RESEARCH HANDBOOK ON
Irregular Migration

Edited by
Ilse van Liempt • Joris Schapendonk
Amalia Campos-Delgado

4. Humans, not arrows: countering the violent cartography of undocumented migration

Henk van Houtum and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy

1. THE MIGRATION MAP TRAP

In this chapter, we analyse the fallacies in the hegemonic cartography of 'undocumented migration' by critically dissecting the specific cartographic iconography that Frontex, the border agency of the European Union, employed to represent the miscalled 'refugee crisis' in Europe. In order to examine the portrayal of this phenomenon of human mobility, we rely on an iconological method (Warburg 2020 [1927]); i.e., the assumption that a map's visual composition can be interpreted as a broader cultural manifestation of the geopolitical context to which its production, dissemination and interpretation are anchored (Harley 1988). We distinguish three fundamental flaws on the Frontex map: the borderlines' trap, the menacing arrows and the framing effect of encirclement. First, we show how these visual distortions both reflect and influence the general perception of undocumented migration across the EU. In the second section we discuss how alternative cartographic iconographies could contribute to more humane representations of undocumented migration.

1.1 The Migration Map and Its Discontents

Figure 4.1 shows the cartographic depiction of undocumented migration that the European Border and Coast Guard Agency—better known as Frontex—used for years in what they suggestively call their 'quarterly risk analysis'; i.e., an overview of the alleged 'threats' that the EU faces along its external borders.
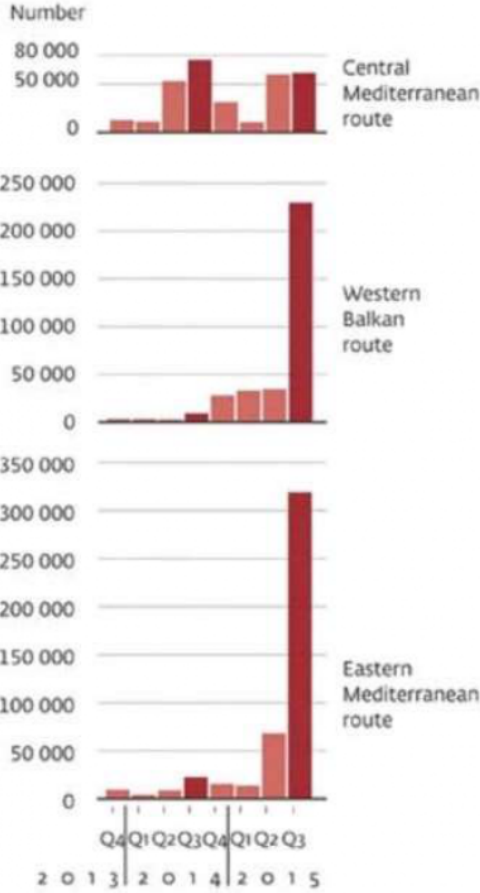
In isolation, this migration map may look insignificant: an aleatory image confined to one among numerous technical analyses by a murky border-control agency (Statewatch 2021). Yet, we argue that political maps of this sort are of unparalleled import, for they stand as cultural testimonies that allow us to peek into the naked worldview of their makers like few other documents do (Kristof 1960, 45).

The power wielded by this map—hereafter, 'the Frontex map'—lies in it being the canon of a much larger and persistently recurrent discourse on undocumented migration to the EU. Variations of this map—which largely preserve the characteristic elements of its visual arrangement—have found their way into European societies through education, academia, non-governmental organisations, school atlases and media.
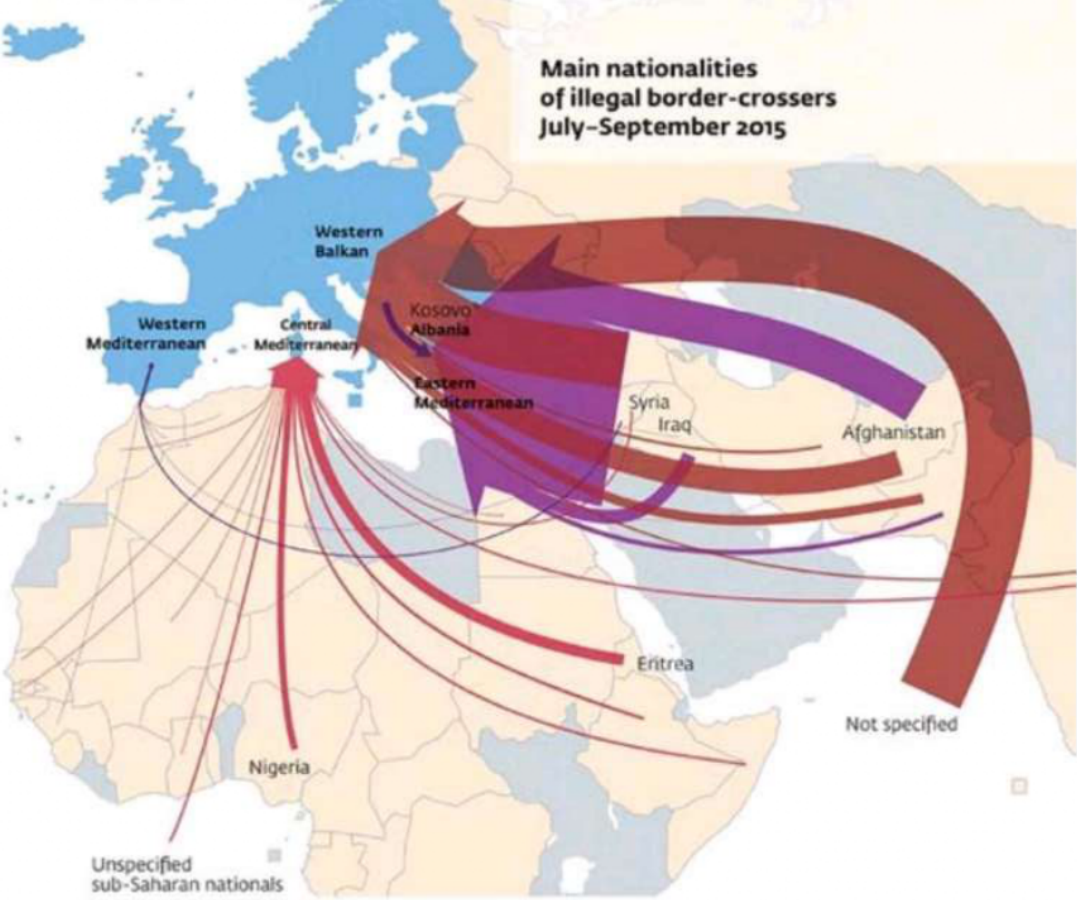
Moreover, regardless of their ideological bent, all types of mass-communication channels—from the most reliable journalistic platforms to the most disreputable tabloids—have reproduced a similar cartographic proposition to make sense of (undocumented) migration in the EU (e.g., Walters 2009, Kingsley 2018, Cobarrubias 2019). We contend that this generalised penchant for misconceiving the migratory phenomenon may reflect, at the very least, severe scientific shortcomings and, at worst, an openly anti-migrant partiality.

