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**Frontex and the Evolution of European Border Control:
A Cultural Approach**

DOCTORAL THESIS

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Επιτρέπεται η ανατύπωση, αποθήκευση και διανομή για σκοπό μη κερδοσκοπικό, εκπαιδευτικής ή ερευνητικής φύσης, υπό την προϋπόθεση να αναφέρεται η πηγή προέλευσης και να διατηρείται το παρόν μήνυμα.

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To the memory of my father and brother,
Ilias A. Sarantakis & Konstantinos Deliaslanidis

List of acronyms

BCP	Border Crossing Point
CIRAM	Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model
CPV	Coastal Patrol Vessel
DG Home	European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
EBCG	European Border and Coast Guard
EBGT	European Border Guard Teams
EIBM	European Integrated Border Management
EPN	European Patrols Network
Eurosur	European Border Surveillance System
EURTF	EU Regional Task Force
FOSS	Frontex One-Stop-Shop
FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
IBM	Integrated Border Management
JORA	Joint Operations Reporting System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCC	National Coordination Centre
OPERA	Operational Resources Management System
OPV	Offshore Patrol Vessel
RABIT	Rapid Border Intervention Teams
RPAS	Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems
SAR	Search and Rescue
SCIFA	Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum
SIS	Schengen Information System

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Table of contents

Abstract.....	11
Περίληψη	13
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	15
1.1 Setting the stage.....	15
1.2 Border control in Europe: The advent of Frontex.....	17
1.3 Thesis scope and research objectives.....	19
1.4 Thesis structure.....	23
Chapter 2: Frontex in the <i>acquis académique</i>	26
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 Thinking about borders and border control in Europe.....	26
2.3 Frontex within EU border control.....	33
2.4 Assessing the <i>acquis académique</i>	46
2.5 Discussion.....	53
Chapter 3: The theoretical scene	58
3.1 Introduction	58
3.2 Re-theorising / reintroducing Frontex: A cultural approach	59
3.3 Why theorise.....	68
3.4 Culture of border control as an analytical construct	79
3.5 Applying culture of border control in Frontex and EU borders	90
3.6 Conclusion.....	102
Chapter 4: Method and the assessment context	103
4.1 Introduction	103
4.2 Methods to solve the research puzzle	103
4.3 Data collection and data analysis.....	106
4.4 Assessing the research pursuit	121
4.5 Conclusion.....	124
Chapter 5: Exploring borders.....	125
5.1 Introduction	125
5.2 National borders as EU external borders.....	125
5.3 The border of Evros	126
5.4 The border of Lampedusa.....	146
5.5 Evros and Lampedusa: Anything in common?.....	169
5.6 Conclusion.....	172

Chapter 6: Exploring Frontex and Warsaw border control culture.....	174
6.1 Introduction	174
6.2 Frontex as a border control actor	175
6.3 Border control culture: Warsaw.....	188
6.4 Schengen, Westphalia, Brussels and Warsaw: Comparing the four loci of border control	198
6.5 Cultural evolution: From Schengen to Warsaw border control culture	203
6.6 Beyond Schengen: Exploring Frontex’s impact on Warsaw border control culture	207
6.7 Frontex’s impact on Warsaw culture: Process-traced?	219
6.8 Conclusion.....	220
Chapter 7: Conclusion	222
7.1 Borders and Frontex: Restating the research question.....	222
7.2 Thesis main findings	223
7.3 Thesis contribution.....	225
7.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research.....	228
7.5 Concluding notes	231
References - Bibliography	235
Annex	309

Tables and schemata

Table 3.a Zaiotti's typology	90
Schema 3.b Frontex in EU border control	92
Schema 3.c Operationalisation of cultural evolution.....	92
Schema 3.d Border actors and border control actors.....	97
Schema 3.e Border control actors.....	100
Table 5.a Irregular migration in Evros	132
Table 5.b Hellenic Police structure	135
Table 5.c Frontex in Evros	140
Table 5.d Border control cultural traits in Evros.....	146
Table 5.e Irregular sea migration to Lampedusa	154
Table 5.f Irregular sea arrivals	155
Table 5.g Frontex in Lampedusa	163
Table 5.h Border control cultural traits in Lampedusa	169
Table 6.a Frontex's border control cultural traits.....	188
Table 6.b Warsaw border control culture	191
Table 6.c Frontex's staff growth	195
Table 6.d Frontex's budget	195
Table 6.e Cultures of border control in Europe.....	202
Table 6.f Member states participation in Frontex operations	207
Schema 6.g Cultural evolution	207
Table 7.a Overview of thesis' research findings	225
Schema 7.b Frontex's impact.....	225

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Abstract

In 2005, Frontex, the EU border control agency, started its operational function at the EU external borders. Since then, it has become a central component of the EU border control regime leading EU and national actions for the management of irregular migration. With continuous presence at the EU external borders and substantial mandate enhancements especially amidst the 2015 migration crisis that have rendered it the European Border and Coast Guard, Frontex constitutes one of the most controversial EU agencies. But, Frontex is not just an EU agency, as the academic literature often contends. Rather, it constitutes a key border control actor that shapes borders and border control in Europe. Zooming in Frontex as a border control actor, this thesis explores Frontex's role in EU border control and at the EU external borders bringing culture in the analysis. Drawing on a social constructivist perspective, this thesis employs Ruben Zaiotti's analytical framework of 'cultures of border control' focusing on border control assumptions and practices. This offers a new prism for Frontex's scrutiny, because it allows the incorporation of ideational and inter-subjective elements in the analysis. Remedying a gap in the literature, which refers to the neglect of the existence and function of a border control community, this thesis examines Frontex as a border control actor embedded in a policy community. The central research question is '*how does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?*' To answer this question, this research follows a qualitative methodology comprising document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews with national border guards and Frontex officers, process-tracing, comparative case study analysis of the Greek land border Evros and the Italian sea border Lampedusa and *in-situ* analysis with fieldwork in these two borders. This thesis argues that Frontex shapes the EU border control by pursuing a new border control culture, which has contested the Schengen regime and now constitutes the dominant culture of border control in Europe. This culture consists of a new border control community, which promotes assumptions and practices for border control encountered not only in Frontex but also at the borders. Thus, there has been an evolution from the Schengen regime of border control to a new model. Through the conduct of primary research and analysis, this thesis reveals a new reality at the borders and a different function of Frontex that transcends the agency's technical and managerial role set by its original mandate. This is particularly relevant under newly published EU Commission plans to further expand Frontex's action and

resources to meet emerging challenges in the context of increased irregular migration flows at the EU external borders. Hence, this thesis contributes to the discussion on the EU-level response to irregular migration and the nature of border control especially in today's highly polarised environment dominated by irregular migration concerns.

Keywords: Frontex, borders, border control, culture, irregular migration

**Frontex και η εξέλιξη των συνοριακών ελέγχων στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση:
Μια προσέγγιση υπό το πρίσμα της κουλτούρας**

Αντωνία-Μαρία Σαραντάκη

Περίληψη

Το 2005 ξεκίνησε την επιχειρησιακή του δράση στα εξωτερικά σύνορα της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης (ΕΕ) ο Ευρωπαϊκός Οργανισμός για τον έλεγχο των συνόρων, Frontex. Έκτοτε έχει εξελιχθεί σε κεντρική συνιστώσα του καθεστώτος ελέγχου των συνόρων στην ΕΕ, καθοδηγώντας ευρωπαϊκές και εθνικές δράσεις για τη διαχείριση της παράτυπης μετανάστευσης. Με αδιάκοπη παρουσία στα εξωτερικά σύνορα της ΕΕ και ουσιώδεις ενισχύσεις στο καταστατικό του, όπως ο μετασχηματισμός του σε Ευρωπαϊκή Συνοριοφυλακή και Ακτοφυλακή εν μέσω της μεταναστευτικής κρίσης του 2015, ο Frontex συνιστά έναν από τους πιο αμφιλεγόμενους οργανισμούς της ΕΕ. Ωστόσο, δεν αποτελεί μονάχα έναν ευρωπαϊκό οργανισμό, όπως συνήθως διατείνεται η ακαδημαϊκή βιβλιογραφία. Αντιθέτως, είναι ένας βασικός δρών, που διαμορφώνει τόσο τα σύνορα όσο και τους συνοριακούς ελέγχους στην Ευρώπη. Διερευνώντας τον ρόλο του στους συνοριακούς ελέγχους, η παρούσα διατριβή εισάγει στην ανάλυση την έννοια της κουλτούρας. Μέσω της θεωρίας του κοινωνικού κονστρουκτιβισμού, προκρίνει το αναλυτικό πλαίσιο που αναπτύχθηκε από τον Ruben Zaiotti για τις «κουλτούρες του ελέγχου των συνόρων». Αυτή η επιλογή προσφέρει ένα καινούργιο πρίσμα για τη διερεύνηση του Frontex μέσα από ιδεατά και διυποκειμενικά στοιχεία. Πληρώνοντας ένα κενό στη βιβλιογραφία, που αφορά στην παράλειψη αναγνώρισης της ύπαρξης και λειτουργίας μιας κοινότητας πολιτικής για τον έλεγχο των συνόρων, η διατριβή εξετάζει τον Frontex ως δρώντα των συνοριακών ελέγχων και μέλος μιας κοινότητας δημόσιας πολιτικής. Το κεντρικό ερευνητικό ερώτημα είναι «*πώς ο Frontex επηρεάζει την κουλτούρα για τον έλεγχο των συνόρων;*» Η απάντηση δίνεται μέσα από μια ποιοτική μεθοδολογία, η οποία απαρτίζεται από ανάλυση εγγράφων και θεσμικού λόγου, ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με εθνικούς συνοριοφύλακες και αξιωματούχους του Frontex, ιχνηλάτηση διεργασιών, περιπτωσιολογική συγκριτική ανάλυση του ελληνικού χερσαίου συνόρου στον Έβρο και του ιταλικού θαλάσσιου συνόρου στη Lampedusa και επιτόπια ανάλυση με έρευνα πεδίου στα δύο αυτά σύνορα. Η διατριβή υποστηρίζει ότι ο Frontex διαμορφώνει τους συνοριακούς ελέγχους στην

ΕΕ μέσα από την προώθηση μιας νέας κουλτούρας, που αποτελεί, πλέον, τη νέα κυρίαρχη κουλτούρα για τον έλεγχο των συνόρων στην Ευρώπη, καθώς έχει διαδεχθεί το καθεστώς που οριζόταν από τη Schengen. Συγκεκριμένα, η κουλτούρα αυτή συγκροτείται από μια νέα κοινότητα για τον έλεγχο των συνόρων που προωθεί θεωρήσεις και πρακτικές ελέγχου, που δεν απαντώνται μόνον στον Frontex, αλλά και στα σύνορα. Συνεπώς, έχει συντελεστεί μια εξέλιξη από το παράδειγμα των συνοριακών ελέγχων της Schengen σε ένα νέο πρότυπο. Μέσω της διενέργειας πρωτογενούς έρευνας και ανάλυσης, η διατριβή απεικονίζει μια νέα πραγματικότητα στα σύνορα και μια διαφορετική λειτουργία του Frontex, η οποία υπερβαίνει τις τεχνοκρατικές του αρμοδιότητες. Αυτό συνιστά εύρημα βαρύνουσας σημασίας, καθώς η Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή έχει ήδη δημοσιεύσει σχέδια για περαιτέρω ενίσχυση του Frontex ώστε να αντιμετωπιστούν αναδυόμενες προκλήσεις από τις αυξανόμενες μεταναστευτικές ροές. Η διατριβή συνεισφέρει στη συζήτηση για την αντιμετώπιση της παράτυπης μετανάστευσης σε επίπεδο ΕΕ αλλά και τη φύση των συνοριακών ελέγχων υπό το διαμορφωθέν περιβάλλον πόλωσης, που κυριαρχείται από τους προβληματισμούς που γεννά το φαινόμενο της παράτυπης μετανάστευσης.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Frontex, σύνορα, συνοριακοί έλεγχοι, κουλτούρα, παράτυπη μετανάστευση

Chapter 1: Introduction

'Tolerance cannot come at the price of our security.'

'We will defend our borders with the new European Border and Coast Guard.'

President Juncker (European Commission, 2016a)

1.1 Setting the stage

Who guards the European Union's (EU) external borders? Who determines how to? How important is border control for Europe? Inspired by these questions and intrigued by EU's chronic fixation with border control, this thesis explores Frontex's role in EU border control and at the EU external borders. Investigating Frontex, borders and border control, it deals with EU border control conduct, delving into Frontex as a border control actor. This enables looking at a wider border control image that has shaped border control tools and migration policies in the European continent.

1.1.1 Bringing borders back in

The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of Cold War, the establishment of free movement within the EU and trade acceleration after the creation of the World Trade Organisation, shattered the past border dominance. In this increasing interconnected and globalised environment a 'borderless world' (Ohmae, 1990) seemed closer than ever. This image, however, became torn with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S.A. (2001) and, later, in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) that led to the toughening of border control measures and the construction of new border 'fortresses' to prevent security threats (Andreas, 2003a). Geopolitical instability, social turmoil, poverty and regional conflicts in the aftermath of the Arab Spring¹ reframed the discussion about borders in the European continent creating new border control imperatives (Del Sarto, 2016). Lately, however, we have witnessed the return of borders accompanied by the articulation of new, or renewed, border narratives.

Accordingly, the issue of border control has gained new prominence after the so-called 'migration crisis' (European Commission, 2015a). More specifically, in 2015, the number of irregular border crossings marked a 'never-before-seen figure' surpassing 1,820,000 entries (Frontex, 2016a: 6). Onwards, irregular migration has continued dominating national and EU-level agendas, because of the nonstop migratory

¹ For the Arab Spring, see chapter 5.4.1.

flows that challenge established institutions and constructed European perceptions regarding the proper way to manage borders.

Many observers stress the aspect of human rights protection of migrants and asylum seekers that need to be safeguarded with more open border policies. Following this logic, in 2015, Germany has adopted an ‘open-door’ policy receiving that year a record number of 1.1 million asylum-seekers (The Independent, 2015). This number corresponded to a fivefold increase compared to the year before (Politico, 2016) marking a significant policy change put forward by Chancellor Merkel and characterised by the slogan *willkommenskultur*, namely ‘culture of welcome’ (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016). This did not solely constitute a practical manifestation of Germany’s solidarity towards the EU countries that, due to their geographic position, were receiving vast migratory flows. This decision was also linked to Germany's aspiration for a growing leadership role in the European Union as well as an attempt to reverse, with the inflow of young labour force, population projections forecasting a demographic crisis in Germany and Europe (The New York Times, 2018).

Others, underscoring the dangers to national security and EU identity call for stricter border control and more restrictive migration policies implemented with border closure (Reuters, 2015). Amidst the migration crisis, several EU countries adopted strengthened checks at their external borders to limit irregular entries, like Hungary that built a fence on its border with Serbia and Croatia. Other EU member states reintroduced border controls at their internal borders to cut down secondary movements, such as Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Denmark and Sweden. In this context, Greece has been threatened with expulsion from Schengen due to its inability to control its borders (Reuters, 2016).

These manifest that border control has led EU members to become more divided than ever; even more divided and polarised than the European schism over the 2003 war in Iraq (Menon, 2004; Herd & Forsberg, 2008). This polarised setting has been transferred to the public discourse and civic life with a juxtaposition of pro- and anti-migrant campaigning that has resulted in an escalation of hostility. In this context, even in Germany, there have been attacks against pro-migrant mayors and asylum seekers, despite the country’s refugee-friendly official stance (BBC, 2019a; DW, 2019).

At the same time, in the political arena, beyond Hungary, a rapid rise of right-wing parties all-over Europe has been observed, such as in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Estonia, which has been attributed to anti-

migration feelings fuelled by increased and uncontrolled migratory flows (Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Davis & Deole, 2015; Barone et al., 2016). These parties generate political instability and push for more effective border controls nourishing populism and xenophobia (BBC, 2019b).

The above denote the salience of the issue of border control, which surpasses the border studies field. Rather, it covers a multifaceted context extending to the wider socio-political sphere. After all, Europe continues to face increased migratory pressures triggering new discussions about effective border management (DG Home, 2019a). For instance, only in September 2019, 12,530 migrants reached Greece (UNHCR, 2019a). This number of newly-arrived has been added to the already overcrowded Greek islands, such as Lesbos, which in the same period has been hosting more than 12,600 migrants and asylum seekers in reception centres that were operating well past their capacity (UN, 2019) causing riots and aggression both among and towards them. These portray that border control and irregular migration are today's pressing issues. Adhering to this, this research seizes the opportunity to study Frontex's function at the EU border control to uncover new elements for borders and the border control conduct in Europe contributing to the wider discourse about borders and irregular migration in Europe.

1.2 Border control in Europe: The advent of Frontex

Borders have always been at the heart of Europe setting in motion the EU project. For centuries, European countries have fought some of the bloodiest wars over borders (Friedman, 2017). To restore peace and cultivate unity, European countries chose the route of European integration (Zielonka, 2017). Actualising this aspiration, the EU became a successful case of border conflict transformation (Wallenstein, 2002: 79; Diez et al., 2004: 2) irrevocably changing the concept of territoriality. Accordingly, the finalisation of the European Single Market and the incorporation of the Schengen *acquis* into the EU framework with the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam redefined borders and border control. Border controls were lifted inside the EU territory establishing free movement of goods, services, capital and people. In parallel, member states' national borders started functioning also as EU external borders delineating EU's insiders and outsiders. From that point, the burden of EU borders' protection was placed on frontline countries, like Greece and Italy, which, being situated along EU's external southern border, have traditionally functioned as major cross-border corridors for both regular and irregular mobility flows. Yet, becoming part of the EU external border, these

countries were rendered accountable and were considered responsible for the border protection of the European territory.

To ensure effective border protection, common border control rules were adopted at the EU level. Given the national security connotations of the issue of borders, the increasing migratory pressures, due to conflicts in the periphery of the European continent, have brought border control to the spotlight preoccupying member states, EU authorities and European citizens. This intense preoccupation has been manifested with border control entering without cease the agenda of European Council summits.² In this spirit, the 2003 Thessaloniki European Council, reiterating the importance of effective border controls across the EU external borders and the need for a strengthened action at the EU level, urged for a new institutional structure that would enhance the ‘operational cooperation for the management of external borders’ (European Commission, 2003a). In response to this, in 2004, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union was created, better known with the abbreviation Frontex.

Since becoming operational, in 2005, Frontex has drawn a different reality for border control and borders in Europe. From its first joint operation in December 2005 at the land borders of Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Frontex, 2005a: 5), Frontex has established a continuous presence at the EU external borders developing an array of actions and initiatives for the border control field. It has become inextricable linked with borders and border control in Europe shifting the border control regime pursued until then at the EU external borders. Relating to this, Frontex is currently characterised as ‘a cornerstone of the EU’s efforts to guarantee an area of freedom, security and justice’ (Frontex, 2017a) as well as ‘a symbol for the European Union’ (European Commission, 2016b). This means that Frontex has succeeded in being consolidated as a key actor in EU border control representing Europe at the EU external borders.

However, being a symbol of Europe is only one facet of Frontex’s role. Continuous mandate enhancements with most important its 2016 reform into a European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Agency that has both expanded and strengthened it indicate that Frontex is not just another EU agency. Advocates of this view can be considered human rights groups that have repeatedly put Frontex’s actions

² For more information, see chapter 2.2.2.

under their microscope organising even protests for its closure.³ At the same time, even after fourteen years of operational presence at Europe's borders, Frontex still triggers considerable amount of public debate and receives extensive media coverage, like no other EU agency (Ekelund, 2019: 79).

The above underscore the relevance of academic research, as Frontex, in spite of provoking strong reactions, has not been subject to extensive academic scrutiny. There are still open ends, especially taking into account that most studies consider Frontex as a dependent instrument of EU policies and not an actor.⁴ Yet, this agency dominates the European border regime (Vollmer & von Boemcken, 2014: 61) relishing even a 'shared responsibility' for the management of EU external borders with the EU member states (Regulation, 2016). Hence, Frontex deserves to be this thesis focus.

1.3 Thesis scope and research objectives

This thesis examines Frontex's impact on EU border control. To do so, it applies a cultural approach operationalised with the analytical framework of 'cultures of border control' (Zaiotti, 2011) embedded in a social constructivist theoretical prism. This combination allows developing a variant and original frame for Frontex's investigation, given that culture has not become before a point of conceptual departure for the scrutiny of this EU agency. In the analysis that follows, this thesis aspires to remedy this, by invoking the research question: '*how does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?*' It aims at elucidating both the culture of EU border control and Frontex's impact. The research journey starts from demarcating a specific gap in the literature. Actually, the literature that studies Frontex's role in EU border control seems rather partial and heterogeneous. It mostly includes three discreet contexts of analysis: works on securitisation considerations inspired by Bigo (2002) (Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012; Horii, 2016), studies on the institutionalisation of EU border control policy deriving from the EU governance field (Horii, 2012; Wolff & Schout, 2013; Paul, 2017) and critical investigations of the role of borders (Vaughan-Williams, 2008; Perkins & Rumford, 2013; Reid-Henry, 2013). The literature review identifies a significant gap, which refers to the lack of including in Frontex's analysis the border control policy community, as academics have failed to recognise its existence.

³ For more information, see chapter 2.3.3.

⁴ For more information, see literature review in chapter 2.4.

This concrete gap enables investigating Frontex through a different lens, that of a border control actor embedded in a border control community and pursuing a border control culture. This describes an agent, and not just an agency, of border control. In this light, this analysis allows extracting new findings about Frontex and its role in EU border control that could contribute to a different understanding of this EU agency. Hence, the research aims to elucidate hidden aspects of Frontex's function in EU border control, which will allow escaping from its restrictive conception as solely an EU agency that blindly implements EU policies. This is achieved with the insertion of a cultural approach into Frontex's analysis. Actually, there is a renewed interest for the concept of culture, which has inspired this research to turn its attention to cultural explanations and considerations (Lebow, 2009; Zaiotti, 2011; Kurki, 2014; McNamara, 2015). Following this spirit, to investigate and interpret culture's ideational elements, a social constructivist theoretical frame is being put forward (Searle, 1995; Katzenstein, 1996a; Adler & Barnett, 1998; Wendt, 1999; Pouliot, 2004). This frame enables constructing a non-traditional exploration of Frontex's role in EU border control searching for both material and ideational elements, such as shared meanings, activities and routines.

To operationalise this exploration and set direction to the research inquiry, this thesis adopts the analytical framework of 'cultures of border control' developed by Zaiotti (2011). In particular, Zaiotti has developed a cultural evolutionary framework that addresses the emergence of Schengen as the institutionalised regime for the management of European borders. Zaiotti (2011) in his study describes three border control regimes that are relevant for Europe: Westphalia, Schengen and Brussels. These regimes represent three border control cultures and therefore distinct trajectories for borders and border control. According to Zaiotti, a culture of border control is 'a relatively stable constellation of background assumptions and corresponding practices shared by a border control policy community' (2011: 23). So, this framework enables including in the analysis the border control community, which is consisted of actors that 'share similar background assumptions and participate in common practices in the border control domain' (Zaiotti, 2011: 25) as well as it presents the steps for a cultural evolution (Zaiotti, 2011: 36). These features allow tracing Frontex's impact in terms of concrete elements, namely assumptions and practices at the borders and among the members of the border control community.

On methodology, the thesis follows a problem-driven research process using a qualitative methodology. This allows this research to focus on the research problem using a variety of research methods and tools that can interpret ideational elements, like social meanings and cultural evolution. These methods include document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, comparative analysis of the Greek land border Evros and the Italian sea border Lampedusa, process-tracing and direct observation through fieldwork in Evros and Lampedusa.

Regarding the case selection, Evros and Lampedusa constitute two different EU external borders and they will be examined through Mill's 'method of agreement' (1865 [1843]) in order to draw a wider conclusion about common patterns observed in different cases. This case selection is not random. Both Evros and Lampedusa constitute symbolic EU borders with distinct characteristics that have functioned as operational theatres for various Frontex missions. Therefore, their study can reveal Frontex's role in EU border control. Accordingly, this research aspires to contribute new knowledge about the formation and actual conduct of border control elucidating the border control actors, border control community and border control culture currently pursued at Europe's borders. In this context, the research project also seeks to examine borders as a constructed conception and function highlighting that borders can evolve (Stetter, 2008).

The argument advanced is that Frontex shapes the EU border control. This impact is demarcated and materialised through culture. Indeed, Frontex has produced and is promoting a new border control culture, labelled by this study as 'Warsaw'. This culture has become the dominant culture of border control replacing the Schengen regime. Thus, Frontex shapes EU border control by constructing and pursuing Warsaw culture.

1.3.1 Selected time period

This project begins the relevant scrutiny from the amended Frontex Regulation in 2011 and ends to August 2019. The chosen chronological scope allows for an adequate period of Frontex's development and consolidation in the field of EU border control, as it does not examine its formative years, but rather a period where its role and competences were reinforced, as evidenced with the 2011 amendment of its Regulation (Regulation, 2011). More specifically, 2011 marks six years after Frontex's operational activation in 2005. This chronological gap is essential for a cultural exploration, because culture

needs to become stable and be sustained for a substantial period of time to be developed fully and give indicative results (Meyer, 2006: 25). Similarly, rendering August 2019 as the end for the research, adequate period has been given to conduct this research endeavour and then evaluate the research results to reach a conclusion. In fact, this nine-year period has been chosen for coherence and other practical reasons that refer to the feasibility of this study. Yet, it is deemed as an adequate timeframe to shed light on any shift in the EU border control policy, whilst undertaking a cultural investigation. It should be noted that this timeframe includes important events, like Frontex's upgrade to a European Border and Coast Guard Agency as well as the escalation of the immigration crisis and the reintroduction of border controls between member states.

1.3.2 Defining concepts

This sub-section briefly defines some terms encountered in this research. Others are explained in the following chapters.

Migration crisis:	Alternatively, refugee crisis is a term referring to a period beginning in 2015, where an unprecedented peak in the number of asylum seekers and irregular migrants arriving in Europe was witnessed, which has strained reception structures (Guild et al., 2015).
Internal borders:	Borders between the Schengen member states that, in the absence of emergency, can be crossed without any border control (Regulation, 2016/399).
EU external borders:	Member States' land, sea and air borders that are not internal borders and to be crossed legally, border crossers have to possess the proper travel documentation according to EU and national provisions (Regulation, 2016/399).
Border control:	Measures and activities carried out for the prevention and detection of cross-border crime (Regulation, 2016).
EU border control:	The border control designed and implemented for the EU member states that are also signatories of the Schengen <i>acquis</i> .

Border guards:	Officers within any law-enforcement public agency, or units within such agency, who carry out border control tasks (Regulation, 2016/399).
Irregular border crosser:	An individual that crosses the border, entering or exiting a country, without official authorisation, even if having as aim to apply for international protection (asylum).
Border control culture:	An analytical framework developed by Ruben Zaiotti, which defines a culture of border control as ‘a relatively stable constellation of background assumptions and corresponding practices shared by a border control policy community in a given period and geographical location’ (2011: 23).

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. Chapter 1 seeks to provide a general overview of the research topic specifying the thesis’ rational and introducing the research approach.

Chapter 2 presents the two central themes of this thesis, namely borders and Frontex. Then, reviewing the literature, it reveals a substantial lacuna in the academic research, which this study aims to address. This lacuna refers to the lack of including in Frontex’s analysis the border control policy community.

Chapter 3 composes the thesis’ theoretical line. Proceeding from the adopted cultural approach and the theoretical trajectory of social constructivism, this chapter inserts in this study the analytical framework of ‘cultures of border control’ (Zaiotti, 2011) explaining how it will be operationalised to scrutinise Frontex’s role in EU border control. Furthermore, it sets this thesis’ research question, main hypothesis and sub-hypotheses that provide orientation to this research pursuit.

Chapter 4 depicts the research design employed to answer the research question as well as the research processes and tools to collect and analyse data. Apart from the qualitative methodology, which includes data from documents, discourses, interviews, comparison of cases, in-situ analysis with fieldwork and process-tracing, this chapter also refers to data assessment for the formulation of ‘truth conditions’ (Pouliot, 2007: 360). This involves the development of a research strategy that conforms to ‘goodness’ criteria and the principles of validity and reliability (Marshall, 1990).

After the delineation of the thesis' theoretical and methodological grounding, the study moves to the analytical part. Accordingly, Chapter 5 investigates the border and border control conduct. It includes the case study analysis of the two borders, namely Evros and Lampedusa, examined via Mill's 'method of agreement' (1865 [1843]). Drawing data mainly from the fieldwork and interviews with national border guards in these two borders, this chapter elucidates the assumptions and practices for the border control conduct uncovering common elements that, due to the variant nature of these two borders, constitute cultural traits.

In Chapter 6, attention shifts to Frontex and the Warsaw border control culture. Continuing the analysis of the borders, the thesis scrutinises Frontex's border control assumptions and practices. The outcome of this analysis is that there are common border control assumptions and practices traced at both Frontex and the borders, which vary from the Schengen regime. This indicates the emergence of a new border control culture. Comparing this culture with the other border control approaches, namely Schengen, Brussels and Westphalia, described in Zaiotti's border control typology, this chapter analyses its characteristics and labels it as 'Warsaw' border control culture. The last section assesses Frontex's impact on the development and evolution of Warsaw culture. Following a sequential path set by the research sub-hypotheses and extracting data from document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, interviews with Frontex officers as well as findings from process-tracing, this chapter answers to the research question. It suggests that Frontex impacts on the culture of EU border control, and therefore shapes EU border control, by producing and promoting the components of the Warsaw border control culture.

The last chapter concludes the thesis summarising its key findings, discussing its research limitations and reflecting on areas for future research. The main research findings highlight that there is a new dominant border control culture and that Frontex impacts on the EU border control through the promotion of this culture's elements. In this regard, this thesis identifies that Frontex is a border control actor and member of the border control community. Moreover, it elicits the current assumptions and practices characterising the border control conduct. Actually, the impact of Frontex on EU border control is being manifested through Frontex's promotion and development of the components that compose this new border control culture.

Overall, this study contributes to a mapping of Frontex, EU border control and EU borders. As we will see in the following chapters, the issue of borders is not 'just

an exercise in cartography' (Della Sala, 2017: 549). Rather, it is being underpinned by mythical constructions regarding territoriality, control and the social world (Lewis & Wigen, 1997; Della Sala, 2017). So, having introduced the research topic and the thesis structure, the study will now move to a presentation of its main themes, namely borders and Frontex.

Chapter 2: Frontex in the *acquis académique*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the two central themes of the thesis: borders and Frontex. After presenting the conception of border and its evolution as well as the change of ‘territorialisation’ introduced in the EU with the Schengen cooperation, the EU’s border control agency, Frontex, is scrutinised so as to situate its role, function and development at the EU external border. Following this, the scholarly literature on Frontex, and especially the part that acknowledges Frontex as an object of study integrated in a border control context, is reviewed distinguishing three main streams; the security stream, the institutionalist stream and the border stream. Then, a critical exploration and assessment of the relevant literature is undertaken that reveals the lack of including in the analysis the border control policy community due to the failure to recognise its existence. This lacuna constitutes a substantial gap in the literature, which this research tries to address and fill in order to capture a different role of Frontex in the EU border control.

2.2 Thinking about borders and border control in Europe

2.2.1 The evolution of borders

As the conception of borders encompasses multidimensional and interdisciplinary dynamics, its study is also moving towards the inclusion of socio-spatial realms that include the local, regional, global and supranational level in a post-Westphalian era (Telò, 2007). In this regard, this thesis takes into consideration the structure that serves as border, which constitutes a unique, almost unprecedented, object in international relations and global phenomenon (Vallet, 2014: 3), focusing on the processes and practices that surround, situate, produce and govern it.

For a long time, borders were determined along the rules that characterised the Westphalian state-centric system. The treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the 100 years of religious wars in Europe,⁵ inaugurated the territorial state with the establishment of the sovereignty principle (Krasner, 1999: Chapter 1) and the recognition of states’ rights and duties. Sovereignty was determined as the state’s

⁵ The Treaty of Westphalia is a series of peace Treaties signed between May and October 1648 in Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War and the Eighty Years War in Europe.

monopoly of authority over a territory (Philpott, 2001: 16-17), demarcated by concrete geographic borders (Sassen, 2009: 567). Hence, a territory was considered as a resource on which the power of the state was based, whereas the state was the singular actor of the international system (Agnew, 2015: 43). On the basis of the territorial state, borders were defined as physical territorial barriers between one country and the other (Manda et al., 2014: 7). They belonged to a sole category, that is, territorial borders, and were conceived as static ontological entities (Sendhardt, 2013: 25) and vertical barriers. Put differently, borders were confined to a military conception (Andreas, 2003b: 80) according to which they were considered defence lines that were marking the territorial integrity of states. After all, the original meaning of the word 'frontier' is military, namely the front line where one meets the enemy (Anderson, 1996: 9). Essentially, borders were no more than lines drawn on political maps (Newman, 2006a: 175). But, apart from being first lines of defence, each border also constitutes an institution of social coercion as well as symbol and site of power (Wilson & Donnan, 1998: 10). Thus, it represents a spatial representation of power relations (Yndigegn, 2011: 48) and without its presence the international system would have been comparable to, if not worse than, the Hobbesian 'state of nature' (Hobbes, (1962 [1651])), as borders are a constitutive element of the international order (Carter & Goemans, 2011: 276).

Likewise, traditional border studies were fixated on territorial states and regarded borders as the physical and static outcome of political and economic decisions or the result of wars (Newman, 2006a: 175) and geographic space. In this respect, the realist paradigm emphasised the role of the state and the territorial separation between 'us' and 'them', as by being elements of state power, borders serve to protect from the outside (Morgenthau, 1948: 80-88) and preserve the state sovereignty (Ruggie, 1983: 278). While, according to liberal accounts, borders were an important state aspect, but integrated within the decision-making process with prospects for cross-border cooperation (Moravcsik, 2003; 2010).

However, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the era of globalisation that followed, combined with schemes of transnational integration, condemned the Westphalian sovereign state to obsolescence, as sovereignty, after being in a state of constant retreat (Tsinisizelis & Chrysochoou, 2010: 39), did not equate any more with statehood (Shaw, 2000: 228). This triggered a 'territorial trap' about the role of the state and diffused scepticism towards the most commonly taken for granted and embedded geographical assumptions (Agnew, 1994; Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Agnew, 2015:

43), given that states were no longer able to assert absolute control over the flow of persons, goods, capital, and ideas across borders (Cohen, 2001: 80).

Post-national political entities emerged, altering the traditional architecture of the international system. Actors other than the state started to engage in borders and adopt territorial strategies (Agnew, 2009: 28). Among these, the most important actor that emerged and defied the world-systemic order and traditional views of geopolitics was the European Union (Scott, 2009: 233). The EU, being a 'stateless polity' (Weiler, 1998; Cristóbal & Lobeira, 2014: 98-99) composed of various actors, bodies, institutional forms and centres of governance (Lavdas & Chrysochoou, 2011: 29), initiated a post-modern and post-national narrative regarding the role of territories (Ruggie, 1993). As such, it transformed the conceptualisation of borders under a sovereign state and interstate prism (Guild & Bigo, 2010: 260) proposing instead a model of integration and interaction that transcends state borders and causes a revolution in sovereignty (Philpott, 2001: 39). Also, it developed new models of international legal and political order other than the state-centred 'Westphalia', such as the 'Imperial' or Core-Europe-dominated and the fragmented and regionalised 'Neo-medieval' systems (Browning, 2005).

In parallel, intense transnational mobility, economic interdependence, liberalisation of trade and internationalisation of production seemed to provoke border erosion in order to facilitate the circulation of goods, citizens, labour, information and capital. Following this development, the academic debate shifted away from state-centric interpretations of international relations to a world without borders (Ohmae, 1990; 1995; Strange, 1996; Badie, 2000; Galli, 2001) or a world where borders were becoming less relevant (Kaplan, 1994; Brunet-Jailly, 2005).

Despite the changes in the nature of the state and territoriality, borders have not become obsolete. Instead, they continue to be present and to multiply being constantly produced, reproduced and transformed (Paasi, 2012: 2305). Consequently, borders have not stopped to matter (Agnew, 2008: 2). This became particularly relevant in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as borders not only returned (Paasi, 2009: 216), but in many cases became part of the building of 'fortresses' accompanied by a new border narrative (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Newman, 2006b) centred on security. In this vein, a connection was made between terrorism, migration and border security that led to the strengthening of measures at borders to prevent organised crime and terrorist acts. An indicative example of this 'securitisation' (Buzan et al., 1998) of borders constitutes

the dramatic tightening of border inspections and the toughening of the border policy discourse in the U.S.A. after the events of the 9/11 (Andreas, 2003a: 1-2). In this context, border control, namely the adopted measures to regulate and monitor the borders, became a key term describing the main function of borders. This border control aspect, also, led to a multiplication of actors and a multiplication of data and technology at borders (Tholen, 2010: 260) for the protection from de-territorialised threats, signalling the establishment of biometric borders due to the exercise of biopower (Amoore, 2006).

The reappearance of security preoccupations linked to border matters and the focus on the border control practice marked the so-called renaissance of border studies evidenced in the creation and proliferation of research centres and networks, conferences, publications and major funding (Newman, 1998; 2006a; 2006b; Kolossov & Scott, 2013: 2). The renaissance of border studies was characterised by a crossing of disciplinary borders and the development of an interdisciplinary research that highlights the heterogeneous character of borders and the dynamics and processes that accompany them. Following this, the meaning of borders has also changed. From a simple and closed conception along military and statist terms, to a complex one (Zapata-Barrero, 2013: 5), recognising that borders are more than just physical lines (Diez et al., 2004: 11) or even lines in the sand (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2009). They also enclose geopolitical, functional and symbolic dimensions (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008). In this respect, non-traditional approaches started to develop that consider borders as dynamic functional processes that are 'being made' (van Houtum et al., 2005; Newman, 2011). As such, the words 'bordering', 'b/ordering', 're-bordering' and 'de-bordering' commenced to be articulated and gain a predominant place in border studies reflecting the diverse and dynamic nature of borders under a critical interrogation. In particular, the process of bordering means the everyday construction of borders, for example, through political discourses and institutions, media representations, stereotypes and everyday forms of transnationalism, suggesting therefore, that borders are non-finalisable processes (Kolossov & Scott, 2013: 3).

This evolution in border thinking has brought to the spotlight and confirmed the fundamental conflicting character of borders, as they compose a set of opposites. They serve as barriers separating but they can also serve as bridges connecting different people (Bort, 2006: 190). Hence, they are both open and closed, namely gates and walls. Or as Balibar observes, borders do not function any more as a strict separation between

the inside and outside. Rather, they take the form of 'invisible borders situated everywhere and nowhere' (Balibar, 2002: 78).

2.2.2 EU territorialisation and Schengen

This border evolution has also been reflected in the model of territorialisation introduced by the EU in the context of supra-state governance and territoriality. The integration of European economies replaced cross-border conflicts, which was the norm, with cross-border cooperation (Marenin, 2010: 58). The deepening of cooperation led to the abolition of internal borders and created a common territory between the member states. This was achieved through the Schengen provisions that abolish checks at the EU's internal borders, while simultaneously tighten controls outside the Schengen territory (European Commission, 2017). As such, Schengen conferred the official status of an 'external frontier' to the borders between Schengen and non-Schengen states (Walters, 2002: 566).

A de facto external border of the EU was created by the Treaty of Amsterdam (Castan Pinos, 2009: 10-11) that was signed in 1997 and entered into force in 1999. The Treaty provided the EU with shared competence over this external border (Wolff, 2010: 23) and incorporated Schengen into the legal framework of the EU as the Schengen *acquis*. The Schengen *acquis* is estimated to be over 3,000 pages long (Marenin, 2010: 10) and entails rules and standards regarding the organisation, tactics and procedures as well as rules and regulations of border control (Hills, 2006: 71) that new member states have to meet as threshold requirements for admission to join the Schengen zone.

According to the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, the EU's external border is composed of the contracting parties' land and sea borders as well as their airports and sea ports, provided that they are not internal borders (1990: Article 1). This external border consists of almost 9,000 km of land borders and 44,000 km of sea borders as well as hundreds of airports and seaports (Frontex, 2019a) and encloses a population of about 510 million (Eurostat, 2016).

The development of a single external border was integrated into a common approach to external border security (Monar, 2006a: 194) and policy on external border management (European Parliament, 2016). From the Title VI of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that referred to the cooperation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs, to

Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001) and Lisbon (2007) Treaty revisions, EU's competence was consolidated in developing a common policy on migration and external borders.

Migration and border control became priority topics on the agenda of successive Council meetings (Laeken, 2001; Seville, 2002; Thessaloniki, 2003; Brussels, 2004) rendering this policy area as one of the most fast developing EU domains (Monar, 2010a: 22). Following this, at the level of policy-making and profiting from the political impetus to deepen the cooperation, the Tampere (1999), Hague (2004), and Stockholm (2009) multi-annual programmes were endorsed, which advanced EU's action setting out specified goals, strategic guidelines and instruments. In parallel, key EU documents were adopted that referred to the EU's approach toward migration and border control, such as the European Security Strategy (2003), the EU Internal Security Strategy (2010), the Global Approach to Migration (2005) and the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (2011).

The Schengen Borders Code and the so-called 'Smart Borders package' became a central pillar of EU's border policy development and legislation. The former, revised in 2016, defines border control as 'the activity carried out at a border, in response exclusively to an intention to cross a border, regardless of any other consideration, consisting of border checks and border surveillance' (Regulation, 2006: Article 2) and lays down the rules governing the control of EU's external border. Also, it provides Schengen member states with the capacity to temporarily reintroduce border control at internal borders in the event of a serious threat to public policy or internal security (Regulation, 2006: Articles 23 et seq.). The latter entails a Regulation for an Entry-Exit System and a proposed amendment to the Schengen Borders Code so as to modernise the Schengen area's external border management (Regulation, 2017).

This process of 'europeanising' border policy,⁶ manifested by the Schengen Borders Code, the Schengen *acquis* and various policy implementation instruments, is not one-dimensional. Instead, it is accompanied by the practice and promotion of an EU paradigm on border control (Carrera, 2007: 8). The Integrated Border Management (IBM) paradigm was introduced as a term at the 2001 Laeken European Council. It was initially described as a way of guaranteeing 'a high level of security within the European Union after enlargement' (Commission, 2002). It was developed hereafter as

⁶ In general terms, Europeanisation refers to the 'export of European authority and social norms' to the national level (Featherstone, 2003: 6).

a strategy supported by its own legal, financial and institutional framework (Carrera et al., 2013: 11) aiming at the establishment of common border management standards within and beyond EU borders (Hernández i Sagrera, 2014). Especially this transfer of border standards outside the EU has led to new forms of cooperation with countries neighbouring the EU. This, in turn, has facilitated the conduct of remote or extraterritorial border controls (Rijpma & Cremona, 2007; Ryan & Mitsilegas, 2010) and the externalisation of border logics that also transform the EU borders (Christiansen et al., 2000; Boswell, 2001; Lavenex, 2006; Doukouré & Oger, 2007; Casas et al., 2010; Monar, 2010b) into EU borderlands (Balibar, 2004; Del Sarto, 2010; 2016), namely spaces that exist around borders, which foster cooperation, while, at the same time, diffuse exclusionary practices.

