular, oil and gas. In 1995, the Tunisian economy was considered fully liberalized; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank used to cite Tunisia as an example of successful adjustment (Murphy, 1997), and the EU signed an association agreement with the country. As Adrian Smith (2015) extensively discussed, such economic liberalization process has been strongly guided by the EU and supported by a series of other international institutions both before, and in the aftermath of, the Jasmine revolution. The liberalization of trade and the externalization of European economic

governance were even strengthened in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, as a way of alleviating the pressure of economic crisis and unemployment in Tunisia and other southern Mediterranean countries (Del Sarto, 2015; Smith, 2015).

In terms of political reforms, even during Ben Ali's regime, the country was seen as an example of successful modernization. On a visit to the country in 2008, former French President Sarkozy declared: "What other country can boast of having advanced so much in half a century on the road to progress, on the road to tolerance and on the road to reason?" (cited in Kausch and Youngs, 2009: 973). After the Jasmine revolution, the country underwent a process of genuine democratization, as exemplified by the new democratic constitution approved in 2014. The EU, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as international experts, supported the constitutional process. The role of these external actors, however, has not been formalized by the constitutional assembly, which instead emphasized the full national ownership of the process in order to not provide grounds for accusations of "foreign interference" (Carter Center, 2014).

Tunisia is included in several region-building efforts supported by the EU at different scales: the bilateral and multi-lateral components of the ENP and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as well as two cross-border cooperation programmes operating at sub-national scale (one involves the entire Mediterranean basin, while the other, the Italy-Tunisia programme, includes the Southern Provinces of Sicily and the Northern Tunisian Provinces). The area of the latter programme covers the physical border between Europe and North Africa, which is at the centre of migratory pressure originating from southern Mediterranean countries. Since its initial launch in 2007, the ENP has financially supported cross-border relations in different fields, paying special attention to economic integration. The programme has come to nurture already existing cross-border economic relations developed in the last decades, thanks to physical proximity and trade liberalization (Celata et al., 2016).

The Italy-Tunisia cross-border region possesses various peculiarities. In Sicily, the main economic activities are services and agriculture, while in Tunisia manufacturing remains important, despite the predominance of services. There are some crucial sectors where the two regions compete directly: fisheries and agriculture, in particular. In these sectors there is a tense balance between cooperation and competition, with Sicilian and Tunisian actors both trying to take advantage of the proximity to the border and of the good relationships between Tunisia and the EU.

The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Tunisia is approximately one-third of that registered in Italy, and strong economic asymmetries characterize the two regions. However, Sicily is one of the poorest regions in Italy and Europe; its GDP per capita is 63% of the national average and 66% of the EU-28 average, with several well known problems in terms of organized crime, corruption and institutional weakness. The northern part of Tunisia, on the contrary, is one of the most advanced areas in North Africa. It includes special economic zones, technopoles and a modern agricultural sector. The relatively high development of northern Tunisia with respect to the South was influenced precisely by proximity and relationships with the EU, as export-oriented sectors are located almost exclusively along the Northern shore.

The peculiarities of the area are hardly compatible with the representation of the Euro-Mediterranean that resonates within EU policy documents. Who is more "developed" – a term that is often used to distinguish between the EU and its neighbourhood – of the two border regions is an open issue. Most importantly, Sicilian actors are supposed to act as "Europeanizers", transmitting "best practices" and the European way of doing things to their Tunisian counter-parts; relationships between the two shores are, however, much more complicated and articulated. A proper understanding of these relationships is crucial to showing the role played by different agents in the external strategy of the EU and how it leads to a process of differential inclusion on both sides of the border. To this end, it is useful to analyse the role and perceptions of different economic actors – without claiming to be exhaustive – that have a stake in the cross-border relationships.

There are two different attitudes that can be identified among Sicilian economic actors. The first is manifested by those that take advantage (or think

they can take advantage) of European policies across the border. These actors play a key role in receiving, practising and enacting EU policies and narratives. This group includes Sicilian public and private entities that support the internationalization of local firms, as well as Sicilian private companies that take advantage of the cooperation framework offered by EU-Tunisia relationships in order to pursue their very practical and short-term economic interests. Large manufacturing and agro-industrial firms, in particular, use these policies to both support and legitimate the outsourcing of their production to Tunisia. Consequently, these actors have a leading role in embodying the narratives of Europeanization and Euro-Mediterranean integration and in spreading the EU "message".