Trend

Quarterly detections of illegal border-crossing, 2014–2015

Number

Central Mediterranean route

Western Balkan route

Eastern Mediterranean route

Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3
2013 | 2014 | 2015

Nationalities

Main nationalities of illegal border-crossers July–September 2015

Western Balkan

Kosovo Albania

Western Mediterranean

Central Mediterranean

Eastern Mediterranean

Syria
Iraq

Afghanistan

Eritrea

Not specified

Nigeria

Unspecified sub-Saharan nationals

Source: Frontex, https://tinyurl.com/yy3qelf9.

Figure 4.1   The Frontex map of 2015

2.   THE BORDERLINES

The first inadequacy of this map resides in the uncritical reproduction of the underlying grid dividing the entire world along national borders. Over the last few decades, an excoriation of the theoretical assumption that takes 'the state' as the fundamental unit of analysis in international relations has fuelled most interesting debates in fields such as critical geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 1996), mobility studies (Sheller and Urry 2006) and border studies (Van Houtum 2021). Among these we would like to draw attention to one in particular: the current scientific consensus in border and migration studies theorises borders not as fixed lines located at the perimeter of a state's territory, but as ceaselessly mutating socio-political constructs, always selectively permeable, in motion, omnipresent and liable to multiple interpretations (Paasi 1998, Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002). Although the notion of the 'territorial trap' (Agnew 1994) has implicitly rebuked the cartographic basis on which such 'state-centrism' rests (Agnew 1999, Harley 2001), such criticism remains not only underexposed but also undertheorised in cartography.

The misrepresentation of national borderlines as uninterrupted and unblurred continuities of the same thickness and colour regardless of the map's particular context constitutes a 'blank template' that has rarely been addressed and, as a result, remains unfortunately shared by the overwhelming majority of our political maps—from school primers to Google Maps (Farman 2010, 877–8).

The flawed logic of this national grid is also exacerbated by the Frontex map we scrutinise, for it visualises a phenomenon of human mobility against a background devoid of human beings. Moreover, by representing EUrope as a homogeneous collection of blue nation-states independent from their surroundings, it conceals innumerable connections of uninterrupted regional and individual interaction, unlike cartographic borders and the homogeneous national cultures they evoke, which are not merely drawn on a map but do exist as everyday human geographies (Bueno Lacy and Van Houtum 2015). Adding to this misrepresentation of the migratory phenomenon, the grid's 'natural order' of neatly divided 'national blocks' is shown disrupted by a contingent of gigantic red lines symbolising undocumented migrants. Its visual effect is to invent a simulated reality in which national (and supra-national) isolation is disturbed—i.e., disordered—by people on the move: an insight that bears little relation to the uninterrupted border-crossing undertaken by people, trade and culture on a daily continuum.

Frontex's reliance on this 'classic grid' not only reproduces but also validates a national biopolitics that, by design (Foucault 1978), fosters regimes of political control over foreign bodies. This border regime is driven by the anxious rationale that the infiltration of foreign elements across the state's boundaries should be regarded with knee-jerk suspicion, for it may pose a threat to the homogeneity of the state's imagined community (Anderson 1983). By normalising the notion that political community springs from an intrinsic symbiosis between soil and blood—i.e., the 'myth of nativity' (Elden 2013, 21–52)—the national grid's visual logic implicitly predisposes the viewer to distrust the non-native. The map's grid seems to suggest that sedentary people are 'natural' inhabitants of the national borders that enclose them, a visual statement that turns migrants—a politically constructed, legally sustained and violently enforced category—into unnatural intruders in countries other than their own. This visual logic is not only a propitious breeding ground for all sorts of xenophobic prejudice (Esses, Medianu and Lawson 2013, De Genova 2018), but it constitutes an apocryphal account

of human history, in which migration has been—and remains—the norm rather than the exception (Banerjee and Smith 2020).

Tellingly, the only reference to people on the Frontex map is made by its menacing arrows: a visual choice that not only codifies migrants as an iconographic—and thus geopolitical—abnormality but which also does it by depicting them as a shrieking threat (Van Houtum 2010). This fear of foreigners is further aggravated by the Frontex map's sole emphasis on undocumented migrants. Its header, 'Quarterly detections of illegal border-crossing', conflates undocumented migration with a criminal offence rather than with its most immediate association: people escaping armed conflict and widespread violence, political persecution, social stigma or the unbearable fate of having been born in a country that blights their ambition. Moreover, the geopolitical relationality that could hint at such an explanation has been usurped by a visual grammar that suggests geopolitical isolation instead. This iconography misconstrues the causality between migration and EUropean geopolitics by burying the fact that the global instability from which such migrants run away is the direct result of decades-long military interventions, arms sales, climate injustice, conflicts, gargantuan tax evasion and coercive trade facilitated by EU member states—a sustained process of wealth extraction that can be traced back to the heyday of European imperialism (Rodney 1972). Instead, Frontex's visual narrative amounts to a tacit praise for the 'organic' unity of the state; i.e., a belief in the natural 'purity' of one's country, history and people (Kristof 1960, 21–8). Given its unwarrantedly extravagant visual grammar, the Frontex map should be regarded as the conduit of heavily politicised propaganda—and by no means as an 'objective' depiction of the particular migratory movements that it misrepresents.

Adding to this propagandistic distortion, a crucial aspect that is conveniently ignored by the Frontex map is the paradox built into international refugee law: since rich countries discourage migration from poorer ones, asylum seekers (who overwhelmingly stem from some of the most benighted countries in the world) can legally apply for refugee status only by 'irregularly' entering the EU (Black 2003, Van Houtum and Lucassen 2016, Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020a). The map shows no indication that 'illegal' migration is the only legally available path for an overwhelming majority of asylum seekers. In other words, the iconography of the Frontex map echoes a hegemonic politico-juridical discourse and not a scientific insight about undocumented migration.