In this context, it is often argued that the Europeanisation of migration with the elimination of internal borders under the Schengen auspices has led to a parallel strengthening or even the securitisation of the external border (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; Dover, 2008). This raises serious challenges, especially now amidst the migration crisis, as it has been argued that the EU external border has become the deadliest border on earth (Ferrer-Gallardo & van Houtum, 2014: 297) due to the adopted border control practices.

Hence, borders are simultaneously becoming more and less important (Marenin, 2010: 26). This highlights the conflicting character of borders and especially the complexity of EU's borders and implemented border policy, which also shape the EU as a non-state entity. Indeed, the management and control of borders confers the ability to decide who belongs in the EU territory, who can enter and who will remain or deserves to remain outside of it (Della Sala, 2017: 545). Taking this into account, a non-traditional and evolutionary approach is needed to analyse EU's external border. This approach should both grasp the EU as a structure as well as its border trajectory formation and transformation, which is characterised by a paradox, namely the simultaneous removal, relocation and creation of new borders (Boswell & Geddes, 2011: 12).

Following this, this thesis embraces that, instead of being fixed geographical lines or outcomes, borders are social constructions (Newman & Paasi, 1998: 187; Newman, 2003: 17; Cassarino, 2006: 3; Newman, 2006a: 173; Yndigegn, 2011: 48). As such, they are socially produced (Herschel, 2011: 30; Novak, 2011) and constantly reproduced (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013: 3). This highlights the ontological question of

what a border is has been replaced by the query of *who* constructs them and *how* (Sendhardt, 2013: 25). Under this constructivist strand, emphasis is placed on border's evolving and complex character, as borders are subject to change (Stetter, 2008). They provide a means of both territorial inclusion and exclusion. Likewise, they produce and are a manifestation of functional or symbolic inclusion and exclusion (Diez et al., 2004: 11). Thus, border as a space, has become a 'field of action' and a 'basis for action' (Lefebvre, 1991: 191), where inter-subjective interferences are manifested (Bellamy et al., 2017: 484) and social relations are conducted. This directs the attention to border actors, which act at the borders as well as formulate and implement border policy (Casas-Cortes et al., 2013: 53). Given that new actors, other than the state, have become involved in border control activities (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000: 176; Tholen, 2010: 265; Rumford, 2012: 897; Vaughan-Williams, 2015: 6), their study should also be included in border's research. After all, border control actors provide symbolic capital in the field of border control, and create a path dependence on new ways of controlling the border (Frowd, 2014: 232). In this respect, borders can be produced from dominant discursive processes that shape the border activity (Agnew, 2008: 176), and therefore by the border control actors.

2.3 Frontex within EU border control

2.3.1 Before Frontex

As the focus on borders shifted from state sovereignty to borders' irrelevancy and then to border control functions, new governance imperatives emerged that reflected this border evolution and the territorial restructuring of Europe. This domain of European integration introduced within the Schengen paradigm and the subsequent abolition of the internal borders was accompanied by the set-up of an institutional context and a multiplicity of arrangements for the management of the EU external border. The formation of this European border regime and policy created various possibilities and roles for the new structures that were developed to function in the EU border domain.

The protection of the EU external border has become a major priority area and a growing field of EU policy since the abolition of internal borders. It originated in 1985, when Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg signed the intergovernmental Schengen Agreement on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders. The aim was the creation of a common space where not only goods

and capital, but also individuals would be free to circulate (Zaiotti, 2015: 89). It was followed by the signing of the Convention in 1990 implementing that Agreement that came into effect in 1995. By that time Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain had also joined the Schengen area. The treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 incorporated the Schengen cooperation into the framework of the European Union as the Schengen *acquis* that allowed freedom of movement across the Schengen area. This enabled the EU to evolve from a 'market to a demos' (Mitsilegas, 2007), while, in parallel, it formalised the spill-over of the internal market into an internal security project (Huysmans, 2000: 760).

To date, the Schengen area includes 26 countries, namely 22 EU countries and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, between which border controls have been abolished enabling free movement of persons. However, the consolidation of the Schengen zone and the subsequent lifting of border checks resulted in the emergence of significant cross-border challenges that redefined the nature of borders and border control. The post-Cold War migratory trends and globalisation, greater human mobility, the blurring of internal and external borders, the security prioritisation in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York (2001), Madrid (2004) and London (2005), the extension of the Schengen area with the 2004 big-bang enlargement, and the rise of irregular migration, reinforced the need to protect effectively the EU external frontiers.

In this context, the EU's Justice and Home Affairs policy area, previously referred as Area of Freedom, Justice and Security, was set in place so as to respond to the common challenges of border management and enhance security. From its intergovernmental starting point, it soon became one of the most rapidly growing EU domains (Monar, 2006b: 495) and expansionist EU areas (Kurowska & Pawlak, 2009: 476). But, despite the significant legislative action in this policy area that included various rules for external border control, such as the Visa Information System and the 2002 Directive on migrant smuggling, there were still gaps, ineffective implementation and lacking results. The same applies to the institutional trajectory with the creation of a constellation of working groups in the Council of the European Union framework that led to policy fragmentation and limitations. More specifically, more than thirty committees and working parties have been established, two thirds of which deal with internal security matters, including border control (Monar, 2006b: 499), such as the 'Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum' (SCIFA), which gathers together senior level officials, and the SCIFA+ formation, which consisted of the members of SCIFA and the heads of member state border control services, tasked to

oversee the development of a common policy on external borders. Yet, these mechanisms were considered unable to cope with the increasing workload of border management (Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 908), due to the large membership, vast agenda, lack of a common approach (House of Lords, 2003: 14) and the funding arrangements that required ad hoc project planning and approval for each initiative instead of a planned strategy (Ekelund, 2014: 105). The European Commission argued for a new permanent community structure, which led to the creation of an External Borders Practitioners Common Unit (PUC), consisting of the heads of member state border guard services and set up to deal with operational issues, while SCIFA remained responsible for the border management strategy. This institutional set-up, however, was perceived as inefficient due to its inadequate legal framework and structural challenges that hampered cooperation among the member states (Commission, 2003; Léonard, 2009: 378-9; Neal, 2009: 342).

The increased irregular migration flows at the EU's southern maritime borders, after the 2003 war and invasion of Iraq, created the political stimulus during the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003 for a new institutional arrangement to enhance cooperation for the management of external borders and mandated the European Commission to examine alternatives. For its part, the Commission, being a proponent of centralised cooperation and the communitarisation of this policy (Rijpma, 2009: 131), seized the opportunity and proposed a European border management agency (Commission, 2003; European Commission, 2003b).

According to Majone, 'agency' refers to a variety of organisations performing functions of a governmental nature and existing outside the normal departmental framework of government (2006: 191). They are distinct entities set up to deal with specific technical, scientific or managerial tasks (Groenleer, 2009: 82). The choice to establish an agency, so as to increase the operational cooperation at external borders, was preferred over other models. It was in line with the process of 'agentification', namely the proliferation of agencies and the delegation of regulatory powers to independent agencies (Gilardi, 2002), which started to dominate in the EU's governance field and new executive centre formation (Egeberg & Trondal, 2011).

As a result, the EU's border control agency, Frontex, was established as the EU's 19th decentralised European regulatory agency. The main advantages of the agency structure were the policy expertise and know-how in a highly technical area, namely border management, and the political context that was not against this institutional

development. In particular, the European Commission was not reluctant to propose the delegation of tasks to an agency in an area that was not traditionally involved, whereas the member states considered that with this mechanism they could control more easily the policy implementation through its Management Board (Léonard, 2009: 381). Thus, the establishment of Frontex is considered as a compromise between the community-focused approach of the European Commission and the European Parliament that preferred a European Border Guard corps (Jorry, 2007: 2) and member states' reluctance to abdicate power (Kasperek, 2010: 123).

Frontex was one of the most important steps in terms of both symbolism and enhancement for border operational cooperation, as it constitutes the highest level of integration at the EU external border (Marenin, 2010: 20). Its creation was a remedy to the perceived need for an increase in cooperation at external borders amongst EU members due to migration flows, concerns for the protection of external borders that the 2004 EU expansion triggered and terrorist fear (Léonard, 2009: 375-376). Legally, it was created on the basis of the provisions of the Article 62(2) (a) and 66 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. In terms of agency delegation, it demonstrates the vertical transfer of powers from the national to EU level, signalling a shift from national coordination with the PUC schema to a more supranational approach (Rijpma, 2009: 132). EU agencies are autonomous administrative entities with formal and factual independence and can serve as multilevel networks that integrate webs of actors, professionals and experts (Trondal & Jeppesen, 2008: 418). Yet, despite its advantages, the agency structure raises specific problems, such as lack of control and accountability, legal issues due to their operating framework or challenges that stem from bureaucratic resistance (Fägersten, 2010).

2.3.2 Frontex: The creation of a border control agency

The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union - Frontex⁷ - was established by Council Regulation No. 2007/2004 in 26 October 2004 'with a view to improving the integrated management of the external borders of the member states of the European Union' (Regulation, 2004: Article 1) and became operationally active the following year on October 3, 2005. This Regulation applies to all the member states, except for

⁷ Frontex is the acronym derived from the French '*frontières extérieures*'.

the United Kingdom and Ireland that have an opt-out regime in this policy area.⁸ The founding Regulation was amended twice in 2007 and 2011. Later, it was repealed by the 2016 Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard.

Frontex's headquarters are situated in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. The decision to place the seat of Frontex in Poland, that is the biggest new EU member from the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004, was linked to the perception that the agency's operational activities would be much more intense along the EU's external eastern border than along the southern border (Hernández i Sagrera, 2014: 171), due to the enlargement towards east of the Schengen area. Yet, since its founding, Frontex's activities have mainly been focused on irregular migration flows from the southern border. Frontex is the EU border control agency tasked with coordinating, supporting and developing member states' control of their external borders (Frontex, 2012a: 3). Thus, it coordinates additional European measures to complement the national ones. Actually, it develops EU border management and promotes a pan European model of Integrated Border Security (as quoted in Vaughan-Williams, 2008: 65). It fosters a European border guard culture (Frontex, 2019b) in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the IBM concept. In particular, Frontex constitutes the cornerstone of the IBM concept (Frontex, 2010a: 75) as it is the main institutional actor in charge of implementing it (Carrera, 2007: 27). In doing so, it protects EU citizens from any illegal cross-border activity and threat, such as irregular border crossing, overstays, false or falsified documents, smuggling of goods, weapons and people, terrorism, stolen vehicles and other forms of cross-border crime.

Its main tasks, as they were shaped from its establishment and consolidation until the European Border and Coast Guard Agency formation, include the planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of joint operations at the external sea, land and air borders, the coordination of joint return operations of foreign nationals staying illegally in the EU, the development of common training standards and specialised tools as well as a pooled resource of European Border Guard Teams (EBGT) and available equipment. Another task is the short-term development of rapid border interventions in case of a crisis situation at the external border. In parallel, being an intelligence driven

⁸ It should be noted that Denmark participates 'fully' in Frontex after its implementation in its national law, despite the country's opt-out in this policy area. The legal basis for this participation is Protocol No. 22 on the position of Denmark, annexed to the Treaty on European Union (Author's written communication with Danish Ministry of Immigration and Integration, October 2017). For more information about the legal basis of this participation, see Stevnsborg (2013).

organisation, Frontex carries out risk analysis as well as it facilitates research and development activities for the advancement of border control technology (Frontex, 2016b).

Frontex is an independent and specialised EU agency after the Lisbon Treaty or quasi-supranational entity (Fiott, 2013: 53) with legal personality as well as operational, technical, administrative, legal and financial autonomy (Regulation, 2004). Frontex is governed by its Management Board, which provides strategic direction especially through the adoption of its Work Programme (Peers et al., 2012: 148) and controls Frontex's functions, such as its budget and organisational structure. The Management Board is composed of representatives of the heads of the border authorities of the EU member states that are signatories of the Schengen *acquis*,⁹ plus two representatives from the European Commission. The Schengen Associated Countries, namely Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Switzerland, also participate in the agency's Management Board meetings but retain limited voting rights to specific matters relevant to these countries and to training activities. Frontex is managed and represented by its Executive Director. The Executive Director is proposed by the European Commission and appointed by the Management Board, to which Board the Executive Director is accountable. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the agency, acts as appointing authority on behalf of Frontex, prepares and implements work programmes and activities for consideration and adoption by the Management Board, and is afforded independence. The Executive Director is assisted by a Deputy Executive Director¹⁰ and a Cabinet.

Institutionally, Frontex is divided into five divisions,¹¹ namely the Operational Response division, the Situational Awareness and Monitoring division, the Capacity Building division, the Corporate Governance division and the International and European Cooperation division. Each of these divisions is composed of various sub-units, such as the Field Deployment unit, the Frontex Situation Centre, the Risk Analysis unit and the Research and Innovation unit. There is also a Fundamental Right Office, a Data Protection Office and a Consultative Forum (Frontex, 2019c).

⁹ United Kingdom and Ireland are invited to participate in Management Board meetings without a right to vote due to their not taking part in the Schengen agreement.

¹⁰ As of January 2015, Fabrice Leggeri from France is Frontex's Executive Director. Ilkka Latinen from Finland was the first Executive Director. He passed away in 2019. Berndt Körner from Austria serves as Deputy Executive Director replacing Gil Arias-Fernández from Spain.

¹¹ Before the 2016 enhancement, Frontex was divided in three divisions, namely the Operations division, the Capacity Building division and the Corporate Governance division.

This structure aims at facilitating the agency's function and work, whereas, it also shows the variety of activities that have been developed so as Frontex to perform its role in the EU border control field. As indicated in Frontex's Work Programme, the agency has a priority oriented approach that is centred on six goals of equally importance, namely situational awareness, supporting response, emergency response, development, organisation and staff (Frontex, 2014a: 12). For each of these six goals that give strategic direction to the agency, key objectives and activities are defined and prioritised annually.

At the heart of its activities lies the domain of joint operations, namely the deployment of border guards and technical equipment at a vulnerable border (Frontex, 2015a: 18). Although the traditional nature of border control is still the responsibility of member states, Frontex is tasked with the coordination of joint operations to those border areas that are under significant migratory pressure (Frontex, 2015a: 22). Frontex's joint operations are planned and developed based on an Annual Risk Analysis report, which assesses the likely future risk of irregular migration and cross-border crime along the EU external border. During the annual meetings with member states, it prioritises the proposed joint operations on the basis of their importance and the resources available. Another important procedure is the preparation of the operational plan, which states the aims of each joint operation (Frontex, 2015a: 22). During the joint operation implementation, the deployed officers wear their national uniforms and a blue armband with the insignia of the EU and Frontex. Also, they are bound by Frontex's Code of Conduct, which entails the principles and rules that guide the conduct of all Frontex staff and persons participating in Frontex operations (Frontex, 2017b). This cycle finishes with the completion of the operation and its evaluation by Frontex, the host and the participating countries in terms of effectiveness in relation to the objectives of the operational plan.

For urgent and exceptional circumstances at the external borders, Frontex has developed an emergency response mechanism deploying rapid interventions, that is Rapid Border Intervention Teams (RABITs) for a short-term period (Regulation, 2007). In 2011, this mechanism was strengthened with the European Border Guard Teams (EBGTs), which can be deployed in all types of joint operations and not solely during rapid interventions (Regulation, 2011). This EBGT pool was considered as 'an embryonic structure which could be developed into a fully-fledged EU Border Guard Agency' (European Parliament, 2011a: 38). It should be noted that, apart from border

checks, the joint operations may also include debriefing experts and interviewers that gather information and intelligence on smuggling networks (Frontex, 2012a: 16). In addition to border control operations, Frontex also coordinates joint return operations that refer to the repatriation of foreign nationals that stay illegally in the EU to their country of origin on the basis of a return decision.

Another primary function of Frontex is risk analysis,¹² given that it constitutes the starting point for all the activities of the agency (Frontex, 2010a: 62-67). Regarding operations, risk analysis is the basis for joint operations, as the identification of a weak border area can lead to a proposal for the deployment of an operation. Moreover, apart from the launch of an operation, upon the completion of a joint operation, Frontex also carries out operational analysis, which refers to the operational procedures and aims at maximising operational effectiveness. On a daily basis, Frontex, and specifically the Risk Analysis unit, gathers and analyses data on irregular migration and border control. These data are derived from various sources, such as member states, EU bodies, international organisations, media and other sources within and beyond Europe's borders as well as from the agency's operational activities. They refer to the international security environment and all the threats or risks to the EU border security, like political, social, economic, legal, health, environmental and technological issues (Frontex, 2016a). To analyse all these data, Frontex has developed its own risk analysis model, the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)¹³ and has established several intelligence-sharing communities such as the Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN), the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) and the Eastern Borders Risk Analysis Network (EB-RAN). After data collection and analysis, it produces risk analysis reports of short, medium and long-term trends and prepares various publications, like the Annual Risk Analyses, Semi-Annual Risk Analysis, FRAN Quarterlies, and Intelligence Community Joint Reports. Information from these reports and publications is presented to the European Commission and the Council of the European Union.

¹² Risk as a term has emerged in the 16th century to describe a threat assessment by states and the private sector that justify respective actions to limit the potential risk (Petersen, 2011). In security studies, the concept of risk analysis has been linked to the threat management. In this context, a risk governance has been developed employing technologies and tools to face the risk creating a risk society (Beck, 1992, 2002).

¹³ For more information on CIRAM, see chapter 6.2.1.

On situational awareness, a crucial structure is the Frontex Situation Centre (FSC), which has been created to provide a real time and constantly updated picture of Europe's external borders. Apart from situation monitoring, operational support and mission awareness, FSC undertakes media monitoring, serves as an official contact point, while, at the same time, provides crisis management support in the event of a rapid intervention (Frontex, 2019d). Although, it has a different function and nature, as it deals only with non-traditional security threats, the establishment of the FSC follows the pre-existing situation centres of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Peacekeeping Situation Centre of the United Nations and the EU Joint Situation Centre (Léonard, 2010: 243).

Regarding the capacity building division, the work of the Research and Innovation unit is pivotal. In particular, Frontex is rather active in exploring innovative technologies for efficient border management, namely border check and border surveillance (Marin, 2011; Frontex, 2019e). In this regard, it brings together producers and end-users organising workshops and releasing studies. Moreover, it informs member states and the European Commission with the developments in the field by providing input for policy development. Also, it notifies and cooperates with the research and development community so as to provide a picture with the operational and technical needs at the EU external border. Apart from technology, Frontex's research and development also focuses on various social research issues, such as ethics in border management and corruption. To this end, it participates in the definition and assessment of research projects funded under the Security section of the European Commission funded research programme (Frontex, 2012a: 22).

This unit has also developed Eurosur. The European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur) aims at fostering border-related information exchange and improving situational awareness and reaction capability by enabling real-time sharing of data. It involves a shared IT platform that enables participating authorities to instantly see and assess the situation at and beyond the EU external border (Regulation, 2013). Its purpose is centred on preventing irregular migration, fight organised crime and prevent deaths of migrants at sea (Regulation, 2013). For its implementation, each member state has created a National Coordination Centre (NCC) that is responsible to collate data and inform the system, while Frontex manages the information and acts as a central hub of Eurosur (Fotiadis, 2015: 81; Rijpma & Vermeulen, 2015: 454). Currently, implementing the enhanced Eurosur Fusion Services, Eurosur provides expanded

surveillance services using optical and radar satellite technology. These services entail automated vessel tracking and detection capabilities, software for the prediction of vessel positions, as well as weather and oceanographic forecasts (Frontex, 2019d).

Another key aspect constitutes Frontex's training. In particular, Frontex assists with border guard education and training so as to set out the best practices and achieve a joint approach and uniform standards in border control. So far, Frontex's activities have led to the development of common training standards, EU training modules, common curricula and comparable qualifications at EU level, including a Common Core Curriculum and specialised training. Furthermore, Frontex has initiated an 18-month European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management programme that is supported by a consortium of universities, border guard academies, and experts and aims at sharing knowledge and achieving a European border guard culture (Frontex, 2014b: 7). Through training, Frontex has contributed to the convergence of policies and the integration of the EU external border through the socialisation of border guards and the creation of a professional community at the European level (Horii, 2012).

Thus, Frontex integrates and deepens existing border control structures, while, at the same time, it builds new forms of cooperation with the establishment of networks or partnerships within which it has a central role (Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 907). In this category, examples include networks, such as the European Patrol Network, the Information and Coordination Network and the Frontex Risk Analysis Network. Frontex also cooperates with third countries, EU structures and other organisations, like NATO (NATO, 2016). Frontex's external cooperation activities mostly cover information exchange, risk analysis, training, capacity building, pilot projects and joint operations (Trauner, 2016a: 1).

2.3.3 An evolving Frontex

For the past eleven years, Frontex's role has been substantially reinforced. Institutionally, the first step for this enhancement was the 2007 revision of Frontex's founding Regulation with the inclusion of the deployment of 'Rapid Border Intervention Teams' and the powers of guest officers at external borders (Regulation, 2007). A major reform for the agency was the subsequent 2011 amendment of its Regulation that delegated to Frontex new powers at operational level with a view to implement the IBM concept. Also, this Regulation consolidated Frontex's role as a border control actor. Apart from the provision for a Fundamental Rights Officer and a

Consultative Forum to ensure the respect for fundamental rights, the 2011 revision granted greater autonomy to Frontex and further enhanced its operational capabilities by giving the right to purchase or rent its own technical equipment, to create European Border Guard Teams, to collect and exchange personal data of irregular migrants, to draft a Code of Conduct applicable to all operations, to develop information systems and foster operational cooperation by deploying its own liaison officers in third countries (Regulation, 2011). Frontex's capacity was further strengthened in 2013 with the establishment of Eurosur managed by the agency, as it lays the foundation for a common monitoring and information-sharing environment at external borders (Regulation, 2013). Whereas, the 2016 decision to establish a European Border and Coast Guard upgrades Frontex and constitutes a cornerstone for the EU border control field (Regulation, 2016).

More specifically, the European Commission in December 2015 proposed to expand Frontex's mandate and tasks establishing a European Border and Coast Guard (European Commission, 2015b) so as to be better equipped with facing the new challenges, both as regards migration and internal security (European Commission, 2016c). It was envisaged to constitute a key policy response to the 2015 migration crisis (Carrera & den Hertog, 2016: 2). The European Border and Coast Guard Agency was created in record time of just ten months, and was launched on 6 October 2016 at Kapitan Andreevo checkpoint. The 'European Border and Coast Guard Agency' has replaced the 'European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union' having the same legal personality, premises, and acronym, namely, 'Frontex'.

Despite the continuity with the previous agency, the new Frontex has a strengthened and enlarged mandate indicating its power over the member states (De Bruycker, 2016: 561). In particular, under the new mandate Frontex is now able to draw on a rapid reserve pool of at least 1,500 border guards who can be deployed within three days and a technical equipment pool. It can also perform periodic risk analyses and annual vulnerability assessments to identify risks at external borders and assess the ability of each EU member state to face challenges. Furthermore, it can send liaison officers and launch operations on the territory of non-EU countries neighbouring at least one participating member state. It can also deploy liaison officers to member states for situation monitoring and coordinate voluntary departures. To further help in the return of irregular migrants, Frontex has created Return Intervention Teams.

Furthermore, Frontex can provide support at hotspot areas with screening, debriefing and identification deploying Migration Management Support Teams. In this spirit, emphasis is also given to Frontex's role in training, research activities and the need to focus on various forms of cross-border crimes, including the fight against terrorism, as well as the extensive use and process of personal data (Regulation, 2016). In terms of financial and human resources, Frontex has experienced an extensive upgrading (Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 904). Frontex commenced its operations in October 2005 with 44 staff members, but today it employs around 500 staff members at its headquarters in Warsaw. Likewise, its budget has significantly increased from 6.3 million euros in 2005 to 333 million euros in 2019¹⁴ (Frontex, 2019f). Frontex's revenues stem from four different strands, namely the Commission subsidy, contributions from the countries that participate in the Schengen *acquis*, fees charged for provided services, and any voluntary contribution from the member states (Léonard, 2012: 161).

Regarding Frontex's independence, it should be noted that agencies are supposed to operate free of all political influence (Busuioc, 2009: 600). In fact, Frontex's work is not related to the EU institutions, namely the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament (Guild & Bigo, 2010: 268). Considering the European Commission, it does not participate in the operational plan and execution of joint operations. Furthermore, during the Management Board meetings, in many occasions the European Commission has been outvoted (Font, 2015: 11), which manifests Commission's decreasing influence and Frontex's high autonomy. This raises an important point taking into account that voting for this EU agency is a regular practice of decision-making that impacts on internal power balances (Font, 2015: 11-12). Also, despite that Frontex is accountable to the European Parliament, reports to its Committees and there is a budgetary control over the agency, representatives from the European Parliament have occasionally raised the lack of parliamentary oversight of Frontex as well as the shortcoming of a robust fundamental rights compliance system (European Parliament, 2016), while many suggestions for amendments have been rejected via the consultation procedure (Léonard, 2012: 159-160, 162). Now, concerning member states, reflecting an intergovernmental organisation, they constitute the main stakeholders that control the workings of the agency. This is manifested in the composition of the Management Board, as it is

¹⁴ For more data about budget and staff growth, see chapter 6.3.1.

composed of one representative of each member state. Notwithstanding the power of member states and their control mechanisms over Frontex, this agency as a bureaucratic institution has developed its own organisational character and working methods. In parallel, due to its expanded mandate it has started to savour a level of autonomy. For instance, Frontex's role is not limited to providing operational assistance to member states but also carries out and directs operations (Mungianu, 2013: 379) as well as it analyses the risk situation at EU external borders to identify priorities (Monar, 2006b: 502). Also, the agency has the 'right to intervene' operationally in a member's territory irrespective of its consent (Regulation, 2016).

To date, Frontex has received a considerable amount of public attention and criticism, mainly from advocacy groups that underline the human rights violations that have occurred during its joint operations (Amnesty International and European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011). For this reason, several protest demonstrations have been organised under the slogans 'Shut down Frontex' and 'Frontex kills'. At the same time, its activities became also a matter of political and legal scrutiny mainly from the European Parliament, the British House of Lords (2008), the European Ombudsman (2012) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).¹⁵ Likewise, many scholars have expressed their concerns regarding Frontex's legality emphasising on human rights breaches (Fisher-Lescano et al., 2009; Baldaccini, 2010; Papastavridis, 2010; Babická, 2011; Campesi, 2014; Marin, 2014; Mitsilegas, 2015; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Fink, 2018), the agency's transparency and accountability deficit (Pollak & Slominski, 2009; Pandit, 2012; Carrera & den Hertog, 2015; Ferraro & De Capitani, 2016), its involvement in the securitisation of migration (Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012; Perkins & Rumford, 2013; Moreno-Lax, 2018), the extra-territorialisation of migration control to third countries (Carrera, 2007; Rijpma & Cremona, 2007; Wolff, 2008; Guild & Bigo, 2010; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011; Fink, 2012; Takle, 2012; Slominski, 2013; Triandafyllidou, 2014), and the creation of an emergency-driven environment (Neal, 2009; Edler, 2013; Carrera & den Hertog, 2016). Yet, despite this criticism and attention, which demonstrates that Frontex constitutes a controversial institution, the competencies of Frontex continue to be reinforced and,

¹⁵ In the *Hirsi Jamaa and others v. Italy* case the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights assessed the non-refoulement obligation including in its examination the Frontex Regulation as a relevant aspect of the EU Law (ECtHR, 2012).

therefore, its presence at the EU external border rendering it as an integral part of the EU border policy formation and implementation.

Taking into account that Europe is in the epicentre of an unprecedented migrant crisis, the worst since World War II (OECD, 2015: 1), and populist trends have re-emerged, borders and their control has been rendered as a dominant concern for the EU leaders. This puts forth new determinants, possibilities, developments, controversies and border trajectories at the EU external border. It also brings attention to Frontex rendering it as a referent object for the EU border evolution and European project of re-territorialisation. After all, Frontex is an actor that not only operates at the border and implements border control activities, but, rather, ‘rules’ over the European border regime (Vollmer & von Boemcken, 2014: 61).

2.4 Assessing the *acquis académique*

The growing popularity and controversy on Frontex, since its establishment, was accompanied by a rising scholarly interest. But the content of this interest seems rather partial. In particular, most academic literature examines only certain aspects of Frontex, such as the agency’s establishment (Léonard, 2009; Neal, 2009; Pollak & Slominski, 2009; Edler, 2013; Ekelund, 2014) and expansion (Niemann & Speyer, 2018; Ripoll Servent, 2018; Scipioni, 2018), its governance framework (Cortinovis, 2015), the promotion of humanitarianism (Perkowski, 2018), its gendered power relations (Stachowitsch & Sachseder, 2019) and the human rights implications of Frontex’s activities and its compliance with International and European Law (Wolff, 2008; Fisher-Lescano et al., 2009; Baldaccini, 2010; Fink, 2012; Papastavridis, 2010; Coppens, 2012; Perkowski, 2012; Slominski, 2013; Campesi, 2014; Marin, 2014; Aas & Gundhus, 2015; Carrera & den Hertog, 2015; Mitsilegas, 2015; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Mungianu, 2016; Santos Vara, 2016; Coman-Kund, 2018).

These reflections do not analyse the impact of Frontex on European border control, despite Frontex being the EU’s border control agency tasked with coordinating member states’ control of their external borders. But Frontex, after the agency’s reform with the 2011 amendment of its founding Regulation that enhanced its operational capabilities (Regulation, 2011) and its 2016 upgrade to a European Border and Coast Guard that establishes ‘shared responsibility’ for border control (Regulation, 2016), has a central and now an even more growing presence at the external borders. Hence, an appropriate contextualisation of Frontex’s role and development should include the

border control dimension and particularly its dynamic as well as evolving nature and complexities.

In this context, certain accounts acknowledge Frontex as an object of study integrated in a border control context. However, a large part of this literature is empirical and descriptive in nature lacking any theoretical basis. In this category belongs Wiedemann's paper on the transformation of European border regime. Accordingly, Wiedemann (2011), following an empirical line of argument and drawing conclusions from Frontex's joint operation Hera launched on the request of Spain to tackle the migration flow towards the Canary Islands, argues that Frontex impacts border control through the externalisation of migration control into countries of origin and transit. Having a similar empirical focus, Carrera (2007), Jorry (2007) and Hernández i Sagrera (2014) assess the role of Frontex in the IBM implementation. While Mungianu (2013) using a legal analysis claims that the establishment of Frontex marked a considerable amount of supranationalisation on the EU external border control policy area. Other scholars provide theoretically informed works, which contribute to a more in-depth analysis of Frontex's impact on border control. In this vein, it is possible to capture and distinguish three main streams within the scope of the academic literature that reflects on Frontex's presence at the EU borders; the security stream, the institutionalist stream and the border stream.

2.4.1 Frontex through a security prism

A dominant part of the scholarship is centred on Frontex's link to security and accordingly it views Frontex as a security institution. Having as common theoretical reference Didier Bigo's approach to security (2002), these accounts underline Frontex's involvement in the process of securitisation of migration. Therefore, they focus on the migration-security nexus. In particular, Bigo has developed the idea of a 'governmentality of unease', which is characterised by practices of surveillance that select and control, rather than speech acts that constitute the theoretical basis for securitisation as developed by the Copenhagen School's approach to Security Studies (Buzan et al., 1998). According to Bigo, a 'ban-opticon' dispositif¹⁶ of control is established that indicates the surveillance and profiling of a number of individuals

¹⁶ The 'ban-opticon' dispositif is a term coined by Didier Bigo combining Foucault's analysis of Bentham's 'panopticon' to describe the surveillance, exceptionalism and profiling of people along with a dispositif of bans and restrictions.

instead of everyone. This environment of unease leads to the creation of a wide field of professionals in the management of unease and fear. In the migration domain, this 'governmentality of unease' accompanied by surveillance practices, diffuses the link drawn between migration and security and perpetuates the belief that migration is a security challenge.

In this light, Léonard (2010) adopts a sociological perspective to securitisation, advanced by Bigo (2002; 2008) and Balzacq (2008), which privileges the role of practices over that of discourses in securitisation processes. According to Léonard, instead of speech acts, the use of practices as a research tool is better equipped regarding the study of securitisation in the EU asylum and migration policy. This is due to the fact that the EU asylum and migration policy has not only been securitised, but this securitisation has also been institutionalised. Another reason that prompts to opt for practices is the lack of a traditional public sphere in the EU, which would enable to trace the structure of speech acts in a discourse context. For Léonard, securitising practices are activities that convey the idea that asylum seekers and migrants present a security threat to the EU. To apply this definition in her research, she identifies two criteria for the identification of securitising practices. The first concerns the adoption of practices for the management of issues that are perceived to be security challenges. The second refers to the extraordinary character of the adopted practices. These two criteria are applied to the case of Frontex through the examination of the agency's activities. Her analysis concludes that all the main Frontex's activities can be considered to be securitising practices. This highlights the contribution of Frontex's practices to the 'semi-militarisation' of border controls and the ongoing securitisation of asylum and migration in the EU.

In the same spirit, Chillaud (2012), drawing also from Bigo (2002), investigates Frontex's participation in the securitisation of migration in Europe. His framework tries to combine speech acts and practices. In particular, he considers practice and speech act as complementary perspectives of securitisation. Hence, he studies both Frontex's discourse and practice in two main areas, that is Frontex's origins and Frontex's functioning focusing on its maritime joint operations and certain EU documents, such as the European Security Strategy (ESS) and some Commission communications. Following this analysis, he contends that Frontex supports the securitisation of migration issues in Europe, as it has become the institutional result of the association between security, migration and border controls (2012: 56). However, this causes

certain challenges to the function of Frontex, such as criticism about the agency's legality as well as to operate in a fluid context. This fluidity reflects and characterises the overall EU migration and border policy as it is trapped somewhere between intergovernmental and supranational organisation, as the EU itself.

Building on Léonard (2010) and Chillaud (2012), Horii (2016) inserts in her analysis Bigo's concept of risk (2002) broadening the conceptualisation of securitisation. From this perspective, emphasis is given to the security-migration nexus by framing migration as a risk factor. According to Horii, this perspective emphasises the effect of the risk analysis function of Frontex on EU external border management, which constitutes a core task of Frontex. More specifically, Horii's analysis is divided in two sections. First, she examines the role of Frontex in constructing the risk for EU's external border. This entails the exploration of what Frontex considers as risk, the methods for data extraction and analysis as well as the actors that are involved in this process. Then, she scrutinises how the risk analysis is used in the EU decision-making process having as case studies the Schengen Governance Package that reflects on the rules for internal security and the External Borders Fund that refers to funding distribution. Drawing from this insight, Horii notes that Frontex links migration and security by framing migration as a risk factor. Also, Frontex with its risk analysis function can exercise influence on the EU border management decision-making process. This is achieved taking into account that Frontex's risk analysis is applied as knowledge in the EU decision-making. After all, this has already been witnessed in the two cases explored, which touch upon the access to EU funding and the perception of member states regarding border management capacity.

2.4.2 Frontex through an institutionalist prism

Another strand of the literature examines Frontex focusing on the institutionalisation of EU's border control policy. These reflections, which are rooted in the discipline of EU governance, consider Frontex as a policy instrument and study a patterned action, or, put differently, an institutionalised action. Indeed, Frontex's establishment, as an EU border control agency, is part of a chosen policy practice, which manifests the different layers of EU governance and the extensive institutionalisation of migration and border control EU policy over the last years.

In this vein, from a public policy optic, Wolff and Schout (2013) examine Frontex as an EU governance instrument. Building upon Scharpf's (1999) understanding of

legitimacy, they develop a framework to assess the legitimacy of EU agencies and try to answer whether the agency structure has brought any changes in the EU policy implementation in comparison with other policy choices. This research endeavour follows the path of a previous analysis that has applied the same model to the European Aviation Safety Agency (Schout, 2008). To discover any innovation and added value of the agency instrument, they draw on Scharpf's concept of legitimacy. In particular, according to Scharpf, democratic legitimacy has two dimensions, which refer to the inputs and the outputs of a political system. Accordingly, input legitimacy describes the concept of 'government by the people', whereas output legitimacy entails the logic of 'government for the people'. Through this prism, Wolff and Schout try to assess Frontex as a policy instrument in terms of political suitability and legitimacy. For Wolff and Schout, input legitimacy includes hierarchical and administrative controls, while output legitimacy relates to the agency's effectiveness. After defining their main terms and introducing this legitimacy-based model, they apply the proposed methodology to the case of Frontex, analysing the structure that preceded Frontex as well as Frontex itself through its tasks. In conclusion, they contend that Frontex as an agency structure of EU governance has not been a major addition to the EU's border control, as it did not result in its legitimisation.

Horii (2012) inspired by the ideas of sociological institutionalists¹⁷ and drawing from institutional isomorphism, elaborates on the effect of Frontex to the EU border management field drawing attention to intra-organisational behaviour and institutional homogenisation. More specifically, institutional isomorphism focuses on processes of homogenisation, which take place through the initial institutionalisation, then the diffusion or socialisation and finally the homogenisation of organisational processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this light, Horii explores the area of border guard training through an institutionalist approach so as to discern any integrative effect or convergence through practices of socialisation and professionalisation of border guards. She opts for a normative explanation according to which a 'logic of appropriateness' dictates the behaviour and action of actors within an institution. Put differently, actors follow appropriate behaviour and rules. This indicates a conformism in their conducts. As Horii notes, this convergence of practices can be achieved through socialisation with

¹⁷ Sociological institutionalism focuses on sociological dimensions of institutions and is part of the 'new institutionalism' in political science and sociology developed in the 1980s and early 1990s, when a resurgent interest in the study of institutions emerged (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

the repeated interaction of a group of people. Having as unit of analysis both the organisations and individual border guards, Horii tries to trace the convergent impact of Frontex's training through the experiences of border guard officers. The research method that she chooses is the conduct of semi-structured interviews. According to the outcome of her research, Frontex's training activities have brought an integrative effect to the field producing socialisation and professionalisation of European border guards.

Similarly, Paul (2017) examines risk analysis as an institutionalising governance tool. Accordingly, applying an interpretive policy analysis and using semi-structures interviews, she considers risk analysis as a case of risk-based governance. Actually, the model of risk-based governance studies the relationship between risk and governance highlighting 'institutional risks', namely bureaucratic failure or legitimacy liabilities (Rothstein, 2006: 216). Following this model, Paul's aim is to interrogate how risk analysis is being utilised to advance the harmonisation of European border control assessing its institutionalising function. To do so, she examines three cases; the Eurosur impact level assessment, the Schengen evaluation and monitoring mechanism and the resource allocation in the Internal Security Fund. These cases of risk analysis application are being investigated in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and de-politicisation. She concludes that risk analysis can contribute to the institutionalisation of EU-level border control by advancing its harmonisation with 'soft' processes (2017: 697).

2.4.3 Frontex through a border prism

Border, as a research area, has been revitalised in the last decades. This renewed interest and vision has been characterised by the inclusion of non-traditional institutions, actors and structures in the analysis. Following this, the exploration of Frontex as a border control entity is portrayed in certain works developed within the critical paradigm. These accounts focus on the spatial mobility of the border. Drawing from this analysis, emphasis is given to borders' roles in eroding the inside/outside spatial dichotomy and the parallel processes of inclusion and exclusion that exist at borders or borderlands. Border erosion is being enabled, for instance, with the use of new technologies, like drones that develop a technological border space (Csernaton, 2018). This understanding prioritises the function of symbolic borders neglecting in some cases the actual borders. Moreover, this focus on mobility underlines a state/citizen separation

and opposition that prevails in the analysis of borders undermining the other actors that function at the borders.

In this context, Vaughan-Williams (2008) analyses Frontex by applying the notion of 'borderwork', which investigates the role of ordinary people in making and unmaking borders (Rumford, 2009). Inspired by R. B. J. Walker (1993) and E. Balibar's critical reflection that 'borders are no longer at the border' (1998: 217), he tries to trace any bordering practices that were included in the measures to tackle the threat of terrorism in the EU. In particular, Balibar underlines the multiplication of borders instead of their disappearance. At the same time, it is possible to witness a reduction in their localisation (Balibar, 1998: 220). Similarly, Walker's (1993) theorisation of the inside/outside division manifests the exclusionary character of borders as the sovereign state determines who belongs inside and who outside its territory. In this context, Vaughan-Williams (2008) studies the surveillance activities of Frontex employed during operation Hera in the Canary Islands and Africa as well as the surveillance strategies among suspicious populations arising from the anti-terrorist initiatives and their link to EU citizenship. These two cases of surveillance are considered as forms of borderwork that complicate the inside/outside framing (Vaughan-Williams, 2008: 77), as they do not take place at the geographical location of borders. Especially, regarding the case of Frontex, Vaughan-Williams indicates that the surveillance strategies employed during operation Hera can be considered as emerging bordering practices that change the location of border controls thereby eroding the internal/external distinction. Hence, Frontex's borderwork produces a border outside the space of border.

The role of Frontex in border control has also been underlined by Reid-Henry (2013), who puts forward an incorporating approach that, following Foucault, prioritises the geopolitical rationalities of the border. On this basis, through the investigation of Frontex's maritime joint operations, Hera and Nautilus, at North Africa and a comparison of the re-territorialisation of America's borders, Reid-Henry shows that Frontex's approach has managerial and experimental elements. In particular, the managerial role refers to Frontex's attempt to enhance European cooperation through its management skills and administrative function. In parallel, the experimental facet reflects Frontex's policy experimentation, which facilitates processes of extra-territorialisation and intra-territorialisation across the EU borders. However, these two elements of managerialism and experimentalism in Frontex's function lead to a goal-oriented or, else, aggressive approach, where goals are considered as more important

than ethics, ideals and normative values. Indeed, according to Reid-Henry, Frontex incorporates in the EU's border control regime practices of neighbouring countries that can transform EU's values and conception of democracy, while, at the same time, it reproduces the border as a mobile deterrent (2013: 215). Following this logic, he underlines the agency's pervasive effect upon European border control practices and advocates that Frontex is putting into place an 'incorporating geopolitics' of the border by developing a politics of politico-legal exception as its own operating norm (2013: 204).