Similar attitudes and perceptions are diffused also among Tunisian firms and public agencies who regard their collaboration with Sicilian counterparts as a vital strategy for the region. These actors are highly Europeanized themselves. Tunisian local stakeholders also explicitly refer to the crucial role of the EU for promoting economic development and a peculiar "vision" of how Tunisian modernization should proceed:

> We have to work for the Mediterranean or European market (…). Sicilians and Tunisians can share this market (…). European cross-border cooperation policies were not developed by chance, I think the EU has a wider knowledge and vision. (TUN 1)[1]

More generally, those stakeholders (both in Sicily and in Tunisia) that fit well with the EU scope of strengthening economic integration across the border are fully embedded in European narratives focused on the potentialities and opportunities of creating a Mediterranean "region". The "closeness" between Sicily and Tunisian is emphasized by highlighting the similarities and proximity to the other shore:

> Tunisia is African only from a geographical point of view. In terms of strategic economic relations, it can be considered as part of Europe. (TUN 2)

> Sicily is very similar to Tunisia. We share many cultural and behavioural aspects, unlike the people of the North [Italy]. Sicily is very close. (TUN 3)

> We share the same challenges and the same problems. (TUN 4)

> We are more Arabic than European. (ITA 1)

What is common in the narratives of these actors is the discursive presentation of the Italy-Tunisia border as an economically integrated region or, at the least, the idea that trans-regional integration between the two countries is a somehow "natural" and inescapable process. This integration is presented as unavoidable and unquestionable, as well as having generated (the only relevant) opportunities and potentialities for the future development of their respective regions.

However, a second group of attitudes can be identified among Sicilian stakeholders who are far less positive and encouraging with respect to cross-border relations and the creation of a Mediterranean "region". They feel threatened or negatively affected by liberalization, and by EU policies at the border, or perceive having been excluded from the advantages of these policies. A first example can be observed in the agricultural sector and, more specifically, in the production of olive oil. Agriculture is still an important sector in both the northern and southern shore of the Mediterranean: in Sicily, three-quarters of the land is used for agriculture, which employs 11% of the active population. In Tunisia, the agricultural sector is of vital importance, contributing 8.6% of GDP and employing 16% of the population. The liberalization of agriculture is a contested area. Agricultural trade has been excluded from initial prospects for the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean free trade area, with the aim of safeguarding European agriculture and the European agricultural policy (Tovias and Bacaria, 1999). This has raised criticisms and discontent in partner countries and among observers. Consequently, the EU upgraded preferential market access for agricultural and fishery products from Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, while several other agreements in this field have been negotiated, such as free trade in services (European Union, 2011). The agriculture sector is, however, far from being fully liberalized. Duty free imports of olive oil from Tunisia are allowed, but limited to 57,700 tonnes per year. The protectionist attitude is clearly supported by Sicilian producers who claim,

for example, that liberalizing agricultural trade is contradictory to the relevant efforts the EU put in place to sustain and subsidize European agriculture. Recently, however, as a reaction to the terrorist attacks in Tunisia at the end of 2015,[2] and the ensuing decrease in tourism (one of the main source of revenues for the country), the EU has decided to enlarge the quota for duty free Tunisian olive oil to be imported for 2016 and 2017,[3] adding 35,000 tonnes annually. This is also indicative of a shift from a logic of "trade for aid" to, somehow, a logic of "trade as aid", also in light of austerity politics that severely reduce the possibility of increasing aid flows towards external partners. The decision immediately sparked protests from olive oil farmers in Italy, and in Sicily in particular, supported by both the regional and national government.[4] Such contestation was not based on an explicit refusal of the logic behind the policies but upon stressing the potential threat that liberalization would have caused in terms of food security and, particularly, in terms of increasing the risk of illegal and untraceable goods invading the European market. During a spontaneous sit-in organized in Catania (a southern province of the Island) the day after the policy was announced, the regional agricultural commissioner of Sicily took the opportunity to complain that the EU's decision could, in his opinion, damage Sicilian enterprises:

> The EU has made a hypocritical decision (…) that will produce the effect of legalizing products that are already illegally in our markets, damaging our olive oil. (Antonello Cracolici, agriculture commissioner of the Sicilian Regional Government, March 2016)[5]

It should be noted that, in November 2015, the very same agricultural commissioner sent out a message of "proximity and solidarity to the Tunisian people" after the terroristic attacks in Tunis.[6] The change in policy was perceived of as a threat to Sicilian agriculture, while, according to many observers, the increased quota offered by the EU was exclusively a symbolic act with a very small impact on effective trade, because Tunisian production is not enough to cover such an increase in exports and the European market does not need such an increase in imports.[7] The contestation of European policies

by Sicilian stakeholders allows the dispelling of two key assumptions that are implicit in territorial readings of Euro-Mediterranean relations; firstly, that actors located within the EU borders are key messengers of Europeanization; secondly, that EU actors are those that "take advantage" of the liberalization in Euro-Mediterranean policies. Moreover, this example shows how the appropriation of EU policies at the local level is selective: local stakeholders are keen to adopt European policies and narratives so far as they think these can be favourable to them, while they contest what they think might have negative effects, eventually adopting different counter-narratives and seeking alternative alliances.

An illustrative example, in this regard, is the fishing sector. Like agriculture, and despite the structural crisis of the last decades (Fiorentino, 2009, 2010; Pernice, 2010), fishing is still a very relevant sector in the Mediterranean, and in some maritime cities in particular. In Sicily, fisheries contribute 0.58% of the regional economy, compared to 0.17% in other Southern Italian regions and 0.08% in other Italian regions (Pernice, 2012). Furthermore, about 20% of the fishing yields caught in Italy are from the waters surrounding Sicily. The Sicilian fishing industry has undergone a profound crisis and restructuring during the last 20 years, as clearly shown by the data on employment: employment in the fishing sector was around 18,000 in 2003, while it was 8,000 in 2012 (Pernice, 2012). These changes have heavily affected the territories where fishing was the main economic activity (the South-West part of the island). Furthermore, the crisis was exacerbated by EU policies. During the 1990s, the EU supported the creation of Italian-Tunisian joint ventures in the fishing sector; according to local stakeholders, such policies encouraged de facto a process of delocalization of Sicilian enterprises in Tunisia, and a pauperization of the Sicilian fishing industry. While this process is, to a large extent, driven by endogenous factors, competition from Southern Mediterranean countries became one of the most often cited threats to Sicilian fisheries. More recently, a specific EU policy supported by the Structural Funds was aimed at the demolition of Sicilian fishing boats, officially in order to safeguard the environment. Consequentially, what still exists of the Sicilian fishing sector claims

to be victim of both unfair and unmanageable competition from non-EU countries, and of EU policies:

> Tunisian and Sicilian fishing boats insist on the same sea. In Tunisia, fuel is much cheaper, as is the workforce. They do not have all the constraints that we have – imposed by EU policies… but then they sell in the same market! We are dying. This is unfair competition (…). The EU is not only destroying boats, it is destroying human beings (…). Europe is far away from here. (ITA 2)

Instead, on the other side of the border, the Tunisian fishing sector manifests a positive attitude towards Sicily and the EU, the latter of which is seen as much more of an ally than by their Sicilian counterparts. For example, in March 2016, a protest against the Tunisian government was organized, asking for better salaries and pensions and for specific support from the EU:

> We will move to Sicily with our families. We will put the EU flag close to the Tunisian flag. We do not ask for asylum; we just ask for better conditions to work in our country: we need the EU's help. (Tunisian fisherman, March 2016)[8]

This example offers a clear look at how EU-Tunisia economic interaction is re-working the border at the local scale as well, highlighting the complexity of this re-working, which cannot be captured by a simple binary between inside and outside. We can even observe a sort of reversal of the taken-for-granted hierarchies that exist between the North and the South, for instance when Sicilians become those who need help and hospitality from their Tunisian counter-parts, as expressed by this Tunisian stakeholder:

> In Sicily, a program was made to destroy boats to make the sea rest (…). I want to say that in Tunisia there is a place for these technicians, to come here to work or to create companies (…). There are very good professionals in Sicily. I think they should be integrated in Tunisian society. The Tunisian government is not particularly favorable to immigration but personally I am happy to hire these people because they are able to manage boats properly. (TUN 2)