The illegalisation of undocumented migrants is not a natural phenomenon but instead a conscious political construct that begins with the EUropean refusal to issue legal travelling documents—i.e., a visa—to potential asylum seekers in their home countries, thus leaving them no alternative other than entering the EU without the unobtainable permit (Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020a, Van Houtum and Van Uden 2021). Such discrimination is officially codified in the Schengen blacklist: a ranking of nationalities that assesses the desirability of the migrants the EU allows into its borders. Individuals holding passports classifying them as what the EU considers to be the 'wrong place of birth'—a total of 135 countries out of 195—face near-zero chances of being granted a visa for the EU (Van Houtum 2010, Schuster 2011, Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2020a). Not only does this amount to ethnic discrimination (UN 1948), but the near deprivation of legal migration channels for those born in blacklisted countries has created a smuggling industry worth over 1 billion euros a year—roughly as big as the militarised border industry trying to stop it (The Migrants' Files 2015). Refugees' smugglers are thus a product of the discriminatory EU border regime and not the other way around (Van Liempt and Sersli 2012). In contrast to 'undocumentalised migrants' (a fairer term), people

born in countries on the positive Schengen list—predominantly rich countries—can travel to the EU in the comfort of a plane and without a visa.

The Frontex map, however, does not even hint at this causality: the EU's migration policy as well as its member states' foreign policies are entirely missing from its cartographic misrepresentation. Instead, through its simplistic, dehumanised, nativist, statist and apocryphally static grid, Frontex's map offers a demonisation of vulnerable populations as unforeseen, abnormal and undesirable law-breakers and thus a danger to the 'natural' order of the EU's prosperity.

3.   THE ARROWS

The binary antagonism between desired normal fixity and unwanted abnormal mobility that the Frontex map promotes is brought to a narrative climax by what is arguably its most striking feature: its converging red arrows. Dominantly, the cartographic representation of migration across school atlases, media and academia relies on the symbolism of arrows. It is remarkable that despite a wealth of nuanced and detailed analyses of migration patterns, the predominant cartography of undocumented migration still represents it with the simplicity of an arrow— often crowned with a menacing arrowhead. To be sure, an arrow can depict spatial information about the initiation, route and destination of movement: a path that is followed in order to get from A to B. However, an arrow has also another, more clandestine, yet less scrutinised existence: it can turn into one of the most forceful symbolical devices when its use is extrapolated from the purely navigational to the political—when instead of a directional device it takes the role of a frightening metaphor (Boria 2008, 281). It takes but a rapid glance at the Frontex map to realise that the alarming colour, direction and shape of its arrows do not put together a scientific depiction of the origins, paths and numbers of undocumented migrants coming to the EU. Instead, these arrows are a menacing allegory alerting the viewer about multitudes of 'unwanted bodies' invading the EU and bringing with them unspecified threats—a connotation that splices into the prevalent xenophobic discourse that portrays asylum seekers as a 'security, economic and hygiene threat' to EUropean populations (El Refaie 2001, 2003).

From a cartographic perspective, what makes the arrows on the Frontex map particularly eye-catching is that such alarm-raising icons have traditionally appeared in propagandistic invasion maps that rely on a plain and eye-catching visual composition to represent either the magnitude of a military attack or a country's vulnerability to it. Such design does not pursue scientific accuracy but rather the schematic efficiency of an oversimplified diagram to deliver a straightforward message: a political organisation faces an existential threat. The power of such a dehumanising insight is the tacit policy recommendation that unequivocally derives from it: the justification of any policy to prevent such a catastrophe and thus the legitimisation of 'the management of preventable death' as the fundamental principle of the EU's border regime (Bueno Lacy and Van Houtum 2020).

One would expect the map by Frontex—given this border guard's avowed civilian mission as well as the EU's self-professed 'humanist inspiration'—to rely on a more nuanced, evidence-based and sophisticated palette in the depiction of undocumented migration. Not only out of scientific integrity but also because accurately depicting the complexity of undocumented mobility would better inform the humanitarian legislation EU member states are supposed to foster. Yet, rather than insights from state-of-the-art scholarship, Frontex's

fear-inspiring design reflects the vitriolic xenophobia gaining ground across the EU while simultaneously insinuating the map's callous objective: to overstate the threat posed by undocumented migrants in order to cultivate political support for a more restrictive border policy.

The continuity of the arrows worsens this scaremongering by wrongly assuming that all undocumented journeys have their eye fixed on the EU from start to finish. The arrows also fabricate the methodological illusion that all border crossings stem from the whimsically straight trajectories invented by Frontex, a baseless choice that lumps undocumented migrants together as if they constituted a coherent military aggressor. Yet, undocumented migration looks nothing like well-organised troops travelling in a straight line. The smooth continuity, coherence and straightness of the arrows on the Frontex map comprehensively misrepresents the harrowing 'zigzag' individual undocumented migrants go through and is thus flawed on a very basic scientific level (Van Houtum 2012, 2013). A more truthful representation of their journeys would evoke the unease, suffering, death and veritable odysseys that undocumented migrants endure along their turbulent trajectories (Schapendonk and Steel 2014, Amnesty International 2016).

The relation between the arrows' geometry and the statistics they supposedly represent adds to their nonsensical symbolism. There are around 4.8 million 'undocumented migrants' living in the EU (Connor and Passel 2019), which amounts to 1.7 per cent of the total EU population of 447.3 million—hardly the numbers of an invasion. Moreover, the EU hosts only around 5.8 per cent of the world's 82.4 million forcibly displaced people (UNHCR 2021), which means that 94.2 per cent of the world's forcibly displaced travellers do not aim for the EU (De Haas 2008). Although this utilitarian logic can be no substitute for the EU's foundational principles, even its numbers paint a remarkably different picture than the one offered by the Frontex map. To be sure, even though Frontex's arrows are supposed to symbolise hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrants—which bulged to over a million in 2015 (Connor 2016)—these numbers still represent a small fraction of the total global population of undocumented migrants. Yet, the humongous arrowheads on the Frontex map mischaracterise the most helpless migrant demographic by making it look as an ominous convergence as large as Western Europe. The choice to rely on whopping, menacing, crimson arrows is reminiscent of the tradition of propaganda maps of invasion. In this particular case, the propagandistic effect of the arrows is to typecast some of the world's most underprivileged populations into the unlikely role of representing an existential threat to a supra-national union of economic and military powerhouses. Given the magnitude of the misrepresentation, we are forced to conclude that the Frontex map is not merely scientifically flawed but also shamelessly dishonest.

4. THE FRAME

The third fallacious element that we wish to draw attention to is the geo-historical framing of the map. From the very bottom of Africa and the farthest corners of Asia, the Frontex map shows a stream of colossal arrows travelling unimpeded across the Afro-Asian landmasses towards the EU. Their sheer length and profusion suggest that vast populations of entire continents are co-ordinately moving into the EU in one single motion that converges at three bottlenecks along its external borders. Although most arrows seem to have specific countries as their point of origin, it is not very clear how rigorous such locations might be. The source of some arrows is lost beyond the margins of the map, leaving the onlooker to assume that some

of these migratory routes might stem from 'somewhere in the far East'. This iconographic sloppiness implies that what matters about this map is not the specificity of its details but its broader message: the migratory movements that its arrows represent might as well come from everywhere around the world—unmistakably evoking the typical far-right narrative of less affluent Muslims and Africans overrunning the EU. By failing to add any kind of global— let alone historical—comparative perspective, the map's intimidating arrows demand the onlooker to believe that the EU, one of the richest regions in the world commanding a techno- logically sophisticated militarised border system, is at the mercy of destitute wretches fleeing despair. This framing technique is known as encirclement (Speier 1941, 317): an allegory intended to exaggerate the threat posed by unwanted foreigners and thus justify aggression towards them—unsurprisingly, an all-time favourite of xenophobic movements in both Europe and the US.