Equally, Perkins and Rumford (2013) critically approach Frontex under a vernacularised border studies prism that highlights the cosmopolitanism of borders and the role of ordinary people in bordering activities, taking into consideration that borders are not any more under the exclusive authority of states. To illuminate the local and global interaction in bordering practices, Perkins and Rumford apply their framework of vernacularised borders in the case of Frontex, in the UK's offshore border as well as in the 'Stroud pound', which is a complementary currency scheme introduced in the British town of Stroud. All these cases demonstrate the processes of fixity and unfixity that dominate borders as well as highlight dimensions of the cosmopolitanisation of borders. In particular, cosmopolitanism turns the attention to the ability of citizens to contest state bordering practices and produce their own bordering and, in turn, institutional realities. This context brings in light a different type of borders as well as alters the relation between people and things (Perkins & Rumford, 2013: 274). Drawing on this insight, in the case of Frontex, they highlight the agency's practices of selective fixing and unfixing of border components during its joint operations in the Mediterranean and the west coast of Africa. This process, leads to the development of flexible borders that are mobile so as to be able to undertake bordering functions at different places and away from the actual geographic location of borders. The selective contribution of Frontex in processes of fixity and unfixity at borders does not only shift the space of bordering activities. In parallel, through semantic ordering, Frontex also opens up the border importing non-EU influences and practices overlooking human rights breaches from third countries.

2.5 Discussion

The relevant academic literature, despite its variety of conceptual interpretations and empirical accounts stemming from security, institutionalist and border rationales, fails

to recognise the existence of a border control community consisting of the actors that act and interact at the EU external border. This signifies a twofold gap, as the failure to capture the formation of a border control community does not only result in its total absence in the research, but most importantly it misses the interaction of its members and therefore the border control community's development and evolution. Indeed, an investigation of Frontex's interaction with the other members of the border control community, although it has not been explored yet, constitutes an essential dimension in order to discern Frontex's impact on border control.

Apart from the lack of including in the analysis the border control community, the scholars reviewed above derive their understanding from heterogeneous disciplines having therefore diverse research focus and objectives. This conveys considerable fragmentation, as each of these three main strands is produced in isolation from one another, and hinders the dialogue among the distinct accounts. Also, they do not seek to open their research inserting and combining elements from other fields. This narrow focus limits the analysis, providing instead a distorted picture of Frontex that conceals important elements of its nature.

More specifically, the works that focus on security (Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012; Horii, 2016), although they study key aspects of Frontex that have triggered serious challenges from the agency's very establishment, they entail a negative logic. The securitisation perspective regards security as an inherently negative concept that is accompanied by exceptional measures and existential threats, namely that of migration, which threatens the welfare and the identity of the state. This negatively-driven security or risk environment tends to be self-referential in the analysis prejudging part of the research outcomes. In addition, emphasising the exceptional character of security practices disregards the long-term context and the institutional settings. Moreover, these works reckon on the securitisation of migration issues in Europe and do not study or establish any link between the agency, the audience and the context or structure required to trace the securitisation process (Balzacq, 2005).

The part of the literature that emphasises the institutionalisation of EU's border control policy (Horii, 2012; Wolff & Schout, 2013) treats Frontex solely as a tool of government. Even Paul's analysis (2017), despite referring to EU-level actors, considers Frontex as a part of the European multi-level governance designed to enhance European Commission's power. In this vein, Frontex and its risk analysis become a tool serving to justify European Commission's decision-making. Nevertheless, this seems

quite problematic in the case of Frontex, as, though technocratic, it constitutes an agency that has enhanced competences in the sensitive area of border management, which relates to national state power and sovereignty (Deleixhe & Duez, 2019). It should be mentioned, that within this stream, Horii's work refers to a professional community by drawing attention to intra-organisational behaviour and institutional homogenisation. However, neither Frontex as an EU entity and organisation nor a wide border control policy community is included in her analysis, as she does not take into consideration the different actors and agents that act at the border. Rather, she studies border guards as individuals that have the same profession so as to assess their socialisation and professionalisation through training activities. Thus, such a research cannot be considered as a genuinely representative account of the border control policy community. Furthermore, these institutionalist perspectives seem to focus on the structure and not the agency, despite undertaking an exploration of the latter. Hence, the institutional domain alone cannot fully grasp Frontex's complex role and illuminate its presence at the EU external border.

The same prioritisation of the structure over the agency applies to the reflections that focus on the element of borders (Vaughan-Williams, 2008; Perkins & Rumford, 2013; Reid-Henry, 2013). These works, in spite of being able to include in their research the place where Frontex acts, directing therefore the interest to geo-spatial dynamics, emphasise the structure, namely the border, and not the agency, that is Frontex as an actor that impacts the borders. Consequently, Frontex becomes an example which shows and justifies the current border dynamics and not the factor that shapes and alters them.

Most studies consider Frontex as a policy instrument or a vehicle for bordering practices and not an actor (Reid-Henry, 2013: 200). For this reason, Frontex is deprived of any analytical value. Also, according to the application of the theoretical approaches presented in the scholarly literature and their selected research design, Frontex is not assessed as an independent variable. Instead, the securitisation of migration (Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012) risk analysis (Horii, 2016; Paul, 2017) training (Horii, 2012), surveillance activities (Vaughan-Williams, 2008), governance practices of bordering (Perkins & Rumford, 2013), geopolitical rationalities (Reid-Henry, 2013) and the agency structure (Wolff & Schout, 2013) are regarded as independent variables. Yet, in research analysis, the independent variable has greater causal or explanatory power as it can affect or cause variation in the other variables. Following this logic, an analysis

that considers Frontex as an explanatory factor or, put differently, an independent variable is missing from the existing literature. The remedy of this research orientation and conduct can offer a different analytical prism, focusing on Frontex, which, in turn, can yield new insights into EU border control.

Regarding the orientation of the empirical research, the literature provides an incomplete picture of Frontex's function, as it is based solely on operational activities. In fact, the reviewed scholars draw conclusions based solely on the operational activities, such as maritime joint operations (Carrera, 2007; Vaughan-Williams, 2008; Wiedemann, 2011; Chillaud, 2012; Perkins & Rumford, 2013; Reid-Henry, 2013) training (Horri, 2012) risk analysis (Horii, 2016; Paul, 2017) or operational cooperation with third countries (Hernández i Sagrera, 2014), while others opt for a combination of multiple operational activities (Jorry, 2007; Léonard, 2010; Mungianu, 2013; Wolff & Schout, 2013). This operational activity-based research, though, leads to a partial study of Frontex's function. Thus, a holistic approach is needed so as to take into account all the dimensions and areas of Frontex's impact. This can be achieved moving beyond its operations to a more elaborated and inclusive scrutiny of Frontex's role within the European border control community.

This discussion shows the different approaches to the study of Frontex and border control, the dimensions that they emphasise, as well as the limits and challenges that they pose for Frontex's reinvigoration. However, Frontex is not only an institutional entity that operates at the EU external border and deals with border security issues. It also has a multifaceted function, which is embedded in a complex socially constructed environment. In this light, a different prism is needed so as to open up the analysis and enrich Frontex's exploration with all of its characteristics.

To this end, this thesis suggests an alternative approach that allows focusing on Frontex as a policy actor of the border control community. In doing so, it advances a constructivist line of inquiry emphasising culture. This directs the focus of the research to actors without ignoring the context in which they are integrated and act. Also, it constitutes an area that has not yet been included in Frontex's research, neglecting therefore an important aspect of Frontex. This neglect leads to an important analytical lacuna given that culture gives meaning to the world informing social processes and content. Hence, Frontex, as an actor of this environment, is shaping ideas, perceptions and beliefs, while at the same time it produces knowledge through its various activities, such as the suggestion and launch of operational measures, organisation of workshops

and events, data dissemination and risk analysis publications. In other words, Frontex also affects the border control community through its practices and ideas. This point is particularly important and needs to be further investigated taking into account that social reality is inter-subjective as every 'knowledge structure' is constituted and reproduced by members of a community (Adler, 1997: 326). This indicates a dialectical interplay between social activities and cognitive structures, namely collective meanings, common understandings and belief systems, which shape and evolve the border control culture of the border control community (Zaiotti, 2011: 29). Thus, the lack of an approach that explores the border control community constitutes a substantial gap in the literature that this research tries to address in order to capture a different role of Frontex in the EU border control.

Chapter 3: The theoretical scene

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the two central themes of this thesis, namely borders and Frontex. In parallel, it presented and critically reviewed the scholarly literature that engages with Frontex's impact on European border control, distinguishing three main streams; the security stream, the institutionalist stream and the border stream. Yet, a substantial gap in the literature was revealed that refers to the non-inclusion of the border control policy community in the analysis due to the failure to recognise its existence. To remedy this gap this thesis suggests an alternative exploration putting forward a cultural approach aiming at scrutinising Frontex's role, as a border control actor embedded in a border control policy community at the EU external borders. To do so, this cultural approach follows a constructivist line of inquiry, which provides the theoretical basis to unfold and interpret a cultural approach.

In applying and operationalising this cultural approach and its theoretical orientation, 'cultures of border control' is adopted as an analytical framework that enables to link culture with border control, whilst focusing on Frontex, as a member of the border control community. The main elements of this framework are presented and adapted to answer the main research question: '*how does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?*', having as a reference the 'Westphalia', 'Schengen' and 'Brussels' typologies of cultures of border control which correspond to three different regimes for EU border control practice. This chapter starts with an overview of culture as an approach in social studies and continues with its conceptual investigation and importance as a research element. Then, the theoretical trajectory of social constructivism is presented providing an overview of its consolidation as a theoretical position in international relations and EU studies and situating it in this thesis. Subsequently, the analytical framework of 'cultures of border control' is described, along with the Westphalia, Schengen and Brussels typologies. The last section explores how this research applies culture of border control in Frontex and EU borders referring to the thesis' research question and hypotheses, the sequential path for the scrutiny of EU border control and the border and border control actors.

3.2 Re-theorising / reintroducing Frontex: A cultural approach

3.2.1 The rise of culture

In sciences various approaches have emerged to answer questions, organise knowledge and provide explanations. Regarding social sciences, from the days of ancient Greece and Rome, matters of politics or other social issues started to be scrutinised and analysed in a methodological and systematic way. This led to the development of distinct approaches in political inquiry, namely different ways to denote the criteria by which questions and data are selected and considered (Van Dyke, 1960: 34). Conventionally, these approaches had mostly legal or philosophical roots and were normative in nature without establishing any link between theory and practice (Salvadori, 1950). However, with the occurrence of the World War II and the revolutionary changes that accompanied the fall of the Iron Curtain, the traditional focus of the study of politics and international relations got substituted by a new scope that emphasised alternative approaches and tools for the study of social phenomena.

In this post-Cold War context, culture started to emerge as a relevant ideational explanation and approach in the social study, especially in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Bourdieu, 1993; Huntington, 1993; Connor, 1994). This culturalism emphasised that, instead of material interpretations, ideational factors best account for explaining how the world works (Desch, 1998: 141). As a result, this cultural resurgence initiated a novel thinking that moves beyond numbers to practices, representations and cultural meanings (Jackson, 2008: 157). In particular, culture etymologically is linked to the word ‘cultivate’, which refers to the action of tilling the soil (Schoenmakers, 2012: 9). Culture as a term first appeared in the writings of the Roman philosopher Cicero, who wrote about the ‘*cultura animi*’, namely the cultivation of the soul (Schoenmakers, 2012: 9). Following this, in 1830, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge suggests that civilisation should be grounded in cultivation for polishing purposes (as quoted in Reeves, 2004: 3). Gradually, the metaphorical meaning of culture prevailed signifying human’s evolution reaching the stage of civilised, as opposed to nature (Hobbes, 1962 [1651]; Williams, 1976) or savagery (Tylor, 1974 [1871]; Montesquieu, 1989 [1748]: 290-291).

This reflects an evolutionary prism that was also adopted by various anthropologists and sociologists. As such, the father of modern sociology, Max Weber, emphasised the importance of cultural influences informing social reality (1949; 2012

[1905]). Similarly, drawing from Weber's work, Clifford Geertz argued that the human is suspended in webs of significance, which constitute culture (1973: 5). A different cultural analysis was developed by Franz Boas, who underlined culture's relativistic character. According to Boas, human's behaviour is heterogeneous taking into account that various cultures exist (1966 [1940]: 243-259). Another influential cultural analysis, although recent, has been proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, who developed a cultural theory of action, suggesting that cultural predispositions shape social interaction and action (1980; 1993; 1998). Hence, a growing literature on culture was formed that highlighted its relevance in social sciences. Indeed, soon culture occupied a central position in the 'toolbox' of anthropologists and sociologists that take into account the role of symbolic systems in the ordering of social life (Scott, 2008: 39).

Regarding the field of international relations, culture became a relevant concept for the scholarship in the 1930s (Crawford, 2002: 59). However, the context in which the mainstream approaches theorised culture referred solely to states and civilisations (Crawford, 2002: 60). More specifically, in the World War II period, a cultural argumentation was formulated to explain the organisation and battles between Axis powers and the Allies (Benedict, 1946; Legro, 1994). In turn, in the 1940s and 1950s discriminatory ideology and nationalist rhetoric were developed to connect culture and state behaviour justified on anthropological terms (Lantis, 2002: 91). Following this, during World War II, culture was considered to be controlled by the state operating as propaganda, while during the Cold War it became a weapon of ideology (Brinkley, 1996: 320-321; Otis, 2009: 172). Notwithstanding this controversial application of culture for interpretation and justification of national or state action (Lantis, 2002: 91), a tendency started to formulate, as more and more social scientists included in their research how humans understand the world rather than simply their objective actions (Jasper, 2007: 59).

With the post-Cold War restructuration of world politics after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent contestation of traditional approaches, a renewed interest on culture was witnessed in the scholarship of social sciences in the early 1990s (Gartzke & Gleditsch, 2006: 55; Williams, 2007: 29). Following this, culture became re-theorised and re-introduced in the international relations field in a context that disassociated it from the traditional state logic. This newer literature on culture is mostly represented by Samuel Huntington (1993; 1996), who, in his 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, accounts for a civilisation-based world order, according to which

culture determines the patterns of cooperation and conflict. In turn, building on this revived emphasis on culture, cultural explanations were formed to explain, on the one hand, antagonism, rivalry, distrust or even violence among different cultural groups (Connor, 1994; Horowitz, 1995) and, on the other hand, peaceful coexistence and cooperation (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Adler & Barnett, 1998; Cederman, 2001) among similar cultures.

Apart from this conceptualisation of culture, the renaissance of scholarly interest in culture can also be witnessed in the development of various distinct approaches in the field of international relations. Peter Katzenstein inserts culture in the analysis of national security (1996a). By doing so, he investigates the sources and content of national security interests that are pursued focusing on the social and cultural context (Katzenstein, 1996b: 32). Similarly, the study of security from a cultural perspective has also been prioritised by Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall (1999). Adopting a critical constructivist prism, these authors shed light on the ways culture produces social insecurities through a process of representation, which, in turn, forms the world (Weldes et al., 1999). The significance of culture has also been affirmed by Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (1994), who call for a rethinking of international relations travelling with the 'ship' of culture, illustrating culture's various meanings and contributions to the field. After all, as they advocate, matters of culture and identity have always existed in the social world, not just by being epiphenomenal, but constituting it and for this reason culture must return in the study of international relations (Lapid & Kratochwil, 1994). More recently, Richard Lebow has constructed a theory of international relations based on a cultural basis of reason (2008). Drawing from Aristotle and Plato, he provides a cultural understanding for the logics of cooperation, conflict and risk in societies and their consequences to the world politics (Lebow, 2008).

Similarly, culture has emerged in EU studies research, marking a 'cultural turn' in EU discourses (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006a: 3). In this vein, it was introduced to analyse Europe as a concept (Ifversen, 2002), the EU's organisational structure and institutionalisation (Gravier & Triga 2005; Ban, 2013), the EU policies and the prospect for a cultural identity (Tonra & Dunne, 1997; Bellier & Wilson, 2000; Sassatelli, 2009; McNamara, 2015) or European identity (Wintle, 2005), the possibility for a European strategic culture (Cornish & Edwards; 2001; Rynning, 2003; Biscop, 2004; Hyde-Price, 2004; Meyer, 2006; Howorth, 2007; Biava et al., 2011; Norheim-Martinsen, 2011;

Schmidt & Zyla, 2013) the process of European integration (Bekemans, 1990; Zetterholm, 1994; Shore, 2000; Eder, 2001; McMahon, 2014), as well as the diversity among EU member states (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006b) and immigrants (Stolcke, 1995; Mattelart & d'Haenens, 2014).

This rise of culture has also impacted border studies, as a growing number of works started to explore cultural dimensions at borders. In this light, Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (2005) argues for the need to re-theorise borders taking into account the culture of borderland communities, while David Newman (2003) refers to cultural borders between different groups that generate inclusion and exclusion. Another focus on culture for the border scholarship is its contribution in conveying individual or micro-level explanations in the construction of symbolic borders (Kurki, 2014). In this regard, the notion of cultural bordering has been applied to describe, on the one hand, the possibilities for cultural exchange and the development of common values, and, on the other hand, the divisions between 'us' and 'the others' at borderlands (Dimitrovova, 2010). The different function of border and its link to culture has also been underlined in the work of Victor Konrad and Heather Nicol through the concept of border culture (2011). In particular, according to their analysis, the conceptualisation of border culture refers to the relationship between national cultures and global dimensions of borderlands, signifying the constant need for interaction at cross-border regions, while safeguarding national sovereignty (Konrad & Nicol, 2011: 86). Hence, culture constitutes an integral component of the border system that needs to be taken into consideration in border studies, as it shapes the function and meaning of borders and borderlands through its involvement in geo-economic processes that impact cross-border transactions (Konrad & Nicol, 2011: 72). Also, Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (2012), proposing a culturally-oriented border research in a post-disciplinary context, underline the added value of culture in grasping how locality and territory affect the lives of borderlanders (Wilson & Donnan, 2005: 8-9).

This cultural turn in border studies demonstrates its recognition as a variable that is present at borders and therefore its analytical and conceptual utility in border research. However, this reinvention of borders under the prism of culture and culture's relationship on territory is mainly presented and analysed from a transnational and cross-cultural context, which emphasises the different ethnic groups that live at borderlands. This manifests that the culture of borderland communities is the research focus. Notwithstanding this dimension, borders and culture can be approached through

a different logic as culture also exists in the border control domain and consequently can also be applied to investigate the function of border control as well as its meaning and evolution. After all, as Donnan and Wilson noted, culture is the least studied and understood aspect in international borders (1999: 11).

So, the adoption of a cultural approach does not just account for a different understanding in relation to borders and the field of border control. It also influences the scientific nature, orientation and conceptual construction of the research as well as the path applied for approaching, analysing and interpreting the object of enquiry. Hence, the choice to insert a cultural approach in the study of Frontex brings a non-traditional conception and novel considerations in Frontex's exploration that build on shared meanings and collective understandings. In this regard, the inclusion of culture in this research endeavour and its structure as an approach involves a new theorisation, methodology and research disposition enabling to answer different research questions and therefore accounting for a different role for Frontex.

3.2.2 Culture: An 'essentially contested concept'?

Culture is considered a difficult to define and catch-all term with persistently fuzzy edges (Lebow, 2009: 153). In fact, it can be characterised as an essentially contested concept (Gray, 1999a: 61; Lantis, 2002: 90; Ballinger, 2006: 342), because it has been applied in several distinct, yet separate, intellectual disciplines and systems of thought (Williams, 1976: 87), ranging from arts and anthropology to organisational theory and psychology. This led to fragmentation in cultural theory and therefore to a conceptual and empirical heterogeneity and ambiguity (Shore, 2000: 22). As a result, different meanings and operationalisations of culture were developed that hindered for many years culture's development as a solid and hard analytical approach in various research fields. But, despite this fragmentation and lack of clarity, culture has succeeded not only to emerge but also to deeply influence contemporary thought. The cultural approach was built on the variations in the conception and application of culture across the different research fields, as each cultural research still offers a different, yet elaborate and promising avenue that advances the study of culture.

At the same time, the adoption of culture proposes an alternative understanding and research, which, in general, is based on behavioural patterns and collectively shared meanings in the social environment. This common point among different traditions in cultural studies has enabled culture to be embraced as an approach. Also, it has further

developed culture's meaning and content by stimulating its theoretical aspiration and empirical pursuit. After all, culture is not just another element to include in a research endeavour. Given its impact on thoughts and actions, it therefore composes a fundamental criterion for defining and understanding human condition (Kim, 2009: 5). Accordingly, culture is a 'topos' for meaningful behaviour and action (Crawford, 2002: 68), comprising the persisting socially transmitted ideas, attitudes, traditions, habits of mind, and preferred methods of action (Gray, 1999a: 51). It thus interlinks ideas with practices, conceptual conviction with empirical reality, theory with praxis, and future with past, as it embodies historically derived patterns of meaning (Geertz, 1973: 89) and impacts on their future development.

In general, culture is a description of a mode of life that finds expression in institutions and behaviour (Williams, 1994: 56). In this light, culture determines what to want, to prefer, to desire and to value (Hudson, 1997: 8) as well as it builds opinions and beliefs (Williams, 2007: 18) accounting, therefore, for action. In other words, culture provides context for events and ideas (Hall, 1976). It surrounds and, in parallel, unites and navigates actors (Gray, 1999b: 138). In fact, it guides thinking, feeling and acting (Alvesson, 2013: 6). For this reason, it can also be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy, taking into account that it reproduces itself by generating beliefs, actions and evaluations that are based on and composed of the same culture (Wendt, 1999: 184-189). Put differently, culture is the way humans assign meaning to the world and how they perceive their role and place in that world (Kim, 2009: 6). Culture is, therefore, a delineating social process of meaning making through which people reproduce the conditions that allow them to make sense of the world (Wedeen, 2002: 717). It refers to collective types of behaviour and action,¹⁸ given that it is shared among a group or community of people. In this context, everything a group does is a manifestation of culture or, it is, at least, culturally shaped (Gray, 1999a: 52). Yet, this group or community may have more than one culture at the same period of time (Gray, 1999a: 51), as cultures can coexist.

This social character of culture reflected in the formation of a group or community that shares certain collective cultural traits indicates that culture is also transmitted from one individual or group to another, with the transfer or inheritance of

¹⁸ For the choice to use the term 'collective' and the difference with the term 'common', see Wendt (1999: Chapter 4).

ideas, beliefs, values and practices, like genes (Florini, 1996). This transmission can assimilate to the process of learning through interaction with nature, namely the physical environment, or socialisation with others (Wendt, 1999: 123). But, apart from being transmitted through socialisation (Berger, 1996: 326), culture also enables socialisation. Indeed, culture can become a source of socialisation, as it provides the space to create relations, along with the content of communication and the mode to interpret the others. In other words, culture can also form and weave together groups and communities. This point gains more weight, taking into account that culture, apart from being internalised and habiting in the minds, it is also expressed and manifested externally,¹⁹ with socialisation and communication. In this sense, it can be found in words, ideas, customs, beliefs, rituals, images, and other representations of interests, norms and values (Kim, 2009: 6) that enable to communicate, socialise, connect and mark out others that have similar cultural traits.

Similarly, this conception of culture as a meaning making process denotes its dynamic character. More specifically, culture is not an object, and therefore static (Berger, 1996: 326) or monolithic. Instead, it has a dynamic nature (Wedeen, 2002: 720), given that it constitutes and is composed of shared meanings (Alvesson, 2013: 6) that can alter. Consequently, culture can change over time (Gray, 1999a: 52) as well as evolve from one culture to another. In this regard, culture varies through space and time (Kim, 2009: 8). As such, it can be continually negotiated in relation to the content and the structure of the social world. It can become a source of innovation by forming and generating new beliefs, ideas and actions (Crawford, 2002: 59).

This turns the attention to the members of the group or community that share the same culture. By expressing, materialising and pursuing a distinct culture, these members make their worlds intelligible and manageable (McNamara, 2015: 27), as they attribute meaning to the social world. In fact, through the creation and reproduction of signification signs, such as symbols, language and practices, they interpret the world (Wedeen, 2002: 720). In this context, these members participate in the ongoing meaning making process. So, they define, produce, reproduce, interpret, apply and use culture. This occurs with the adoption of practices, the articulation of arguments and ideas as well as the shaping of everyday realities and routines. Yet, these members of the group

¹⁹ It should be noted here that even emotions are considered as manifestations and expressions although not verbal, but salient.

or community, though embedded in the cultural setting, do not only always conform to established cultural patterns. The adoption and internalisation of meaning and norms, apart from being a dynamic process, it can also entail variability among the members of the community, as the interpretation, endorsement and diffusion of culture may differ. Thus, the content and manifestation of culture may vary triggering, in turn, its evolution. Similarly, new relations can be formed within and outside this group or community through socialisation and interaction that can also impact culture. More specifically, the construction of relations can facilitate a broader network of cooperation, communication and dialogue among members of different groups or communities. Accepting and habituating other ideas, norms and practices that are discovered and assimilated during the interaction with others can bring innovation or contestation of the established logics and therefore influence the dominant cultural traits. The members of the group or community can alter culture by initiating new ways of acting or organising (Scott, 2008: 78), thus impacting on the social world. So, they constitute both agents and actors of culture.

To sum up, culture allows discovering more subtle explanations of the most pressing problems in social sciences and therefore it contributes to a richer theory and more effective practice (Booth, 2005: 27), as it sheds light on the content and sources of interests and policies (Katzenstein, 1996b: 32). After all, it is culture that makes some things possible and others unimaginable (Kier, 1997: 65). Hence, it is culture that rules sentiments, judgments and actions (Gray, 1999b: 143) as well as conveys causality to material power (Jepperson et al., 1996: 40). As such, taking into account that no one is without cultural traits (Herskovits & Willey, 1923: 192) and can operate beyond culture, even institutions (Gray, 1999b: 129; Scott, 2008), organisations (Kier, 1997; Crawford, 2002), communities (Adler & Haas, 1992; Crawford, 2002) and societies (Bull, 1977), as well as that there is no aspect of life that it is not affected by culture (Hall, 1976: 16), then culture is an essential research element to account for every question in social sciences. In particular, actors are guided by socially shared and transmitted ideas and beliefs (Berger, 1996: 325). Henceforth every actor's behaviour is a reflection and expression of culture.

For this reason, a cultural approach is put forward in this study that aims at exploring Frontex's role, as a border control actor embedded in a border control policy community at the EU external borders. This cultural inclusion enables to alter the focus of the traditional approaches to a non-state level analysing therefore non-state actors

(Norheim-Martinsen, 2011: 528). In this light, the role of Frontex, which constitutes a non-state actor, in the EU border control can be explored. Similarly, given that culture describes and refers to behavioural patterns and collectively shared meanings in the social environment, it constitutes an ideational element that allows studying both the structure, namely the border, and the agency, that is Frontex as an actor, which acts at its social environment producing and reproducing behavioural patterns and meanings.

Yet, despite the importance of culture as an alternative approach in the study of Frontex as well as its analytical and conceptual utility, culture still remains a vague concept (Wiarda, 2016: 91). It seems to be everywhere, and, as a result, it is endangered to be nowhere (Gray, 1999a: 68), because it is so inclusive that becomes difficult to exclude anything from it (Hudson, 1997: 2). Also, culture still remains a contested terrain, because it is tricky to define, operationalise (Desch, 1998: 150) and assess its effects. For this reason its application is considered as a virtuoso affair (DiMaggio, 1997: 263), given that it needs to confront the problems that arise from its inherent ideational nature as well as its fragmented conceptualisation. Otherwise, it can turn to a meaningless element with negligible empirical applicability (Gibbs, 1989: 275). However, these problems are not insurmountable obstacles (Desch, 1998: 150) in a research endeavour. Instead, the inclusion of culture as an approach, embedded in a clear theoretical and methodological context, can remedy culture's challenges. In fact, with the use of theory and methodology, culture avoids being everything everywhere and consequently synonymous to nothing and nowhere.

Following this logic, culture's conceptual pursuit and methodological development needs to comply with its special character and nature. In this regard, to capture and study the conceptualisation, contextualisation and evolution of culture, a social constructivist theoretical prism is put forward, because it is deemed appropriate theoretical frame with the essential tools to apply and interpret a cultural approach. More specifically, social constructivism constitutes a theory that concentrates on issues of culture (Hopf, 1998: 172). After all, culture has been characterised before as a 'weapon' of choice for many constructivist theorists (Blyth, 2003: 699), like Katzenstein (1996a), Wendt (1999), Meyer (2005) and Lebow (2008).²⁰ This cultural focus for social constructivism is enabled due to the theory's emphasis on ideational

²⁰ For works on culture that are inspired from critical social constructivism see Weldes et al. (1999) and Williams (2007).

elements, which, from a social constructivist viewpoint, give the world structure, order, and stability (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 894). Furthermore, it is a theory that offers alternative understandings by scrutinising action and behaviour within the socio-cultural context (Hopf, 1998: 173). Consequently, this theory allows reorienting the research to inter-subjective elements that inform and build the social world, with culture being one of them. Hence, a cultural approach can be applied within a social constructivist theoretical frame, as this theory allows unfolding culture's characteristics and it enables recognising how culture operates.

To sum up, culture can be rendered as an applicable approach, when inserted in a context that opens up the possibility to explore and understand how it works and evolves. This constitutes an important and essential task, because, without culture, any research is left with narrow and meaningless insights (Poore, 2003: 284) regarding the role of actors and their behaviour. Thus, irrespective of the challenges linked with culture, in terms of conceptualisation and application, the pursuit of a cultural approach is a puzzle worth trying to solve, because undoubtedly culture matters (Desch, 1998: 169). For this reason, culture remains one of the most enduring alternative approaches (Lantis, 2002: 90) and a discovery that can be considered, as important in the history of science, as Copernicus' heliocentric theory (Gibbs, 1989: 275). But, if culture is to mean anything (Williams, 2007: 23), it must be inserted in a theory that allows it to at least mean something. In this vein, the adoption of a theory can be beneficial for a cultural approach, while, in parallel, acknowledging culture can also contribute in theory's advancement. For this reason, social constructivism is adopted to provide the theoretical basis for the cultural approach put forward in this research.

3.3 Why theorise

3.3.1 Social constructivism: Making theory matter

The process of selection, inclusion and application of a theory in a research analysis and investigation of a social inquiry is of paramount importance, as each theory leads to diverse interpretations of reality. Instead, a theoretical vacuum may induce to an implicit and therefore unexamined or under-examined research (Keohane & Hoffmann, 1990: 284). This equates to just observation or description. But, even pure observation cannot be void of theory (Hollis, 1994: 77), as the interpretation of the observed facts and the digestion of experience cannot be merely empiricist. Rather, it rests on

theoretical grounds to define fundamental dimensions of the research, such as its sample, content, scope, approach and method. In other words, theory structures all observation (Stoker, 1995: 17) bringing order in any research project. For this reason, any statement about social phenomena in the absence of theory is deemed impossible (Rosamond, 2000: 4). In this regard, the theoretical lens that is adopted not only captures aspects of the structural reality and its underlying dynamics but also enables new possibilities to be explored offering an analytical variety. Furthermore, it determines the starting point, basis and depth for each research. It is also inherent to the process of thought guiding the stages of investigation, understanding and explanation as well as it constitutes an essential component of any sphere of human action traced back even in the pre-Socratic era (Edwards, 2004: 101). Yet, today, it continues to be relevant, because it dominates the knowledge of reality in any science. Thus, theory still matters (Chrysochoou et al., 2003: 1) and there is no - nor should there be any - escaping from it (Edwards, 2004: 101).

However, theory is not an easy option, taking into account that it can turn as a complete system of universal laws (Mjøset, 1999). For this reason, a good 'travel guide' on the theoretical basis is required so as to illustrate where to arrive and where not to go, what is important and what it is not (Abrams & Hogg, 2004: 98). In fact, apart from theory, a reflection on the theory should be undertaken so as to perform a fundamental investigation on the object of enquiry (Chrysochoou, 2000: 130). Essentially, this enables to understand the context in which the theory is produced as well as the context that it generates to the social realm and study. In other words, the choice for a theory-oriented research needs to consider the philosophical orientation that underpins the research or, put differently, the philosophy behind the theory. This is the role of meta-theory, which in broad terms involves the identification of the research's social scientific roots (Bache, et al., 2011). At a basic level, meta-theory scrutinises the essence and the products of the social world bringing theoretical clarity to the research. Indeed, meta-theory serves to provide theoretical direction redirecting the research's analytical foci to the important questions and answers (Wendt, 1991: 383; Chrysochoou, 2000: 135) by making theory as the primary subject of analysis (Wallis, 2010: 80). Likewise, it sets the principles for the construction of knowledge, whilst accounting for an awareness of this process (Chrysochoou, 2013: 87).

Taking this into regard, this research is rooted within the meta-theoretical frame of social constructivism. Since meta-theory constitutes the analysis of the building

blocks of social enquiry (Bache, et al., 2011), social constructivism therefore functions as the anchor that organises the knowledge of the social world or as a meta-theoretical commitment (Guzzini, 2000; Kratochwil, 2000).

In particular, social constructivism as a meta-theoretical stance emphasises the construction of knowledge and social reality (Guzzini, 2000: 149). Taking into account that reality is always constructed, its observation and interpretation is therefore contingent on the observer. Thus, to produce and explain social knowledge, the inter-subjective action must be taken into account (Guzzini, 2000: 162) as well as the observer's standpoint and its background ability to share a system of meaning with the society (Searle, 1995: 143-144, 154).

This turns the attention to the ways of constructing the reality and the nature of the social world, or else to the ontology of the research. Ontology refers to what exists in the social realm and what is the relationship between agency and structure (Bache et al., 2012: 65). The ontological stance adopted is that of a social and inter-subjective ontology, which points that knowledge and reality are actively created by social relationships and interactions. Following this logic, knowledge, as a social construction, is shared (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and for this reason it cannot be considered as independent or pre-given (Guzzini, 2003: 4). Rather, knowledge is the outcome of the human activity and interaction. Hence, it is a human construction (Guba, 1990: 26). This social ontological underpinning that draws on social constructivism considers the world as inter-subjectively and collectively meaningful structures and processes (Adler, 2005: 10). Similarly, it emphasises the mutual constitution, or even co-determination of agents and structures (Wendt, 1991: 390). Broadly speaking, social ontology refers to inter-subjective meanings, norms, rules, routinised practices, discourse, deliberative processes, communities, communicative actions as well as collective identity formation (Christiansen et al., 1999a: 530). All these elements structure and socially constitute or cause human action. They form identities and guide actions (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 7). In essence, agents do not function independently from the social environment and the collectively shared systems of meaning, namely their culture (Risse, 2009: 145). In this light, ontologically social constructivism is positioned between individualism that focuses on agents, and structuralism that prioritises structures (Adler, 1997; Wendt, 1999: 78; Christiansen et al., 2001: 8-10; Risse, 2009: 146). Hence, social constructivism acknowledges the material, subjective and inter-subjective dimensions trying to explore how their interaction socially constructs reality (Adler, 2005: 99).

The meta-theoretical context, apart from ontology, includes the epistemological positioning that guides this research. Epistemology is defined as the philosophy of knowledge (Griffiths, 2007: 5; Bache et al., 2012: 66). In essence, it constitutes a theory of knowledge that studies the nature of knowledge and the way of obtaining it (Sørensen, 2008: 13). Hence, it cannot be exempted from any social research that aims at producing knowledge, given that it defines what knowledge is (Rosenberg, 2008: 245). As Blaikie suggests, epistemology concerns ‘the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of reality’ (1993: 6-7). Consequently, the stance of epistemology on the sources and criteria of knowledge determines the relationship between theory and method. Also, it defines the relation between the reality and the researcher (Carson et al., 2001: 4), the knowledge and the observation as well as the known and the knower (Wight, 2002: 35). In fact, social constructivism has developed a novel epistemology that brings to the fore social meanings and social relations (Chrysochoou, 2009: 111). This stance is located in the ‘*via media*’ between positivism and post-positivism (Wendt, 1999: 38). More specifically, it is in the middle, because it shares with the positivist paradigm an epistemological commitment to truth-seeking (Risse & Wiener, 1999: 776), whereas, it has the same ontological basis with post-positivism regarding social understandings and systems of meaning (Risse & Wiener, 1999: 776).

This position in the middle of the positivist/post-positivist continuum allows for epistemological diversity that can break any paradigm-bound restrictions answering to both critical and problem-solving²¹ purposes (Adler, 1997: 334). In this respect, different epistemological positions can be drawn that offer variant explanations or understandings regarding the nature of reality, diffusing therefore diverse interpretations that nourish research divisions. Consequently, in the social constructivist tradition distinguishable differences exist that have formed two main groups labeled ‘conventional’ and ‘critical’ or ‘radical’ constructivism (Hopf, 1998; Gofas & Tzifakis, 2017: 128-130). In this sense, the critical pole, emphasising the role of interpretive methods and discourse, contends that actors and observers cannot be separated (von Glasersfeld, 1995; Price & Reus-Smit, 1998; Diez, 1999; Weldes et al., 1999). In parallel, conventional Constructivists have a positivist epistemological orientation focusing on norms and identity (Katzenstein, 1996a; Friedman & Starr,

²¹ For the critical and problem-solving theory distinction, see Cox (1981).

1997; Adler & Barnett, 1998; Dessler, 1999; Wendt, 1999). Due to these variations, the aim of the research as well as its object, and the relation between the individual and the reality must be taken into consideration for the selection of a suitable perspective that provides 'better explanations of social reality' (Adler, 1997: 334).

On these epistemological grounds, drawing on the conventional constructivist strand, this research explores the role of Frontex in the EU border control based on a cultural approach. In general, to investigate, understand and explain a phenomenic concept, such as culture, and its possible evolution and transformative effect, an inter-subjective logic is required (Wendt, 1999). Yet, the world, being socially constructed, generates a reality that it is not based solely on inter-subjective meanings. It is also built on 'social facts' (Pouliot, 2004: 320), 'brute facts' (Searle, 1995: 27) or 'objective social facts' (Wendt, 1999: 95). These facts, which are 'real and objective' (Wendt, 1995: 74), enable or constrain action and generate distinct patterns (Wendt, 1999: 184), acknowledging, therefore, the existence of both material forces and ideational conditions or meanings that form the world (Wendt, 1999). Indeed, as Wendt notes, 'social structures include material resources' (1995: 73), proving that 'social' and 'material' dimensions are not antithetical to each other (Dessler, 1999: 127). Rather, according to this logic, knowledge, whilst being produced and constructed, it also becomes situated in a dynamic context that includes both material structures and ideational or social elements (Antony, 2006: 60). As a result, a two-fold relationship between explaining meanings and understanding action is shaped bringing the 'how' and 'why' research questions (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 15).

In this vein, to present, describe and interpret accurately how the world works, all these dimensions need to be incorporated into the analysis to lead to 'new and meaningful interpretations' (Checkel, 1998: 325). This can be achieved by gathering a variety of data and situating them within the social environment (Hopf, 1998: 182). Following this, to best capture and explain the 'brute' material forces as well as cultural contexts (Jepperson et al., 1996: 40), the analysis needs to be based on evidence (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 12), which enable to produce knowledge or truth claims (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 20), while proceeding to general inferences for social phenomena, inter-subjective relations and the world construction (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 12; 20-21).

In parallel, to safeguard the research ‘objectivity’²² in any ‘human epistemic endeavour’ (Antony, 2006: 59) and to avoid any influence on the researcher or observer, a distance must be kept and ensured between the known and the knower during all the stages of the research process. Indeed, the fact that the researcher does not constitute part of the border control community, which is being investigated, enables the researcher and the subject to be separated, which constitutes an essential condition for reaching an objective truth (Seale, 1999: 25), albeit not universal Truth (Pouliot, 2007: 379). After all, the border control culture exists also independently of the researcher. Following this, the production of knowledge is attainable, when the distance between the observer and the observed social phenomena is retained. Similarly, a self-awareness of the researcher’s held assumptions and experiences hinder the prospect of any personal position to have a detrimental effect on the research conclusions about the nature of the social reality (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 105). Indeed, the socially constructed nature of the world is not a deterrent to valid explanations and accurate descriptions (Radaelli, 2012: 10), as although ‘observation is theory-laden’, it is not ‘theory-determined’ (Wendt, 1995: 75). Thus, it is possible to conduct accurate research independent from the researcher (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Guba, 1990), and, in turn, gain accurate knowledge independent from the knower. This, along with the selected methodology, can limit the interpretive bias and reach acceptable claims in the quest for fulfilling the truth-seeking commitment (Risse & Wiener, 1999: 776). After all, ‘how much the world is socially constructed is something we can document’ (Parsons, 2010: 91).

3.3.2 The rise of social constructivism

Constructivism as a term was first elaborated by Nicholas Onuf in 1989²³ and has developed as a specific position (Guzzini, 2000; Christiansen et al., 2001: 2-3) as well as method to social inquiry (Checkel, 1998: 325), which refers to a tradition of scholarship that traces the world’s construction emphasising social interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen & Gergen, 2007: 461) and the ‘prospects for change’ offering an alternative understanding to social reality from the mainstream perspectives

²² For the meaning of objectivity under a constructivist prism, see Wendt (1995: 74-75).

²³ Although, Berger and Luckmann (1966) refer to a ‘Social Construction of Reality’, it is Onuf (1989) that describes social constructivism.

(Hopf, 1998: 172).²⁴ In broad terms, social constructivism is concerned with the sociology of knowledge as well as with and how the social and political world works (Checkel, 1998: 325). Its roots can be traced in the writings of the 18th century philosopher, Giambattista Vico, who recognised that ‘*verum esse ipsum factum*’, namely that the truth itself is made (1988 [1710]: Chapter 1), as well as in Immanuel Kant’s philosophy about the conception of knowledge (1871 [1781]), and in Émile Durkheim’s cultural analysis (1984 [1893]; 2002 [1897]).

Drawing mainly from sociology, social psychology, anthropology and political theory (Checkel, 2011: 5), social constructivism, or, in short, constructivism puts the question of ‘who am I?’ logically and ontologically prior to the question of ‘what do I want?’ (Hopf, 1998: 175; Phillips, 2007: 62). In essence, it describes the dynamic, contingent, and culturally based condition of the social world (Adler, 2012: 114). For constructivism, the world is made, which therefore turns reality into ‘a project under constant construction’ and not a pre-given and frozen heritage (Flockhart, 2012: 82). Thus, it advocates for a possibility of change questioning therefore the static material assumptions of traditional theories (Fierke, 2007: 167).

The birth of contemporary social constructivism can be traced to the end of the Cold War and the ‘quiet cataclysm’ that followed (Mueller, 1995) for the architecture of world politics. In particular, the peace that prevailed after the fall of the Berlin wall was an embarrassing blow to the traditional accounts, because of their failure to predict it along with their inaptitude to explain the fundamental transformations that accompanied the post-Cold War reality (Onuf, 1989). In this regard, the established viewpoint of the dominant American disciplinary context was irrevocably contested. At the same time, the end of the Cold War rivalry initiated a profound reflection and remoulding of debates so as to provide with an alternative, yet convincing, explanation regarding the new regime and course of events in international relations. This provoked a natural boost to the constructivist school of thought, as it presented a revolutionary thinking (Adler, 2005: x), which allowed to include in the analysis explanations of non-material dimensions and changing ideas (Wohlforth, 2011: 448).