An interesting counter-strategy of contestation and selective appropriation – with respect to the EU

proposals – has been developed by the Sicilian Fishing District (*Distretto della Pesca*) located in Mazara del Vallo (the South-West part of the island). In an open dispute with the EU over the European fishing policy in the Mediterranean, the District has developed a confrontational position and an alternative strategy for survival and development. Indeed, this is based on the same idea of the "blue economy" or "blue growth" that the EU has been, more recently, strongly pursuing.[9] The District, in particular, contests the use of the blue economy concept by the European Commission, and its inability to include a consideration of what happens outside of the EU in this strategy:

> We have to talk with these people [Northern African fishermen] in order to find common rules regarding the blue economy. If these people are not convinced of the need to apply the principles of the blue economy then the policy can't do anything. We have been promoting the concept for years; and now the European Commission is even co-opting the term! (…) We have to change direction, mentality, we have to cultivate the sea, but we can't do that alone. If Tunisians, Egyptians don't work with us, it is useless. The policy is a second step. First, we need a collective *moral suasion*; we need to work on these principles; we need to explain that if we don't let the sea regenerate, and if we don't adopt uniform, less impacting fishing instruments, we will have to say goodbye to the Mediterranean. (ITA 2)

In its quite intense international relationships, the District therefore adopts the same narratives and strategies of the EU, thus playing the unintended role of transmitting the "European way of doing things" across European borders. At the same time, this appropriation is, on the one hand, highly selective and, on the other hand, implies always some sort of negotiation and adaptation to specific aims and interests. Fro example, the district attempts to "export" the model that itself represents across the Mediterranean in an ambition to "rescale" fishing policies both with and against the role and strategies of the EU in this field, also with the aim of – according to the District – furthering a "real" and locally driven integration between the two shores.

> We have this idea of creating a Mediterranean district: numerous small clusters in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt,

Algeria…that interact among themselves within a longer network. (ITA 2)

The example of fisheries sheds light on the complicated geometries of integration (or lack thereof) across the Mediterranean basin, and on its consequences. Most of the problems for the fishing sector in Sicily are perceived indeed to derive from the lack of a fisheries partnership agreement between the EU and Tunisia, as well as with Libya and Egypt, which are the other main competitors of Sicilian fishing fleets. These agreements are based on the offer of financial and technical support from the EU to partner countries in exchange for fishing rights in their maritime space; the lack of these agreements makes Sicilian fleets uncompetitive not only with respect to Southern countries, but also with Spain where a similar agreement (with Morocco) exists. Moreover, this lack of agreements worsen what Sicilian fishermen call the "war of fish": the seizures of Sicilian fishing vessels by maritime authorities from the southern shore, accused of fishing in their maritime space without permission.

An exhaustive analysis of these themes goes beyond the aims of this paper; instead, what we think is important to stress is the way in which the local economic system is moving beyond and against the EU from within, rather than in antagonistic terms. This is to say that local economic actors who feel marginalized and excluded from the dominant discourse about economic and social development at the Italy-Tunisia border do not refuse EU discourse and practices, but rather they are trying to shift this discourse to their own advantage by accepting its premises and establishing alternative alliances.

A further interesting element is how this implies a negotiation and reframing of the spatial imaginaries of Euro-Mediterranean policies. More specifically, there is a clear contrast between the geometry of integration proposed in EU narratives – focused on "regionalization" at different scales – and the selective and networked processes that take place across European borders, and that could be better investigated by adopting a topological rather than territorial perspective. Focusing on borderscapes of differential inclusion, in our view, would allow for an extension beyond the inadequacy of those territorial readings and "regional fantasies", while at the same time, would also allow an appreciation of the dialogical interaction and negotiations taking place within and around "normative power Europe", including the role of actors and voices who are generally marginalized in the hegemonic representations of Mediterranean space.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this paper was to provide a re-conceptualization of external Europeanization as a dispositif of differential inclusion, with a specific focus on the positioning of several economic actors on both sides of the European external borders. Our final goal was to attempt to go beyond some assumptions that pervade both EU external policies and research on the topic. The first of these assumptions is that of a clear distinction between inside and outside, the European "self" and the neighbouring "other", the Europeanized and the Europeanizers, or between "border confirming" and "border transcending" practices (Dimitrovova, 2008). As such, we provided some preliminary evidence of the complicated geometries that EU external policies produce and impact upon, especially in times of internal crisis for the European integration project and geopolitical reconfigurations of the entire Euro-Mediterranean area. Another assumption that we tried to problematize is that the "normative" approach which is typical of EU external policies is incompatible with a more pragmatic approach aimed at the pursuance of material and specific interests. If this is not true at the level of member states or of European institutions (Del Sarto, 2015), it is even less so in the case of local actors. What we documented is, more precisely, that the alignment of different typologies of actors with the narratives and normative presumptions of EU external policies is, firstly, an essential prerequisite for joining the policy community. In this, such alignment acts as a powerful dispositif of differentiation and selection, which discriminates between typologies of actors and excludes those whose interests are too divergent. This selectivity operates at and across different scales and places. Moreover, the alignment of both European and non-European actors with the EU message is very often instrumental to the pursuance of very specific interests. What we see, therefore, is either