Since the Frontex map is an heir to this tradition, it should be considered an extremist cartographic composition, for a visual argument that presents a set of invading arrows sur- rounding a seemingly innocent and defenceless EU paints a hopeless situation that calls upon viewers to support any measure—regardless of how extreme—to shield them from such an existential threat. Unsurprisingly, a visual arrangement that promotes the narrative of 'civili- sational survival' within the context of undocumented migration squarely reproduces one of the most violent tropes of the xenophobic politics of today: 'white genocide' or 'race suicide' (Perry 2003). These fantasies are rooted in white-supremacist conspiracy theories that have coalesced into 'the grand replacement theory' (see Raspail 1973): according to this racist 'dys- topia', white populations in Europe and the US are being purposefully replaced by non-white immigrants with antagonistic cultures and high birth rates who are being imported by political elites whose openness to the world amounts to treachery (Brown 2019).

To put it mildly, the harmony between official European and far-right cartography should raise alarm among EU policymakers responsible for visualisations of undocumented migration like the one seen on the Frontex map. It is disturbing to ascertain that what Frontex tries to pass for serious cartography seems to be no better than deeply ideological, xenophobic propaganda.

4.1   Countering and Humanising the Violent Cartography of Migration

As of now, much-needed alternative maps that deviate from the Frontex iconography and its unscientific narrative on migration to the EU are still scarce and their use is largely confined to small circles where 'radical' cartography has broken some ground (Casas-Cortés et al. 2017). Nevertheless, there is a growing collection of cartographic trends inspiring novel mapping visualisations of undocumented migration. We will briefly discuss three trends that we see as particularly promising—namely counter-mapping, deep-mapping and mobile mapping.

Counter-maps are checks on power aimed at contesting the oppressive message, application and implications of hegemonic cartographic depictions. By consciously bringing to light the geographical information that matters to the people whose existence and interests dominant cartography usually invisibilises, they radically humanise the map. In spite of their powerful narratives and daring iconographic designs, these maps have so far gained relatively little academic—let alone political—attention. Their scarcity points to the crucial need to cultivate an iconological expertise among political cartographers (Moore and Perdue 2014, 894). Luckily, there are interesting—though largely non-academic—collectives such as *The Atlas of Radical Cartography* (Mogel and Bhagat 2007), *This Is Not an Atlas* by kollektiv orango-

tango+ (2018) and 'The Decolonial Atlas', a rich online compendium (https://decolonialatlas .wordpress.com/). Their counter-maps sacrifice the misleading spatial precision and feigned objectivity of traditional cartography for creative distortions intended to denounce either the false assumptions or dishonest motivations behind hegemonic maps.
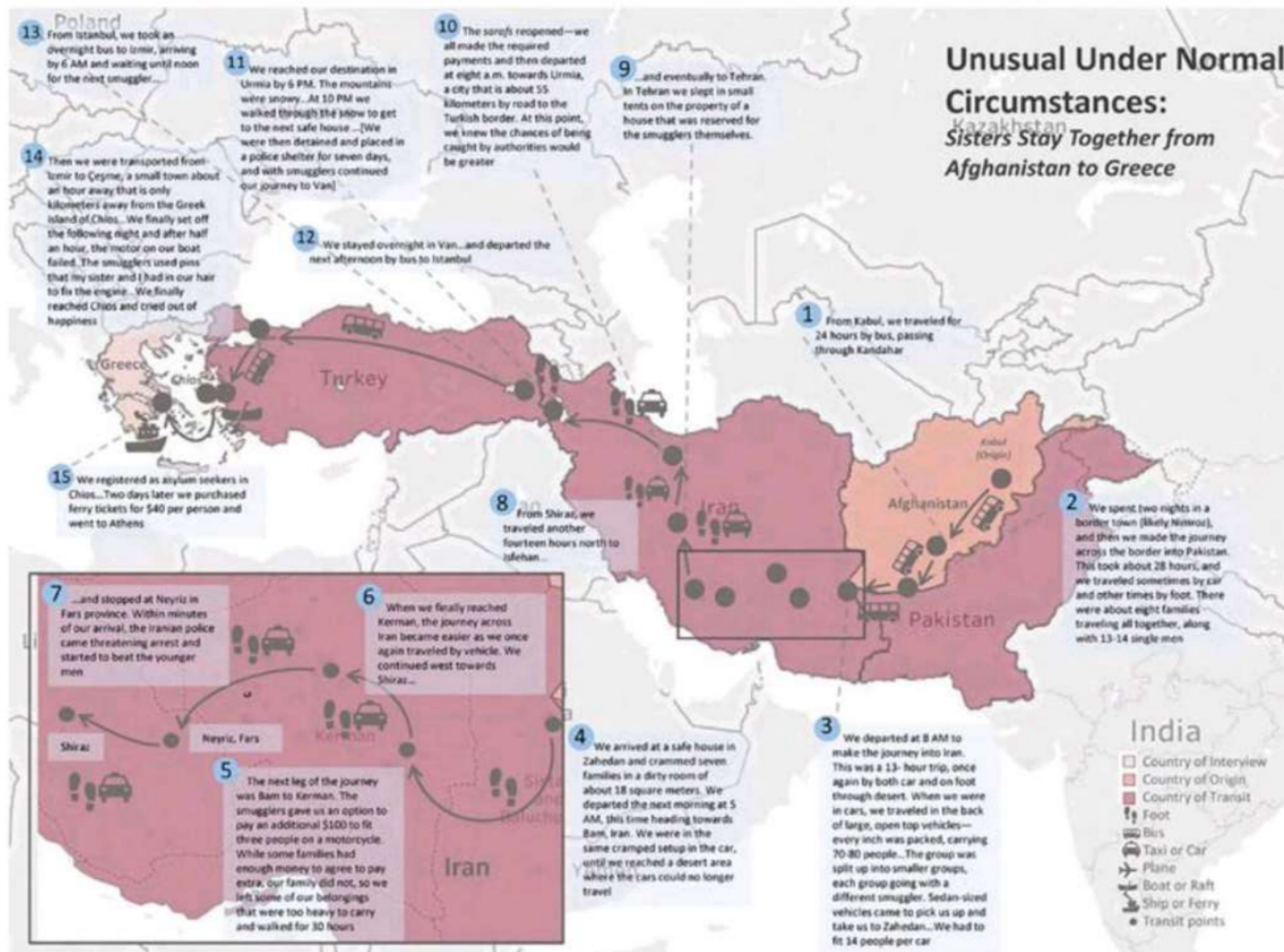
In the field of undocumented migration, in particular, there are superb counter-maps such as 'Expanding the Fortress' (2018) by the Transnational Institute (Figure 4.2). Their map presents a visual composition that stands in open antagonism with the Frontex map. It depicts the Mediterranean as a graveyard while exposing the involvement of EU troops along perilous migratory routes towards Europe. It also denounces the corporations enriching themselves as consequence of the EU-produced industry of 'migrant illegalisation'—and thus profiting from abetting the most atrocious human suffering. This map turns the fallacious narrative of the Frontex map on its head by presenting a visual argument which shows that migrants are the victims of the EU's migratory policies—not the other way around.