In this post-Cold War background, social constructivism reached the shores of the discipline of international relations in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the

²⁴ It should be noted that as a critique social constructivism is considered an approach or meta-theoretical orientation and not a first order theory in international relations (Smith, 1999).

pioneering work of Nicholas Onuf (1989) and Alexander Wendt (1992; 1995; 1999), while other influential thinkers in constructivist tradition included Emanuel Adler (1997; 2005), Friedrich Kratochwil (1989) and John Gerard Ruggie (1998a; 1998b). Social constructivism quickly gained recognition, credibility and popularity. In fact, it was consolidated as a distinctive perspective and rapidly became the main contender of the mainstream theories (Hopf, 1998: 171) seizing the ‘middle ground’ between rationalist perspectives, such as realist or liberal, which are concerned with material dimensions, and interpretive perspectives, mainly postmodernist, poststructuralist, and critical, which ignore the material world emphasising instead on interpretation (Adler, 1997; Christiansen et al., 1999a: 535-537).

In the late 1990s, social constructivism spilled over to the EU studies marking a ‘constructivist turn’ in the discipline (Christiansen et al., 1999a: 538; Smith, 1999: 682), which followed the one that occurred earlier in the international relations field (Checkel, 1998). A turning point for the inclusion of constructivist insights to the study of Europe was the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy* in 1999 that introduced a social constructivist perspective to the study of European integration (Christiansen et al., 1999b: 527) and officially signalled the arrival of social constructivism in EU theorisation (Risse & Wiener, 1999: 775). The aim was to prove that a social constructivist account can explain key aspects of Europeanisation (Checkel, 1999: 546) highlighting its added value and setting the stage for a move towards a social scientific understanding in EU studies.

In parallel of the inclusion of a social constructivist understanding in EU studies, the rise of a constructivist turn was also witnessed in many fields across social sciences, ranging from political economy (Blyth, 2002) to international organisations (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004), security (Katzenstein, 1996a; Weldes et al., 1999) and borders (Williams, 2003; Cooper & Perkins, 2012; Sendhardt, 2013). In particular, regarding border studies, the constructivist accounts that were advanced, contrary to the static prism of traditional theories, focus on the socio-spatial processes that construct and reconstruct the borders (Cooper & Perkins, 2012), either as geographical and physical points or as conceptual structures that serve to separate or, instead, to unite peoples.

3.3.3 Defining social constructivism

In general, social constructivism emphasises human consciousness and social reality (Jackson & Sørensen, 2007: 162) exploring people and their practices. For

Constructivists, social reality is constructed and reconstructed through the interaction of social agents that produce social practices. Thus, the world is not created in a vacuum, but is socially constructed (Wendt, 1995: 71) and redefined through permanent interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

By questioning the dichotomy between structure and agency, social constructivism argues for a constitutive relationship between agents and structures (Hopf, 1998: 173) through a process of interaction and mutual constitution. In this regard, structure escapes the one-dimensional trap of traditional perspectives pioneering a more complex nature. In fact, structure can both constrain and enable praxes of agents. Hence, there is no fixed setting or static understanding (Christiansen et al., 1999a: 528). Instead, structures are sustained patterns of social practice developed through the actions of agents. So, they are not ontological primitives (Phillips, 2007: 62). In this respect, structures are assigning meaning through the social context that interprets them (Checkel, 1998: 326) and for this reason have no existence or causal power outside this context and the process that constructs them (Wendt, 1992: 395).

In this light, given that material structures obtain meaning through the social realm, emphasis is given to ideas. After all, reality is not only material but also ideational. In this regard, Constructivists try to shed light on the social and structural properties of ideas, highlighting their inter-subjective elements (Gofas & Hay, 2010: 30). Indeed, ideational factors, such as culture or other cognitive schemas, matter as they determine and dominate policy (Checkel, 1993: 276; Saurugger, 2014: 145), because of their normative and instrumental dimensions (Ruggie, 1998a: 33). More specifically, the inter-subjective character of ideas, which is composed of shared understanding, shapes a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness, then, becomes embedded in social routines and practices and is manifested in the everyday life and habits of individuals and groups (Adler, 1997: 327).

In this ideational and social content, social constructivism also takes into account the role of actors (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Checkel, 2001a; Saurugger, 2013; Hay, 2016). More specifically, actors act as social agents that generate a collective intentionality (Searle, 1995: 23-26) by internalising institutional rules, norms and cultural values (Schimmelfening, 2003: 69). Indeed, actor's behaviour is being fundamentally shaped by socially shared understandings of the world (Berger, 2000: 410), such as identity, norms and culture. In fact, actors, which are institutions, can

create structures, namely other institutions (Rosamond, 2000: 122), or structures of shared knowledge that form collective meanings.

In this regard, actors' interests are endogenously constructed (Saurugger, 2014: 147) by shared ideas, while taking into account the specific circumstances that arise for each period of time. Hence, a context of social and cultural norms can shape actors' behaviour (Fierke & Wiener, 1999: 723). In this respect, interests can alter over time, as actors change their understanding of the social, political and economic background due to social interaction. In particular, through social interaction agents start to acquire new interests, preferences and behaviour via social learning and socialisation (Checkel, 2001b: 53), nourishing a common spirit and collective intentionality. In fact, actors who enter into a social interaction environment rarely emerge the same (Johnston, 2001: 488). Social interaction is enabled in forums or even in the smaller arenas (Jobert, 1998), as they become spaces of communication, interaction and confrontation among actors. Thus, they constitute loci of policymaking where norms and actors' behaviour are shaped (Saurugger, 2014: 148) and endogenised. These norms, after being molded and internalised, can turn into shared inter-subjective understandings that make behavioural claims (Checkel, 2001b: 57).

Thus, agents are not the 'puppets' of social structure. Rather, they are social actors that create and recreate inter-subjective structures of meaning through their practices and interaction (Risse, 2000: 10). In fact, they 'constantly negotiate, reproduce, or change meanings' (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 63). Therefore, as Alexander Wendt, who was inspired by Anthony Giddens' concept of 'structuration' (1984), suggests, agents can influence the content of a particular structure and the culture through their actions (Wendt, 1999: Chapter 7). More specifically, agents can turn individual held beliefs into broader, collective understandings. In essence, they create structures that take a life on their own and then form subsequent action (Finnemore, 1996: 30). Thus, from a political science angle, they can function as entrepreneurs and seek policy change when the opportunity arises, namely when a window of opportunity or policy window opens that facilitates policy transformation.²⁵ This leads Constructivists to conclude that social reality exists only by human agreement and for this reason it can be transformed, contested or preserved (Searle, 1995; Christiansen et al., 2001: 3). Thus, change is always possible.

²⁵ For the concept of 'policy window' in public policy, see Kingdon (2014 [1984]).

The possibility to include in the analysis both structure and agency, along with the recognition and embracing of change, as well as the focus on the ideational and social context, without disregarding the material environment, makes social constructivism in a conceptual sense a well-suited perspective for this inquiry. After all, ‘theory is always for someone and for some purpose’ (Cox, 1981: 128). In particular, social constructivism offers a way to conceptualise, understand, and analyse the role of Frontex, as an EU border control policy actor in the EU external borders applying a cultural approach. This theoretical prism is distinct from the other perspectives and empirical endeavours that have been applied before to the study of Frontex. But, apart from a novel scrutiny of this EU agency, social constructivism also allows uncovering different understandings of Frontex’s presence and function at the EU borders focusing on the ideational elements, and in particular on culture.

However, to structure and apply theory in a systematic manner, an analytical framework is needed, which studies the operationalisation of culture in the EU external borders. More specifically, to establish not just correlation between the variables but also examine their development and influence, the application of an analytical framework is required. In this regard, the analytical framework adopted here examines and links culture with border control, as a policy outcome, whilst focusing on the members of the border control community. It is an essential means to inserting culture, which constitutes an ideational variable, and to applying a cultural approach to study Frontex’s role at EU borders from a social constructivist lens.

Similarly, the adoption of an analytical framework gives direction to the research inserting theory into the analysis. Thus, it connects the researcher to existing knowledge. In particular, the constructivist logic raises certain research challenges, which refer to its difficulty in explaining change (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 888) and demonstrating the empirical influence of ideational variables (Saurugger, 2013: 897) or the role accorded to ideas and cultural factors (Risse, 2000: 3). With the use of an analytical framework, these challenges can be limited, due to the operational aspects, which define the analytical framework and, as a result, give substance and content to the conceptual inquiry. At the same time, the use of the analytical framework does not erase the added value of social constructivism, namely its ability to study and describe the dynamic, contingent, and culturally based condition of the social world (Adler, 2012: 114). Instead, it can build on it proposing a coherent application and adding therefore to the theory’s explanatory power. Hence, the analytical framework is an

essential part to enrich theory with analytical utility, as it contributes to the formation of a systematic bias in constructivist research regarding social construction in a socially constructed world (Haas & Haas, 2002: 577).

Thus, the application of an analytical framework can lead to valuable insights, as it can advance substantially the understanding on Frontex by enabling to undertake an empirically valid research. That is a research subject to falsification²⁶ and empirical confirmation (Wendt, 1995: 75; Zaiotti, 2008a; 2011), which places social action in context (Adler, 2012: 112) proving that ‘interpretation does not have to be the equivalent of mushiness’ (Haas & Haas, 2002: 589). After all, although ideational elements are not a hindrance to explanatory research, given the difficulty to understand, measure and operationalise them, the application of a coherent analytical framework that is attuned to the research objectives, the applied approach and the theoretical orientation, can prove to be the necessary element that bridges theory and practice as well as correlates the process with the outcome (Hopf, 1998: 196).

3.4 Culture of border control as an analytical construct

To study and analyse the role of Frontex in the EU border control, this thesis will be based on Ruben Zaiotti’s (2011) analytical framework on the concept of ‘cultures of border control’. This analytical framework constitutes a means to apply a cultural approach in the exploration of Frontex through a social constructivist theoretical lens. In particular, in order to explain the formation of the Schengen regime,²⁷ Zaiotti advances a cultural evolutionary framework.²⁸ This provides a schema that brings the concept of culture into the field of European border control, as it addresses the evolution of the border control culture. In essence, it examines an empirical case, that is the emergence of the Schengen regime, while applying a model of policy change that considers reality constructed through culture (Zaiotti; 2013). So, it constitutes a suitable analytical framework to analyse the role of Frontex at the EU borders from a cultural approach, given that its research area is located at the European frontiers and its focus is defined on the cultures of border control. These domains, after all, are the main

²⁶ For the ‘falsification’ concept and its importance in a constructivist research, see Wendt (1999: 187-188; 373).

²⁷ The word ‘regime’ refers to the policy imprint of the border control culture. For the ‘regime’ concept, see Krasner (1983).

²⁸ This cultural evolution framework advocates that the world is not fixed, but can evolve, whilst recognising the man as a product of biological and social evolution (Campbell, 1974: 413).

elements of this research and with the use of Zaiotti's analytical framework they can be explored, clarified and situated to respond to this research's objectives. According to Zaiotti, a cultural and evolutionary approach enables to investigate and understand the evolution of EU border control as a policy domain (2011: 229). In this regard, the notion of culture of border control is being applied to examine the institutionalisation of Schengen as a regional border regime to manage Europe's borders. In this light, drawing on Zaiotti's framework, the culture of border control is 'a relatively stable constellation of background assumptions and corresponding practices shared by a border control policy community in a given period and geographical location' (2011: 23).

A border control community is consisted of a group of actors that 'share similar background assumptions and participate in common practices in the border control domain' (Zaiotti, 2011: 25). They have frequent interaction and social activities that enable them to communicate, exchange views and develop a *sensu communis* or commonsense. This social interaction and communication can lead to an inter-subjective reality (Adler, 1997: 327), due to their shared causal and normative beliefs. So, this entails the process of understanding others and being understood by them (Schutz, 1962: 10). Hence, a sense of we-ness or, put differently, a conception of 'self' and, as a result, an image of 'the other' (Oren, 1995: 154) can be socially constructed. This can be achieved with the development of a common set of values and mutually responsive transactions (Deutsch, 1966: 96-97) as well as with the help of a constellation of collective identifications (Wæver, 1998: 78), namely collective meanings and understandings. This can lead to a high level of integration among the members of the community,²⁹ accompanied with real and tangible consequences for the subjective as well as the physical world (Adler, 1997: 327). Yet, the awareness of the existence of a common identity may vary, depending on the strength of the culture in which the community is inserted and the stage of its evolution (Zaiotti, 2011: 25). Moreover, membership in a community cannot be exclusive. Indeed, members of a community can belong to and participate in several communities at the same time, as well as transfer from one to the other according to the circumstances.

²⁹ The notion of community has been applied by various scholars in different forms and understandings, such as the notion 'security community' (Deutsch et al., 1957; Adler & Barnett, 1996; Williams & Neumann, 2000, 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), 'epistemic community' (Adler, 1992; Haas, 1992) and 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). It should be noted that border control policy community and border control community are used interchangeably in this research.

Now regarding background assumptions, they are ‘inter-subjective cognitive structures that members of the border control community rely on to interpret the reality in which they are inserted and to act upon it accordingly’ (Zaiotti, 2011: 23). Thus, assumptions render reality intelligible and coherent. They suggest what actors should do, how they should act and who they represent. Also they connote which are the members of the border control community legitimising their role as well as they define the empirical challenges that have to be addressed and the options of the community. However, it should be noted that their relevance is linked to actors’ practices. In particular, to acquire importance and empirical ground, background assumptions have to be inserted in the everyday routines and practices of the members of the community. Thus, they need to be internalised. This, as a result, could mean that the members of the community may not be able to recognise the existence of these assumptions. Yet, they draw upon them for their actions and aspirations taking them for granted. These assumptions of the members of the border control community are interrelated and henceforth constitute a ‘system’, which can change over time.

Apart from background assumptions, culture is also composed from practices. Practices can be conceived as arrays of organised activities in a given domain (Schatzki, 2001: 2; Zaiotti, 2011: 23). These activities can have various forms. They can be verbal, like discourses, and non-verbal, like routines. Thus, practices are an identifiable, concrete and relatively stable pattern of social activities over time (Zaiotti, 2011: 24). They signalise an action (Swidler, 2001: 76) and can anchor, organise, or even control others (Swidler, 2001: 79). In general, they are what members of a community do in their interactions. They are embedded in taken-for-granted routines (Swidler, 2001: 75) that form schemas of structure (Swidler, 2001: 79). Practices at the collective level are different from those at the individual level, which can be characterised as habits. Rather, shared practices are a collective accomplishment (Barnes, 2001: 23).

The inclusion of practices into an analysis of culture reveals this dynamic interplay between background assumptions and practices, which forms and shapes culture. In particular, on the one hand assumptions define the relevant practices characterising a given domain, while, on the other hand, it is through these very practices that background assumptions are reproduced and sustained over time securing culture’s survival and diffusion (Zaiotti, 2011: 24).

The last decades there has been a ‘practice turn’ with the emergence of a practice-oriented research in philosophy, sociology and anthropology that aims at

indicating the importance of practices' study (de Certeau, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990; Schatzki et al., 2001; Reckwitz, 2002). It is rooted in pragmatism, phenomenology and critical theory (Adler-Nissen, 2016: 88) and moves beyond the usual socio-theoretical dichotomies, which tend to lead to a metaphysical impasse (Pouliot, 2016: 49). Bourdieu's theory of practice, for instance, transcends the dichotomy between agency and structure emphasising their dialectic relationship with the notion of 'habitus', namely the collective dispositions, which moves away from objectivist and subjectivist understandings (Bourdieu, 1977). This enables to consider practice as the place to study the nature and transformation of the research object (Schatzki, 2001: 2) and to keep the 'doings' and 'sayings' of actors at the centre of the theoretical and research endeavour (Kustermans, 2016: 177; Hopf, 2018).

Hence, the background assumptions and practices shared by the border control policy community constitute the elements that compose the border control culture, which Zaiotti has reconstructed in an analytical framework to analyse the border control domain and its transformation over time. But, being continuously produced and reproduced, a culture of border control is always evolving (Zaiotti, 2011: 27). In this light, a fundamental change can lead to the culture's demise and substitution with an alternative culture. This transition from one culture of border control to another is called 'cultural evolution' and can be conceptualised as the outcome of the dialectical interplay of cognitive structures and social activities over time (Zaiotti, 2011: 29). To operationalise cultural evolution, two mechanisms are applied which offer an explanation of change: 'cultural variation' and 'cultural selection'.

Cultural variation refers to the emergence of a different culture of border control within which a border control community is inserted (Zaiotti, 2011: 31-32). The alternative culture or cultures that take form challenge the dominant culture and can lead to a new type of policy and system of governance. These alternative cultures are potential and can coexist or even overlap with the established culture and with each other for an amount of time (Zaiotti, 2011: 32). They represent a set of assumptions about ways in which the border control policy domain could be (re)organised (Zaiotti, 2011: 32). It is essential that in order to be relevant and start challenging the dominant culture, some members of the community must adopt and carry the assumptions of this potential culture within the community. This process of cultural variation begins when the previous regime is considered as ineffective and/or unable to address the challenges of the policy domain. This creates irritation and discomfort among the members of the

community, and as a result these members start questioning the culture's relevance, while, in parallel, they reflect on alternative solutions (Zaiotti, 2011: 32). This leads to different assumptions about borders and border control and therefore to the articulation of new measures and policies that have the potential to form an alternative border control culture. However, not all of the alternative cultures succeed in taking the place of the dominant culture. Some of them may demise, although, later, in different circumstances, they can re-emerge and re-contest the dominant culture. So, cultures do not disappear or dissolve.

Apart from variation, the other essential part for border control evolution is the eventual selection of a new official culture of border control. The process of cultural selection includes the phases of culture's pursuit and culture's anchoring (Zaiotti, 2011: 33-37). The pursuit of a new culture involves the development of a progressive worldview (Laudan, 1977), namely a considerable change, within the members of the community. This mainly stems from a reasonable decision (Zaiotti, 2011: 34) that relates to the effectiveness of the dominant culture to address the challenges that have emerged. Thus, the pursuing of a different culture is a rational and logical choice (Zaiotti, 2011: 34) and for this reason, it can be characterised as the 'rationality of pursuit' (Laudan, 1977: 112-113). Otherwise, from the community's view, it would have been irrational to pursue or even to articulate a different culture that clashes with the culture in which the community is embedded. This prism of rationality is linked with the agency and the process of cultural evolution that also shapes the structure of the border control. Consequently, cultural evolution is not a random event, but a reasonable decision that takes into account the environment and tries to provide a remedy to the regime's current failings safeguarding its preservation.

The culture's anchoring indicates how members of a community can reach consensus over a new culture, accept it and internalise its assumptions (Zaiotti, 2011: 34). This, after all, constitutes an essential prerequisite condition for the adoption of an alternative system of border governance (Zaiotti, 2011: 33). Hence, apart from the initial decision to pursue a new culture that is based on a belief in its effectiveness (Zaiotti, 2011: 34), the anchoring reflects on a practical dimension, as it refers to the culture's actual effectiveness or, put differently, its performance in shaping and constructing action (Swidler, 1986). This performance depends on its articulation in concrete circumstances, which due to the culture's social and discursive dimension can be both utterances and physical gestures (Zaiotti, 2011: 36). Accordingly, it is the

effectiveness of a culture that can persuade and prompt the members of the border control policy community to accept and adopt it. Thus, cultural selection does not depend solely on the characteristics of the culture but it is also based on its performance and ability to respond to the practical challenges that preoccupy the policy domain. In this context, the activities carried out by a community in the beginning of a culture's pursuit can be regarded as 'experiments' that test and trial the culture before its final jurisdiction, namely its acceptance or rejection (Zaiotti, 2011: 35). They provide the necessary 'hard' proof to the members of the community to assess the culture's performance by practicing and testing it. These 'experiments' can later turn into routinised and automatic practices and to a new set of assumptions and practices, in the case of culture's development into a dominant and mature regime.

In this process, key role have the members of the community, as, apart from structuring the debate around the culture's assumptions, they also apply the main tenets of a culture, reproduce it through their activities, test and practice the new culture and then change their identities and behaviour. This role is not always instrumental stemming from the actors' conscious actions and rational interests. Instead, it can be indirect and diffuse with the culture's articulation. As a result, members of the border control community impact on a culture's configuration and future trajectory through their actions, their efforts in proving its relevance and their predisposition towards it. Culture's anchoring is thus an open-ended process (Zaiotti, 2011: 37) that requires a positive evaluation of its performance in order to lead to the final phase, cultural retention (Zaiotti, 2011: 42). At this stage, the new dominant culture becomes settled and institutionalised. Otherwise, whether the alternative culture is unsuccessful, it can die or lie down with the view to be resumed later provided a change occurs in the environment or the circumstances (Zaiotti, 2011: 37).

3.4.1 The European typology: Westphalia, Schengen and Brussels

As Zaiotti explains, the content and structure of a culture of border control vary according to the geographical and historical context (2011: x). In this light, for the European case, he has reconstructed three typologies of cultures of border control, namely 'Westphalia', 'Schengen' and 'Brussels' (Zaiotti, 2011: Chapter 3 & 4). Westphalia and Brussels represent the two potential regimes that have failed to become the dominant culture, while, instead, Schengen has succeeded in being materialised as the unquestioned regime and commonsense of border control in Europe for the last

decades. Each of these three cultures has different assumptions and practices about the conception of borders and their control, which is also reflected in the choice to use geographical references to label them, such as the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, the 1985 Schengen agreement, and Brussels, considered the ‘capital’ and ‘heart’ of the European project.

In particular, Westphalia characterises a nationalist approach to border control, which was formed in the beginning of the modern state system (Zaiotti, 2011: Chapter 3). It is reflected in key legal texts of that period, such as the Montevideo Convention, the Charter of the United Nations and national Constitutions (Zaiotti, 2011: 26; 51-52). It was the dominant culture in Europe mostly after World War II and until the 1980s (Zaiotti, 2011: 47). The Westphalia model focuses on borders and stresses the need for stricter border controls so as to safeguard the territorial integrity and ethnic homogeneity of the sovereign state. Its main assumption is that borders constitute linear barriers emphasising the internal/external distinction (Zaiotti, 2011: 54). Regarding border control, Westphalia culture considers it as national and absolute focusing on its security and military dimension. Likewise, the type of practices that characterises it is formal and intergovernmental, while the border control community has a nationalist identity and is composed mainly of officials from national governments. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that during the 1970s, when the Westphalia border control culture has fully matured, there was a considerable decrease in cross-border flows because of severe obstacles to movement, while access to European countries was strictly regulated and based on short-term permanence (Zaiotti, 2011: 49).

However, after reaching its full maturation, the Westphalia culture of border control has started to be seriously contested due to the integration of the European countries after the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 (Zaiotti, 2011: 61). These two events that fundamentally changed the European environment, accompanied with the era of globalisation that was characterised by intense transnational mobility, unavoidably impacted the conception of borders shaking the nationalist regime of Westphalia. In parallel, many parts of the European continent started to witness the results of the economic recession (Zaiotti, 2011: 61-62). This recession not only triggered high levels of immigration within Europe but also from and to Europe with the arrival of a large number of non-Europeans. This high scale of migration, along with the rise of terrorism in many European countries in the 1970s and 1980s, started to raise concerns about the nature of borders linking border control with

security (Zaiotti, 2011: 64-65). Hence, in practice, although the international and European context facilitated the lifting of economic and trade barriers, it did not result in a free movement of people, but instead highlighted a security anxiety.

In this regard, in the 1980s, while the Westphalia culture of border control was contested, two alternative cultures of border control emerged in Europe, namely Schengen and Brussels. This contestation was articulated practically at the political level in François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl's attempts to respond to the challenges that the Westphalia regime faced, while moving forward with the European project (Zaiotti, 2011: 67-68). In particular, there was a series of informal political agreements that declared this privileged relationship between the two countries and also laid the foundation for a post-national approach to border control prompting also the other European countries to embrace it. At the European level, during the Fontainebleau European Council in 1984 two intergovernmental initiatives started to develop, namely Schengen and Brussels. Despite being different and therefore leading to two potential cultures of border control, these two initiatives had the same goal: a Europe without borders. Thus, from the second part of the 1980s until the late 1990s a parallel evolution of these two new cultures took place (Zaiotti, 2011: 69), while, at the same time, Westphalia was still suited as the dominant, albeit contested, culture of border control.

In particular, after the Fontainebleau European Council many European countries started to envision an abolition of border controls. In this context, in 1984, the Benelux Union Ministerial Committee addressed a memorandum to France and Germany proposing the gradual abolishment of border controls (Zaiotti, 2011: 68-69). A few months later, on 14 June 1985, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg signed the intergovernmental Schengen Agreement on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders, which was accompanied, in 1990, with the Convention implementing that Agreement. In essence, these two texts embody a novel approach to border control that have replaced Westphalia as well as contain their underlying assumptions (Zaiotti, 2011: 69). More specifically, they redefined the traditional meaning of borders introducing the distinction between external and internal borders and de facto abolished controls at internal borders. But this abolition created a security vacuum that to be redressed a reinforced approach was adopted with the introduction of new security measures for entry at the external border.

The Schengen regime is incorporated in the Schengen *acquis*, which defines its main characteristics. In summary, the Schengen border control culture considers

borders as semi-linear (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). The internal/external distinction still exists, as the Schengen conventions distinguished borders between internal and external. Yet, this internal/external distinction has a different nature that focuses on the common area in the Schengen zone and the Schengen's external border. This highlights the security-freedom continuum that characterises Schengen border control (Zaiotti, 2011: 72). Indeed, there is a will for free circulation in the Schengen area, with a parallel hardening of security provisions at the external border. Furthermore, border control is considered as trans-governmental, 'pooled' and with an asymmetric distribution of responsibility between the EU countries (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). Its practices are mainly trans-governmental and flexible, while the border control community has an intergovernmental identity. Also, its members are not only officials from national governments, but also the EU Council and the European Commission (Zaiotti, 2011: 26).

A cultural evolution from Westphalia to the new Schengen regime required the countries that originally embraced it to test and prove its effectiveness. For this reason, in the beginning, Schengen was conceived as a laboratory for this new approach to border control (Boccardi, 2002: Chapter 2; Jorry, 2007: 3-4; Zaiotti, 2008a; 2011: 74-78; Ferraro, 2013: 2; Infantino, 2016: 16-17). Then, replacing Westphalia, it developed as the dominant culture of border control from the 1990s until maybe today. Parallel to the Schengen model, Brussels emerged as an alternative approach. The Fontainebleau European Council set up an ad hoc committee, known as the 'Adonnino Committee' that suggested a 'People's Europe', namely a Europe without internal borders (Adonnino, 1985; Zaiotti, 2011: 78). The same period, the European Commission tabled a 'Proposal for a resolution to ease controls' and a White Paper on the completion of the Internal Market, which included a program for the removal of internal border controls between member states by 1992 and was the basis for the 1986 Single European Act (Commission, 1985; Zaiotti, 2011: 79).

These initiatives and documents form a different conception about borders and border control. For this reason, Brussels is considered as a potential alternative border control culture to Westphalia and Schengen, which has not yet fully materialised as a full-fledged culture of border control (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). According to the Brussels model, borders have a negative connotation. They are barriers that hinder transactions. For this reason they should be eliminated or start to function positively as bridges. Like Schengen, there is reference to internal borders that need to be abolished and, being

variant to Schengen, to the ‘Community’s borders’ that are common and can function as symbols of a new collective European identity (Zaiotti, 2011: 81). In this regard, the internal/external dimension is irrelevant, as there is continuity between these two dimensions. Border control is only supranational with a balanced distribution of responsibility among member states. Also, emphasis is given to the economic and social facets of mobility, as it draws from the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty that prioritise these issues. The practices that characterise the Brussels model are supranational, multilateral and legalistic, while its community has a supranational or European identity and is composed of officials from the EU Institutions and certain individuals from national governments and parliaments (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). It should be noted that the Commission was the strongest supporter of the Brussels project and its key promoter (Zaiotti, 2011: 86).

The Schengen and Brussels initiatives developed for some years in parallel,³⁰ while certain individuals participated in the discussions for both models. The fact that they had the same goal of abolishing Europe’s internal borders, allowed them not to be antithetical and rival each other (Zaiotti, 2011: 88). Rather both Schengen and Brussels embodied an ambitious goal, as they contested the Westphalia regime, triggered controversy among the border control policy community members and were challenged by the practitioners of the still-dominant nationalist culture of border control. However, the Brussels trajectory seemed to face more internal challenges. The desire to include all the EU members in the design and materialisation of this initiative created deadlock. In particular, during the negotiations for the ‘Convention between the members states of the European Communities on the crossing of their external frontiers’ two distinct camps were formed (Zaiotti, 2011: 118-119). On the one side, a group of countries defended a communitarian approach. On the other side, some other countries, and especially the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark and Greece promoted a nationalist interpretation of border control putting forward the security dimension and geographical particularities that needed to be addressed only by national governments. Furthermore, the institutional constellation of the Justice and Home Affairs field with the function of various working groups dealing with border matters under the auspices of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission’s restricted role in the Third Pillar did not allow for the development of a supranational commonsense.

³⁰ See table 3.a.

After all, the Council, by representing the member state executives, was closer to them. Thus, the European Commission recognised this deficit in influence and started to incorporate Schengen's narrative, so as to at least replace the Westphalia model (Zaiotti, 2011: 140-142).

But, Schengen border control culture did not receive only the support of certain supporters of the Brussels initiatives that deemed its success. Key factors for this cultural selection and then retention were the regime's positive practical results, its flexible arrangements that enabled a faster degree of anchoring and its expansion of membership, especially taking into account that even non EU-countries are associated with the Schengen zone (Zaiotti, 2011: 146). These developments resulted in the progressive internalisation of the Schengen border control culture by the border control community (Zaiotti, 2011: 160) and the regime's formal incorporation, as the Schengen *acquis*, into the European Union. So, in this light, Schengen became the new official approach to border control in Europe (Zaiotti, 2011: 144). In this context, to insert Frontex in the analysis of EU border control and explore its role in the development of the Schengen border control culture, a tailor-made application to this study is developed. The theoretical elements, methodological directions and operative imperatives of the analytical framework, when combined, construct the applied process to approach and investigate Frontex's impact on the EU border control.

Table 3.a Zaiotti's (2011: 26) typology

Cultures of Border Control in Europe			
	Westphalia	Schengen	Brussels
<i>Period</i>	1940s - 1980s	1985 - 2000s (+?)	1985 - 1990s
<i>Borders</i>	linear, barriers	semi-linear, internal/external Schengen borders	bridges, symbols of Europe, no internal/external distinction
<i>Border control</i>	national, governmental, strict, security & military emphasis	transgovernmental, pooled, asymmetric responsibility, security emphasis	supranational, collective, balanced responsibility, economic emphasis
<i>Practices</i>	unilateral, formal	transgovernmental, flexible	supranational, multilateral, legalistic
<i>Community</i>	national (governmental)	regional (intergovernmental)	supranational (European)
<i>Members of community</i>	officials from national governments	officials from national governments (Ministers of Interior), EU officials (Council, Commission)	EU officials (Commission)
<i>Reference Texts</i>	Montevideo Convention, UN Charter, national Constitutions	Schengen acquis	Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty

3.5 Applying culture of border control in Frontex and EU borders

This study tries to explore whether and how Frontex impacts the EU border control and therefore the EU external borders. To do so, a cultural approach for border control is advanced that emphasises shared meanings, collective understandings and actions drawing on social constructivism, which perceives social reality as constructed and reconstructed through the interaction of social agents that produce social practices and

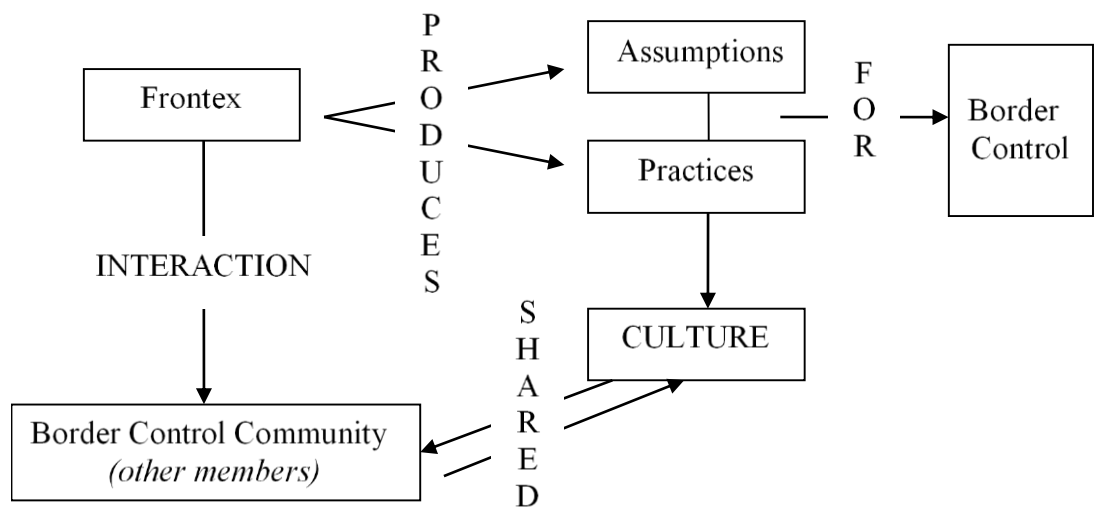
inter-subjective understandings. In this regard, the role of Frontex is investigated as a border control actor and part of the border control policy community.

In essence, to bring and operationalise culture in the study of Frontex and the EU external borders, the concept of ‘cultures of border control’ is applied (Zaiotti, 2011). This application concerns the attempt to detect any evolution of border control after its institutionalisation with the Schengen border regime, while focusing on Frontex, as a policy actor of border control. Hence, by employing the analytical framework of the culture of border control, the background assumptions and practices of the border control policy community are explored. But, neither the borders nor the border control community are fixed, finalised and frozen across time. Instead, they enclose a dynamic and constructed nature that reflects and adapts to the imperatives of the social environment. From its very establishment, Frontex was inserted in the border control community as a new member, whilst its consolidation in the EU border control policy and its enhanced powers have rendered it a pivotal actor in this borderland group. Similarly, in terms of institutional structure, new rules, measures and policies have been adopted and implemented in the border control area stemming from the escalating migration pressures at the EU external borders. All these developments in the border control community and the border control policy area are manifested empirically at the external borders, while, at the same time, build on borders’ construction. After all, according to the social constructivist lens adopted in this study, the border is socially produced (Herschel, 2011: 30; Novak, 2011) and constantly reproduced (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013: 3). Thus, it constitutes a social construction. To account for this social construction and evolving character of the border, an analytical framework, situated within a cultural and evolutionary approach, is adopted focusing on the components that compose border control and the actors that conduct it, while, simultaneously, shaping it.

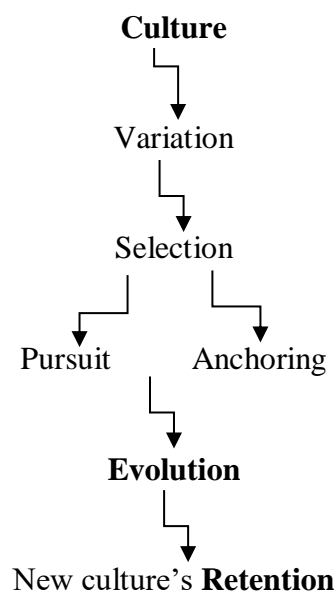
In fact, the culture of border control as an analytical framework provides the basis upon which this study’s exploration of Frontex is constructed. Indeed, this analytical framework allows operationalising culture by enriching its empirical applicability, yet, retaining culture’s ideational elements and complex character. Thus, the culture of border control in analytical terms functions as a map and manual that guide this research endeavour. The following schema (Schema 3.b) presents the basic elements of the analytical model and the logic adopted to approach the EU border control. In particular, Frontex after its establishment produces assumptions and

practices for the conduct of border control, whilst interacting with the other members of the border control policy community. These assumptions and practices can lead to a new culture of border control. This enables the investigation of the evolution of the settled culture. It is presented graphically in Schema 3.c, as the variation in culture can lead to a cultural evolution with the subsequent retention, or institutionalisation of the new culture and, then, the marginalisation of the previous regime.

Schema 3.b Frontex in EU border control



Schema 3.c Operationalisation of cultural evolution (based on Zaiotti, 2011)



The main elements of this analytical framework are the border control policy community and the border control culture that consists of a constellation of assumptions and practices for the period examined. In this context, apart from the border, the actors that form a border control community as well as the border control conduct are included in this scrutiny. This enables to account for a holistic analysis of Frontex's function at the EU external borders by investigating variant components of border control. The operationalisation and application of the culture of border control concept draws on the 'Westphalia', 'Schengen' and 'Brussels' typologies of cultures of border control constructed by Zaiotti (2011: Chapters 3 & 4). By examining the current border control conduct, namely the formation and implementation of border control at EU external borders, any challenge of, development, or evolution from the materialisation of the dominant Schengen paradigm to border control is scrutinised.

Frontex's role implies a temporal distinction in relation to Zaiotti's research. In particular, Zaiotti's analysis is oriented in explaining the creation of the Schengen border control regime and therefore it ends with the emergence of Schengen as the new dominant culture of border control and its formal incorporation in the EU. Chronologically Zaiotti's research for the Schengen regime covers the period from its initial formation in the 1990s to 2008, the year that he concluded the research for his doctoral thesis (Zaiotti, 2008b). But, an important development occurred those years at the EU external borders. This refers to Frontex's establishment in 2004 as the EU border control agency accompanied with its consolidation in the following years at the EU external borders. Accordingly, with the subsequent enhancements in its function and the strengthened powers to manage border control, Frontex is not just a presence at the EU borders. Rather, it constitutes an actor that rules over the European border regime (Vollmer & von Boemcken, 2014: 61) with its border control function. Thus, it has the ability to impact on the EU's project and logic of territorialisation. Frontex may have triggered changes in the Schengen regime and the implementation of border control policy in the EU. Thus, any shifts that may have occurred the last years at the EU external borders after Frontex's operation need to be explored and, on that account, are explored in this research. Hence, the investigation of its role in the development of a culture of border control can be presented with a connotation that presents a temporal framework to detect any shift in border control and measure change over time. The period before Frontex can be considered as BC $t=0$, while the activation of Frontex can be marked with $BC \times t=n \rightarrow DBC$. Thus, in this temporal connotation, BC is the border

control, N signifies the temporal space, D refers to change, × is Frontex, while DBC marks the different border control.

Accordingly, this research aims at exploring whether and how Frontex affects the EU border control culture and, in turn, to where it directs border control. Indeed, possible alternative directions and approaches for border control, as Zaiotti notes, constitute the Westphalia nationalist logic and the Brussels supranational and communitarian trajectory, which, as rivals to the Schengen culture, have died or retreated after Schengen's institutionalisation. However, they can resume and re-emerge as potential alternatives to border control in case of a change in the environment or the circumstances (Zaiotti, 2011: 37).

In this regard, the main research question this research tries to answer is: *'How does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?'* Following this, the thesis investigates the following research hypothesis: *'Frontex shapes the assumptions and practices shared by the border control policy community leading to an evolution of EU border control'*. This hypothesis is inspired by the theoretical orientation of the research as well as it reflects the main research question: how Frontex impacts on the culture of EU border control. Frontex, being a member of the border control policy community, has the ability to affect and alter the EU border control. This hypothesis highlights the relation among research variables, their variance and value (Antonakis et al., 2004: 51). Accordingly, it perceives EU border control as the dependent variable, while Frontex is identified as the independent and culture the intervening variable. Assessing Frontex as the independent variable becomes the focus of the research, as it is being attributed explanatory power by exploring and assuming that it can affect or cause variation in the other variables. This hypothesis also provides a context for analysis that is 'falsifiable' (Adler, 1997: 334; Wendt, 1999: 372-373). If a member of the border control policy community does not influence the assumptions and practices shared, then the EU border control will not evolve. This demonstrates the potential falseness of the proposed conceptual model (Hancké, 2010: 235). Thus, to examine the research hypothesis and Frontex's impact, analysis is organised around four sub-hypotheses that emanate from the theoretical and analytical framework:

- H 1: Frontex is part of the border control community.*
- H 2: Frontex with its presence, role and function at the EU external borders has introduced or promoted alternative assumptions and practices for border control.*
- H 3: New assumptions and practices have been initiated and adopted by the border control community contesting the dominant culture of border control.*
- H 4: The newly adopted assumptions and practices have been promoted by Frontex.*

This set of sub-hypotheses is assessed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 with the use of a research strategy that follows a qualitative approach to methodology, as presented in Chapter 4. In particular, the first sub-hypothesis (H1) is that Frontex constitutes part of the border control community. This hypothesis has two conditions. First, the existence of a border control community. Second, the condition of Frontex being a border control actor. This hypothesis is studied in the operationalisation of the analytical framework (Chapter 3.5.2) and the empirical chapters of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6). The second hypothesis (H2) stems from the social constructivist assumption that Frontex, as a social actor, creates inter-subjective structures of meaning, while the third hypothesis (H3) is based on the constructivist logic that social reality is constructed through the interaction of social agents that produce social practices. It is expected that Frontex's assumptions and practices are endorsed by the border control community (H4). These hypotheses are analysed under the methodological strategy that will be presented in the following chapter and will be examined and operationalised with the use of Zaiotti's analytical framework. Taking into account that this research examines a different period from Zaiotti's, it can offer new information on current characteristics and the evolution of the border control culture in Europe. Also, the role of border control policy community actors is further elaborated and their impact on border control and European borders, as in Zaiotti's analysis the policy community actors remain a neglected and underdeveloped research element. Indeed, although Zaiotti's concept of culture of border control has provided the necessary grounding basis to answer the research questions and rationale of this thesis, at the same time, it enables to build upon it and further advance it by investigating elements and factors that are not included or explored in Zaiotti's study.

3.5.1 Sequential path for border control scrutiny

To operationalise the analytical framework, a sequential path is followed which proceeds from the exploration of the border control community, then moves to the interaction of the members that produce culture, and concludes with policy implementation at the border. Initially the formation of the border control community is scrutinised: who are the members of this community, what place they have been accorded in it and how they act, whilst focusing on Frontex. Then, their interaction is explored denoting the internal dynamics, structures and norms adopted within the group. Interaction facilitates (re)production of inter-subjective structures of meaning (Risse, 2000: 10). Through it and the construction of social relationships, agents can alter their predispositions and adopt new interests, preferences and behaviour. In this regard, a common spirit and collective intentionality is developed with novel elements via social learning and socialisation (Checkel, 2001b: 53). This constructs a border control culture that shapes the policy implementation at the EU borders, and therefore the border itself. Thus, the last axis for investigation is the border control conduct and policy implementation at the EU external borders.