a selective appropriation of EU norms and narratives or, more rarely, a negotiation of those. While these ambivalent attitudes have already been discussed in research about "internal" Europeanization (Clark and Jones, 2009; Dyson and Featherstone, 1999), they are particularly frequent in the relationships between the EU and external partners, where they produce a variety of complicated geometries of external Europeanization. "Outsiders", in this frame, may have the power to reshape EU policies, but only to the extent that they accept most of their premises. In this, we think, the concept of "differential inclusion" (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Smith, 2015) is particularly useful, as it implies an idea of both the selectivity and discriminatory functioning of bordering political technologies, and of the fact that being accepted within the policy community requires some sort of subjectification, subordination and the structuring of an asymmetrical dialogue based on European benchmarks.

In the article, we argued that this is true on both sides of the border. "Insiders" are not only located within the EU territory; "outsiders" as well are not only located in third partner countries. Within the EU, many actors are very often Europeanizers but, at the same time, subject to Europeanization. Selective appropriations, a continuous negotiation of EU policies and voices that are marginalized, excluded or invisible, are very often to be found within the EU; this is especially the case in European borderlands, which feel increasingly marginalized by the advantages of the EU integration process. Europeanization cannot be interpreted as a process originating from a generic EU towards a generalized neighbourhood; the "chain of transmission" of Europeanization, in other words, is not neutral and deserves closer investigation.

This is particularly relevant in times of internally and externally turbulent times. In the post-Arab spring scenario, regulatory convergence with the EU is obviously irrelevant if compared to the challenges posed by political changes or the resolution of social and military conflicts. Any attempt at the Europeanization of Southern Mediterranean countries today impacts an ongoing, problematic and complicated transition.

In this frame, the idea of the Mediterranean as borderscapes of differential inclusion provides, in our view, a crucial contribution: it offers a more complicated and multi-dimensional spatial imaginary, it allows a focus on situated, local and usually invisible voices and actors, and a more proper understanding of the selectivity of external Europeanization. Moreover, it allows for complex, hidden and counter-hegemonic representations of the Mediterranean to be brought out, even in a domain, such as the economy, which is more often portrayed as a binary, flat representation.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. After each quotation in brackets there is a code that refers to the different interviewees quoted; the code indicates whether the interviewee is form Tunisia or from Italy. Quotations are translated into English from Italian, Arabic or French.
2. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/24/explosion-on-tunisian-military-bus
3. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5665_en.htm
4. http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/agricoltura-protesta-catania-tutelare-made-italy-841a7274-a088-48ea-ba27-2fdf1c3c8940.html
5. http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/03/10/news/olio_d_oliva_tunisino_si_del_parlamento_ue_ad_aumento_import_esplode_la_protesta-135194776/
6. http://trapani.gds.it/2015/11/26/mazara-distretto-della-pesca-incontro-col-viceministro-tunisino_441736/
7. http://www.olivenews.gr/en/article/7238/why-extra-35000-tons-of-tunisian-olive-oil-are-not-a-threat-for-european-producers

8. http://www.lastampa.it/2016/03/17/esteri/la-protesta-dei-pescatori-tunisini-andremo-in-centinaia-a-lampedusa-LLNOdwOTgL82Gh1eNzP6NO/pagina.html
9. See, for example, http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/blue_growth/

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