Counter-maps like this feature a unique visual composition that tells a more scientifically accurate narrative of the global inequality kept in place by wars of which undocumented migration is a direct by-product. The Frontex map neglects such connection to the detriment of its own credibility, for many undocumentalised migrants are legitimate refugees under the international legal instruments to which the EU is signatory, and many of the horrors from which they flee are not independent from longstanding European geopolitics. This brazen disregard for such flagrant causality exerts the narrative effect of exempting EU member states from assuming any responsibility for the sweeping suffering they have played a prominent role in creating around the world. Counter-maps like this one rebuke the Frontex map's distorted narrative by exposing the simple causality it conceals: if you do not want refugees, stop creating them.

A second promising trend is deep-mapping, which is concerned with the humanisation of space in order to give a rich, situational, consciously relational and subjective account of place-related emotions ('storymaps'). The purpose of such a mapmaking approach is to counter the 'cartographic cleansing' of human beings shown on hegemonic maps (Van Houtum 2012, 2013)—particularly the dehumanising cartography used to represent mobility and migration (Mekdjian 2015, Campos-Delgado 2018).

A powerful example is provided by the deep-maps made by the Journeys Project, a website tracing the journeys of undocumented migrants to understand the costs they incur as well as the survival strategies they devise (see Figure 4.3, tracing the journey of two sisters from Afghanistan to Greece). Unlike traditional cartography, the visual composition of these maps provides an insight into the physical and mental hardship, uncertainty, violence and fear that undocumented migrants endure during their voyage. Yet, were the Frontex map to depict the same journey, the sisters' individual stories—together with the plight of thousands like them—would become a faceless pixel thickening an unpropitious arrow pronging the EU.

A source of deep-mapping which deserves special mention is the *Manual of Collective Mapping* by the Buenos-Aires-based Iconoclasistas (Ares and Risler 2016). Besides a complete guide on how to organise workshops to put together collective maps that empower communities who usually lack representational power, this document offers an 'Iconography for mapping' with detailed explanations on how cartographic symbolism can be wielded to imbue a map with meaning. Often collectively made, these maps aim at showing the sort of 'geography from below' which is rarely depicted, for it is made by the sort of people who, given their marginalisation, rarely have access to the kind of knowledge and platforms that would

Source: Transnational Institute, https://www.tni.org/en/transnational-institute.

Figure 4.2   Counter-Frontex map

Unusual Under Normal Circumstances:

Sisters Stay Together from Afghanistan to Greece

13 From Istanbul, we took an overnight bus to Izmir, arriving by 6 AM and waiting until noon for the next smuggler...

11 We reached our destination in Urmia by 6 PM. The mountains were snowy...At 10 PM we walked through the snow to get to the next safe house...[We were then detained and placed in a police shelter for seven days, and with smugglers continued our journey to Van]

14 Then we were transported from Izmir to Çeşme, a small town about an hour away that is only kilometers away from the Greek island of Chios... We finally set off the following night and after half an hour, the motor on our boat failed. The smugglers used pins that my sister and I had in our hair to fix the engine...We finally reached Chios and cried out of happiness

12 We stayed overnight in Van...and departed the next afternoon by bus to Istanbul

10 The sarafs reopened—we all made the required payments and then departed at eight a.m. towards Urmia, a city that is about 55 kilometers by road to the Turkish border. At this point, we knew the chances of being caught by authorities would be greater

9 ...and eventually to Tehran. In Tehran we slept in small tents on the property of a house that was reserved for the smugglers themselves.

1 From Kabul, we traveled for 24 hours by bus, passing through Kandahar

15 We registered as asylum seekers in Chios...Two days later we purchased ferry tickets for $40 per person and went to Athens

8 From Shiraz, we traveled another fourteen hours north to Isfehan...

7 ...and stopped at Neyriz in Fars province. Within minutes of our arrival, the Iranian police came threatening arrest and started to beat the younger men

6 When we finally reached Kerman, the journey across Iran became easier as we once again traveled by vehicle. We continued west towards Shiras...

5 The next leg of the journey was Bam to Kerman. The smugglers gave us an option to pay an additional $100 to fit three people on a motorcycle. While some families had enough money to agree to pay extra, our family did not, so we left some of our belongings that were too heavy to carry and walked for 30 hours

4 We arrived at a safe house in Zahedan and crammed seven families in a dirty room of about 18 square meters. We departed the next morning at 5 AM, this time heading towards Bam, Iran. We were in the same cramped setup in the car, until we reached a desert area where the cars could no longer travel

3 We departed at 8 AM to make the journey into Iran. This was a 13-hour trip, once again by both car and on foot through desert. When we were in cars, we traveled in the back of large, open top vehicles—every inch was packed, carrying 70-80 people...The group was split up into smaller groups, each group going with a different smuggler. Sedan-sized vehicles came to pick us up and take us to Zahedan...We had to fit 14 people per car

2 We spent two nights in a border town (likely Nimroz), and then we made the journey across the border into Pakistan. This took about 28 hours, and we traveled sometimes by car and other times by foot. There were about eight families traveling all together, along with 13-14 single men

India
☐ Country of Interview
☐ Country of Origin
☐ Country of Transit
Foot
Bus
Taxi or Car
Plane
Boat or Raft
Ship or Ferry
Transit points

Source: Journeys Project, 2021.

Figure 4.3   *The journey of two sisters from Afghanistan to Greece*

allow them to show the world that they experience. An example of the Iconoclasistas' work is 'Nobody is illegal' (2017) (Figure 4.4). Although it shares the subject matter (i.e., undocumented migration) with the Frontex map, its iconography shows a colour-based typology of borders around the world, with particular attention to those that feature the most prominent human dramas, such as Palestine–Israel. It also portrays interesting cartouches placed on each of the four corners, together telling the story of asylum-seeking families facing a 'global police state' along their journey (Robinson 2020). On each side, this map features either pliers or a hammer, tools symbolising the cutting of the barbed wire which keeps this global apartheid in place as well as the need to tear down the walls that constitute the infrastructure of its violence.