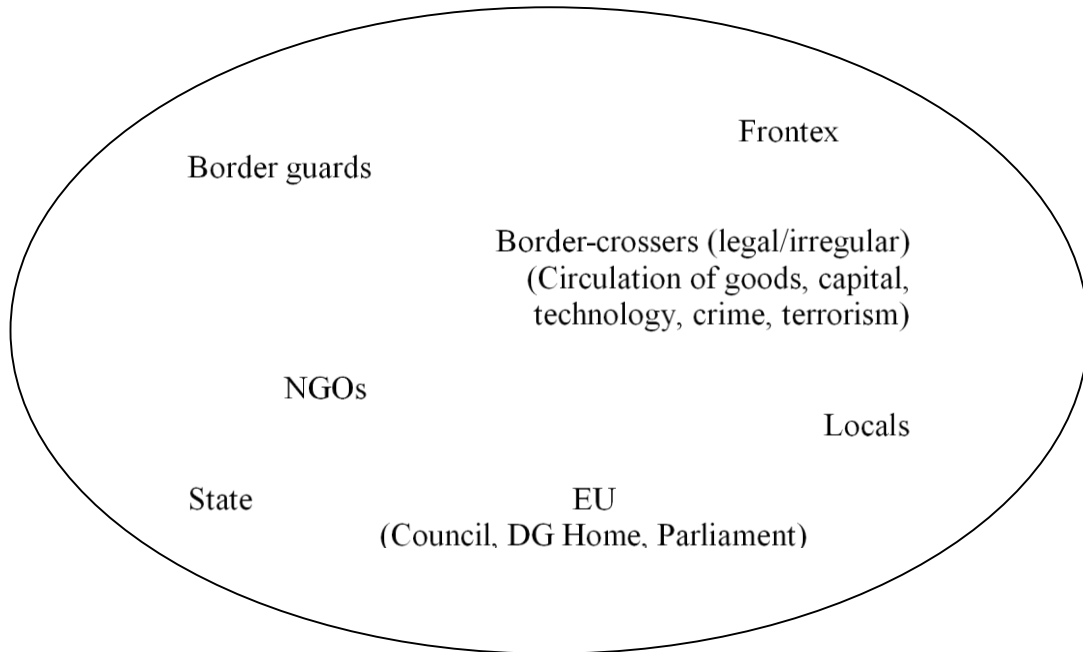
3.5.2 Border actors and border control actors

To illustrate the main actors that operate at or engage in the EU border taking into account the different levels that exist –local, regional, national, and supranational–, the following schema is utilised that reflects the socio-spatial dynamics:³¹

³¹ The aim here is to give a representative picture of the actors that act at the EU external borders with reference to the theme of the research and not to provide a detailed mapping of all the potential actors that may have a presence at the EU borders, like the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Yet, any omission of border actors does not impact on the research endeavour and its outcome.

Schema 3.d Border actors and border control actors

Border



As in every border, in this case too, various actors exist and interact. Thus, the border becomes the environment or the structure, which functions as a place of conduct and ‘topos’ for social relations. In this context, the border allows the actors to define their function and role as well as to warrant their existence in the social world.

But, being border actor does not necessarily equate to a role at the border control, and as a result, does not infer the ‘border control actor’ attribute. Hence, these actors, although they act at the border, not all of them participate in the border control conduct. For instance, despite that border crossers are being subject to border control, they are not its actors, because they do not implement it and do not have the capacity to confer a conscious alteration to it. The same applies to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are present at the borders, like Amnesty International and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Though they can formulate general suggestions and policy recommendations or criticise and put pressure on national authorities regarding border control aspects and human rights, they do not practice or plan border control. In principle, this means that they are not and cannot be part of the border control policy community. Rather, they remain external actors, which can only play a restricted role in informing the broad discussion on border control (Zaiotti, 2011: 32). For instance, a dramatic change in the number of border crossers has the potential to alter the way of carrying out border control or provide solid proof for an amendment in border policy. Yet, this does not constitute an internal alteration of the regime.

Rather, it describes certain circumstances that the members of the border control policy community can acknowledge, disregard or use for their benefit. In this vein, the focus is the members of the border control community, which constitute the actors that conduct, practice and implement border control at the EU external borders. These actors compose a community of border control practitioners. In this category belong border guards from the national authorities of member states, and Frontex. In particular, there is a responsibility sharing in the implementation of border control between Frontex and the member states (Regulation, 2016) and for this reason both Frontex from the EU level and member states from the national spectrum are included in this category, as they carry out border control activities.

Yet, apart from these actors, there are also other entities that inform border control at both national and EU level. For instance, national parliaments that adopt border control legislation. However, this concerns a general function of the legislative procedure and not an active and conscious presence at the external borders. Similarly, at the EU level, in border policy are involved the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home) from the side of the European Commission,³² the European Parliament, the Council, the Court and the European Ombudsman. These entities have the capacity to impact on border control policy. However, this impact is directed towards policy-making, namely the formulation of policy and the adoption of general guidelines or legislation. Due to the technical character of the border control field, the specific measures applied to border control implementation and its operationalisation by border guards cannot be a matter for reflection, discussion and decision, for instance, at the Council level or at the European Parliament, as they do not have the required technical expertise to deal with these issues or the time to invest upon them. Similarly, the European Commission, despite the establishment of the DG Home, does not have the necessary resources, in terms of extra staff and available financial allocations or, as stated by itself, the ‘highly technical know-how’ to engage with such a specific operational field, as it is border control (Commission, 2003). For this reason Frontex was created in the first place to deal with these technical aspects of border management

³² It should be mentioned here that, apart from Frontex, there are also other EU agencies in the area of Home Affairs, like the European Union’s Law Enforcement agency (Europol) and the European Agency for the Operational Management of large-scale IT Systems (eu-LISA) that, whilst fulfilling their mission they indirectly touch upon border security matters. However, due to their technical function and specific tasks they cannot substitute the EU’s border control agency or assume its role and presence at the EU borders.

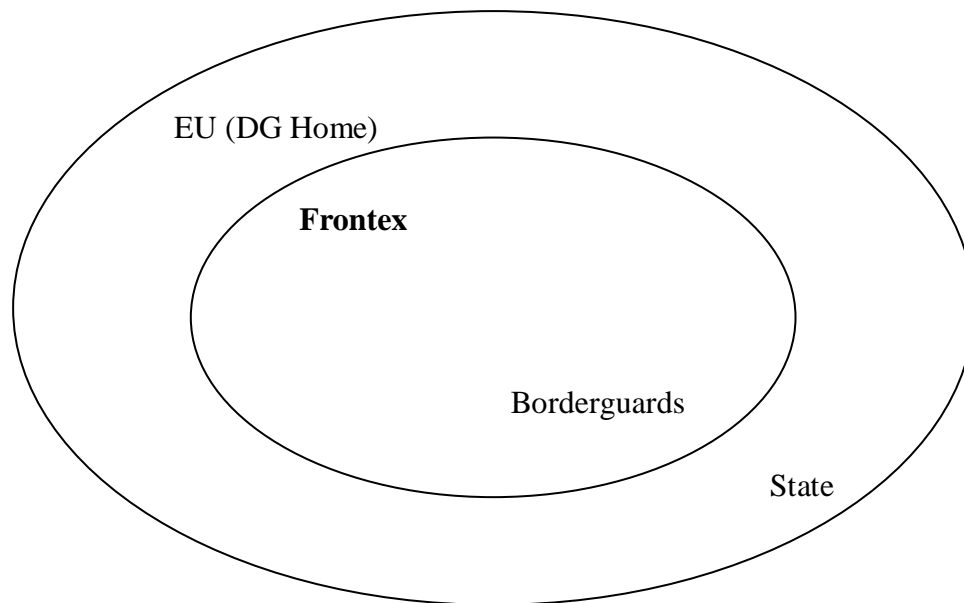
(Léonard, 2009). At the same time, the EU Court of Justice can only give judgments or opinions and the European Ombudsman recommendations about the implemented border policy. This means that, due to the nature of their function and their powers in the EU institutional system, they can impact on border control but indirectly via legislation and court judgments. For this reason they cannot belong to the core of the border control policy community, as they are not at the EU external borders, do not interact there with other actors, do not share common routines for border management, and, most importantly, they do not carry out border control.

However, special consideration and attention shall be accorded to the European Commission in terms of policy-making, due to its strong role as ‘agenda-setter and legislation initiator’ in all the EU policies (Léonard, 2009: 375) and particularly in Frontex’s creation (Commission, 2003; Léonard, 2009: 379-381). In this sense, the European Commission with its DG Home engages with border control issues by suggesting and structuring policy initiatives, evaluating measures and policy tools, setting priorities and goals, formulating strategies as well as proposing regulations and recommendations for this EU policy area. On these grounds, it can be drawn that it has a primary function in designing and supervising the overall EU border control policy. But it does not have a permanent or systematic presence at EU external borders. Consequently, it cannot practice any organised activities that shape a cultural context. Neither can it develop any sense of we-ness being outside from the physical and social environment delineated at the border. It does not practice border control and does not interact or engage with all the members of the border control policy community at the external border. For instance, European Commission representatives participate in Frontex’s Management Board, but there is no channel of official cooperation between the European Commission and national border guards. In sum, the European Commission is an actor that impacts border control through its ‘privileged position’ in EU policy-making (Christiansen, 2006: 100), and, as a result, it cannot be excluded from the general border control policy community. Yet, because of its absence from the EU external borders and its inability to carry out border control, it does not belong to the core of the border control community.

Similarly, for each member, the ‘State’ as an institution exercises its power in the field of border control. But the actual conduct of border control is undertaken by national authorities that implement the border control policy, such as Police, Border Police, Coastguard, State Border Guard Service, Border Guard or Civil Guard, and

particularly the border guards that manage the borders. However, due to their official status as state civil servants and the obligations that derive from this status as well as the link of border control to national security, they do not have free rein, when they perform their duties and fulfil their mission. Instead, their function is state controlled.

Schema 3.e Border control actors
Border Control



Turning to Frontex, as an actor of the EU border control and member of the border control policy community, it acts at the external border and shapes its social environment by producing and reproducing behavioural patterns and meanings. This accounts for a different role for Frontex by illuminating the behaviour, practices and social environment in which Frontex is embedded. Frontex is also an actor at the EU external borders that has specific tasks, freedoms and powers for the fulfilment of its role as well as it has developed a constant presence at the EU external borders and a permanent interaction with the other border control actors. As it was noted in the previous chapter that referred to Frontex, this agency after its institutional enhancements the last years, has formed its own organisational character and working methods. In this context, Frontex decides and carries out operations, has equipment, staff and budget, advances new ideas and technologies for border control as well as it produces risk analyses that evaluate the cross-border threats and spot the most critical borders. This means that Frontex has created novel ways of acting, which constitutes a characteristic of actors (Finnemore, 1996: 30) as well as it has given life to new structures, like networks, partnerships and new forms of cooperation that it has created

at the EU borders. Therefore, Frontex, being a border control actor, is shaping assumptions, beliefs and practices as well as it practices daily routinised activities of border control. In other words, Frontex produces and materialises culture or, in terms of border control, it develops and can pursue a culture of border control.

In a similar vein, given that all actors possess some degree of agency (Scott, 2008: 78), this also applies to Frontex. Hence, as social constructivism advocates, agency creates, reproduces and alters culture through the daily practices (Risse, 2009: 146), whereas interests are constructed through social interaction (Finnemore, 1996: 2). This social construction of the world indicates that it is continually evolving, rather than a fixed production. In essence, agency implies a degree of choice, the capacity to reflect on specific situations, set objectives, define interests (Della Sala, 2017: 547), use knowledge to transform decisions and exercise learning (O'Neill et al., 2004: 158), and the ability of the agent to alter the environment in which it operates via its respective actions (Rosamond, 2000: 172).

In this sense, Frontex is an agency that acts at the border by formulating and adopting operational decisions during the conduct of missions. Furthermore, Frontex produces knowledge through its various activities, such as the organisation of workshops and events, risk analysis publications, data dissemination and launch of operational measures. So, building on its role as a border control actor, Frontex not only implements, but also formulates border policy (Casas-Cortes et al., 2013: 53). Thus, it constructs territoriality by consolidating its agency (Della Sala, 2017: 546). In parallel, being an actor embedded in a community, Frontex is also rendered a social agent and actor. Indeed, given that the agency is socially constructed (Scott, 2008: 79), the conscious or unconscious participation and especially the active involvement in a community allows a member of this community to become accepted by the other members and possibly increase its influence on the community. This process may involve the internalisation of new understandings and routines signalling a change in the *modus vivendi*, *operandi* and *essendi* of the community. This can lead to a shift in the border control culture, and, in turn, to the institutionalisation of a new regime for border control. Frontex can thus become a change agent (Börzel & Risse, 2003: 67-68) or even a policy entrepreneur (Kingdon, 2014 [1984]), as it has the ability to initiate change by persuading the other members of the community to redefine their interests and therefore transform the border control culture and policy. As a result, it also impacts and controls the border through its activities, practices and ideas.

To sum up, to bring the ‘culture of border control’ in Frontex’s analysis, the operationalisation of the framework is undertaken focusing on the characteristics of the research that emanate from the chosen research question, research hypothesis and research variables. In this context, to apply the proposed framework developed by Ruben Zaiotti, but oriented towards exploring Frontex’s impact on the EU border control, emphasis is placed to the border control community, and particularly the members that compose it, the internal dynamics that govern it and the processes or structures of interaction enabled in the community. All these, in turn, shape the border control culture and, therefore, the border.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the theoretical orientation, approach, analytical framework, and operationalisation selected in this research. More specifically, this thesis projected an alternative approach to the study of Frontex’s role in the EU borders by putting forward a cultural approach based on social constructivism. Accordingly, this inclusion of culture brings a non-traditional conception and novel considerations in Frontex’s exploration that build on shared meanings and collective understandings, while social constructivism allows reorienting the research to inter-subjective elements of the social world so as to explore the main research question, namely ‘*how does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?*’. To answer this question and, at the same time, bring and operationalise culture in this thesis, Zaiotti’s analytical framework on the concept of ‘cultures of border control’ is applied. This framework provides a means to link culture to border control, while undertaking a research on Frontex and the EU external borders. In this regard, the culture of border control is scrutinised so as to detect any change in the border construction, taking into account the Westphalia’, ‘Schengen’ and ‘Brussels’ typologies of cultures of border control in Europe as well as the border control actors. But, to move from the conceptual context to that of empirics, the adoption of specific methodology is required so as to measure the variables that have been operationalised and test the research hypotheses. This constitutes an essential step to turn this research from a theoretical exercise to a plausible explanation of empirical events.

Chapter 4: Method and the assessment context

4.1 Introduction

Apart from laying the theoretical foundation of the research and the approach followed to explore the role of Frontex in the EU border control, the methodology adopted to answer the research question is presented in this chapter. The study adopts a qualitative approach which highlights ideational elements and the construction of social meanings. This describes a problem-driven process. The research design of acquiring knowledge has included the use of various methods and tools for data collection, such as document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, comparative analysis, process-tracing and direct observation through fieldwork at the Greek land border Evros and the Italian sea border Lampedusa, which constitute the two case study borders that have been selected to be examined as variant cases. Similarly, the data analysis involves documents, discourses, interviews, comparison of cases, *in-situ* analysis with fieldwork as well as process-tracing. Hence, this variety of data collection and data analysis methods reflects a multi-dimensional research strategy put forward to construct and assess new knowledge claims drawing from the principles of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ as well as conforming to common ‘goodness criteria’ that enable to enhance the plausibility of this research pursuit.

4.2 Methods to solve the research puzzle

As the previous sections demonstrated, both borders and culture constitute complex concepts, which, in this research, are investigated in relation to the EU and Frontex that also present ambiguous actors. Yet, this complexity and ambiguity does not render them immune from scientific study (Ladyman, 2002) or scientific standards and truth conditions (Pouliot, 2007: 360), theoretical exploration as well as empirical analysis and confirmation (Wendt, 1995: 75; Antonakis et al., 2004: 49).

To conduct research, construct knowledge and draw empirically valid conclusions, the use of scientific methods is a condition *sine qua non* for a coherent research inquiry and explanation that leads to knowledge development (Petit & Huault, 2008). In the past, the use of scientific methods was more the exception rather than the rule. But, from the 1970s onward, the field of international relations has become more method-oriented, as the use of methodology soon became part and parcel of research

by validating the process of knowledge acquisition and development (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004: 6-7).

In particular, the process of knowledge acquisition refers to methodology (Hay, 2011: 169), while the tools to collect and analyse this knowledge are the research methods that are applied. In this context, the research design aims at translating methodology into methods (Düvell, 2012: 5), to obtain and interpret data as well as link theory to empirics. Yet, scientific knowledge is not a static object. Rather, it is a dynamic activity and complex process that is directly linked to the researcher (Petit & Huault, 2008: 75), given that it is the researcher that conducts the research and constructs the knowledge by reproducing it (von Glasersfeld, 1991; Hancké, 2010: 232). In this sense, science, and social science in particular, resembles the process of solving puzzles (Hancké, 2010: 234). For this reason the use of appropriate research tools or, put differently, methods, is needed so as to answer the research question, reach a conclusion (Ellis & Levy, 2008: 21), develop meanings (Pouliot, 2007: 365) and solve the research puzzle.

The study adheres to this scientific understanding, applying a variety of research methods that enable the conduct of a valid research as well as the extraction of trustworthy and knowledge attained conclusions regarding Frontex's role in the EU border control. In this light, in the research conduct, emphasis is given to the expression of the problem. After all, the provision of a solution to a research problem requires prior knowledge of what the problem is (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000: 24). It thus opts for a problem-driven, not for a method-driven, process (Checkel, 1999: 546; Shapiro, 2002), while retaining its method-oriented component, that is the application of a research methodology that conforms to the principles of validity and reliability as well as to 'goodness criteria' so as to fulfill its truth-seeking commitment (Risse & Wiener, 1999: 776).³³ In essence, it tries to answer how Frontex impacts the culture of EU border control. To provide an answer to this research puzzle, the research design and knowledge acquisition are anchored in the research's ontological and epistemological stance. In this regard, the adopted ontology and epistemology consider knowledge and reality as actively created by social relationships and interactions, and that knowledge or truth claims (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 20) can be developed and extracted based on evidence (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001: 395; Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 12) for constructing

³³ For the principles of validity and reliability and the 'goodness criteria', see chapter 4.4.

‘new and meaningful interpretations’ (Checkel, 1998: 325). To do so, a cultural approach is applied operationalising it with Ruben Zaiotti’s (2011) analytical framework of ‘cultures of border control’.

The research problem, along with the approach and theoretical stance determine the data that will be gathered and the research methodology that will be conducted. After all, not just any methodology is appropriate to answer the research problem, whereas the methods that will be applied need to be fitted to the selected methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108). In this vein, research follows a qualitative approach to methodology. Qualitative methodology concerns the empirical research,³⁴ which includes data that are not numbers (Punch, 2014: 3), taking into account that ‘not everything that counts can be counted’.³⁵ In general, qualitative methodology is used to explore attitudes, behaviours, motivations and culture, namely ideational variables (Düvell, 2012: 5). It is considered as the most important research analysis in the field of international relations, because the majority of scholars choose to apply qualitative instead of quantitative or mixed methodology (Moravcsik, 2014: 663).

Principally, qualitative methodology allows the development of a systematic empirical inquiry that explores the meaning (Shank, 2006: 4; Vromen, 2010: 255). Also, it enables to investigate and produce an analytical description of a complex social phenomenon or process (Jabareen, 2009: 50), as it is not confined to just numbers or numerical data. Instead, it involves the investigation of words and images reflecting on perceptions, attitudes, narratives, motives and interpretations (Lydaki, 2016: 25). In this light, qualitative methodology permits the study of human life by interpreting the factors of interaction among real people in the real world (Blumer, 1969 [1939]: 136-138), emphasising therefore the social world and its construction (Tsiolis, 2014: 45).

This research opts for a qualitative methodology, because of culture’s central role in the analysis. In particular, qualitative research seems to be appropriate for this study, due to the character of culture, which apart from being an ideational variable and therefore difficult to measure or quantify, it is also a ‘contested concept’.³⁶ Hence, qualitative methodology provides the context and the means to analyse ideational elements as it occupies methods that explore not only what is ‘seen’, but also what is

³⁴ Empirical research is a scrutiny based on direct experience or observation of the world (Punch, 2014: 2)

³⁵ Written in a sign in Albert Einstein’s office at Princeton University.

³⁶ For this conception of culture, see chapter 3.2.2.

‘discussed’ or ‘read’. This is crucial in terms of a cultural analysis, as the detection of culture urges to use all the senses, including hearing, listening, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling (Ballinger, 2006: 357). In parallel, this distinct methodology can appreciate and accentuate the complexity of culture by clarifying its components. In fact, it can stimulate culture’s background understandings, whilst combining them with evidence and empirical observation from culture’s development and evolution. Similarly, using a qualitative methodology, emphasis is placed to the context and the environment (Vromen, 2010: 257), apart from the agents and their perceptions. This enables to trace culture, which is situated in the social environment, and follow its path for maturity. In this regard, the research focus can be shifted from the individual level to the group level. This permits the investigation of how social meanings are constructed and developed between the members of the group as well as how they enter into the subject’s world (Pierce, 2008: 45).

In reality, it is qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative methodology, which facilitates the study of over-time data (Mahoney, 2007: 126) and long-term dynamic processes (Vromen, 2010: 233). This is required in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the research problem that constitutes a prerequisite for the conduct of a cultural exploration. Thus, qualitative research can be framed in a social, cultural and temporal context, avoiding the pitfalls of rigid numerical designs that cannot adapt to change and therefore respond to the complexities of the social world (Pierce, 2008: 43; Vromen, 2010: 257). Following this, it is not surprising that qualitative methodology has been associated with social constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 105; Andrews, 2012). Indeed, due to the focus of social constructivism on ideas and inter-subjective meanings as well as the examination of the social world, instead of the natural, qualitative methods soon became the methodological ‘weapon’ of choice in constructivist theory. In fact, many Constructivists use this methodology in their analyses to capture the interaction between context and agency and the construction of social reality (Searle, 1995; Finnemore, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996a). This is another point that reflects the suitability of qualitative methods in this research pursuit.

4.3 Data collection and data analysis

After the articulation of the research problem and then the selection of the appropriate methodology to answer it, the steps that follow in the research design for the fulfillment of the research conduct are the data collection and data analysis. These steps are

sometimes interlinked, as, though, in principle, the collection of data should precede their analysis, it is not rare the data analysis stage to create more information. This equates to a data collection and data analysis cycle with no clear beginning and end. Regarding data collection, this process involves the generation of diverse and a large amount of data that need to be carefully managed and processed. In this light, to capture empirically and then analyse how Frontex impacts the EU border control focusing on culture, the methods used to gather data involve document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, comparative analysis, process-tracing and direct observation through fieldwork at certain EU borders. Thus, multiple and diverse data collection techniques have been applied to solve this research puzzle. This, in spite of offering variety, minimises any research challenges that may arise from studying culture, which constitutes an ideational variable based on subjective meanings and composed of elusive elements that cannot be quantified.

Also, these data collection methods guide the data analysis phase as well as define the relation or variance between the variables (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000: 455). Indeed, by collecting and then analysing data the interaction between the subject and object of the research is denoted with the articulation of a distinct set of sub-hypotheses that construct and assess the relationship of the under examined variables. In essence, the nature and substance of data as well as the research problem indicate the methods for data analysis and therefore the implementation of the research design. In this case, for this study the data analysis is centred on documents, discourses, interviews, comparison of cases, *in-situ* analysis with fieldwork and process-tracing.

4.3.1 Document analysis

Given the phenomenical character of culture, its empirical traces can be extracted from relevant texts (Zaiotti, 2011: 38-39). Thus, document analysis is essential to discover, recognise, distinguish and understand any change in the context as well as to identify the time period and context of the explored elements. Following this, qualitative document analysis is employed in this research to explore Frontex as an actor and, in parallel, the EU borders as a context. Hence, it is a tool that enables to interpret the content of the EU border control culture and the implemented policies in this domain (Beauguitte et al., 2015: 854) focusing on Frontex. Document analysis refers to data from both primary and secondary sources. In this study, primary data sources include official documents deriving from Frontex, such as handbooks, governance documents,

annual reports, general reports, work programmes, Management Board decisions, publications, official statements and studies commissioned by Frontex. Also, national reports, minutes from parliamentary discussions, and EU texts from primary and secondary legislation, like EU Treaties, the Schengen Convention, Regulations, Council Conclusions, Directives and Decisions, Commission Decisions, Opinions, Communications, Reports, Recommendations and studies, ECtHR Judgements and European Parliament Reports. Secondary data sources entail scholarly articles and literature, and review articles from the press and non-governmental organisations.

Regarding the document analysis process, starting from a review on the existing literature on Frontex, the main perspectives are presented, along with the methods used and the extracted conclusions regarding Frontex's presence at the EU borders. Then, after situating a research lacuna in the field, a document analysis is applied to primary data so as to discern Frontex's impact at the EU borders. In particular, having as reference Ruben Zaitotti's typology on the cultures of border control in Europe (2011), through reading and analysing Frontex and EU texts, this research tries to discern any change in the narrative of the Schengen culture after Frontex's establishment and enhanced function at the EU external borders.

In doing so, a rigorous three-stage process for the analysis of qualitative data in social sciences is adopted (Strauss, 1987: Chapter 3). This process focuses on document coding, a careful and systematic reading of texts so as to convert them into significant words, symbols and meanings (Neuman, 2014: 374) or concepts (Neuman, 2014: 480). The first phase involves an 'open coding' reading through the material so as to recognise, identify, isolate and record the noticeable patterns of change and the main characteristics of the current culture of EU border control as articulated in texts. Secondly, through 'axial coding', the elements specified in the first stage are reviewed and assessed in a more concrete way. This permits to transfer the broad context into specified characteristics, whilst making connection to the research problem and the research approach adopted in the study. In the final stage of 'selective coding', the documents are critically reread. This requires reflection and systematic revision so as to uncover any miscoded passages or discrepant meanings (Wesley, 2014: 150).

4.3.2 Institutional discourse analysis

Another technique used for data analysis, which complements document analysis, is discourse analysis. In fact, due to the primary focus of this study on culture, and

therefore assumptions and ideas, the application of discourse analysis is particularly relevant, because this method can reveal ‘hidden’ meanings and assumptions of geopolitical knowledge (Beauguitte et al., 2015: 858). This can be achieved through the investigation of discursive developments and accounts (Lynggaard, 2012: 85) in the textual and contextual environment.³⁷

In particular, discourse analysis studies the development and effect of collective meaning systems by having as research object, evidently, the discourse (Lynggaard, 2012: 88). In that spirit, institutional discourse analysis is applied to Frontex and the local border control services’ narratives. Behind this method lies the idea that language and discourse, though relational and context-dependent (Hassard & Wolfram Cox, 2013: 1712), have a powerful dimension (Beauguitte et al., 2015: 858) that encompasses meanings and relations as well as constructed realities. Thus, discourse analysis sheds light on the way rhetoric, communication and everyday settings of the spoken world reflect and construct social assumptions and practices as well as the broader context, namely the border. Given that words do not exist in isolation but in a given context, a discourse analysis can elucidate cognitive elements, such as beliefs, knowledge and opinions as well as technical terminology, like concepts and practices. Furthermore, discourse can reveal transformative patterns, while, in parallel, it can also enable, justify or constrain change. In fact, discourse can be regarded as a carrier of ideas that can alter policies, rendering it therefore as the main tool of change (Saurugger, 2013: 895).

However, taking into consideration the institutional dimension of this discourse, and therefore its official character, attention should also be placed on the process of discourse formulation and the actors involved. Through the articulation of discourse, actors can bring new ideas and argumentation, justify their choices or, in contrast, due to miscommunication, misuse of language or with the use of unrecognised language, they can lose authority and become irrelevant (Lynggaard, 2012: 88-89). In this light, through discourse analysis the role of actors can be explored using the characteristic of discursive actorness, which refers to actors’ ability to articulate and impact on discourse (Lynggaard, 2012: 98). This means that actors can have a discursive entrepreneurship by using words, formulating rhetoric, linking discursive meanings and creating fora that

³⁷ Textual environment is the structures of discourse, such as words, while the contextual environment refers to the context, such as social, economic and cultural, in which the discourse is produced.

can function as channels of communication with the organisation of conferences, seminars and lectures (Lynggaard, 2012: 98). Thus, via discourse actors produce meanings and strategies for action. Discourse is, therefore, a discursive repertoire that can be strategically applied by actors seizing new opportunities to reframe meanings and contexts as well as to impact on their environment (Werner & Cornelissen, 2014: 1460). So, discourse is both structured and structuring (Hay, 2011: 177). In essence, it is being structured by actors, while, in parallel, discourse structures meanings.

To capture the discourse empirically and move from the side of narration to that of empirics, a critical, yet sociological (Keller, 2012), engagement with the discourse is needed so as to explore all the relevant questions, namely how the discourse is uttered and constructed, by whom, for what reason, with what mechanisms, how it is been communicated and to which audience it is addressed. This involves an analysis that starts from the formulation and articulation of discourse, continues to its dissemination and communication, and finally ends with its adoption and legitimisation by the target audience (Keller, 2012: 59). To do so, the coding process is utilised, as described before in the document analysis.

In particular, this research technique for discourse analysis is applied to the rhetoric of Frontex, along with the discourse of border guard services, EU officials and the uttered discourse during the stage of interviews. In essence, building on the research problem, namely how Frontex impacts the EU border control, this discourse analysis traces the dominant narrative and therefore border control culture trying to grasp any change in assumptions and practices of the Schengen border control model.

4.3.3 Process-tracing

To explore whether and how Frontex impacts the EU borders, the method of process-tracing is also applied, as it constitutes a research tool that combines structure and context, whether institutional or social, with agency (Bennett & Checkel, 2015: 3). Hence, in this research, the use of process-tracing tries to detect any impact of Frontex on the EU border control by studying change patterns in the EU border control culture. The process-tracing method was first developed in the late 1960s in the field of cognitive psychology (Bennett & Checkel, 2015: 5). Later it was transferred in political science by Alexander George (1979) and soon it became a rather popular method in qualitative social sciences (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 2) with fundamental importance in research analysis (George & Bennett, 2005; Checkel, 2006; Collier, 2011), mainly

due its ability to link smoothly theory and empirical data (Checkel, 2006: 369) and zoom into the chain of events (Panke, 2012: 129).

Process-tracing refers to the systematic examination of evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses (Collier, 2011: 823). It seeks to describe phenomena, explore their relationships and explain their causal role, namely why 'x' causes 'y' (Hall, 2013: 23) in the causal process, that is the casual chain and causal mechanism between the research variables and their outcome (George & Bennett, 2005: 206). So, it does not focus only on the dependent and independent variables. Instead, it gives room to explore also the role of the intervening variables (George & Bennett, 2005: 6-7; Kay & Baker, 2015). In this context, it investigates specific sequential processes underlining a dynamic relationship among the different variables.

This dynamic quality of process-tracing renders it as a suitable analytical tool for exploring social change or policy change at different levels, like macro and micro (Kay & Baker, 2015), because it enables to track the path from the origin down to the effect (Radaelli, 2012: 5) leading to an analytical exploration of the research problem. Indeed, the process-tracing method can shed light on the mechanisms and dynamics of change by investigating methodologically the process and the series of steps made in a sequence of policy development (Kay & Baker, 2015: 6) or social change (Checkel, 2006: 363). Yet, it should be noted that in the process-tracing technique, the observable manifestations drawn from this method could also include evidence in the form of rhetoric, narration and discourse (Parsons, 2010: 92). This allows the production of a holistic qualitative picture regarding the development of an event, action or variation. Moreover, it fits well and can be combined with the use of other qualitative research methods, such as case studies and interviewing (Hall, 2006: 24; Tansey, 2007; Panke, 2012; Rohlfing, 2012), so as to enrich the research process and strengthen the research analysis conclusions.

Process-tracing can also provide evidence of ideation, and therefore, due to this study's cultural approach, needs to be included in the methodological repertoire. More specifically, process-tracing can manifest any link between ideational elements, such as ideas and beliefs, and policies by tracing the ideational processes (Parsons, 2002: 48-49; Jacobs, 2015) and following the intervening cognitive steps that exist between them (Yee, 1996: 77). This involves an analytical examination of the paths for the diffusion of ideas, including their origins, their transmission and their carriers, namely the actors

or policy entrepreneurs that carry them (Jacobs, 2015: 65-69). So, process-tracing enables to reveal how ideation influences the course of action by tracking the way ideas inform certain actions over time and their initiator. In this regard, process-tracing allows detecting Frontex's role as a distinct actor isolating it from the general border control environment, as well as from member states or EU preferences and interests. Apart from processes and ideas, this method can also function as a practice-tracing methodology (Pouliot, 2015). In this context, given that practices are performances and social activities, they produce concrete effects in the social world (Pouliot, 2015: 241), which can be 'witnessed', 'talked about' or 'read' (Pouliot, 2015: 246). Hence, the use of this research method allows interpreting not only the context, in which practices are enacted, but also the actors that produce them as well as their social meaning, placing therefore emphasis on the community of practitioners that generate them through social interaction (Pouliot, 2015: 243-244).

On process-tracing conduct and the mechanism for measuring change in this study, a careful description is made paying close attention to the temporal sequence of events (Collier, 2011). This systematic process, involves, firstly, the formulation and theorisation of variables, including their correlation in the casual chain. Then, the formulation of predictions, rival predictions and expected or possible outcomes, the collection of evidence, and the drawing of observations about the case examined and the process made so as to assess the theory and the empirical material. Lastly, the analysis and the conclusions extracted form the process-tracing determine the final judgment about the research direction (Hall, 2006: 27-28; Kay & Baker, 2015: 10-18).

4.3.4 Comparative case study analysis

The use of comparison is another method applied to investigate Frontex's impact. Comparison is a research method in which two or more cases are investigated and contrasted so as to draw parallels and differences (Azarian, 2011: 113). In this sense, it is a process of research construction that underlines, de-emphasises and relates elements of social reality, bringing therefore order to the chaos of the social world (Azarian, 2011: 123). Hence, the distinctiveness of this method stems from its ability to understand the social world by making explicit connections among social phenomena (Ragin & Rubinson, 2009: 30).

In the last decades, comparative analysis has become a fundamental tool of the social sciences (Collier, 1993: 105) as it enables to establish knowledge about life in a

complex environment (Hopkin, 2010: 289). In fact, in spite of the impossibility of law-like generalisations, comparative analysis can produce ‘contingent generalisations’ (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998: 275; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001: 396) with the construction of analogies across cases (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 20-21). Furthermore, comparison allows uncovering any causal inferences (Bennett, 2004: 30) through the search for both similarity and variance in specific cases (Ragin, 1994: 105; Mills et al., 2006: 621). After all, the act of comparing is a natural function of the human mind, and therefore any reasoning void of the process of comparison can be deemed utopian (Azarian, 2011: 115).

The comparative analysis employed follows a small-n case study model. More specifically, the case study research refers to an empirical inquiry (Yin, 2003: 13) for an in-depth examination of cases (Patton, 2002: 447; Goodrick, 2014: 1) that allows for the exploration of the relationship between evidence, or empirical observations, and explanations based on hypotheses or theories (Levy, 2008: 2). This method can involve all the stages of knowledge production, such as data design, collection and analysis (Yin, 2003: 14), thus equating to a process of analysis (Patton, 2002: 447). Also, through case study research, both deduction and induction reasoning³⁸ can be adopted (Bennett, 2004: 19) for an analytical variety and a dynamic discovery process (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 31). The selected cases for close examination and comparison are ‘instances of a class of events of interest to the investigator’ (Odell, 2004: 57) that can lead to a series of observations (Bennett, 2004: 20). For each case, comparisons to a wider group of cases can be drawn (Bennett, 2004: 21). Following this, the research applies a small-n comparison, which is more suitable for counterfactual analysis of ideational explanations, beliefs and socially constructed change (Hopkin, 2010: 302) and can thus be combined with a cultural approach. The small-n study model facilitates the ‘focused’³⁹ and detailed examination of a small number of cases so as to detect any similarities, differences and patterns, with a view to produce knowledge about social phenomena that can be analogically considered and applied beyond the cases under scrutiny (Goodrick, 2014: 1).

From this point of departure, the cases that have been selected to be examined are the Greek land border Evros and the Italian sea border Lampedusa. The choice for

³⁸ Deductive reasoning begins with the general and ends to the specific, while, contrary to deduction, inductive reasoning moves from the specific to a general conclusion (Halperin & Heath, 2012: 29-31).

³⁹ For the method of focused comparison, see George & Bennett (2005: Chapter 3).

the case selection was not random. Rather, to limit any danger of selection bias, it was based on the ‘method of agreement’ in Mill’s classification of small-n case study research methods (1865 [1843]), which corresponds to the design of the ‘most-different method’ developed by Przeworski and Teune (1970). This type of small-n method refers to cases that are different, except on the outcome and the variables that are being studied (Hopkin, 2010: 291). Hence, the examination of variant cases enables to focus on the complementary elements and aspects for development of a social phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1991: 620).

Following this, Evros and Lampedusa have been chosen as case studies in this research because they constitute two distinct EU borders. On the one hand, Evros is the external border of the EU with Turkey in northern Greece along the river Evros, which, for many years, has been the main point of entry for illegal migrants to reach Europe. On the other hand, Lampedusa constitutes Italy’s most southern part and island close to Tunisia and Libya, which the last years has also become a point of access for illegal migrants to enter Europe. Thus, Evros and Lampedusa are two borders that are different in geopolitical, symbolic, functional and geographic terms. Yet, despite these fundamental differences, the common element that they share is that both have attracted vast migration pressures and have functioned as the place of conduct for various Frontex joint operations and activities. Therefore, by comparing these two borders through the ‘method of agreement’ the effect of the independent variable, that is Frontex, on the dependent variable, that is border control, is isolated (Burnham et al., 2008: 81).

Regarding the process of research conduct, the comparative analysis begins with the small-n case study design. In essence, the research problem and the research objective determine the logic for case selection and case comparison so as to apply a comparative case study analysis. The selected cases are studied, at first separately and then in relation to each other, so as to examine the relationship between the variables and follow their sequential pathways as well as to detect any variance or similarity across the cases and the determined indicators. Lastly, this research process ends with the extraction of a conclusion about the development of the case comparison (George & McKeown, 1985: 43-54; George & Bennett, 2005: Chapter 4).

This case study comparison describes not only a descriptive methodology but it can also lead to an exploratory or explanatory explanation⁴⁰ for a complex social phenomenon (Tellis, 1997). Thus, it is well equipped to grasp Frontex's role in the EU border control by mapping processes, practices, relationships and behaviours (Harrison et al., 2017), whilst uncovering and accentuating the dynamic character of culture. For this reason, the comparative small-n case study model has been added in this research methodology so as to describe, reflect and understand the context and the actors in the EU border control environment as well as construct and generate conclusions about the outcome of their relationship.

4.3.5 Interviewing

Interviewing is also used, which, apart from being a tool for gathering data that refer to the past and present, it can also strengthen the data analysis process. Indeed, interviews permit us to gain depth and reach a detailed understanding of the research problem (McDowell, 2010: 158), guiding therefore the research, as stories and narratives always matter (McDowell, 2010: 156). After all, we can only understand the world by obtaining firsthand knowledge of the subjects living within it (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 6), which can be derived from and through interviewing. Interviews focus on the meaning that people attribute to the world they live in and the social processes in which these are imbued (Valentine, 2013: 111). So, interviewing can reveal thoughts, opinions, feelings and experiences as well as capture socio-cultural meanings, processes and contexts (Dixon et al., 2016: 282). In essence, interviewing constitutes an interpretive method that allows the investigation of meanings and interpretations (McDowell, 2010: 158) of the subjective and inter-subjective world.

In this light, it can also be utilised to identify norms and beliefs formed by cultural processes. Following this, in this research, interviewing is applied to trace the perceptions, assumptions and practices of border guards at the EU external borders. Thus, this method aims at acquiring substantial information from the interviewees regarding their thoughts, attitudes and actions as well as their perceptions about the role of Frontex in EU border control. Furthermore, interviewing can reveal how border guards and Frontex officers understand Frontex, not only as an agency, but also its function and their work under this agency or during Frontex's missions. After all,

⁴⁰ For the explanatory logic, see Wendt (1999: 88-89).

during interviews the background stories behind factual events and the decisions made in the events can be narrated, described and explained by the persons that have participated in them (Tansey, 2007: 766-767). This point is particularly relevant in the case of Frontex, given that it is an agency that deals with a sensitive field as border control, and for this reason the information and data that are circulated are relatively few or in many cases controlled and with restricted access and dissemination.

In designing the interviews, emphasis was given to the selection of the persons that were interviewed. More specifically, Frontex staff and Italian and Greek border control practitioners participated in the interviewing process. In addition, one interview was conducted with a border crosser to inquire about the regular border control process. The interviewee selection was based on both the appropriateness and representativeness of the interview sample. In this regard, the pool of interviewees was edited according to the research information gained during the interviewing (Kuzel, 1999). Therefore, a range of officials was interviewed so as to include persons that participate in Frontex as well as national border guards that carry out border checks. Thus, there was a selective targeting of individuals to contact so as to have an illustrative sample of interviewees based on the research problem (Valentine, 2013: 112-115). To address possible issues of accessibility (Pierce, 2008: 52-53; 127-129) especially regarding Frontex, I took advantage of the contacts established during my professional experience at Frontex.

Regarding the interview process, I sent initial emails to request permission for interviewing in November 2017. In most cases, I had to follow-up with emails and phone calls. Characteristically delayed answers or negative responses from the institutions' 'gatekeepers' (Liu, 2018: 3), forced this study to adopt a different strategy and contact prospective interviewees directly. Other interviewees were contacted using the strategy of 'snowballing', while I was conducting field research (Düvell, 2012: 11), as initial contacts or interviewees helped me gain further contacts that were willing to participate in this research, overcoming any access issues linked to this professional community. In total, 14 face-to-face interviews were conducted; 3 with Frontex officers, 6 with Greek border or police officers, 4 with Italian border officers and 1 with a Greek border crosser that had regularly crossed the Greek-Turkish land border. The interviews with Frontex officers were conducted in June 2018 in Warsaw, at Frontex headquarters. The interviews with Italian officers were carried out in May 2018 and with most Greek border guards in October 2018 during the field research in Lampedusa

and Evros borders. The interview with the border crosser was conducted in Athens.⁴¹ This mostly refers to an *in-situ* interviewing model that was followed. Indeed, given that the interview location can influence the interview process (Cassell, 2009: 504-505), it had been chosen, whenever feasible, to conduct the interviews in the interviewee's environment for them to feel more at ease with the process, which for some was an unknown territory and procedure.

The format applied was semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowing hypothesis consideration (Leech, 2002: 665). This kind of interview technique has been chosen because, in contrast to a structured interview, it enables a degree of flexibility, which is an essential prerequisite, whilst tracing cultural and elusive aspects. In parallel, contrary to an unstructured interview, the semi-structured interview has a systematic format to follow so as not to lead the researcher to chaos with the interview's possible diversion to a path that has no connection to the research problem (Leech, 2002: 665). In fact, the semi-structured format allows interviewees to add new topics and perspectives (Burnham et al., 2008: 238-245). Also, semi-structured interviews contribute in the reconstruction of the situational, positional and dispositional context (Pouliot, 2013: 50-58) with the formulation of questions and the discussion that they trigger between the interviewer and the interviewee constructing therefore discourse and meaning.

Another important element to consider in the interviewing process is the language of the interview, as it can influence the interview process and therefore the results. Indeed, interviewees who do not speak their mother tongue can feel a linguistic disadvantage and for this reason, information or data may be altered or withheld during the interview (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis, 2004; Pierce, 2008: 128). Taking this into account, the interviews were conducted by the researcher in Greek, Italian and English, choosing the appropriate language each time according to the interviewee's mother tongue. When there was not an option to conduct the interview in the interviewee's mother tongue, English was selected as a suitable alternative option. This minimised any language challenge, as the use of a translator would mean the involvement of a third party into the communicative and interactive action of the interpretation, representation and understanding of meaning. Hence, the inclusion of more persons, even translators, who may not be relevant with the border control terminology, could

⁴¹ For a detailed presentation of the dates and place of the interview, see bibliography.

result in loss of meaning and thus endanger the validity of this study (van Nes et al., 2010).

Regarding the content of the interview and the questions asked, an interview guide was created deriving from the research problem with relevant issues to be covered and questions developed for each interviewee⁴² (Weiss, 1994: 48-49; Cruickshank, 2012: 48; Halperin & Heath, 2012: 290-294). This demanded a preparation before the actual interview for the creation of tailor-made questions having as reference the background, ranking and professional experience of each interviewee. In this context, emphasis was given to exploratory questions starting with 'how' and 'what' so as to obtain the interviewee's own opinion and assumptions for certain behaviours and actions, whilst limiting the explanatory 'why' questions, at least in the beginning of the interview, so as not to provoke any defensive feelings to the interviewee.

To establish an atmosphere of trust and openness between the interviewer and the interviewee, complete confidentiality and anonymity was assured and maintained throughout the research process. This was an essential part for the interview conduct, because, not only border control touches upon sensitive national security issues, but, in general, border guards and Frontex staff are bound by confidentiality rules. Also, it should be taken into account that the interviewees, in some cases, were reluctant or cautious to discuss their experience, given that border control is a 'messy' work triggering and embodying emotional ambivalence (Rivera & Tracy, 2014). Furthermore, given that interviews can be an intrusion into respondents' private lives, to avoid causing any harm, the interview process was strictly confidential following ethical considerations at all stages (Cassell, 2009: 510-511), while the participation in the interview was voluntary.

The interview analysis for the interpretation of interviews was conducted during and after the interview process with note taking and coding (Alshenqeeti, 2014: 41), so as to open up meanings (Richards, 2005: 94) and detect patterns of similarity or contradictions in expressions and narrations. Moreover, the interviewing material was not generated and edited in isolation. Instead, it was combined with data extracted from other methods to verify the interview knowledge for achieving a meaningful research (Tansey, 2007: 766).

⁴² For the interview guide, see Annex III.

4.3.6 *In-situ* analysis

Due to the complexity of borders, which are characterised by socio-spatial, multidimensional and interdisciplinary dynamics reinforced by the construction of power relations and the engagement of various actors situated at the border, the actual presence and visiting of the border is a *conditio sine qua non* for its exploration. Especially, when the study is developed within a cultural approach, given that, to grasp the inter-subjective meanings and empirical manifestations embedded in culture, *in-situ* research and commitment is required (Shore, 2000: 7). Indeed, by visiting the EU external border, a field research was conducted with the method of *in-situ* analysis.

In this regard, field research refers to the firsthand acquisition of data and evidence in the research location (Kapiszewski et al., 2015: 1; Pole & Hillyard, 2016: 2-3), which enables the observation of the researched variables and the development of their relationship in natural settings (Furze, 2011: 28). In essence, this represents a spatial separation between 'the field' and the researcher's life at 'home' (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997: 12-15). In this light, this research time and experience in the field can function for the research as an opportunity and challenge to 'confront the empirical world head-on' (Jenson & Mérand, 2010: 86-87). Moreover, being in the field enables to see what it is done and where, instead of limiting the research to just what it is said (Shore, 2000: 7). This is particular relevant for a cultural understanding, taking into account that with field research, the explicit and hidden aspects of culture are manifested (Neuman, 2014: 438) studying both the context and the actors that operate at this context.

Now, the method of conduct adopted for field research (Neuman, 2014: 438-461), included a data collection process with *in-situ* observation. This process began using field notes to record and document data concerning descriptive elements of the field sites and reflective information drawn during the observation process (Lydaki, 2016: 151). More specifically, visiting the borders, I conducted field research in order to extract empirical evidence and information about the borders, the border control conduct and the border control actors. The researcher role adopted was 'observer as participant' (Gold, 1958; Junker, 1960), because apart from observation, I also conducted interviews with actors that were at the borders sharing my research status.

The completion of the field research process, for a valid *in-situ* analysis, requires the exit and disengagement from the field (Neuman, 2014: 461) so as to ensure that the field research data are 'accurate representations of the social world in the field'

(Neuman, 2014: 468). Indeed, after the *in-situ* presence, a period of time is needed so as to leave the world of the field and detach from its reality. In fact, it is this physical but also emotional detachment that allows elaborating and assessing with neutrality the research findings extracted during the field research period.

4.3.6.1 Field research at EU external borders. The fieldwork at the EU external borders was composed of field trips and *in-situ* analysis at the two case study borders, namely the land border Evros in Greece and the sea border Lampedusa in Italy. Thus, the conduct of fieldwork in these two borders also included the visiting of two different EU member states and countries for research purposes. But, the border is not a single-site geographic location. For this reason, a multi-sited research approach was adopted for this fieldwork, with the visiting of various field sites and border control points across Evros and Lampedusa borders. The first trip of this field research was conducted in Lampedusa in May 2018. Then, after decoding and analysing the results from this first field site, the next field trip was in Evros in October 2018. Each field trip lasted approximately one week. During the period of these field trips and research, I observed certain border control routines as practiced by the border guards at these two borders.

Furthermore, as part of this field research and the interviewing process, during my stay in these localities, I also interviewed officials that carried out border control activities at these two EU external borders. In fact, the interview questions in these cases had a significant part that referred to these two borders, but at the same time, there were also certain questions asked without geographical description and delimitation so as to draw a contextual picture regarding the border control conduct. Hence, the field research at Lampedusa and Evros, had a paramount importance in this study, as it facilitated to gain firsthand knowledge in the research location from the observation of the field sites and the interviewing of border control officials. Also, given that this fieldwork involved two different borders in terms of geography, natural scene and manifestation, it enabled to note the differences that exist among and across borders. This also involves the border control actors that manage them as well as the persons that try to cross them, which may exhibit variant characteristics. After all, it is the function, role and the actors that construct the border, rather than a geographic definition and determination as border.

4.3.6.2 Work at Frontex. Although not a field research and not conducted for the purposes of this thesis, the researcher's internship for six months at the Frontex Situation Centre in Warsaw, Poland, from January 2012 to June 2012 was an important element that enabled me to gain contextual knowledge about this agency. In particular, it enabled me acquiring a firsthand experience of Frontex's daily activities and working methods. Also, it allowed me to become familiar with Frontex's written products and institutional terminology, which was essential for the document and institutional discourse analysis. Apart from the empirical knowledge regarding Frontex's function, I became familiar with its organisational character and mentality as a bureaucratic institution. Actually, working at Frontex enabled me to navigate into this agency's shared ideas and beliefs by witnessing its behavioural patterns and systems of meaning.

4.4 Assessing the research pursuit

This research pursuit puts forward a multi-dimensional strategy for enhancing the assessment of the research analysis and the measurement of its key findings. In this regard, the use of various methods and tools for data collection drawn from multiple sources constitutes the selected components of the research design applied to establish a stronger account (Barusch et al., 2011: 13) and make relevant and meaningful inferences about Frontex and EU border control.

This process of knowledge acquisition and data analysis adheres to a methodological awareness, which is developed in order to enhance the research enterprise (Seale, 2002) and limit any methodological limitations and challenges.⁴³ In essence, qualitative research and, specifically, an inquiry of social sciences, cannot be constrained to standardised or fixed frames, as each case and phenomenon studied can vary (Lincoln, 1995). Consequently, any control of the research process and its results needs to take into account as well as relate to the research construction by denoting the relational and elusive elements of the social world. Following this, the ontological and epistemological stance, within which each research is inserted, determines the selection of methodology and the process for its empirical assessment, because, in turn, it defines what to research, how and the ways to attend to measuring.

⁴³ Possible methodological challenges in a research enterprise may involve variable bias, unstable measurement, undefined concepts and ill-defined relationships among variables and concepts (Mahoney, 2007: 130).

This describes a systematic context of research pursuit for the development of scientific knowledge (Wendt, 1999; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000: 15; Petit & Huault, 2008; Churton & Brown, 2010: 364) subject to assessment and measurement. However, the conclusions of qualitative methodology cannot be measured mathematically, as qualitative studies focus on meanings (Antonakis et al., 2004: 54), which cannot be quantified. As a result, many studies of social sciences that employ a qualitative methodology have become contested due to their data collection and data analysis mechanisms (Schmitter, 2008: 283). Yet, qualitative research is not exempted from research assessment and empirical analysis. In fact, through the principles of validity and reliability this research attempts to bring measurement to the research constructs (Neuman, 2014: 211) in terms of the research process and research outcome.

More specifically, reliability means consistency and stability indicating that the same thing can occur or be repeated under similar conditions, while validity,⁴⁴ originating from the Latin word '*validus*', suggests truthfulness or authenticity in understanding and describing social reality (Neuman, 2014: 211-221) or establishing 'truth' and 'facts' that are socially devised (Pouliot, 2007: 378). Hence, the aim in the research analysis is the production of valid, or put differently, plausible claims that can be supported by diverse data (Neuman, 2014: 220). As a result, validity and reliability prove the research's utility and research importance by demonstrating its relevancy in interpreting specific events as well as its applicability in exploring possibilities and opportunities that have inferences to larger contextual settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 124-125, 290; von Glasersfeld, 1995: Chapter 5; Price & Reus-Smit, 1998: 273-275).

To pursue effectively and apply without abstraction the principles of validity and reliability this research conforms to specific criteria (Marshall, 1990: 193-195) or, put differently 'scientific standards' (Pouliot, 2007: 360). After all, Constructivists, like any other researcher, apply similar criteria in assessing the research evidence (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001: 395). Indeed, established criteria need to be followed throughout the research apparatus to ensure that the research formulates 'truth conditions' (Pouliot, 2007: 360) and adheres to a scientific path for knowledge development and construction, which permits to observe, measure and analyse phenomena (Smith, 1990; Antonakis et al., 2004: 50-51; Petit & Huault, 2008: 81).

⁴⁴ For the concept of validity inserted in a constructivist methodological reasoning, see Klotz & Lynch (2007: 20) and Pouliot (2007: 377-379).

Following this research path, common ‘goodness criteria’, guide the research conduct and its empirical assessment (Marshall, 1990: Chapter 13), which transcend the boundaries of research paradigms for a holistic and meaningful understanding. In this sense, drawing from these criteria, emphasis is placed on the adopted research methods and the data analysis tools, which, as a result, have been described in a detailed manner in this study (Marshall, 1990: 193). The same logic has been applied to the research challenges, as there is reference to any possible research bias in the research conduct that could endanger the validity of the research and self-awareness of the researcher (Marshall, 1990: 193).

Furthermore, another key research point involves the data collection process. More specifically, for the gathering of data a variety of data collection tools and techniques have been employed. This enabled the extraction of different kinds of data from the real world as well as their correct representation in the research, which included the consideration of alternative explanations and predictions for the research outcome (Marshall, 1990: 194). It should be noted that all the collected data have been saved securely and are available to other researchers (Marshall, 1990: 194). Yet the anonymity of the persons that participated in the research, and particularly in the interviewing, was and will continue to be preserved to comply with ethical standards and legal requirements relevant to the research conduct.

In parallel, every phase of the research process and conduct was targeted at answering the main research problem and research questions developed in the study prescribing therefore to a problem-driven process (Checkel, 1999: 546; Klotz & Lynch, 2007). In this light, explicit reference was made to the pre-existing scholarly literature on Frontex and EU border control, followed by its critical review and assessment (Marshall, 1990: 194). Also, embedded within and promoting a cultural approach, this study, apart from the material environment, investigated the historical, ideational, social and cultural context so as to trace any evolution in the border control conduct. Incorporating all these dimensions, despite being a demanding task in terms of research implementation, it also highlights the variety of the research endeavour and enables to bring to the fore all the hidden elements of the research problem and reflect about the ‘the big picture’ (Marshall, 1990: 194).

All the gathered data have been explored and assessed in a careful manner and have been subject to specific requirements, described above, so as to avoid the over-generalisability trap (Marshall, 1990: 193-195). Otherwise, a wide application can

hamper the quality or the research, whereas a narrow focus can limit the research utility and value. So, a thin balance of generality and detail in designing the research and expressing truth claims needs to be maintained (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 107).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the research design adopted, along with the process and the tools to collect and analyse data. In the beginning, the relevancy of the use of appropriate research methods to investigate a research question was explained. In this context, a problem-driven process was adopted focusing on the expression of the problem so as to reach a conclusion and solve the research puzzle. As a result, the methodological goal of this thesis is to explore and answer whether Frontex impacts the EU border control. To answer this question a qualitative approach to methodology has been selected due to the suitability of qualitative methods in this research in terms of theoretical stance, cultural approach and research problem. After that, the methods for data collection and data analysis were presented. In this regard, this thesis has opted to apply an array of methods for data collection and data analysis in order to achieve a meaningful interpretation. Accordingly, document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, comparative analysis, process-tracing and direct observation through fieldwork at the Greek land border Evros and the Italian sea border Lampedusa were employed. This research pursuit reflects a multi-dimensional research strategy put forward that conforms to ‘goodness criteria’ and the principles of validity and reliability. As a result, the conclusions drawn from this research reflect knowledge and therefore enable us to arrive at, or at least approximate a truth as manifested in the time and the place of the research conduct, namely at the EU borders and Frontex that constitute the ‘topos’ for this research endeavour. Consequently, the next step is to move to the border so as to explore the practices and assumptions that inhabit and are produced at the ‘topos’ of border control.

Chapter 5: Exploring borders

5.1 Introduction

After setting out the thesis' conceptual and methodological grounding, in this chapter the research turns to the place of border action and border control, that is the border itself to shed light on the border control conduct and border control actors. Two EU external borders are being explored and compared as case studies. The Greek land border of Evros and the Italian maritime border of Lampedusa.

With the investigation of borders, this chapter aims at extracting any common cultural traits for the border control conduct at these two borders. Traits are the empirical traces of the border control culture pursued by the members of the border control community (Zaiotti, 2011: 38). Therefore, these traits are indicators of a border control culture. In parallel, this chapter attests the existence of a border control community. Highlighting Frontex's role at the borders, it empirically confirms that Frontex is a border control actor and member of a border control community.

The case study analysis starts with the transformation of borders from national to EU external borders. First, Evros and, after, Lampedusa are being studied and compared. This comparison entails an exploration of the border, the border control conduct, the structure and actors involved in border control as well as Frontex's presence at the border. From this analysis, the border control assumptions and practices traced at each border are extracted as well as the members of the border control community. The case study concludes with a comparison of the borders highlighting the existence of common border control assumptions and practices in Evros and Lampedusa that constitute cultural traits.

5.2 National borders as EU external borders

Borders, being constructed, are evolving (Newman, 2003). Actually, they are being shaped by the environment and the actors that act, are present and operate at the borders. In this regard, borders in the European territory have been marked by changes in border demarcation and territorial governance that deeply affected the conception of what is border, where it is, who controls it and how it is being controlled. Especially after the dissolution of internal borders, the development of EU external borders and the creation of the Schengen area comprising free circulation of people and goods, the conception of the border has never been the same.

Hence, the emergence of the Schengen regime brought a border redrawing and reshaped the model of border governance in the EU territory (Zaiotti, 2011; 2018). Borders acquired new characteristics and functions that redefined their role. During this process, two historical yet distinct borders have become the main terrains for ‘field of action’ and ‘basis for action’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 191) in EU border control due to irregular migration flows. These borders are Evros and Lampedusa.

Since the Schengen *acquis* incorporation into the EU law with the Treaty of Amsterdam, Evros and Lampedusa have become part of the EU external border, where a shared competence has been exercised between the EU and its member states. As a result, apart from national borders, they also started functioning as EU external borders. This introduced novel functions, territorial traits and geopolitical considerations to these borders. In fact, beyond segmenting neighbouring regions, countries and nations, they also became frontiers of the EU demarcating Europe’s insiders and outsiders (Oberman, 2016: 30). Moreover, new border and border control actors started to operate at the borders reasserting border dynamics and forming new antithetic pairs of internal/external, us/them, European/non-European, bridges/walls.

In this context, Evros and Lampedusa became reconstructed as EU external borders and acquired new meaning and function that was added on their role as national borders. This describes a complex conceptualisation that encloses various dimensions. Indeed, Evros and Lampedusa are not just two national borders. They have been transformed as EU external borders representing a novel ordering of the space (Vitale, 2011). Yet, their EU external border function does not annihilate their role as national borders. Instead, they have been reconstructed enclosing all the dimensions, expressions and functions of this new territoriality.

5.3 The border of Evros

In northeast, Evros border connects and divides Greece with Bulgaria and Turkey. Yet, this research is focused on the Greek-Turkish border, which constitutes the only land border with Turkey, though the two countries also share a sea border on the Aegean Sea in the south. Evros in Greek language, Meriç in Turkish and Марица - Maritsa in Bulgarian, constitutes an EU external border that sets the frontier of the EU with Turkey. Actually, Evros river marks the land border between Greece and Turkey, which extends for 206 kilometres (km). Most of the length of the border is part of the river,

except from 12.5 km of land strip (Maronitis, 2017: 53). Evros is the second largest river in the Balkans after the Danube river. Its total length is 530 km.

The water of Evros is muddy with a fast and sturdy current (Topak, 2014: 825). Its flow has formed various lakes, lagoons, salt marshes and low-tide elevations. On the banks of the river there is significant vegetation including poplar, willow and elm trees as well as various bushes (Christianou, 2009). During winter, the temperature can drop many degrees below 0° Celsius. The cold is harsh, often accompanied with humidity and fog that reduce visibility. There are also frequent incidents of heavy rainfalls resulting in the river's flooding.

The river has given its name to Evros prefecture in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.⁴⁵ Actually, Evros is the northernmost Greek prefecture that borders with Turkey to the east and with Bulgaria to the northwest. Evros prefecture covers an area of 4,242 km² with 147,947 inhabitants (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2011) and more than 130 villages and small towns. It is characterised by lowland areas, mostly of cotton cultivation, without mountainous territories or high hills (Field note, 24.10.2018). The capital of the prefecture is Alexandroupolis, which is located 840 km from the Greek capital Athens, 295 km from the Turkish city Istanbul and 153 km from the Turkish city Edirne. Alexandroupolis has a harbour, a railway connection and an airport with flights from and to Athens. The second most populated town after Alexandroupolis is Orestiada, which is located in the northern region of Evros.

Greece has a strong military presence in Evros. Accordingly, more than ten military camps operate in villages near the river, like in Feres, Peplos, Kavyli, Tychero and Didymoteicho (Field note, 23.10.2018). This increased military deployment is due to the deep-rooted rivalry between Greece and Turkey. Despite their mutual NATO membership, the two neighbouring countries are traditionally considered adversaries. Actually, this rivalry has been marked as one of the oldest between neighbouring countries, bringing Greece and Turkey various times on the verge of armed conflict (Moustakis & Sheehan, 2000: 95; Heraclides, 2012: 115). From the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the Ottoman occupation of Greece that started in 1458, until the outbreak of the Greek war of independence in 1821, Greeks consider Turks a threat (Millas, 2004: 53; Theodossopoulos, 2006), or put differently, their 'stereotypical

⁴⁵ Evros prefecture is divided into the municipalities of Alexandroupolis, Orestiada, Didymoteicho, Soufli and Samothrace (Kallikratis, 2016). For Evros map, see Annex I, and Annex II for photos from fieldwork in Evros.

religious, ethnic and cultural “Other” (Argyrou, 2006: 33). Similarly, Turks consider Greece a hostile neighbour that may even initiate a military attack against Turkey (Çarkoğlu & Kirişci, 2004: 147).

In this Greek-Turkish perpetual state of rivalry, critical was the Greek-Turkish War of 1919-1922 that resulted in the ‘Asia Minor Catastrophe’ for Greeks and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 that evoked Greek fears about their territorial integrity (Moustakis & Sheehan, 2000: 96). Over the years, hostility has been preserved.⁴⁶ However, Greek-Turkish relations further deteriorated after the failed *coup d'état* attempt in Turkey in 2016, when eight Turkish officers fleeing from Turkey landed with a military helicopter in Alexandroupolis and asked for asylum. The decision not to deport them back to Turkey led to new tensions between the two countries with a rapid escalation in March 2018, when two Greek military officers, while patrolling Evros border, entered the Turkish territory and were arrested by the Turkish forces. These continuous episodes of tension and contention reveal a problematic relationship between the two neighbouring countries filled with mistrust, suspicion and rivalry (Moustakis & Sheehan, 2000: 95). This has led to an arms race in the quest to maintain the regional status quo (Tsakonas, 2010: 64; Paparas et al., 2016), but also to a considerable militarisation of the border region in Evros.⁴⁷ Yet, despite its militarisation, Evros continues being a cross-border area managing more and more regular and irregular border crossings.

5.3.1 Border control in Evros

The Greek-Turkish border has three border crossing points (BCPs) or border stations that constitute the entry/exit points to Turkey. These are Kastanies and Kipi highway border stations as well as Pythio railway border station.

Kipi is part of Alexandroupolis municipality and the busiest crossing point between Greece and Turkey. Passing through the border station, there is a bridge over Evros river that links Kipi with the Turkish border station in Ipsala. On the bridge, there are military officers. Kastanies is part of Orestiada municipality. It is located in the northern part of Evros. BCP Kastanies does not coincide with Evros river, but it is a terrestrial area with trees and bushes. Similar to Kipi, after the border station, there are

⁴⁶ For confrontation issues between Greece and Turkey, see Moustakis & Sheehan (2000).

⁴⁷ For more information on Evros militarisation, see chapter 5.3.4.

military officers, before border crossers enter the Turkish border station in Pazarkule. Pythio BCP is the only railway frontier station and rail link between Greece and Turkey. It is part of Didymoteicho municipality and geographically it constitutes the easternmost mainland point of Greece. In Pythio, apart from a train station, there is a BCP for passenger control as well as a military station. The railway lines are in parallel to Evros river. In Pythio, Greece is connected to Turkey with a railway bridge.⁴⁸

In the Greek BCPs, the flags of Greece and the EU are placed in a prominent position conveying the country's territory and symbolic configuration (Field note, 22.10.2018). Police officers and border guards manage the entry and exit to the country through these BCPs according to specific border control processes that include document, vehicle and luggage control. At the BCP, border crossers present the proper travel documentation to a uniformed border officer before their exit from the country. Greek citizens need a national identity card or passport to enter Turkey, while Turkish or other non-EU citizens need visa to visit Greece.⁴⁹ Border officers using dogs can also check border crossers' luggage and vehicles (Interviewee 7). There are also customs agents that check customs documents.⁵⁰ Border officers, after examining the validity and authenticity of the documents, enter the border crosser's personal information to an electronic platform that is linked with national and European databases. If the travel document is being approved and there is no alert in the Schengen Information System (SIS),⁵¹ then the border crosser can pass the BCP control and enter the neutral zone. This process is being repeated at the BCP in the country of entry (Interviewee 7).

Although the procedural and border crossing times can change due to congestion (Miltiadou et al., 2017), the border control process remains mostly similar. This is because it stems from adopted national, bilateral and European border control policies. This process describes regular border crossings through BCPs. However, the last decade there has been a considerable augmentation in irregular mobility.

⁴⁸ Pythio was part of the Orient Express' iconic railway route.

⁴⁹ There is a harmonisation across the EU member states in the conditions and requirements for visa issuing (Regulation, 2009). Visa can be acquired after applying for it at the Greek Consulates in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, and Edirne (MFA, 2019). It should be noted that there was a visa facilitation programme put in place that permitted non-EU citizens arriving from Turkish ports to visit for tourism Eastern Aegean islands in Greece without a visa from a Greek consulate. Instead, a visa clearance was given at the entry points (MFA, 2015).

⁵⁰ Linking customs and border control, the USA has established the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency run by CBP officers (CBP, 2019).

⁵¹ The Schengen Information System (SIS) is a large-scale information system that contains alerts, such as copies of European Arrest Warrants, for the purpose of refusing entry or stay to third country nationals (Regulation, 1987/2006).

Actually, Evros has always been identified as a main entry gate for irregular border crossers (Frontex, 2007a: 15; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, 2008: 77). Yet, as from March 2010, a large expansion in the number of irregular border crossings at the Greek-Turkish land border was observed. This increase reached its peak in November 2010 with around 350 irregular entries per day (Frontex, 2010b: 8). For the whole 2010, 47,088 detections were reported marking a 436% rise⁵² (Hellenic Police, 2019a). Proportionately to irregular migration, there was also an ascension in drug trafficking (Frontex, 2011a: 33) and stolen vehicles (Frontex, 2011a: 35). This sudden increase in irregular border crossings was attributed to Turkey's visa liberalisation policy⁵³ combined with the expansion of the Turkish Airlines (Frontex, 2011a: 14-15). It enabled many third country nationals to enter Turkey⁵⁴ and then transit irregularly via Evros to Greece before reaching another EU country (Frontex, 2012b: 4-5; Kirişci, 2013: 206).

These elevated numbers manifested a shift in irregular border crossers and facilitators' *modus operandi* (Frontex, 2011a: 27). In the past, most irregular border crossings were reported along the Greek-Turkish sea border (Frontex, 2010c: 15). However, in 2009, the strengthening of Frontex's operational activities limited irregular sea arrivals (Frontex, 2009a: 43). To prevent their dismantlement, facilitators and migrant smuggling networks,⁵⁵ which over the years have been proven flexible (Europol & Interpol, 2016: 2), altered their *modus operandi* opting to smuggle instead irregular border crossers via the Greek-Turkish land border. Following that, in 2010, the Greek-Turkish land border accounted to 85% of all the detections of irregular border crossings at the EU level (IOM, 2019).

To cut down the flow of irregular migrants entering Greece from Evros border, Greek authorities decided to erect a fence on the Greek side of the Greek-Turkish land border between the towns of Kastanies in the north and Nea Vyssa in the south (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015: 57). This location had been considered a 'vulnerable' point, because it is not delineated by the river (Frontex, 2010b: 8). The fence, built in 2012,

⁵² This number surpassed the historic rise in the Canary Islands in 2006 with 30,000 detections of irregular border crossings (Godenau, 2012).

⁵³ Turkey agreed a visa-free travel regime in 2007 for Moroccan and Tunisian nationals and in 2009 for Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese nationals (Kirişci, 2013: 212; Görgülü & Dark, 2017: 7).

⁵⁴ Indicative is the rise in the number of third country nationals entering Turkey, which from around 5.2 million in 1991, reached 31.4 million in 2011 amounting to a 760% increase for nationals from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria as well as 9,490% increase for Iraqis (Kirişci, 2013: 205-207).

⁵⁵ Migrant smuggling is defined as 'facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence' (Council Directive, 2002).

is a 12.5-km long and 4-meter high (Kathimerini, 2012) double barbed-wire-topped structure (Karakatsanis, 2014: 102). Nevertheless, the fence's erection has been criticised as an anti-migration measure of securitisation logic (Grigoriadis & Dilek, 2019) and a Westphalian expression of state's sovereignty (Tsitselikis, 2013).

Irrespective of the fence, the numbers of irregular border crossers entering Greece through Evros increased dramatically during the refugee crisis. In 2015, 3,713 irregular border crossings were reported compared to 1,903 the year before (Hellenic Police, 2019a). Yet, these numbers, though elevated, do not approach the dramatic flow via the sea that reached 872,519 irregular border crossings in 2015 (Hellenic Police, 2019a). According to Frontex's situational analysis, the reinforcement of the Greek-Turkish land border with surveillance measures and the deployment of additional border guard officers functioned as a deterrent⁵⁶ (Frontex, 2014a: 133). This, once again, changed after the adoption of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016.⁵⁷ Irregular border crossers, to avoid their return to Turkey, directed their routes towards Evros, which is exempted from the provisions of the Statement. In 2017, 5,677 irregular border crossings were reported at the Greek-Turkish land border. Most were from Syria, Iraq and Pakistan (Hellenic Police, 2019a). Apart from irregular migration, there was also a rise in cross-border crime, such as drug smuggling (Frontex, 2016a: 28).

Despite the Greek-Turkish border being the second most dangerous and deadliest migratory route, after the Central Mediterranean (Frontex, 2016a: 46; Last et al., 2017), irregular mobility at the Greek-Turkish land border continues to augment. Irregular border crossers, usually with facilitators' help (Frontex, 2018a: 35), tend to cross the river at night in groups of approximately fifteen to twenty people. They use inflatable boats to disembark onto the Greek bank of Evros and then on foot they pass through the thick vegetation before moving to Evros' mainland (Greek Council for Refugees et al., 2018).

⁵⁶ For an overview of irregular migration flows the last decade, the top nationalities and the main causes, see table 5.a.

⁵⁷ The EU-Turkey Statement foresees that all migrants who arrived on Greek islands via Turkey or who are intercepted in the Aegean Sea after the 20th of March 2016 will be returned to Turkey, as Turkey is declared a safe third country (Council of the EU, 2016).

Table 5.a Irregular migration in Evros⁵⁸

Year	Irregular Border Crossings	Top Nationalities	Causes
2009	08,787	Afghans, Iraqis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Iraq & Afghanistan wars ➤ Political instability ➤ Turkey's visa liberalisation ➤ Turkish airlines expansion
2010	47,088	Afghans, Iraqis, Algerians, Moroccan	
2011	54,974	Afghans, Syrians, Algerians, Iraqis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Arab spring ➤ Syrian war
2012	30,433		
2013	01,122	Syrians, Afghans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Arab winter ➤ Syrian war ➤ Sea flows (2014: 43,518≠2012: 3,651)
2014	01,903		
2015	03,713	Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis	➤ Migration crisis
2016	03,292		
2017	05,677	Syrians, Iraqis, Pakistanis	➤ EU-Turkey statement (shift from sea to land border)

5.3.2 Border control actors and structure: The Evros case

The Hellenic Police, which constitutes a law enforcement agency, is responsible for the management of border control and the protection of national borders (Hellenic Police, 2019b). For land and air borders, this constitutes an exclusive competence of the Hellenic Police, while for sea borders the border control jurisdiction is exerted by both the Hellenic Police and the Hellenic Coastguard (OSCE, 2019). The army only auxiliary supports the Hellenic Police and the Hellenic Coastguard with border control and surveillance (Interviewee 4). The Hellenic Police is comprised of central and regional Services.⁵⁹ The headquarters, located in Athens, supervise all the Services providing general directions. Under the Hellenic Police Chief, which leads the Hellenic Police, there is an Inspector General for Aliens and Border Protection that coordinates all border control matters with the help of the Aliens and Border Protection Branch and the Border Protection Division (OSCE, 2019). The Border Protection Division

⁵⁸ Data for flows and nationalities extracted from Hellenic Police (2019a).

⁵⁹ For an overview of the Hellenic Police structure, see table 5.b.

implements the Schengen Borders Code and the Visa Code as well as is the competent authority for the cooperation with Frontex (Interviewee 4). Evros' regional structure has two central police Directorates. In Alexandroupolis for southern Evros and in Orestiada for the northern part. Along the land border, there are border stations equipped with border guards and technical assets for the conduct of border control. Furthermore, in 2012, in Nea Vyssa, an operational border surveillance centre was established that functions as a hub collecting all the optical data from thermal imaging cameras in Evros (Ministry of Citizen Protection, 2012).

After a recent organisational restructure that merged police and border units within the police departments, local and regional centres for the management of irregular migration were established (Hellenic Parliament, 2017). These centres have a real-time situational picture for irregular mobility and cross-border crime in Evros. The information collected is turned into statistical data and then analysed before being forwarded to the central centre in Athens, which was inaugurated in 2014 (Hellenic Police, 2014). For the border control conduct, the Hellenic Police has at its disposal technical means, like vehicles, thermal imaging cameras, hand-held cameras, binoculars, detector dogs and heartbeat sensors (Interviewee 2). The camera range is up to four km, allowing surveillance beyond the Greek soil of the border (Interviewee 1). Greece is, currently, in the process of developing and using automated border control systems (Interviewee 4). Actually, in the region of Evros new technologies are being employed, including an automatic surveillance system with thermal imaging cameras as well as day and night cameras (Interviewee 3). Apart from that, the border fence, which constitutes a technical hurdle, is considered a means assisting in border control (Interviewee 4). Yet, its deterrent ability has been put into question (European Parliament, 2012). Irregular migrants pass through the fence climbing it or after using wire cutters (Interviewee 2). After all, at the fence's perimeter there are camera blind spots allowing migrants to approach it undetected, whereas, until now, no maintenance work has been undertaken to repair fence damages (Interviewee 2).

Regarding border control personnel, the border guard institution commenced in 1999 to tackle irregular migration and cross-border crime (Hellenic Police, 2019c). Border guards are part of the Hellenic Police agency structure, and therefore not a self-governing and independent corps. This, over the years, has caused the qualitative and quantitative frailness of the border control personnel. It should be noted that from the 4,500 border guards recruited in the period 1999-2002, now almost the half, around

2,000 to 2,500, continue serving in border stations, as, since 2002, there has not been another call for border guards' filling vacancies (Interviewee 1). As a result, border guards' age often surpasses today the forty years old (Interviewee 1). Nevertheless, their work is physically demanding, as their tasks involve working outdoors during harsh weather. These work conditions require periodic new staff addition or younger personnel that can be more adjustable and resilient.

At Evros, in 1999, there were 400 statutory border guard posts. After two decades, this number has been reduced to 300 (Interviewee 1; 2). Despite that, often, border guards are being sent to serve to other Services. Alternatively, due to police personnel shortages, they engage with tasks irrelevant to border control (Interviewee 5). Filling staff shortages, police officers are seconded for a short period to Evros to assist in the management of irregular migration. This practice started with Operation 'Shield'⁶⁰ in August 2012, where 1,881 border guards and police officers were transferred to Evros (Minister of Citizen Protection, 2012). Currently, with the seconded officers, approximately 700 border guards are in Evros (Interviewee 1). Yet, some of the seconded police officers have no previous training or service in border control. For instance, even officers from the units for the Reinstatement of Order (MAT) have been transferred to Evros, despite that the personnel of these units does not have experience in dealing with vulnerable population, often encountered at the borders, like unaccompanied minors (Interviewee 1). Yet, they agree to their secondment, or even propose it, due to financial incentives (Interviewee 1). While on duty, border guards wear police officer uniforms. Their work schedule involves 8-hour shifts from 06.00 to 14.00, 14.00 to 22.00 and 22.00 to 06.00, for a 24-hour cover. During these shifts, they conduct foot, vehicle or boat patrols. The patrol area can be up to fifty km (Interviewee 1). For boat patrolling, border guards use sea vessels to monitor the river crossing and save lives in the water (Dobbs, 2018). All the sea vessels used in Evros river have been acquired by private grants (Interviewee 2). Actually, boat patrolling along Evros river started after Frontex's recommendation (Interviewee 2). Vehicle patrolling is performed by two or three officers with assigned vehicles.⁶¹ Furthermore, border guards patrol on foot the routes along the river. Sometimes, they

⁶⁰ For more information on operation Shield (Aspida), see Baird (2017: 75-76).

⁶¹ The assigned vehicle, usually Nissan Navara cars or other off-road vehicle, such as Jeep Cherokee (Field note, 22.10.2018), remains the same throughout the patrol shifts (Interviewee 1), which signifies high vehicle usage affecting the cars' performance over time.

patrol with dogs. This started during Frontex operations in 2010 (Interviewee 2; 6). Alternatively, they go to uphill areas close or across the river, for long-distance surveillance, using hand-held cameras or binoculars (Field note, 23.10.2018). Moreover, border and police officers set up roadblocks in strategic points at the Orestiada-Alexandroupolis highway or in regional roads near the river to dismantle smugglers and irregular migrants (Field note, 22.10.2018; 23.10.2018).

On border operational cooperation, a trilateral Bulgarian-Greek-Turkish contact centre was set at the Kapitan Andreevo BCP in Bulgaria (Ministry of Citizen Protection, 2016). It aims at operational cooperation and information exchange among the three. However, apart from this trilateral structure for cross-border cooperation, Frontex has also assisted Greece in border management. The agency's development and operation in Greece reflects that the tackling of border control challenges requires a collective action from the EU partners to ensure a secure and safe EU, whilst fostering the free movement of people (Frontex, 2019g). Yet, some Greek border control officers negatively perceived Frontex, especially during the first years of its operation, as, by recording every irregular migrant that enters Greece, secondary movements to other European countries were prevented increasing, therefore, the number of foreign nationals staying in Greece (Skleparis, 2016: 99-100).

Central Service in Athens	Regional Services in Evros	
Hellenic Police Chief	Alexandroupolis Police Directorate (southern Evros)	Orestiada Police Directorate (northern Evros)
Inspector General for Aliens & Border Protection	Border surveillance centre (Nea Vyssa)	
	Border Stations (Soufli, Tycherio, Feres)	Border Stations (Orestiada, Didymoteicho, Metaxades, Kyprinos)
Aliens & Border Protection Branch		Border unit (Nea Vyssa)
Border Protection Division	Regional centre for integrated border & migration management (Alexandroupolis)	Regional centre for integrated border & migration management (Neo Cheimonio)
Central centre for integrated border & migration management	Local centres for integrated border & migration management (Soufli, Tycherio, Feres)	Local centre for integrated border & migration management (Didymoteicho)

⁶² Data extracted from Hellenic Police 2019d; Interviewee 1; 3.

5.3.3 Frontex in Evros

Since 2006, Frontex has an operational presence in Greece and, more precisely, at the Greek-Turkish land border in Evros. Its role on the ground includes border patrol and assistance with the detained irregular border crossers in the form of screening and debriefing for intelligence purposes (Frontex, 2019h). Actually, Frontex coordinates and implements almost throughout the year operations at the Greek-Turkish land border. To do so, it deploys technical equipment and brings Frontex guest officers. Approximately 20 guest officers currently operate in Evros (Interviewee 2). These guest officers wear Frontex's insignia and act according to the agency's Code of Conduct. Border patrols are usually performed by a team of two Frontex officers and one Greek border guard (Interviewee 1; 6).

The first Frontex joint operation in Greece was Poseidon. It took place in the summer of 2006 bringing in the country Frontex guest officers from Austria, Italy Poland and the United Kingdom (Frontex, 2006a: 11). It was conducted at BCP Kipi and at the green border between Greece and Turkey.⁶³ The operation's aim was to assist Greece in irregular migration management and border surveillance, as this region constituted a significant irregular migration route towards the EU (Frontex, 2006a: 11). With continuous Poseidon joint operations, Frontex was aiming at tackling irregular migration by strengthening border control at the land and sea borders (Frontex, 2007a: 26). These operations were part of the Poseidon concept (Frontex, 2009a: 15), which reflected a novel management methodology consisting of a holistic operational plan for the land and sea borders (Frontex, 2009a: 26-27) as well as return capacity building through the organisation of return operations Attica (Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2013: 612). Poseidon focused on irregular migration, migrant smuggling and facilitators' dismantlement. It was implemented with the deployment of debriefing teams, interpreters and operational experts, which contributed to the collection and, in turn, diffusion of real-time, intelligence. This enabled the identification of new smuggling networks and irregular migration routes fostering the communication and interlinks between the land and sea operational theatres (Frontex, 2009a: 26-27).

Apart from Poseidon, since 2008 Greece also participated in the Focal Points joint operation that covered the eastern and southern land borders having as hosting countries, Greece, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and

⁶³ Green border is the external land borders outside BCP areas (CSD, 2011).

Slovenia (Frontex, 2008: 40). Focal Points was part of the Focal Points programme that aimed at enhancing regional and local coordination at hotspots of EU external borders (Frontex, 2009a: 15).

On 24 October 2010, Greece requested the activation of Frontex's RABIT mechanism, due to unprecedented irregular migration pressures in Evros (Frontex, 2010d). Overall, the RABIT mechanism intends to provide rapid, yet, short-term operational assistance to a member state that faces 'a mass influx of third country nationals attempting to enter its territory illegally' (Regulation, 2007). This assistance refers to the deployment of RABIT teams, namely border guards, and large-scale technical equipment to tackle an emergency.⁶⁴ The RABIT deployment in Evros started on 2 November 2010 and finished on 2 March 2011. During this period, 567 officers from 26 EU member states and Schengen-associated countries⁶⁵ arrived in Evros (Frontex, 2011b: 15). These officers were commanded by the Greek authorities (Frontex, 2011c). While performing their duties, they were able to carry their service weapons (Regulation, 2007). Moreover, they were wearing their own national uniforms with the addition of an armband appearing the insignia of Frontex and the EU (Regulation, 2007). In total, during the four-month RABIT deployment, 11,971 person-days⁶⁶ were performed. The human resources consisted of border guards specialised in false documents, irregular entry, border checks, stolen vehicles as well as dog handlers, debriefers and interpreters (Frontex, 2010e). As a result, during RABIT operation, considerable professional knowledge and know-how was transferred to Greece (Trauner, 2016b: 317). The technical means that arrived in Evros for this operation included fixed-wing aircrafts, helicopters, radars, night vision cameras, buses, patrol cars and thermo-vision vehicles (Frontex, 2010b: 28). As a result, modern technological assets were deployed at the Greek-Turkish land border for the first time.

RABIT operation signified a massive deployment of force and enhanced border control action in Evros. Emphasis was placed on border patrolling as well as the debriefing of apprehended irregular migrants to collect intelligence regarding facilitators' *modus operandi* (Frontex, 2010b: 40). When the situation at the Greek-

⁶⁴ The RABIT mechanism was activated once again in 2015 after Greece's request for assistance due to the emergency situation at its sea border (Frontex, 2015b).

⁶⁵ Guest officers, that is deployed officers, from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden (Frontex, 2011b: 42).

⁶⁶ Unit of measurement for the number of people and the hours worked during an operation.

Turkish land border became re-stabilised, RABIT was replaced by the Poseidon Land joint operation, which ran, until 2014, at an almost permanent basis as well as by Focal Points Land joint operation.

Furthermore, in October 2010, a Frontex's Operational Office (FOO) was established in Greece, which was renamed as Frontex Liaison Office and, as of 2016, it is incorporated into the EU Regional Task Force (EURTF) (Frontex, 2015c). Its premises are located inside the Ministry of Maritime and Island Policy in Piraeus and it is staffed with five persons (Frontex, 2015c). This office aims at providing regional support to Frontex activities in a permanent framework, whilst fostering situational awareness (Frontex, 2010f). In this context, it contributed to the RABIT operation in Evros (Frontex, 2010b: 15) conducting situation assessment, intelligence-gathering and operational management (Carrera & Guild, 2010: 4).