The third trend we distinguish is mobile mapping, which stresses the dynamic, relational and convoluted paths of human relationality, often manifested in data on human connections through mobile means, such as mobile phones, social media, cameras, satellites, open-sourced mappings and film (Caquard 2014). The website Metrocosm, for example, run by data-visualiser Max Galka, pictures an interactive world map of intra- and inter-national migration (Figure 4.5). It must be said, however, that although mobile maps like this have the advantage of showing a more dynamic picture of human mobility, they also feature a shortcoming: the exclusion of immobility. As with the Frontex map, it would be more scientifically accurate to refrain from visualising undocumented migration as a collection of smooth, quick and straightforward journeys. This sort of depiction may reproduce the anti-humanist water language of 'flows' disrupting hermetic and homogenous territories, which in turn would conceal the 'slowness, intermittence, loops and constraints of movement' affecting the everyday life of undocumented migrants (Lo Presti, 2020, 8).

Although this is only a short overview, it shows that there is a wealth of iconographic avenues for bold new visual designs to set right the dehumanising misrepresentation of undocumented mobilities and visibilise the larger geopolitical power plays in which they are embedded.

5.   CONCLUSION

Political maps confront us with the fundamental paradox of cartography: although they are perhaps the most immediate evocation of geography, they are also some of the discipline's most anti-geographical artefacts, for they conceal at least as much as they reveal—and often much more. The implication is that every single political map should be acknowledged as a political statement.

The Frontex map of undocumented migration we have zoomed in on is a case in point: it presents itself as an official document and objective truth on the basis of which border policies along the EU's external borders can be formulated. Unfortunately, this map does not represent a rarity but the norm, not only in cartography but in the larger discourse and populist 'spectacle industry' that undocumented migration has become (De Genova 2011). The arrangement of iconographic choices of the dominant official cartography of (undocumented) migration creates a heavily distorted image of this political phenomenon. Its science is wrong and its geopolitics are perverse: the overall message of the Frontex map is a phobic diagnosis about the perils of 'non-native' immigration and an implicit recommendation to fix it with the same violence as the threat it spuriously represents. This extremist Frontex cartography cannot and
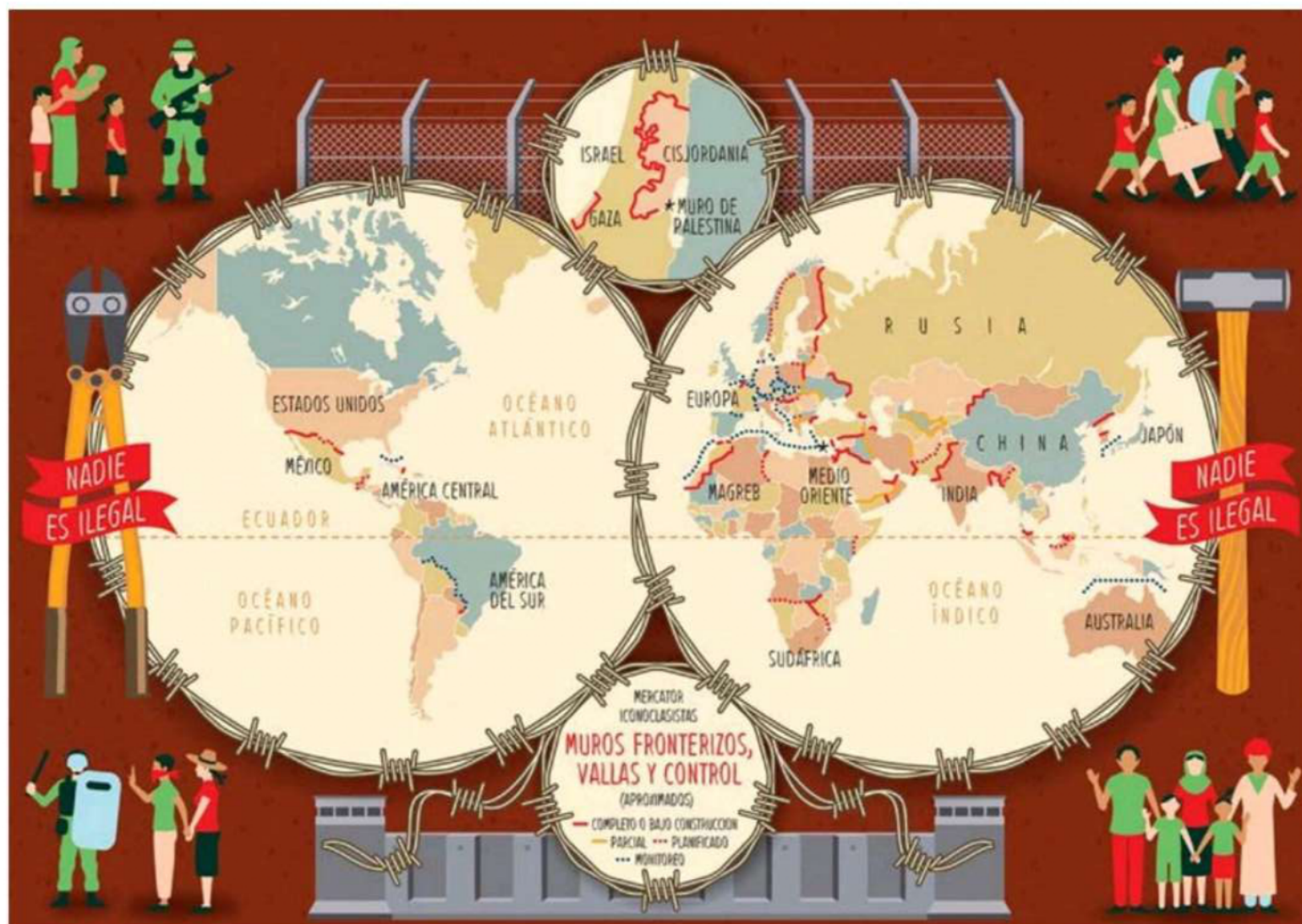
Figure 4.4   'Nadie es ilegal' (2017), by Iconoclasistas
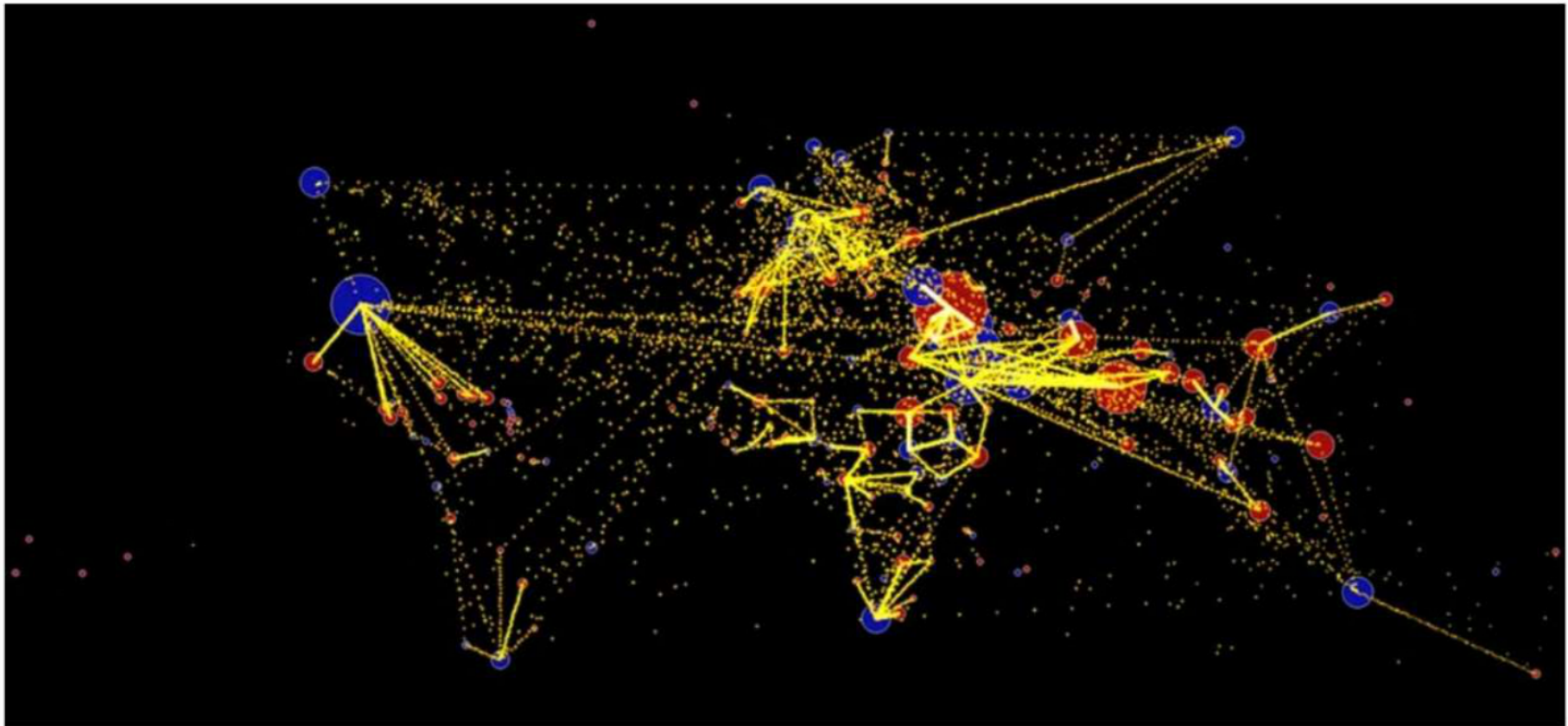
Figure 4.5   Global net migration map (2010–2015)

should not be taken at face value, for it puppeteers onlookers into believing that undocumented migration to the EU amounts to a trope of evil against innocence: the colour-coded contrast of red arrows invading an imaginatively innocent, defenceless baby blue community—the classical dichotomy of 'friend vs foe' on which the dehumanising politics and ethnocentric violence across the EU is predicated. It is high time to reclaim and democratise the art of cartography in order to free it from this 'officialised objectivity' and the dehumanising and scaremongering visualisation of irregular migrants it confabulates. Towards a migration cartography of humans, not arrows.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

Agnew, John. 1994. 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory.' *Review of International Political Economy* 1 (1): 53–80.

Agnew, John. 1999. 'Mapping Political Power Beyond State Boundaries: Territory, Identity, and Movement in World Politics.' *Millennium* 28 (3): 499–521. https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298990280030701.

Amnesty International. 2016. 'Refugees and Migrants Fleeing Sexual Violence, Abuse and Exploitation in Libya.' Amnesty International. July 1, 2016. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2016/07/refugees-and-migrants-fleeing-sexual-violence-abuse-and-exploitation-in-libya/.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Ares, Pablo, and Julia Risler. 2016. *Manual of Collective Mapping*. Buenos Aires: Iconoclasistas.

Banerjee, Kiran, and Craig Damian Smith. 2020. 'International Relations and Migration: Mobility as Norm Rather Than the Exception.' In *Nomad-State Relationships in International Relations: Before and After Borders*, edited by Jamie Levin, 265–80. Cham: Springer Nature.

Black, Richard. 2003. 'Breaking the Convention: Researching the "Illegal" Migration of Refugees to Europe.' *Antipode* 35 (1): 34–54. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00301.

Boria, Edoardo. 2008. 'Geopolitical Maps: A Sketch History of a Neglected Trend in Cartography.' *Geopolitics* 13 (2): 278–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040801991522.

Brown, Andrew. 2019. 'The Myth of Eurabia: How a Far-Right Conspiracy Theory Went Mainstream.' *The Guardian*, August 16, 2019, sec. World News. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/16/the-myth-of-eurabia-how-a-far-right-conspiracy-theory-went-mainstream.

Bueno Lacy, Rodrigo, and Henk van Houtum. 2015. 'Lies, Damned Lies & Maps: The EU's Cartopolitical Invention of Europe.' *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23 (4): 477–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2015.1056727.

Bueno Lacy, Rodrigo, and Henk van Houtum. 2020. 'Death as Policy: The EU's Criminalisation of Solidarity with Undocumented Migrants.' In *Expanding Boundaries*, edited by Jussi P. laine, Inocent Mayo and Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, 72–84. London: Routledge.

Campos-Delgado, Amalia. 2018. 'Counter-Mapping Migration: Irregular Migrants' Stories through Cognitive Mapping.' *Mobilities* 13 (4): 488–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1421022.

Caquard, Sébastien. 2014. 'Cartography II: Collective Cartographies in the Social Media Era.' *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (1): 141–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513514005.

Casas-Cortés, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani. 2017. 'Clashing Cartographies, Migrating Maps: The Politics of Mobility at the External Borders of E.U.rope.' *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16 (1): 1–33.

Cobarrubias, Sebastian. 2019. 'Mapping Illegality: The i-Map and the Cartopolitics of "Migration Management" at a Distance.' *Antipode* 51 (3): 770–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12512.

Connor, Phillip. 2016. 'Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015.' Washington DC: Pew Research Centre. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of -refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/.

Connor, Phillip, and Jeffrey S. Passel. 2019. 'Europe's Unauthorized Immigrant Population Peaks in 2016, Then Levels Off.' Pew Research Centre. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/11/13/ europes-unauthorized-immigrant-population-peaks-in-2016-then-levels-off/.