Other Frontex operational activities in Evros included a rapid intervention exercise carried out in 2015, staff exchange operations (Frontex, 2016c) and the joint mission Flexible Operational Activities (FOA) on border surveillance and capacity building (Frontex, 2017d). These operational actions are aligned with a multipurpose concept promoted by Frontex under its European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) function, which covers a broader cross-border aspect (Frontex, 2016d). Frontex's enhanced operational activity in Evros was accompanied by a significant budget growth, which - whilst proportionate to the general rise in the agency's financial resources - it is illustrative of Frontex's development. More precisely, from €2,110,719 in 2007 (Frontex, 2008: 22-23), the 2016 budget for land operations activities reached the amount of €14,800,000 (Frontex, 2016e: 49). Apart from the land border control, during the refugee crisis Frontex also provided 'dedicated assistance' to Greece (Frontex, 2017d: 23). The agency implementing the hotspot approach enhanced its role in the islands in the form of registering, fingerprinting and screening incoming migrants.⁶⁷ Also, it started organising readmission operations from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the EU-Turkey Statement (Council of the EU, 2016). More precisely, Frontex's role in readmissions refers to organisational support to Greece, such as logistics as well as transportation and escort officers (Frontex, 2019h). Furthermore,

⁶⁷ The hotspot approach is part of the EU immediate action to assist operationally certain frontline EU member states that face disproportionate migratory pressures at the EU's external borders (European Commission, 2015a).

Frontex helped Greece with the drafting of operational procedures for biometric identification (Frontex, 2017d: 24).

Beyond Frontex's activity on the Greek soil, the agency has promoted its role on the other side of the border. To this end, it has constructed a cooperation with Turkey, a third country neighbouring with two EU members, Greece and Bulgaria. This cooperation describes an externalisation of border control (Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2013: 602). Accordingly, in 2009, after Frontex's request, Turkey agreed to appoint a contact point for Frontex (Frontex, 2009a: 27). In 2012, Frontex and Turkey concluded a Working Arrangement (MoU, 2012), which enables them to start building a formal relationship (Fink, 2012). Subsequently, Turkey started participating as a third country in various air and sea joint operations (Frontex, 2013a; 2014d). In 2014, Frontex and Turkey also concluded a cooperation plan focusing on risk analysis, information exchange, training and joint operations (Frontex, 2014d: 12-13). In that particular context, Frontex has developed a Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network (TU-RAN) for risk analysis and strategic planning and is participating in a technical assistance project for the enhancement of Turkey's migration management capacity and the transfer of best practices (Frontex, 2019i). Finally, in 2016, Frontex deployed in Ankara its first liaison officer (FLO)⁶⁸ to a third country (Frontex, 2016e: 74). All these attest an active role of Frontex in Evros, and generally in Greece.⁶⁹ This is further consolidated with the 776 Frontex officers currently operating across the country (MFA, 2018), accounting to 1/4 of all border officers in Greece.

Thus, apart from the Greek border control authorities, Frontex is a border control actor in Evros. It is present at the Greek-Turkish land border coordinating and conducting joint operations, monitoring migratory movements, deploying officers and technical assets as well as gathering and sharing operational, tactical and strategic information. As a result, Frontex is not only a border actor, being present at Evros. It is also a border control actor informing and participating in the conduct of border control at the Greek-Turkish land border. The above describe a complex and evolving border control environment at the Greek-Turkish land border. There are various operational activities, differentiated measures, new policies, diverse objectives and multiple border control actors. There also exist continuous shifts in irregular migration flows that lead

⁶⁸ Liaison officers perform liaison tasks enhancing the cooperation between Frontex and the national border control authorities (Frontex, 2019ia).

⁶⁹ For an overview of Frontex's activities in Evros, see table 5.c.

to changes in the operational capacity regarding human and technical resources deployed. These evolutions not only shape the territoriality of Evros as a border; they also impact on the border control policy domain.

Table 5.c Frontex in Evros			
	Activity	Scope	Composition
Land Operations	Poseidon Land	Surveillance, migration management	Experts, debriefers, interpreters
	Focal Points Land	Coordination enhancement, technical support	Experts
	RABIT	Rapid assistance	Experts, debriefers, interpreters, dog handlers
	RABIT exercise	Testing operational preparedness	Surveillance officers, first-line officers, debriefers, interpreters
	Flexible Operational Activities	Surveillance, capacity building	Experts, trainers
Other	Staff exchange		
	Training		
	Return operations		
	Readmissions	From Greece to Turkey	
	Drafting of operational procedures	i.e. biometrics, reporting systems	
	Frontex Liaison Office (part of EURTF)	Regional support, situational awareness, operational management	5-person staff
	External relations with Turkey	MoU, participation in joint operations, technical projects, meetings	Liaison officer, TU-RAN

5.3.4 Accounting for border control assumptions and practices in Evros

The mode of the border control conduct in Evros, as presented previously, describes a routinised pattern for border control. This routine reflects cultural traits consisting of background assumptions and practices for the border control conduct. The background assumptions refer to border and border control characteristics (Zaiotti 2011: 23). They include the approach implemented for border control, the underlying presumptions for the border control conduct as well as territoriality and border perceptions. In turn, practices are activities or actions. They correspond to what border control officers commonly do when engaging with border control and how they do it (Zaiotti 2011: 26).⁷⁰ Concerning border assumptions, the main characteristic of Evros is that it constitutes an EU external border and, in parallel, a demarcation of national sovereignty. On the one hand, the EU dimension, symbolising a post-national integration, denotes and asserts Frontex's engagement in Evros. On the other hand, the national aspect, shaped by the Greek-Turkish rivalry, has resulted in border militarisation to protect the national territory and ensure border integrity (Nachmani, 2003: 172-173; Martino, 2010; Gkintidis, 2013: 457). Accordingly, apart from military camps along the river, as well as minefields (Antonopoulos & Winterdyk, 2006: 453)⁷¹ - that since 2009 have been cleared (Ministry of National Defence, 2010) - the access to the river is restricted. Only military staff and border guards can approach Evros border, namely the borderline and the area near the borderland (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015: 56; Interviewee 5). The same access restriction has been applied to the roads and fields that are close to the river, given that metallic chain barriers block vehicles and pedestrians from approaching Evros river (Field note, 24.10.2018). All these convey that Evros is a militarised border.

Regarding border control assumptions, there are securitised characteristics evidenced, for instance, with the fence construction (Skleparis, 2016: 96; Grigoriadis & Dilek, 2019) and with Frontex's operations, like RABIT that respond to an urgent context (Léonard, 2010). In this regard, irregular migration is framed as a security threat reflecting a securitising logic (Huysmans, 2000; Karyotis & Skleparis, 2013).

⁷⁰ In Chapter 3, the concept of assumptions and practices is presented in a more thorough manner integrated within the analytical construct.

⁷¹ After the Cyprus crisis in 1974, Greece laid 24,751 anti-personnel mines to defend against a Turkish invasion into the Greek soil (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006).

Moreover, a technocratic approach has been put forward emphasising the deployment of high-tech and computer-assisted border control tools, such as IT reporting systems. Greek authorities are obliged to use Frontex applications uploading border control incidents. Actually, Frontex has developed specialised reporting tools, like the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur), Joint Operations Reporting System (JORA), Operational Resources Management System (OPERA) and Frontex One-Stop-Shop (FOSS) promoting therefore its own mode of operational reporting and visualisation among border control practitioners.⁷²

Another characteristic is that the ‘topos’ of border control has been shifted redefining the internal/external distinction. Border control is not solely carried out at the border but away from its actual geographic location creating new border control spaces (Walters, 2006: 193). It has been expanded beyond the border and in the territory of the third country accounting for an extra-territorial strategy. This occurs, for instance, with surveillance in the pre-frontier area⁷³ via Eurosur as well as cooperation in border control and migration matters with third countries, like Turkey (Ryan & Mitsilegas, 2010; Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2013). Yet, simultaneously, border control is also conducted in the interior of the country with the setting up of roadblocks and vehicle patrolling to dismantle irregular migrants. This denotes the intra-territorialisation of border control (Reid-Henry, 2013: 218) transferring its conduct within the country and away from the border.

In addition, a key element for border control is the increasing use of border surveillance. An automatic surveillance system has been installed in Evros composed of monitoring stations, thermal sensors, cameras, radars as well as system monitoring and surveillance of surrounding areas (CCTV) (Secretary General of Public Order, 2016). This system has been developed to implement Eurosur (Ministry of Citizen Protection, 2011). All the data extracted are portrayed via geographical information systems (GIS) in a cartographic environment for common visualisation. Furthermore, Frontex, being responsible for the coordination of surveillance tools, such as Eurosur, monitors the pre-frontier area strengthening situational awareness (DG Home, 2019b). Yet, these monitoring tools enlarge the securitisation context (Bigo, 2000).

⁷² For the politics of migration mapping through JORA and Eurosur software, see Tazzioli (2018a).

⁷³ The pre-frontier area is the geographical space beyond the external borders (Regulation, 2013).

Moreover, there is a move towards an intelligence-oriented approach to border control manifested with the utilisation of IT reporting systems, the promotion of information gathering and sharing as well as risk analysis. In this context, Frontex gathers information and intelligence via its debriefing activities included in its operations, like Poseidon Land. Moreover, it monitors migratory movements, conducts risk analysis and shares data functioning as an information-exchange hub. This logic is also promoted with the centres for the management of irregular migration established in Evros for information gathering, intelligence and analysis. All these characteristics constitute the underlying assumptions about borders and border control that exist in Evros. At the same time, they manifest Frontex's role in their construction and development through the agency's operational activities and tools for border control that promote and further consolidate these assumptions.

Turning to border control practices produced at the border, Evros manifests a policing border control context and organisation. Police officers and border guards, who are part of the police, carry out border controls, whilst in police uniforms. Policing tactics are commonly employed for border control purposes. These include boat, vehicle and foot patrols, roadblocks, the use of dogs to dismantle migrants or prohibited goods as well as debriefing. Debriefing is a form of police interrogation, which entails cognitive characteristics and psychological elements, employed to extract information for intelligence purposes (Frontex, 2019ib). Following that, a policing context has been formed in Evros constituted by processes of detecting and preventing criminal activities (Mawby, 2011: 17). Yet, debriefing as well as dog and boat patrolling were initiated in the border of Evros by Frontex (Interviewee 2).

Another practice is information gathering and analysis. The collection, sorting, visual representation, analysis and exchange of information have become dominant border control activities. The last years, an operational border surveillance centre as well as regional centres for integrated border and migration management have been established in Evros gathering intelligence and conducting risk analysis. These data are also sent to Frontex. This practice describes a proactive border control conduct with intelligence-led characteristics, given that it aims at identifying possible risks and emerging threats, whilst ensuring up-to-date situational awareness. This reflects a direct link between data, operative vision, analysis and action for the proactive identification, localisation and threat or risk tackling (Dijstelbloem et al. 2017: 225).

Moreover, border control in Evros is being implemented through and relies on a practice of multilateral cooperation. Greece, Frontex and even Turkey cooperate to manage irregular migration flows at the Greek-Turkish land border. In this spirit, Greek border authorities have frequent meetings and web conferences with officers from Frontex's headquarters to discuss migratory challenges (Interviewee 3). Also, during RABIT operation, Frontex, Greek and Turkish border officials held frequent informal meetings on both sides of the land border that fostered the cooperation and operational communication (Frontex, 2010b: 10-11). On the ground, officers from different authorities and member states are deployed in Evros. It is a multi-actor and multilateral setting, fostering cooperation among border control practitioners. The secondment of Greek officers and border guards as well as the deployment of Frontex guest officers have built a cooperative spirit and enhanced communication channels, contributing to the creation of an informal network of border control professionals. These officers, which work multilaterally, build and maintain interpersonal relations during and after their deployment at Evros border (Interviewee 2; 3; 5; 6). They share their experiences, discuss work challenges, confront similar problems and set common professional goals establishing a connection with their colleagues. Thus, this builds a border control community that exists and is being nourished at the border.

Technologically enhanced functions and procedures constitute another practice encountered extensively across Evros. High-tech border control instruments, such as automated surveillance systems, sophisticated visualisation tools, thermal imaging cameras, biometrics, thermo-vision vans and heartbeat detectors have become integral in the border control conduct. Frontex promotes innovative border control solutions, such as Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) tested in Greece (Frontex, 2018b). In this spirit, the automatic border surveillance system in Evros has been established with Frontex's help (Ministry of Interior, 2015). Similarly, thermo-vision vans have arrived in Evros and assist in border control during Frontex operations, as Greece has not yet obtained such vehicles.

The spread of seconded officers and Frontex guest officers in Evros makes for the professionalisation of border control. On the one hand, the economic incentive for officers' transfer to this border enhances professionalism rendering the service in Evros a profitable job. On the other, professionalisation is also being promoted emphasising on the effectiveness and assessment of operational actions as well as the establishment of border control work standards. All national and Frontex operational activities are

being periodically evaluated via Frontex and EU evaluation reports, Court of Auditors reports and statistics published by national authorities. These assessments lead to a performance evaluation of the resources employed and thus to greater professionalism. Moreover, training builds on professionalisation, creating work methods and standards for border guards. Frontex has developed specialised curricula, such as training for land border surveillance officers (Frontex, 2019ib), whereas Frontex's Common Core Curriculum for border guard training (Frontex, 2019ic), has been incorporated into Greece's police training, building on the technocratic approach in Evros and creating expertise in debriefing and screening. Frontex also enables border control professionals to meet and discuss matters of common interest, thus constructing a professional community.

These underlying assumptions and practices in the region of Evros reflect a routinised mode for border control implemented and reproduced by border control practitioners.⁷⁴ As the above empirical analysis has shown, there exists a border control community composed of national border guards, seconded officers, and Frontex officers and guest officers. Also, Frontex is a border control actor, which has promoted and diffused some of the border control assumptions and practices that shape the border control conduct in Evros. To explore the cultural condition of border control, these findings are compared with the EU external border of Lampedusa.

⁷⁴ For an overview of the assumptions and practices, see table 5.d

Table 5.d Border control cultural traits in Evros	
Border assumptions	EU external border – Post-national integration
	National territory – Militarisation
Border control assumptions	Securitisation
	Technocracy
	Extra-territorialisation / Intra-territorialisation
	Surveillance
	Intelligence
Practices	Policing
	Information gathering & analysis
	Multilateral cooperation
	Technology
	Professionalisation

5.4 The border of Lampedusa

Lampedusa is the southernmost Italian territory and an external sea border, connecting the EU with and dividing it from North Africa. It is a small island of the Mediterranean Sea. Having an area of 20 km² and around 6,000 inhabitants (Kitagawa, 2011: 201). It is the biggest as well as the capital of the Pelagie Islands.⁷⁵ It is located between Sicily and the African coast. Actually, it is situated 200 km from Sicily (CoE, 2011: 2), 113 km from Tunisia and 300 km from Libya (Reuss, 2015). It is a flat rocky island with a lunar-like landscape and dry climate. During summer, temperature easily reaches 35⁰ Celsius, whereas, in winter, it does not drop lower than 10⁰ Celsius. There is a lot of humidity and harsh wind throughout the year and especially during the night. The island's flora is limited to thistles, low thorny bushes and some palm trees. Its fauna is mostly migratory birds, *Caretta Caretta* turtles and fishes. Lampedusa is also the name

⁷⁵ The Pelagie Islands, derived from the Greek word *pelagos*, namely open sea, are formed by Lampedusa, Linosa and Lampione. They belong to the Sicilian province of Agrigento. See Annex I for map of Lampedusa and Annex II for photos from fieldwork in Lampedusa.

of the island's only town. Lampedusa's economy is centred on fishing, agriculture and tourism. Yet, the island depends on products imported from Sicily, such as vegetables, clothing and drinkable water (WHO, 2012a: 8). This results in product shortages. The island has an airport and a port. By air, it is connected to a few Italian cities with sporadic flights.⁷⁶ By sea, there are 8-hour ferry routes from the Sicilian port of Porto Empedocle. In the summer, it becomes a popular tourist destination due to its white beaches, cliffs and rocky landscape. Lampedusa, albeit an Italian soil, is considered a fragment of Africa in Europe (Kitagawa, 2011: 201). Besides its geographical proximity with the shores of North Africa, the island is also geologically connected with the African continent by an undersea shelf.

Despite its isolation and geographic marginality from Italy, Lampedusa has a turbulent history, due to its geostrategic position in the middle of the Sicilian Strait (Li Causi, 1987: 165). Before 1843, Lampedusa was uninhabited, as North African pirates raided the island enslaving its habitants (Baracco, 2015: 444). After that, Maltese farmers lived there, and later, the island was sold to the kingdom of Naples (Li Causi, 1987: 165). In 1943, during World War II, Lampedusa had been subject of severe bombing by the Allied Powers, whereas in 1986, the Libyan leader, Muammar al-Qaddafi, fired scud missiles at the island in retaliation for US bombing attack against Libya (Baracco, 2015: 445).

Lampedusa's development has been shaped by Italy's relations with its southern neighbours. Historically, Ancient Rome's rule over countries of the Northern Africa, established social, economic and political ties. During the mass Italian emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, North Africa received a considerable amount of Italians (Montalbano, 2018).⁷⁷ However, Italy's colonial aspirations, especially on Libya and Tunisia, due to their nearness and World War I concessions, triggered confrontations and competition for influence (Hess, 1963). More precisely, in 1881, France invaded Tunisia, although the Italian population outnumbered the French (Montalbano, 2018). To continue exerting its influence over the country, yet differently, Italy started to cooperate with local authorities and organisations revitalising an Italo-Tunisian cooperation (Choate, 2010: 6-7). Regarding Libya, Italy invaded the country in 1911 during the Turco-Italian War. Despite Libyan resistance, which resulted in one of the

⁷⁶ Namely Rome, Milan, Venice, Palermo and Catania.

⁷⁷ In 1924, after World War I and amidst fascism in Italy, approximately 91,000 Italians were living in Tunisia (Cresti, 2008: 194).

bloodiest colonial wars (Fuller, 2000: 123), Italy fulfilled its desire for a Mediterranean colony enabling the country to partake in the Mediterranean and trans-Saharan trade routes (Raza, 2012: 6). The Italian rule over Libya ceased in 1943, after the Axis powers lost World War II from the Allies.⁷⁸ Yet, Italy's economic influence remained.

The above describe a porous relationship between Italy and North African countries characterised by cross-border exchanges. Due to its closeness with North Africa, Lampedusa became a channel for this trans-Mediterranean mobility. However, the last decades, thousands of migrants have tried to reach the shores of Lampedusa, metamorphosing it into an iconic EU border (Orsini, 2014: 1). Hence, Lampedusa is characterised by pairs of dichotomies, like North/South, namely Continental Europe and Mediterranean, South/North, Southern Europe and Northern Africa, as well as South/East, that is Southern Europe with Middle East (Giuliani, 2018). All these dichotomies have framed the border of Lampedusa in an antithetic context. From the one part, it constitutes a place advancing a Euro-African link built on cross-cultural merges and common memories (Brambilla, 2016: 116). From the other part, being an EU external frontier, it separates Europe from the 'unwanted' African migrants (van Houtum & Mamadouh, 2008: 95).

5.4.1 Border control in Lampedusa

For centuries, cross-border mobility was flourishing in the region of Trans-Mediterranean. Lampedusa soon became a corridor for this mobility as well as a small trade centre (Li Causi, 1987: 165), because of its geostrategic location between Libya, Tunisia, Malta and the Italian mainland.

Most cross-border mobility towards Lampedusa is channelled via the sea border. More specifically, the island has two very small seaports. The new port mostly accommodates small boats offering short cruises around the island. The old port services ferries.⁷⁹

In general, the ferries arriving on Lampedusa depart from Sicily conducting a domestic route. Following that, the passengers arriving at the island are not subject to passport control. Yet, the typical procedure for sea border control refers to passenger passport control, before the embarkation, and after the disembarkation from the sea

⁷⁸ In 1951 Libya declared its independence and from 1969 to 2011 it was under the rule of Muammar al-Qaddafi that came to power after a military *coup d'état* (Pargeter, 2012).

⁷⁹ This harbour can accommodate sea vessels up to 500 feet in length (SeaRates, 2019).

vessel. More specifically, to board the ferry, passengers that are not EU citizens must present their passport and, if required, valid visa to a border officer, who is dressed in a uniform. Actually, Tunisian and Libyan nationals need a visa to enter Italy.⁸⁰ There are also customs agents that check customs documents. Passengers, during their embarkation, can also be subject to luggage security screening. The same process of border control takes place at the port of arrival. The entry to the country can be denied if the passenger has an alert in national and European databases or in case of a false travel document (Polizia di Stato, 2014). This refers to a formal maritime cross-border mobility. However, the last decades, Italy has witnessed a sharp rise in irregular sea arrivals from its southern sea borders. This migratory corridor, entitled Central Mediterranean route,⁸¹ concerns the sea journey from North Africa to Italy, putting Lampedusa in its epicentre as a primary port of arrival.

Since 1990s, Lampedusa has been the main destination for many irregular border crossers, mainly from Tunisia, who wanted to reach Italy opting for the sea route (WHO, 2012b: 2). Most were seasonal workers being employed in the fishing or agricultural sectors (Global Initiative, 2014: 3-4). However, over the past fifteen years, the number of irregular sea border crossers increased dramatically tripling the island's population. More specifically, in 2006, 18,047 irregular border crossers reached Lampedusa (WHO, 2012a: 1), whereas the overall number for irregular sea arrivals in Italy was 22,016 (Fargues, 2017: 26). This manifests that Lampedusa was the main destination for irregular border crossers trying to reach Italy by boat. The majority did not intend to stay at the island. They used it as a 'stepping-stone' on their way (Bernardi-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014: 90) towards the Italian mainland and then to other north European countries, like Austria, Switzerland or France (IOM, 2018: 19).

To halt the migratory wave towards Lampedusa's shores, Italy and Libya signed a bilateral agreement ratified in 2009 that enabled the two countries to cooperate against irregular border crossings (Ronzitti, 2009). However, this bilateral agreement facilitated push-back practices⁸² resulting in Italy's condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR, 2012). In 2011, the island faced an emergency

⁸⁰ Libyans can apply for a visa at the visa application centre in Tripoli or at the coastal city of Tobruk, while Tunisians have to visit the Italian Embassy in Tunis to issue a visa to enter Italy.

⁸¹ The Central Mediterranean route refers to migratory flows from North Africa to Italy and Malta.

⁸² Push-back practices refer to the interception of irregular border crossers on the high seas and then their return to Libya. These practices breach the principle of non-refoulement. For refoulement, see Papastavridis (2010).

situation, due to a major migratory influx after the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia and the Arab Spring revolts⁸³ (CoE, 2011: 2). In this context, emergency powers were given to the prefecture of Palermo to manage the migration situation. This peak in sea arrivals amounted to 51,922 irregular border crossers (WHO, 2012b: 2) compared to 459 in 2010 (CoE, 2011: 2). Most were Tunisian and Libyan males, but there was also a small percentage of Sub-Saharan nationals (WHO, 2012b: 3).

In the aftermath of the Jasmine Revolution, irregular migration towards Italy continued to be on the rise, as Tunisia was characterised by political instability and economic recession. Soon, the country became a fertile ground for arms and drug smuggling and a terrain for terrorism, given that Tunisia's borders with Libya in the east and Algeria in the west remained uncontrolled and unmonitored (Khan & Mezran, 2015: 3-4). Following this security vacuum, terrorists intended to lead Tunisia to an 'Arab Winter'⁸⁴ under Islamic rule (Hansen et al., 2017). This pushed many Tunisians to flee the country. As a result, from January to March 2011, around 20,000 Tunisian migrants reached Lampedusa (Frontex, 2012b: 15).

The situation was worse in Libya. The eruption of street demonstrations in February 2011 turned into a civil war. Since Qaddafi's death in October 2011, Libya has fallen into a perpetual chaos (Sensini, 2016), driving to migration to Italy many Libyans with their families as well as workers from the Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan Africa residing in Libya (Frontex, 2012c). Actually, Libya was the primary departure country for irregular sea border crossers reaching Italy.⁸⁵ Apart from irregular migration and migrant smuggling, Libya also became a corridor for other cross-border crimes, like drug smuggling, namely heroin and cocaine, as well as arms trafficking (Shaw & Mangan, 2014). In this context, Lampedusa continued being a destination for irregular sea border crossers reaching 11,557 in 2016 and 9,057 in 2017 (Ministero dell'Interno, 2019). However, these numbers seem limited in relation to the total irregular migration flow towards Italy.⁸⁶ More specifically, in 2017, 119,445 irregular border crossers

⁸³ More specifically, on 17 December 2010, a young Tunisian set himself on fire to protest against the Tunisian authoritarian regime of President Zine el-Abedin Ben Ali. The subsequent street protests that broke out across the country, besides the regime's violently response, led to the overthrow of the Tunisian President. The so-called 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia, ignited, as a chain reaction, the Arab Spring uprisings in the countries of North Africa and Middle East, such as Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen (Khan & Mezran, 2015: 1).

⁸⁴ For the Arab Winter and its variation from the Arab Spring, see Totten (2012).

⁸⁵ This trend reversed in 2018 as Tunisia replaced Libya and became the main country of departure for migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean route (Frontex, 2019ii).

⁸⁶ See table 5.f.

entered the country (Guardia Costiera, 2017: 5). Most were from Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea and Tunisia. Yet, they did not land in Lampedusa.⁸⁷ Instead, they disembarked in various Sicilian seaports leading to a segmentation of sea arrivals. This was attributed to a variety of reasons, such as new smuggling *modus operandi* for migrants from West Africa, weather conditions affecting the sea route, port traffic as well as reception capacity (CIR, 2018: 2). After all, as Orsini (2014: 2) argues, maritime arrivals after search and rescue (SAR) incidents are not actual arrivals. Conversely, they are part of an institutional decision, given that the authorities, which participate in border control, rescue and transfer migrants to a selected port. Following that, these authorities can direct migrant boats to harbours close to reception centres that have not surpassed their reception capacity.

Another process that influences the disembarkation place, though it is not part of border control, is the hotspot system. In Italy, the first hotspot was established in Lampedusa in September 2015 with a 500-person capacity.⁸⁸ Implementing the hotspot approach, irregular border crossers landing in Lampedusa are being transferred to the hotspot centre so as to be identified, registered and fingerprinted with the help of EU agencies.⁸⁹ This process limited any secondary movements, but, at the same time, it accelerated asylum seekers' relocation to other EU countries.⁹⁰ Therefore, the irregular border crossers that were not eligible to relocation became trapped in the hotspot centres without being able to move informally to northern Europe. In fact, many irregular border crossers denied being fingerprinted to avoid detection of subsequent intra-Schengen movements (Tazzioli, 2018b: 2770). This may have affected the smuggling routes and particularly the disembarkation places with migrants opting to land in an area that does not have a hotspot in operation.

Irregular migration flows were further cut down in 2018, after the decision of the new Minister of Interior to block charity vessels from disembarking irregular border crossers in Italian ports (Cusumano & Gombeer, 2018). As a result, in 2018, 3,468 persons arrived irregularly on Lampedusa compared to 9,057 in the previous year

⁸⁷ In 2011, Lampedusa had been declared as an unsafe harbour (European Parliament, 2011b: 6).

⁸⁸ Italy has established five hotspots located in Lampedusa, Trapani, Pozzallo, Messina and Taranto.

⁸⁹ These agencies are Frontex, EASO, the EU Police Cooperation Agency (Europol) and the EU Judicial Cooperation Agency (Eurojust).

⁹⁰ The EU relocation scheme was a programme that covered the transfer of asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other European states. It applied only to applicants for which the average recognition rate of international protection at the EU level was above 75%. The programme ended on 26 September 2017 (Council Decision, 2015).

(Ministero dell'Interno, 2019). Most were males from Tunisia and Eritrea. In general, most irregular sea border crossers that arrive in Italy using the Central Mediterranean route are facilitated by smuggling networks (Frontex, 2018a: 35). Libya, Tunisia and Algeria are the main departure countries (UNODC, 2018: 145). However, for many irregular border crossers the journey did not start from the shores of these countries. Instead, it began from their home in West or East Africa, the Middle East or even Asia indicating a longer and tiring route (UNODC, 2018: 146).

The sea journey usually starts during the evening to avoid the interception before entering international waters and can last more than two days (UNHCR et al., 2017: 105). Though tariffs can be negotiated and vary according to nationalities, in general, each migrant pays more than \$1,000 to be smuggled from Libya to Italy (RMMS, 2014: 48). The sea border crossings do not take place in the season of winter to avoid extreme weather conditions in the open sea (Frontex, 2014c: 5; Interviewee 10). The sea vessels used are usually small wooden boats, even manufactured locally, or rubber inflatable dinghies (House of Lords, 2016: 13). Most are unseaworthy, without navigation tools, overcrowded and with insufficient fuel and food on board (Frontex, 2016a: 46). For each journey, the wooden boats can be packed with more than 700 people on board, whereas the respective number for inflatable dinghies can reach 140 persons (UNHCR et al., 2017: 6).

Sea vessels' overcrowding and unseaworthiness, Lampedusa's rocky coastline that hinders disembarkation, the perilous sea and the severe open-sea weather render it the deadliest migratory route in the world,⁹¹ responsible for the massive death toll of 4,578 only in 2016 (UNHCR, 2019b). In the memory of all the border crossers that have lost their lives during this sea journey, a monument has been erected in the island forming a door of Europe (Porta d'Europa) (Field note, 10.05.2018).

The history of the island and cross-cultural heritage, its alienation from the Italian capital as well as shipwrecks' fatalities have constructed Lampedusa as a community⁹² of openness, tolerance and solidarity (Melotti et al., 2018). Actually, the island's inhabitants, and especially fishermen, have many times rescued with their boats or tried to save irregular migrants in defiance of any legal actions against them

⁹¹ The most shocking shipwreck and worst maritime tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea since World War II, happened on 3 October 2013, when a boat carrying approximately 500 people sunk a few hundred metres off Lampedusa occurring 366 fatalities (Dines et al., 2015: 430).

⁹² However, according to Orsini's analysis, this pro-migrant attitude is not holistic especially towards Tunisians (Orsini, 2015a).

(Puggioni, 2015: 1149). In addition, Lampedusa's community has been repeatedly nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and has produced a document for migrants' rights, entitled 'Charter of Lampedusa' (Carta di Lampedusa, 2014; Giglioli, 2017).

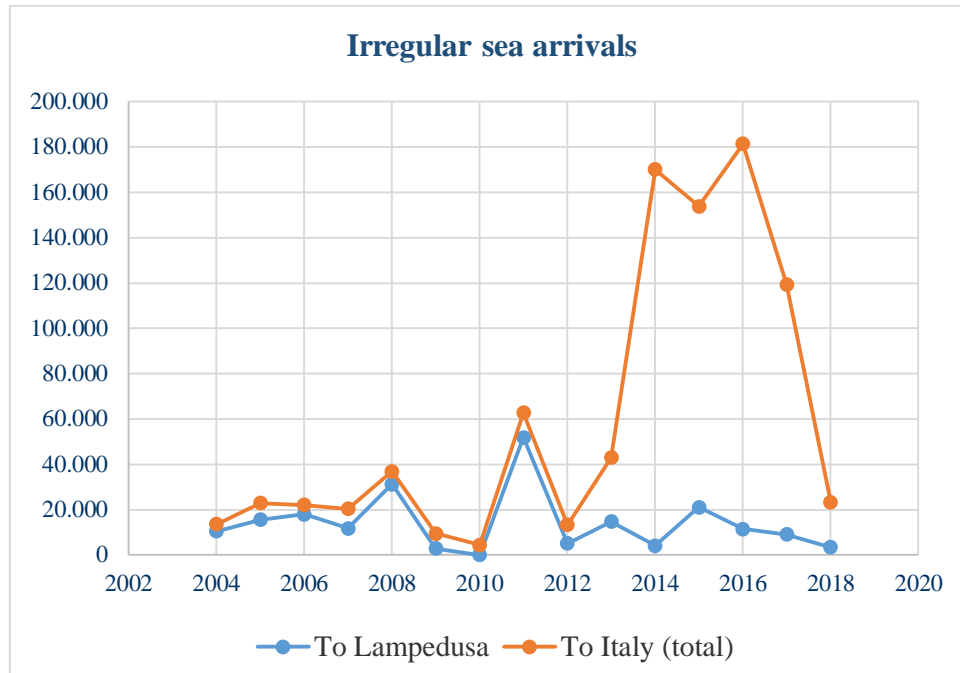
Thus, Lampedusa, though an interstitial space (Bernardi-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014: 87), has been placed at the centre of irregular migration in Italy, being a border that receives vast migratory pressures.⁹³ This has also rendered it a border spectacle (Cuttitta, 2012) or, put differently, a spectacle of bare life (Dines et al., 2015: 432) and a 'theatre of the border play', due to the border policies implemented and the actors involved in border control (Cuttitta, 2014).

⁹³ For irregular migration flows, top nationalities and the main causes for this mobility, see table 5.e.

Table 5.e Irregular sea migration to Lampedusa ⁹⁴			
Year	Irregular Border Crossings	Top Nationalities	Causes
2008	31,311	Tunisians, Nigerians	➤ Tunisia uprising
2009	02,947	Somalis, Nigerians, Tunisians	➤ Italy-Libya cooperation ➤ Italian anti-immigration legislation
2010	00,459	Tunisians, Algerians	➤ Italy-Libya agreement
2011	51,922	Tunisians, Libyans	➤ Jasmine Revolution ➤ Arab Spring ➤ Libyan civil war & military intervention ➤ Emergency state
2012	05,202	Eritreans, Tunisians	➤ Spanish readmission agreements ➤ Italy-Tunisia agreement
2013	14,753	Eritreans, Syrians	➤ Border controls in Israel and the Gulf states diverting migration flows to Europe ➤ Saudi Arabia/Eritrea border fence
2014	04,194		➤ Mare Nostrum ➤ Turmoil in Iraq, Syria, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Eritrea ➤ Lampedusa unsafe harbour, closed detention centre
2015	21,160	Nigerians, Eritreans	➤ Migration crisis ➤ Hotspot operation ➤ Shift towards Eastern Mediterranean Sea route ➤ Operation Sophia
2016	11,557		
2017	09,057	Nigerians, Guineans	➤ Less Libyan departures
2018	03,468	Tunisians, Eritreans	➤ New Italian government ➤ Shift towards Spain

⁹⁴ Data for flows and nationalities extracted from CoE (2011); WHO (2012a); Global Initiative (2014); Fargues (2017); Guardia Costiera (2017) and Ministero dell'Interno (2019).

Table 5.f ⁹⁵



5.4.2 Border control actors and structure: The Lampedusa case

In Italy, three authorities are responsible for border control and border security at the country's land, air and sea borders. These are the Italian State Police (Polizia di Stato), the National Military Police (Carabinieri) Corps and the Finance Police (Guardia di Finanza).

The State Police is responsible for public order and security. It is a civilian police force oversighted by the Ministry of Interior (Polizia di Stato, 2015). Border control is entrusted to the unit of Border Police, which is managed by the Central Directorate for Immigration and Border Police in Rome (Polizia di Stato, 2013). Officers from the Border Police carry out passport control to third country nationals entering Italy through its land, air and sea borders (Polizia di Stato, 2016). The National Military Police is a military police force. Accordingly, it is under the Ministry of Defence regarding military issues and the Ministry of Interior for public order and security (Carabinieri, 2019). The Finance Police is a special military police force under the control of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Its tasks refer to the maintenance of public order and compliance to financial legislation, tax violations, smuggling as well as irregular migration (Guardia di Finanza, 2019).

⁹⁵ Data for irregular migration in Italy extracted from Guardia Costiera (2017).

Yet, for the sea border, there are additional procedures and actors fulfilling the provisions that emanate from the Law of the Sea. Police or military sea vessels can stop to inspect sea vessels that are in the territorial sea or in the contiguous zone in case of reasonable suspicions for any criminal activity.⁹⁶ In this context, the Finance Police, the Italian Coastguard and the Navy undertake maritime patrolling. More precisely, the Navy acts in international waters, the Finance Police within the twenty-four nautical miles zone and the Coastguard undertakes SAR operations.

The Navy (Marina Militare) is a military force tasked with the country's maritime defence and the combat of trafficking. In this regard, in 2013, it organised an anti-smuggling military operation, entitled 'Mare Nostrum' in the Strait of Sicily. During this operation, more than 700 officers were deployed, coupled with various sea and air assets, namely military vessels, such as corvettes, helicopters, patrol aircrafts, coastal radar network and automatic maritime tracking system (Marina Militare, 2018). The Coastguard or Harbour Masters Corps (Capitanerie di Porto) is a military force that is part of the Italian Navy. However, it is not oversighted by the Ministry of Defence. Instead, it operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport. The Coastguard is responsible for the safety of navigation, the control of arriving ships and the safety of human life at sea monitoring and undertaking SAR operations (Interviewee 8). SAR competence is not limited to the territorial waters, but to the 'entire region of interest on the Italian sea' (Guardia Costiera, 2015). Also, in ports, there is the Customs and Monopolies Agency (Agenzia delle Dogane e dei Monopoli-ADM), which is under the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It is in charge of controlling goods entering or exiting the national maritime borders (ADM, 2019).

At the regional level, in Lampedusa, there is a local station of the National Military Police. Furthermore, the Finance Police has a brigade and an office commanded at the lieutenant level. Next to the brigade office, there is an ADM office for customs. Between the two ports and close to a gated pier, where migrants disembark after SAR operations, there is a Coastguard office (Field note, 09.05.2018). Apart from that, there is also an aeronautical military base and a remote radar military station, integrated in NATO's air defence system (Ministero della Difesa, 2019). Actually,

⁹⁶ According to the Law of the Sea, the sovereignty of a coastal state extends beyond its land territory to its territorial waters that can be up to 12 nautical miles from the baseline. In the contiguous zone, which can be up to 24 nautical miles, the coastal state can exercise control to prevent infringement of its migration, customs, fiscal and sanitary laws (UNCLOS, 1982).

since Libya's missile attack in 1986, the army has a continuous presence in the island (Difesa, 2014).

Contrary to Lampedusa's geographic alienation from the Italian mainland, a considerable number of military and police forces are stationed at the island. In 2009, after the Tunisian riots, there were 450 police and military officers amounting in a ratio of one to thirteen inhabitants (Cuttitta, 2014: 205). Most personnel is relatively young (Field note, 10.05.2018). Usually, officers that are in their first years of their career are transferred there, mostly, for a limited-duration service. Although the harsh conditions in the sea require the high preparedness and vigilance of the younger personnel, the unpredictable sea environment coupled with human losses at sea, may have a detrimental impact on younger and less experienced officers.

In general, the Coastguard, the Finance Police and the Navy are involved in the sea patrolling of Lampedusa border, including control, rescue and interception of boats carrying irregular migrants and then their escort to the port. The patrol area exceeds the Italian territorial waters and can reach the 120 nautical miles from Lampedusa (Frontex, 2015d; IOM, 2015). This describes a proactive and preventive border control based on surveillance beyond the limit of the territorial waters (Carlone, 2017: 14). Actually, SAR and, then, interception take place before the migrants' boat reaches the shores (Hendow, 2013: 195).

SAR operations begin with the receipt of information about a migrant boat in danger of sinking. Then, the boat's position is localised with naval and air assets. Next, migrants are being transferred usually to Coastguard motorboats (European Parliament, 2015: 4) in order to disembark safely in a designated pier, that is the military and gated quay of Favarolo, opposite to the old port (European Parliament, 2015: 2; Field note, 10.05.2018). The majority of SAR operations are coordinated by the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) of the Coastguard in Rome (Guardia Costiera, 2017: 15; Cuttitta, 2018: 642). Hence, the means used for border control, are predominantly maritime and air, coupled with surveillance tools. In this context, various naval assets are being employed, such as Coastguard's motorboats and coastal patrol boats as well as National Military Police's motor patrol vessels (Field note, 10.05.2018). Some of these boats are suitable for all-weather use (CoE, 2011: 6). Beyond naval means, there are also helicopters, aeronautical systems, satellites and multiple radars for maritime surveillance. Actually, a new radar has been installed for long-range surveillance up to 470 km (Difesa, 2019).

Apart from human and technical resources, Italy tries to manage irregular sea flows cooperating with its neighbouring countries. In this spirit, despite the thorny Italian-Libyan relation, due to their colonial past, a rapprochement has been attempted with the 2008 Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation (Abbondanza, 2017: 83-84). Also, in 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed that included the training of Libyan officers and the instalment of a border control system in Libya's land borders (Mancini, 2017: 260-262). Moreover, within the EU context, since 2013, the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya) has been launched under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (EEAS, 2016a). Besides Libya, Italy has also formed a bilateral partnership on migration and border control issues with Tunisia (Boubakri, 2013). Yet, despite this context of bilateral cooperation, Italy also sought EU's assistance with irregular migration. In this spirit, Frontex has been engaged operationally in the Mediterranean Sea to limit irregular sea border crossings and share Italy's burden as a frontline country.

5.4.3 Frontex in Lampedusa

Frontex has an operational presence in Italy and, more specifically, at the sea border of Lampedusa since 2006. Its role entails assistance in sea border control, border surveillance, fight against irregular migration and cross-border crime as well as SAR activities in the Central Mediterranean (Interviewee 8). The first joint operation at the southern territorial waters of Italy was Nautilus. It was conducted in October 2006 with the participation of Italy, Malta, Greece, France and Germany. Its objective was to combat irregular migration from Libya towards Lampedusa and Malta by assisting in surveillance of the southern maritime borders of the EU and enhancing operational coordination amongst Mediterranean member states (Frontex, 2006a: 13). It continued to run the next three years.⁹⁷ Another joint operation conducted in the Central Mediterranean was Hermes initiated in 2007 with a budget of €1,890,000 (Frontex, 2007a: 20). It ran annually in the waters of Italy to control irregular sea border crossings and cross-border crime from Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Egypt towards the Pelagic Islands, Sicily and, later, Sardinia (Frontex, 2011d).

⁹⁷ In 2008, it was integrated in the EPN structure. The EPN referred to a cooperation platform at the southern maritime borders of the EU fostering the harmonisation and cooperation among its partners (Frontex, 2006a: 23).