De Genova, Nicholas. 2011. 'Spectacle of Terror, Spectacle of Security.' In *Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession in the Making of Everyday Life*, edited by Shelley Feldman, Charles C. Geisler and Gayatri A. Menon, 141–65. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

De Genova, Nicholas. 2018. 'The "Migrant Crisis" as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (10): 1765–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1361543.

De Haas, Hein. 2008. 'The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe.' *Third World Quarterly* 29 (7): 1305–22.

El Refaie, Elisabeth. 2001. 'Metaphors We Discriminate by: Naturalized Themes in Austrian Newspaper Articles about Asylum Seekers.' *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5 (3): 352–71. https://doi.org/10.1111/ 1467-9481.00154.

El Refaie, Elisabeth. 2003. 'Understanding Visual Metaphor: The Example of Newspaper Cartoons.' *Visual Communication* 2 (1): 75–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357203002001755.

Elden, Stuart. 2013. *The Birth of Territory*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Esses, Victoria M., Stelian Medianu, and Andrea S. Lawson. 2013. 'Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees: Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees.' *Journal of Social Issues* 69 (3): 518–36. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi .12027.

Farman, Jason. 2010. 'Mapping the Digital Empire: Google Earth and the Process of Postmodern Cartography.' *New Media & Society* 12 (6): 869–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809350900.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *Naissance de la biopolitique: cours au Collège de France (1978-1979)*. Paris: Gallimard.

Harley, J. Brian. 1988. 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power.' In *Exploring Human Geography*, edited by Stephen Daniels and Roger Lee, 129–48. Abingdon: Routledge.

Harley, J. Brian. 2001. *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Houtum, Henk van. 2010. 'Human Blacklisting: The Global Apartheid of the EU's External Border Regime.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (6): 957–76. https://doi.org/10.1068/ d1909.

Houtum, Henk van. 2012. 'Remapping Borders.' In *A Companion to Border Studies*, edited by Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, 405–18. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Houtum, Henk van. 2013. 'Van Atlas Naar Hermes: Pleidooi Voor Een Nieuwe c/Artografie.' *Kunstlicht* 4: 13–18.

Houtum, Henk van. 2021. 'Beyond Borderism: Overcoming Discriminative B/ordering and Othering.' *TESG* 112 (1): 34–43. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tesg.12473.

Houtum, Henk van, and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy. 2020a. 'The Autoimmunity of the EU's Deadly B/ordering Regime; Overcoming its Paradoxical Paper, Iron and Camp Borders.' *Geopolitics* 25 (3): 706–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1728743.

Houtum, Henk van, and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy. 2020b. 'The Migration Map Trap: On the Invasion Arrows in the Cartography of Migration.' *Mobilities* 15 (2): 196–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2019 .1676031.

Houtum, Henk van, and Leo Lucassen. 2016. *Voorbij Fort Europa: een nieuwe visie op migratie*. Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, Uitgeverij.

Houtum, Henk van, and Ton van Naerssen. 2002. 'Bordering, Ordering and Othering.' *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 93: 125–36. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00189.

Houtum, Henk van, and Annelies van Uden. 2021. 'The Birth of the Paper Prison: The Global Inequality Trap of Visa Borders.' *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 20–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420981389e.

Journeys Project. n.d. 'The Financial Journeys of Refugees.' https://sites.tufts.edu/journeysproject/.

Kingsley, Patrick. 2018. 'Migration to Europe Is Down Sharply. So Is It Still a "Crisis"?' *New York Times*, June 27, 2018, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/27/world/europe/europe-migrant-crisis-change.html.

Kollektiv orangotango+, ed. 2018. *This Is Not an Atlas: A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/27378.

Kristof, Ladis K.D. 1960. 'The Origins and Evolution of Geopolitics.' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 4 (1): 15–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/002200276000400103.

Liempt, Ilse van, and Stephanie Sersli. 2013. 'State Responses and Migrant Experiences with Human Smuggling: A Reality Check.' *Antipode* 45 (4): 1029–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2012.01027.x.

Lo Presti, Laura. 2020. 'The Migrancies of Maps: Complicating the Critical Cartography and Migration Nexus in 'Migro-Mobility' Thinking.' *Mobilities* 15 (6): 911–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2020.1799660.

Mekdjian, Sarah. 2015. 'Mapping Mobile Borders: Critical Cartographies of Borders Based on Migration Experiences.' In *Borderities and the Politics of Contemporary Mobile Borders*, edited by Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary and Frédéric Giraut, 204–23. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137468857_12.

Mogel, Lize, and Alexis Bhagat. 2007. *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*. Los Angeles, CA: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press.

Moore, Anna W., and Nicholas A. Perdue. 2014. 'Imagining a Critical Geopolitical Cartography.' *Geography Compass* 8 (12): 892–901. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12187.

Ó Tuathail, Gearoid. 1996. *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*. London: Routledge.

Paasi, Anssi. 1998. 'Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in the World of Flows.' *Geopolitics* 3 (1): 69–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650049808407608.

Perry, Barbara. 2003. '"White Genocide": White Supremacists and the Politics of Reproduction.' In *Home-Grown Hate*, edited by Abby L. Ferber, 85–105. London: Routledge.

Raspail, Jean. 1973. *Le Camp Des Saints*. Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont.

Robinson, William I. 2020. *The Global Police State*. London: Pluto Press.

Rodney, Walter. 1972. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East African Publishers.

Schapendonk, Joris, and Griet Steel. 2014. 'Following Migrant Trajectories: The Im/Mobility of Sub-Saharan Africans En Route to the European Union.' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 (2): 262–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2013.862135.

Schuster, Liza. 2011. 'Turning Refugees into "Illegal Migrants": Afghan Asylum Seekers in Europe.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (8): 1392–1407. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2010.535550.

Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry. 2006. 'The New Mobilities Paradigm.' *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38 (2): 207–26. https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268.

Speier, Hans. 1941. 'Magic Geography.' *Social Research* 8 (3): 310–330.

Statewatch. 2021. 'EU: Legal Actions Pile Up Against Frontex for Involvement in Rights Violations.' https://www.statewatch.org/news/2021/february/eu-legal-actions-pile-up-against-frontex-for-involvement-in-rights-violations/.

'The Migrants Files.' 2015. http://www.themigrantsfiles.com/.

UN. 1948. 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights.' https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

UNHCR. 2021. 'Figures at a Glance.' October 13. https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

Walters, William. 2009. 'Anti-Political Economy: Cartographies of "Illegal Immigration" and the Displacement of the Economy.' In *Cultural Political Economy*, edited by Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson, 133–58. London: Routledge.

Warburg, Aby. 2020 [1927]. *Aby Warburg: Bilderatlas Mnemosyne – The Original*. Edited by Roberto Ohrt and Bill Sherman. Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH & Company KG.