In 2011, Rome sent a formal request to Frontex for assistance due to the ‘extraordinary migratory situation in the Pelagie Islands’ (Frontex, 2011e). Responding to this request, Frontex extended Hermes and coupled it with additional operational resources (Frontex, 2011f). In general, apart from technical assets, namely aircrafts, planes, coastal patrol vessels (CPVs) and offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) for border patrolling and aerial surveillance, this operation also included the deployment of debriefing and screening experts to gather intelligence on smuggling networks (Frontex, 2011f). In parallel, from 2011 until 2014, Italy also hosted EPN-Aeneas operation. Although, Aeneas’ initial operational area was in the Ionian Sea to halt secondary movements from Greece to southern Italy, it transferred later its focus to the Central Mediterranean flows and particularly to Italy’s blue borders⁹⁸ (Frontex, 2013a: 59). In 2014, Frontex conducted operation EPN-Triton in the Central Mediterranean. Triton replaced the Italian Mare Nostrum military operation merging Aeneas and Hermes into a single joint operation (Frontex, 2016c: 52). Operation Triton ended in January 2018. Its operational area included Sicily, the Pelagie Islands, Sardinia, Puglia, Calabria and Malta (Frontex, 2015e: 5). According to the operational plan, all irregular migrants intercepted or rescued were to be disembarked in Italy (Frontex, 2015e: 6). But most SAR incidents were taken place close to the Libyan shore, which was beyond Frontex’s operational area (Frontex, 2016f: 5). Given that Libyan authorities did not have the capacity to act, Frontex, responding to SAR emergencies, started operating outside its members’ territory (Frontex, 2013b). This reflects a long-range surveillance and out-of-area border patrolling. Hence, most deployed maritime assets were OPVs for offshore patrolling in the open sea.

Apart from surveillance and patrolling as well as SAR units with divers and first aid experts, Frontex guest officers supported Italian authorities with the disembarkation and screening of persons (Frontex, 2015e: 6). In 2015, forty-two guest officers were deployed in the context of Triton coupled with eighteen units of technical assets, such as vessels and patrol vehicles (European Commission, 2015c: 5). It should be noted that in the context of operation Triton, Frontex also started to cooperate with CSDP’s anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling naval operation European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Sophia (EU NAVFOR MED) (Frontex, 2017d: 19). Accordingly, Frontex and EU NAVFOR MED commenced to share information on the location of

⁹⁸ Blue border is any external water border, namely maritime, river, or lake (CSD, 2011).

vessels detected and the position of naval assets (Frontex, 2017d: 28). Furthermore, they advanced an exchange of operational liaison officers to enhance their synergy for maritime security. Hence, Frontex, which constitutes a border agency that deals with non-traditional security challenges, established a channel of cooperation with a military operation, despite their different mandate, scope, means and staff. Implementing the EBCG function and the concept of multiagency cooperation, during Triton, Frontex also worked on the ground with other institutions. More precisely, it collaborated with Europol, EASO, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), UNHCR and IOM (Frontex, 2017e: 9).

Frontex currently conducts operation Themis. It was launched in February 2018 replacing operation Triton. This operation has an enhanced law enforcement focus supporting Italy with border control, maritime and air surveillance, SAR as well as the registration of incoming migrants (Frontex, 2019id). According to Frontex, Themis has an important security component aimed at detecting terrorist threats at the external border (Frontex, 2019id). For this reason, emphasis is placed on debriefing. The human resources deployed include 260 officers and technical equipment of naval vessels, fixed-wing aircrafts and helicopters for aerial surveillance (European Commission, 2018a: 3; Frontex, 2018c: 210). Themis's difference to Triton is the disembarkation place, which was deemed a pull factor attracting irregular flows (Frontex, 2017e: 3). To remedy this, Themis involves a reduced sea operational area with patrolling up to 24 nautical miles. As a result, it does not cover SAR activities in the Libyan coast. In parallel, Themis operational plan does not foresee a specific disembarkation place.⁹⁹ Instead, rescued migrants are to be brought to the closest European port, which may not be in Italy (Dibenedetto, 2018: 5).

Apart from the sea border sector, Frontex also supports Italy in the implementation of the hotspot approach. Accordingly, Frontex deploys support officers and experts at the Italian hotspots to assist Italy with the registration, screening and processing of irregular migrants (Frontex, 2015f). Approximately twenty-five Frontex officers are in each Italian hotspot facility (Willermain, 2016: 2). Furthermore, Frontex set up in Catania, in Sicily, a EURTF office. This office staffed with six officers provides logistical and operational support to Frontex's operations in Italy (Frontex,

⁹⁹ It is noteworthy that the European Council in its Conclusions called for the establishment of regional disembarkation platforms in third countries to limit disembarkations after SAR incidents at the EU shores (European Council, 2018: 2).

2016g). Additionally, Frontex has conducted various training curricula in the Italian peninsula, like survival in cold weather conditions as well as law enforcement and SAR (Frontex, 2019ie). This enhanced operational presence of Frontex in the waters of Lampedusa can be manifested also with the elevated number of joint operations conducted in Italy and the respected budget growth. From €12,025,097 in 2007 (Frontex, 2008: 23), the 2017 sea operations' budget reached the amount of €102,800,000 (Frontex, 2018c: 79).

Beyond Frontex's activity in the Italian waters, the agency also promotes its role on the other side of the border. Although Frontex has not yet finalised Working Arrangements with Libya and Tunisia, it has promoted a framework of cooperation. Actually, since 2006, Frontex has started negotiations for the signature of a Working Arrangement with Libya. The next year, it led a technical mission on irregular migration and border control to Libya. This mission included field trips, meetings with Libyan authorities as well as information exchange on border control that fostered the development of an operational cooperation between Frontex and Libya (Frontex, 2007b). Following that, Libyan representatives participate in Frontex meetings and Frontex trains Libyan coastguard and navy officers (Frontex, 2019ie). At the same time, Frontex cooperates with EUBAM Libya, deploying Frontex experts to provide their border management expertise (Frontex, 2019if).

Recently, prioritising North Africa, Frontex decided the deployment of a liaison officer (FLO) in Tunisia (Frontex, 2018d). Also, in 2018, Frontex opened its first Risk Analysis Cell in Niger, which borders Libya. This Cell runs by local analysts trained by Frontex. Its task is to collect and analyse strategic data on migration and border management sharing them with Frontex and Nigerien authorities (Frontex, 2018e). Moreover, Frontex participates in an EU project for effective border management entitled 'Strengthening the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community' (Frontex, 2019i). Similarly, it has developed the Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community (AFIC) for intelligence sharing and joint risk analysis.¹⁰⁰ This cooperation with neighbouring countries has contributed to the decrease of flows in the Central Mediterranean. According to Frontex, the 'intensive patrolling' by Libyan officers led to an 81% decrease in irregular migrant departures from Libya during the first quarter of 2018 and compared to 2017 (Frontex, 2018f: 11). Thus, there is a dispersed and evolving border

¹⁰⁰ In the AFIC Libya and Egypt participate, whereas Tunisia has an observer status (Frontex, 2019i).

control environment at the waters of Lampedusa. Various operational activities, measures, policies as well as developments in the neighbouring countries shape this southern maritime border of Italy. In parallel, shifts in irregular migration flows and smuggling *modus operandi* stimulate new operational options and resources. All these constitute evolutions affecting not only the border space, but also the border control conduct and policy.

Following that, the last thirteen years Frontex has developed various activities at this Italian southern sea border with a continuous presence at the border, as well as enhanced cooperation with border officers.¹⁰¹ However, Frontex is not limited to a minor border actor role. Instead, it is a border control actor in Lampedusa shaping the border control conduct. Thus, with its activities, Frontex generates and participates in the conduct of border control at this Italian maritime border. Accordingly, it coordinates and implements maritime operations as well as brings technical and human resources. During operation Triton, 440 officers were deployed in the southern part of Italy (Frontex, 2017c). Moreover, the Italian border authorities have frequent meetings with the Frontex's headquarters on operational matters (Frontex, 2017c).

Furthermore, the agency has developed a training course for Maritime Border Surveillance Officer that aims at establishing common standards for maritime border control, surveillance and SAR (Frontex, 2018g: 56). Moreover, via meetings and the implementation of technical missions on border control, Frontex has promoted a cooperation with border control authorities in the neighbouring countries fostering capacity building. Apart from the maritime operations hosted in Italy, Italian officers have also participated in many sea, land and air missions coordinated by Frontex.¹⁰² This enabled the Italian border control authorities to gain experience in variant operational fields and adapt their action to EU practices. It also consolidated a border control policy community of border officers and Frontex guest officers in Lampedusa.

¹⁰¹ For an overview of Frontex's activities at Lampedusa, see table 5.g.

¹⁰² Such as Hera, Indalo, Zorba, Focal Points Air and Land as well as Poseidon Land.

Table 5.g Frontex in Lampedusa			
Activity		Scope	Composition
Sea Operations	Nautilus	Surveillance, migration management, operational coordination	Experts
	Hermes	Surveillance, migration management, cross-border crime	Experts, debriefers, screeners
	Aeneas	Surveillance, migration management, cross-border crime	Experts, debriefers
	Triton	SAR	SAR units, screeners, debriefers
	Themis	Law enforcement, surveillance, SAR, migration management	Experts, debriefers
Other	Cooperation with CSDP missions (Sophia, EUBAM)		
	Training		
	Hotspots		
	EURTF	Regional support, situational awareness, operational management	6-person staff
	External relations with Libya & Tunisia	Technical project, technical missions, meetings, training, EUBAM Libya	FLO, AFIC

5.4.4 Accounting for border control assumptions and practices in Lampedusa

The previous description of the border control conduct in Lampedusa reveals a pattern and a habitus for border control (Bourdieu, 1977; Leander, 2009: 3). This pattern reflects cultural traits composed of border control assumptions and practices. As far as

border assumptions are concerned, Lampedusa is both a national and an EU external border. The EU dimension validates Frontex's function at this border enabling border control officers from EU countries to assist Italy in border control. As a result, this fosters an integration in border control and migration issues. The national context attests Lampedusa's militarisation. Military personnel is stationed at Lampedusa, whereas across the island, there are more than ten military zone signs prohibiting the access (Field note, 10.05.2018; 11.05.2018). Yet, this militarisation is conveyed valiantly from Evros. In the case of Lampedusa, border militarisation does not stem from any quarrel with neighbouring countries or fear for territorial integrity. Instead, it emanates from the border control approach adopted at Lampedusa that advances a militaristic framework.

Regarding border control assumptions, as referred above, Lampedusa is militarised. The Italian authorities involved with maritime border control, namely the navy and the coastguard, belong to the military corps. Similarly, the finance police is a military police force. This means that their organisation, structure, means, operational concept and doctrines are framed within a militaristic spirit (Jones & Johnson, 2016). Furthermore, military operations, such as Mare Nostrum, have been conducted in Lampedusa to address irregular migration. All these manifest the militarisation of the border control exercised at the island.

Militarisation is accompanied by the securitisation of border control. Securitisation is characterised by conditions of exception and emergency (Buzan et al., 1998: 21-26). Accordingly, Lampedusa has been repeatedly declared in a state of emergency because of irregular migration (DW, 2008; The Telegraph, 2011; BBC, 2013). The emergency state was coupled by emergency policies and measures, like an enhancement in operational activities, as well as an emergency language that denoted Lampedusa's securitisation (Campesi, 2011).

Another border control assumption is technocracy. A managerial and technocratic border control approach is encountered at Lampedusa (Cuttitta, 2018: 636). Border control is being conducted with the use of computer systems and experts. In this context, geospatial imagery allows border control officers to monitor vessels throughout their sea route. Italian border officers and Frontex guest officers use daily the Frontex IT reporting systems, like JORA, to upload incidents, (Carlone, 2017: 38) as well as, Eurosur, to track possible boat arrivals.

Moreover, border control does not take place at the space of the border. Actually, no concrete line can demarcate a sea border. The sovereignty of a state extends to the sea. As a result, both the territorial waters and the contiguous zone correspond to state rights and control; but, also, they include obligations that emanate from the Law of the Sea and the protection of persons in distress at sea (UNCLOS, 1982). For this reason, border control does not begin and end at the sea border. Instead, it has been extended to the territorial waters of the countries neighbouring with Lampedusa, but also across the whole Mediterranean Sea region. This constitutes an extra-territorialisation advanced for effective migration management. In this spirit, the Eurosur system includes a vessel detection service to track objects in the sea, even small rubber boats (Frontex, 2017f). During operation Triton, this service enabled the detection of vessels not only inside the operational area but also outside of it (Frontex, 2017e: 7). Similarly, the use of OPV reflect a wider surveillance and patrolling range. Nevertheless, the operational area has been a matter of juxtaposition, as it was considered a pull factor attracting irregular migrants (Frontex, 2017e: 3). In this context, Italian authorities pushed for a limited operational area in Frontex operations, as with Themis. This mirrors an intra-territorialisation limiting the responsibility area regarding migration and therefore the number of disembarked irregular migrants in the Italian territory.

Furthermore, border control in Lampedusa is characterised by surveillance. For sea borders, surveillance enables monitoring the border, but also rescuing persons in distress at sea (Jumbert, 2018). For this purpose, radars and sensors as well as satellite monitoring systems have been installed in Lampedusa to track vessels, like the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and the Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) (Guardia Costiera, 2015). This maritime surveillance context has been implemented with Frontex's contribution. More precisely, in 2006 Frontex carried out two technical feasibility studies for maritime surveillance, entitled BORTEC and MEDSEA,¹⁰³ which instigated Eurosur (Frontex, 2006a: 14). Moreover, during 2008 Nautilus operation, Frontex promoted maritime surveillance services including earth observation with satellite images for sea vessel monitoring (Frontex, 2009b). Furthermore, in 2015, Frontex developed a concept for aerial surveillance enabling enhanced situational awareness at the sea borders. Accordingly, Frontex deploys fixed-wing aircrafts that

¹⁰³ For more information, see chapter 6.6.2.

stream operational data and images from the external borders to Frontex Situation Centre at Frontex's headquarters. These data are then analysed and assessed by Frontex (Frontex, 2018h). This model has been used in Lampedusa during operation Triton (Frontex, 2018h). Hence, aerial imagery data extracted from surveillance contributes to a spatial analysis for maritime situational awareness and risk management (Frontex, 2009b).

Intelligence constitutes another border control characteristic in Lampedusa. Intelligence-gathering has a central place in the conduct of border control. For this reason, almost all Frontex operations in Italy consider intelligence as an operational priority and, therefore, deploy debriefers (Frontex, 2017e: 8). In the framework of Triton, in 2016, Frontex guest officers interviewed 2,400 irregular migrants that arrived in Italy (Frontex, 2017g: 36). Debriefers collect operational intelligence from migrants regarding smuggling networks (Willermain, 2016: 2). This enables border control authorities to remain informed about current migratory trends and adapt their action accordingly. Apart from debriefing, intelligence information is also gathered via risk analysis, more precisely through the AFIC. In parallel, geospatial intelligence is put forward through the development of geospatial services, like spatial technological surveillance with Eurosur. In this context, optical imagery is being combined with an analysis of the operational environment and the information from other intelligence sources. This contributes to a geospatial assessment for improving border security and enhancing preparedness, which is rather challenging taking into account the complexity of sea borders (Frontex, 2019ig).

Regarding border control practices, Lampedusa is characterised by SAR. The SAR area, the competent SAR authority, the rules for SAR operations and the disembarkation port have established a particular process that applies to border control during SAR incidents (Regulation, 2014). SAR is included as an objective in every Frontex sea operation (Frontex, 2019ih). After all, most maritime border control incidents constitute SAR operations (Interviewee 8). In 2017, from the 119,445 irregular sea migrants that arrived in Italy, 114,286 have been rescued during SAR operations (Guardia Costiera, 2017). This impacts not only border control but also the perception for border control. Ship wreckages, deaths and persons in distress at sea have become synonymous with border control in Lampedusa affecting policies and public attitudes. Therefore, SAR is both a driver and a corollary that shapes border control (Carrera & den Hertog, 2015: 3).

The border of Lampedusa is also an information gathering and analysis hub. Geospatial information and optical imagery data extracted during maritime surveillance as well as intelligence collected from debriefing and risk analysis construct an information gathering and sharing environment of border control. Frontex has contributed to the regular information gathering and sharing through its activities (Interviewee 10). The use of JORA common platform by Italian border control officers to upload operational information on border control incidents functions as an information gathering and information management channel enhancing the situational awareness in the Mediterranean Sea. In parallel, the EURTF in Catania strengthens the regional operational coordination and smooths information exchange gathering data and then channelling them to the relevant actors.

Also, in Lampedusa, a multilateral cooperation has been put forward. Guest officers from various EU countries come to Lampedusa to participate in Frontex joint operations building a community of border control practitioners. Also, Italian authorities collaborate and communicate daily with Frontex officers (Interviewee 11). Furthermore, they cooperate with Libya and Tunisia in the field of migration. In this context, mixed crews with Italian and Libyan border control officers have patrolled the Mediterranean Sea, whereas Frontex has developed a cooperation with the North African countries and stakeholders in the Mediterranean area, such as EUBAM Libya (Frontex, 2017a: 28). Apart from that, Lampedusa has also been developed as a symbolic meeting place for migration and border control discussions fostering the dialogue and cooperation among EU countries (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017).

Technology constitutes another practice for border control. Accordingly, border control in Lampedusa relies on a sophisticated electronic system, which includes radars, satellites and helicopters (Orsini, 2015b). Many tools of this system have been developed in the context of EU-funded security research projects, like the EUCISE2020 for pre-operational information sharing between maritime authorities (EUCISE2020, 2015). Predominant place has the Eurosur surveillance system managed by Frontex scanning the Mediterranean Sea for any unidentified and unauthorised sea vessel or people in distress at sea (European Commission, 2018b: 7). It uses state-of-the-art satellite radar technology including; automated vessel tracking and detection capabilities, position prediction software and weather and oceanographic forecasts (European Commission, 2018b). This function has been further strengthened with the use of Copernicus space system in Frontex's border surveillance. Actually,

Copernicus¹⁰⁴ collects data extracted from different sources, such as earth observation satellites, ground stations, as well as airborne and sea-borne sensors. This covers air, sea and space border monitoring accounting to a sophisticated technological border control. Apart from that, in Lampedusa Frontex has also conducted trials of RPAS so as to be deployed for maritime surveillance (Frontex, 2018b; Interviewee 9).

The transfer of border control officers in Lampedusa as well as guest officers from Frontex led to the professionalisation of border control. Experts having variant profiles, such as screening, debriefing and SAR are deployed to Lampedusa during Frontex missions to provide their professional expertise. They cooperate with officers from variant backgrounds, like military, police and customs developing an operational policy community of professionals (Carrera & den Hertog, 2015: 20). Also, their work is being periodically assessed in terms of shifts in migratory flows and death incidents. This work performance evaluation is being conducted by Frontex and national authorities, as well as by external evaluators like NGOs, the media and independent organisations or companies. At the same time, Frontex publishes annual sea surveillance reports and develops rules, work standards and training curricula for maritime surveillance. All these lead to a move towards more professionalisation by the border control practitioners. These underlying assumptions and practices represent a routinised mode for border control implemented and reproduced at the border by the border control practitioners.¹⁰⁵ As such, they are cultural traits forming the border control conduct in the border of Lampedusa. The empirical analysis revealed the existence of a border control community, composed of national border officers and Frontex officers, which materialise these cultural traits. Also, it attested Frontex's role as a border control actor and part of this border control community, which, through its function, produces some of these assumptions and practices at the border.

¹⁰⁴ Copernicus is the EU's Earth Observation Programme gathering information via satellites as well as ground-based, airborne and seaborne systems (Copernicus, 2019).

¹⁰⁵ For an overview of the assumptions and practices, see table 5.h.

Table 5.h Border control cultural traits in Lampedusa	
Border assumptions	EU external border – Post-national integration
	National territory – Militarisation
Border control assumptions	Militarisation
	Securitisation
	Technocracy
	Extra-territorialisation / Intra-territorialisation
	Surveillance
	Intelligence
Practices	SAR
	Information gathering & analysis
	Multilateral cooperation
	Technology
	Professionalisation

5.5 Evros and Lampedusa: Anything in common?

The analysis in these two different EU borders revealed certain common assumptions and practices. These constitute cultural traits for the border control conduct reflecting culture's phenomic dimension (Zaiotii, 2011: 38). The two cases were analysed in detail seeking for similarity and variance (Ragin, 1994: 105; Mills et al., 2006: 621). At the same time, the collection of empirical evidence (Klotz & Lynch, 2007: 18-19) has led to observations about patterns, processes, shared meanings and social relations. More specifically, Evros and Lampedusa have been compared as case studies through Mill's 'method of agreement' (1865 [1843]). This means that these two borders are different and therefore the similarities and common patterns observed enable us to draw a wider conclusion about the conduct of border control, as well as Frontex's role that constitutes the independent variable of the research design. Actually, despite the significant disparities between Evros and Lampedusa that stem from these two borders'

variant nature, geographic position, historic development and border construction, they have certain common characteristics that define a routinised border control conduct. These routines reflect a shared consciousness expressed in the observed habits and everyday activities (Adler, 1997: 327), which enable extracting the underlying assumptions and practices about border control in the studied borders.

Accordingly, regarding border assumptions, both borders constitute national and EU external borders. This denotes a twofold nature and function for these two borders that impacts not only on their role as borders, but, most predominantly, on the adopted border control process. Actually, the national dimension determinates the insiders from the outsiders stimulating the role of the border as a national sovereignty guard. Yet, this national context is being developed differently in the two analysed cases. In Evros, the river divides Greeks from their ethnic 'Other'. In Lampedusa, its habitants have built cross-cultural merges with their neighbours. Even so, the island has become a laboratory of border control tools to halt migratory flows from the North African states (Reuss, 2015; Melotti et al., 2018). Conversely, the EU external border highlights an integrative approach built on the EU model of supra-state governance and territoriality. This provides the foundation for Frontex's involvement in border control, as an EU border control agency, along with the national border control authorities. Following that, a new border control context has emerged at the borders, as Frontex constitutes a new and alternative border control actor as compared to the traditional national authorities of the Westphalian era. In this context, Evros and Lampedusa have been places for testing Frontex's operational activities (Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2013: 604), experimenting with new border control technologies as well as emerging assumptions and practices (Zaiotti, 2011: 35).

As for border control assumptions, Evros and Lampedusa are characterised by securitisation, technocracy, extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation, surveillance and intelligence. The securitisation is manifested with emergency measures adopted in both borders, such as the erection of a fence in Evros and the establishment of a hotspot structure in Lampedusa. The emergency context indicates that irregular migration is being handled as a security threat leading to border control's securitisation (Huysmans, 2000). Regarding technocracy, border control relies more and more on technologically- and computer-assisted tools and systems, like Eurosur (Rijpma & Vermeulen, 2015), as well as on experts that have developed their technical knowledge and specialisation through training, educational programmes and work experience. This describes a

technocratic system in border control run by technocrats and technocratic tools. The characteristic of extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation denotes a shift in the space of border control. The management of irregular migration takes place both beyond, and, inside the border. Thus, border control is conducted away from the fixed geographic borderline. It moves in the territory of neighbouring countries as an extra-territorial strategy (Ryan & Mitsilegas, 2010). In parallel, it takes place within the state's territory accounting for intra-territorialisation (Reid-Henry, 2013). Furthermore, there is a surveillance context, due to the installation and use of monitoring tools, like radars, cameras, sensors and satellites. The data extracted enhance situational awareness and constitute indispensable part of the border control conduct in both Evros and Lampedusa. After all, surveillance functions also as a method for the control of the territory and the population (Voutira, 2013: 61). It keeps track of border crossers' movements, enables the collection of background information as well as reasserts the role of the actors that regulate mobility and manage any border control 'unease' (Bigo, 2002). Finally, border control follows an intelligence-oriented path. Information during operational activities, monitoring, risk analysis and data-sharing platforms enable a proactive and perhaps more effective border control at these two EU external borders.

The common border control practices traced in Evros and Lampedusa are information gathering and analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology and professionalisation. Accordingly, in both cases border control is being conducted via information gathering and analysis. Different data and information are being collected, sorted out, visually presented, mapped and then analysed implementing a proactive border management instead of a merely reactive border control. Apart from that, Evros and Lampedusa are characterised by multilateral cooperation. The main doctrine is that irregular migration cannot be combatted solely by one state (DG Home, 2019c). Similarly, borders cannot be guarded unilaterally. For this reason, after all, Frontex has been created. Therefore, in a solidarity spirit, guest officers from various EU countries come to Evros and Lampedusa to assist in border control forming a border control community. In addition, Italy and Greece collaborate with their neighbours to manage irregular migratory flows attesting a cooperative framework. Multilateral cooperation is also advanced with best practices exchange through the transfer of experts, technical assets and models of border control implemented with Frontex joint operations and pilot projects. Similarly, the diffusion of data through Frontex's reporting systems enhances an operational and tactical knowledge-sharing, further contributing to this multilateral

cooperation context. At the same time, border control technology has a dominant role in both borders. High-tech border control tools, such as automated surveillance systems, sophisticated radars and satellites have been installed and are used transforming the traditional border control conduct that was characterised by physical checks at the BCPs (Dijstelbloem & Meijer, 2011; Marin, 2011; Csernaton, 2018). Moreover, professionalisation has been developed in the field of border control rendering it a profession and advancing the construction of a policy community of border control practitioners and professionals (Horii, 2012). Accordingly, various border control officers arrive and work in these two borders. They operate according to established work standards and work methods, communicate with their colleagues and address jointly the challenges of their profession. These foster the professionalisation of border control in these two borders and enhance the border control policy community.

Given the variant nature of Evros and Lampedusa, it could be extracted that similar cultural traits can also be traced in the other EU external borders, on the condition that the independent and intervening variables remain the same (Burnham et al., 2008: 81). Regardless, the existence of common border control assumptions and practices even solely in Evros and Lampedusa, indicate a new border control culture pursued at the borders. Yet, apart from these cultural traits, the case study analysis in these two borders attested the existence of a border control community that is being nourished at the borders with the cooperation on the ground of various officers that perform border control tasks. Furthermore, it empirically manifested that Frontex is a border control actor and member of a border control community. In both borders, Frontex has an active operational presence in the border control conduct. This means that it constitutes a border control actor that is present 'everywhere'; at the border, conducting operations, and away from it, monitoring the border from its headquarters in Warsaw (Fotiadis, 2015: 97). With this dual role, Frontex has the ability to consolidate this professional community as well as to promote border control assumptions and practices. This means that it has a central role in the construction of a border control culture (Zaiotti, 2011) and, therefore, its role should be investigated.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter shifted the emphasis to the space of the border control, to the border itself. Two different EU external borders were explored as case studies, namely Evros and Lampedusa. Given that borders matter, as they are invested with meaning, mould actors

and constitute a setting of action (Therborn, 2006: 513-522), this chapter included them in the analysis to uncover actors, functions and meanings. Thus, borders allow tracing border control assumptions and practices, which compose a border control culture (Zaiotti, 2011). Similarly, a detailed analysis of the (space of) border reveals the border control practitioners that form a border control community.

Starting with Evros and then Lampedusa, each case was studied in terms of the border, border control, border control structure, Frontex's activities and the cultural traits encountered at the border. Conforming to a multi-dimensional research method for the formulation of 'truth conditions' (Pouliot, 2007: 360), the comparative case study analysis was enriched with data from interviews, fieldwork and documents, including primary and secondary sources. The analysis of these two different borders manifested common border control assumptions and practices that constitute cultural traits and therefore indicators of a border control culture. Furthermore, the research at the borders empirically confirmed that Frontex is part of the border control community, which constitutes the first sub-hypothesis (H1).¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, regarding the sub-hypothesis' conditions, a community of border control practitioners has been formed at the borders. Frontex, being a border control actor operating at the borders and participating in border control, constitutes member of this community.

Turning to the second sub-hypothesis (H2), this research probed Frontex's presence at the borders in relation to assumptions and practices traced in Lampedusa and Evros. It drew empirically that Frontex has promoted some of the border control assumptions and practices encountered at the borders (H2). Yet, these research findings refer to the structure, that is the border. Now, the analysis will move to Frontex to elucidate the agency. This will allow this thesis to scrutinise if there is a variation from the Schengen border control culture that would mean the potential pursuit of a new EU border control culture. In parallel, the next chapter will assess Frontex's role in the construction of this new border control culture.

¹⁰⁶ Sub-hypotheses are listed in chapter 3.5. The analysis of these sub-hypotheses continues in chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Exploring Frontex and Warsaw border control culture

6.1 Introduction

So far, this research has investigated the border control conduct at the borders. This investigation unveiled common border control assumptions and practices that constitute cultural traits.¹⁰⁷ But, are they signals for a new border control culture? To answer the question, this chapter turns the analysis to Frontex, which constitutes a border control actor. This chapter starts with the exploration of Frontex. This involves a scrutiny of its role as a border control actor and Frontex's border control assumptions and practices. This analysis elicits common border control assumptions and practices both at the borders and at Frontex. These assumptions and practices vary from those composing Schengen culture signifying the emergence of a new border control culture, labelled by this analysis as Warsaw culture. The next part refers to Warsaw culture presenting its components, namely its assumptions and practices, border control community and the new element that was inserted in border control, that is Frontex. Then, Warsaw is being compared in relation to the border control cultures of Schengen, Westphalia and Brussels. After that, there is an examination of the sequential path of cultural evolution from Schengen to Warsaw. The last part traces Frontex's impact on Warsaw border control culture by assessing culture's three conditions: the condition of the border control community, the condition of reference texts and the condition of assumptions and practices. In sum, the chapter assesses Frontex's impact on the development and evolution of Warsaw culture. This assessment is mostly based on data from document analysis, institutional discourse analysis, interviews with Frontex staff and national border officers as well as evidence from process-tracing.¹⁰⁸ Findings reveal that Frontex has promoted and produced the components of Warsaw culture, rendering it the new dominant culture of EU border control. The chapter concludes that Frontex is responsible for the emergence and (re)production of the components that constitute the Warsaw border control culture.

¹⁰⁷ For the definition of border control assumptions and practices, see chapter 3.4. For the common border control assumptions and practices traced at the borders, see chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ For the methodological tool of process-tracing, see chapter 4.3.3.

6.2 Frontex as a border control actor

Frontex, institutionally, is an EU agency. This, however, does not indicate an abolition of actorness. Apart from states, the EU (Hill, 1993; Bretherton & Vogler, 1999; Manners, 2002; Rhinard & Sjöstedt, 2019), EU agencies (Groenleer & Gabbi, 2013; Rozée et al., 2013; Coman-Kund, 2018), multinational enterprises (Hofferberth et al., 2011) and even the Catholic Church (Ryall, 2001) are considered actors. Similarly, border control actors are not exclusively national states. After all, border control no longer constitutes states' monopoly (Walters, 2006; Rumford, 2008). In this vein, Frontex has become an important border control actor (Reid-Henry, 2013: 201) capitalising on a developing EU border control regime and the vagueness of its Regulations (Steindler, 2015: 413). These allow it experimenting with border control goals, policies and tools (Pollak & Slominski, 2009) functioning as an entrepreneur (Checkel, 1993: 279-283; Wood, 2018) and, therefore, escaping the confines of a strictly coordinated work.

Beyond its presence at the borders - as attested empirically in the previous chapter - since 2005, Frontex has accumulated a significant operational role (Rijpma, 2012: 90), expertise and border control knowledge (Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 908; Horii, 2016). These enable Frontex to expand its activities as well as gain recognition and credibility among its partners that can lead to causal effects (Zürn & Checkel, 2005: 1049) making this agency more persuasive towards other actors. In fact, over the years, Frontex has developed important relations with national border control authorities, other agencies, international organisations and third countries (Frontex, 2019i) building new networks (Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 907) and strategic partnerships. At the same time, Frontex constitutes the sole actor at the EU level that engages operationally with border control. This means that Frontex has also a symbolic role at the EU external borders representing the EU model of territorialisation and institutional development. Accordingly, Frontex promotes an IBM approach institutionalising and embodying the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM)¹⁰⁹ (Koslowski, 2006: 48; Cetti, 2014: 18). Actually, since the 2016 Regulation, EIBM has become a shared responsibility between Frontex and member states. In this context, EU member states

¹⁰⁹ This research when referring to the general concept of Integrated Border Management uses the abbreviation IBM, whereas when referring to the European Integrated Border Management or Frontex's Technical and Operational Strategy for European Integrated Border Management, the abbreviation EIBM.

are obliged to contribute to the agency with staff and technical equipment (Carrera & den Hertog, 2016: 2), whereas the agency has the ‘right to intervene’ operationally on the ground of a member state irrespective of its consent (Regulation, 2016) impacting on traditional understandings of sovereignty (Deleixhe & Duez, 2019).

In 2018, in total 11,000 officers were deployed in Frontex operations (Frontex, 2018i: 4). This presence at the borders renders Frontex a border control actor. Being present as an EU border control agency, Frontex functions as an initiator, shaper, filter or even barrier to courses of action in the field of EU border management (Allen & Smith, 1990). In addition, it enjoys certain autonomy and independence (Regulation, 2016). In parallel, it functions as an evaluator of EU member states’ ability to safeguard their borders (Horii, 2016: 247). In this context, the agency monitors and assesses member states’ capacity and readiness to face challenges at their borders (Regulation, 2016). Also, it harmonises border control with technocratic and managerial processes (Paul, 2017). It has its own resources and staff that enable it to implement its mandate at the EU external border. The agency has started acquiring its own border control assets, such as sixteen patrol cars with Frontex logo that are ready for deployment in Frontex missions. Next in Frontex’s acquisition line are maritime vessels, airplanes and remotely piloted aircraft equipment (Frontex, 2019iii). All the human and technical means consolidate Frontex’s role turning this agency into a distinct actor (Haas & Haas, 2002: 576), operating at the EU external border.

As a matter of fact, Frontex is recognised as such by other actors. Indeed, national border guards, states, international organisations and agencies recognise, accept and interact with Frontex (Jupille & Caporaso, 1998: 214-215). For instance, Frontex participates in EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meetings (European Commission, 2019), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) roundtables on border management (OSCE, 2017), and visits for border management assessment in third countries (EEAS, 2016b). During the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) Day, Frontex hosted approximately 600 border and coast guard officers from more than thirty countries (Frontex, 2019iv). All these indicate that Frontex has gained recognition and approval as a border control actor by its partners. This is also illustrated with the following discursive elements:

[Interpol] *‘Interpol and Frontex have a long history of cooperation’*
(Frontex, 2017h).

[NATO] *'We decided to increase our cooperation with the EU and Frontex. And I'm very grateful that we have been able to really establish a very practical cooperation with Frontex'* (NATO, 2016).

[Slovakian Prime Minister] *'By launching the European Border and Coast Guard, we are creating a new reality at our external borders'* (Frontex, 2016h).

[EU Commissioner] *'The management of external borders has increasingly become a shared responsibility. Frontex, as a coordinator, will play an essential role in its implementation'* (European Commission, 2015d).

Apart from that, Frontex is being self-identified as a border control actor. It characterises itself as a 'fully-fledged internal security actor' (Frontex, 2017i) underscoring its importance, as reflected in the rhetoric of its Executive Director:

[Frontex Executive Director] *'Frontex has become an essential actor in law enforcement on the European level'* (Frontex, 2017ia).

[Frontex Executive Director] *'Frontex has become an essential actor in migration enforcement on the European level'* (Frontex, 2018ia).

After fourteen years of continuous operational action at the EU external border and considerable autonomy (Csernaton, 2018: 176), Frontex has become a mature border control actor. It creates inter-subjective meanings (Risse, 2000: 10) and is a carrier of ideas (Saurugger, 2013: 898). It also frames discourses, acts and produces meaning. It has articulated its vision, mission, and specific values that regulate the agency, which are published in its webpage (Frontex, 2019v). This means that it has developed its own strategic planning, objectives and priority setting. In essence, Frontex has its own brain and hands, whereas with its function, it has also acquired a heart. These characteristics differentiate it from its creators, namely the European Commission and the member states, both of which rely on Frontex's expertise to formulate border control or even migration management policies placing it as a '*primus inter pares*' (Rijpma, 2016: 19). Thus, Frontex has become an indispensable border control actor, which although it is not very old, it has succeeded tying itself to the EU external borders. For this reason, its dissolution seems unimaginable.

6.2.1 Frontex: Accounting for border control assumptions and practices

Frontex, as a border control actor and border control practitioner, is composed of and at the same time produces border control assumptions and practices. These assumptions and practices elucidate the inner dynamics and workings of the agency. In parallel, they inform the border control conduct, as Frontex - as a border control actor - constitutes key part of it. Regarding border assumptions, Frontex considers borders as a space of both national territory and EU responsibility. The national aspect sets the parameters of Frontex's action at the borders and cooperation with national authorities. In this context, Frontex states that 'regular border control is the exclusive responsibility of the member states' (Frontex, 2019a) and that it does not exercise 'authority over the national border police forces' (Frontex, 2019vi). Apart from the national angle, there is also an EU context at EU external borders enabling Frontex to operate as an EU agency. Highlighting this dimension, Frontex often refers to borders as a single EU external border (Frontex, 2006b; 2019a). After all, geographically, this constitutes its area of responsibility. The dual nature of borders prompts Frontex and national authorities to cooperate in border management under a 'shared responsibility' (Regulation, 2016). Accordingly, the agency in its mission declares that:

'Together with the Member States, we ensure safe and well-functioning external borders providing security' (Frontex, 2019v).

This not only reflects the twofold nature of borders as national and EU external borders, but also operationalises it through a responsibility sharing. Crucially, Frontex becomes the operational arm of the EU at the borders and a symbol of EU integration.

Moving to border control assumptions, Frontex emphasises fundamental rights. This may seem paradoxical, as over the years the agency has been the object of fierce criticism for human rights violations (Babická, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Marin, 2014). However, Frontex is actively employing a humanitarian language (Aas, & Gunhus, 2015) as asserted by the following statements:

[Frontex Executive Director] *'Fighting crime at the border is a key objective of the Lisbon Treaty, one of the cornerstones of which is full respect for fundamental rights'* (Frontex, 2010g).

[Frontex Executive Director] *'...ensuring at all times that irregular migrants are properly identified and treated in line with our commitment to fundamental rights and human dignity'* (Frontex, 2010h).

Within Frontex there is a Fundamental Rights Officer, a complaint mechanism for the examination of fundamental rights violations and a Fundamental Rights Consultative Forum (Regulation, 2011). Also, respect to fundamental rights constitutes a separate chapter in Frontex's Code of Conduct (Frontex, 2017b; 2018ib) and a section in the Common Core Curriculum (Frontex, 2017ib). As a result, all Frontex staff and deployed officers are informed and trained to act respecting fundamental rights. In sum, Frontex's action by encompassing fundamental rights reflects a human rights-based border control approach (Pascouau & Schumacher, 2014: 1). However, this human rights' prioritisation reflects an aspiration or an organisational strategy of Frontex to reposition itself as a protector of humanitarianism (Perkowski, 2018) and not an implemented action always encountered during Frontex activities.

Contrary to fundamental rights, Frontex's engagement with border control is based on a securitisation logic (Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012; Horii, 2016). The phrases of its Executive Director that 'Europe is only as secure as its external borders' (Frontex, 2018ic) and that 'Frontex is now a fully-fledged internal security actor' (Frontex, 2017i) embody the agency's aim to link border control with security. Arguably, almost every Frontex activity is considered to be promoting EU's securitisation (Léonard, 2010). Most prominent example constitutes the RABIT mechanism designed to activate in case of urgent and extraordinary circumstances (Frontex, 2019vii). Structurally, the units of Risk Analysis and Vulnerability Assessment engage with security issues, as both units seek to maintain and enhance border security. With the use of CIRAM,¹¹⁰ the unit of Risk Analysis identifies possible risks or threats at the EU borders. Actually, CIRAM defines risk as a function of threat, vulnerability and impact (Frontex, 2019viii). Assessing risks in terms of threats and their consequences, this model can construct new threats functioning as an enabling factor for securitisation (Buzan et al., 1998). In the same spirit, the newly formed unit of Vulnerability Assessment monitors threats and risks to prevent crises at the EU external borders (Frontex, 2019ix). In terms of institutional terminology and document

¹¹⁰ For CIRAM, see chapter 2.3.2.

analysis, the agency in its webpage often uses the terms ‘crime’ and ‘security threats’ as well as the rather strong verbs of ‘tackle’, ‘combat’ and ‘battle’ (Frontex, 2018e; 2019x; xi). This terminology clearly manifests a securitisation logic as it is framed with a negative connotation underscoring threats, borders at risk and crises. Actually, in its last Annual Risk Analysis document, the word ‘security’ is mentioned twenty-nine times, ‘threat’ nineteen times and ‘prevent(ion)’ nine times (Frontex, 2019xii). The spread of these terms illustrates that borders are tied to security preoccupations diffusing therefore a securitisation logic.

Frontex also shifts the border. Actually, it produces a re-territorialisation of the border redefining the internal/external dichotomy (Vaughan-Williams, 2008; Perkins & Rumford, 2013; Reid-Henry, 2013). On the one hand, Frontex contributes to the extra-territorialisation of border control. In practice, its surveillance activities in the pre-frontier area, namely beyond the external border, extend border control to the territory of neighbouring countries. The same applies with the deployment of liaison officers to third countries and the conduct of joint border patrolling with officers from neighbouring or even non-neighbouring states, like Mauritania (Frontex, 2010a: 32). Fostering this externalisation, Frontex has - since its establishment - often cooperated with third countries and international organisations. Indeed, it has concluded Working Arrangements with eighteen third countries (Frontex, 2019xiii), including U.S.A., Canada, and Cape Verde, which are situated far away from the geographic area of Europe. In parallel, Frontex undertakes technical assistance projects in non-EU countries (Frontex, 2019i), as well as builds partnership networks for information-exchange, intelligence sharing and border control cooperation. Aside from that, the agency participates in discussions about third countries’ border management strategies (EUAM Ukraine, 2019) directly impacting on their border control policies. Yet, the most obvious paradigm of this extra-territorialisation constitutes Frontex’s operation in Albania, which is situated outside of Frontex’s geographic area of responsibility. Yet, Frontex decided to deploy fifty officers and equipment at the Albanian-Greek land border assisting in border control not its member state, Greece, but instead a non-EU country, Albania. This operation reflects a joint responsibility and equal role of Frontex and Albania, as demonstrated in the following statement:

[Frontex Executive Director] Frontex border guards ‘*work shoulder-to-shoulder with their Albanian colleagues at Albania’s border*’ (Frontex, 2019if).

So, Frontex considers that border control is not spatially confined to the territory of the EU (Ferrer-Gallardo & van Houtum, 2014: 299). For this reason, it frequently uses the wording ‘borderlands’¹¹¹ and ‘beyond the frontiers’ (Frontex, 2010a), which, instead of a border, they indicate a hybrid space, namely a zone extended away from the location of the border (Del Sarto, 2010: 152).

On the other hand, yet to a lesser extent, Frontex engages in border control activities within the EU territory denoting an intra-territorialisation. For instance, after the entry, it conducts second-line checks on arrivals (Frontex, 2016a: 61). Against this backdrop, a discussion commenced within EU institutions on the prospect of adding reporting for secondary movements in Eurosur application (European Commission, 2018c: 48). This means that Frontex will also start engaging with mobility across Europe. Hence, the EU border has become less fixed and more multifaceted and flexible (Vitale, 2011: 22; Rumford, 2012: 891). Frontex shifts border control accounting simultaneously for extra-territorialisation and intra-territorialisation.

Another border control assumption of Frontex is intelligence, which allows the agency to ‘proactively respond to the key illegal immigration threats’ (Frontex, 2007c). All Frontex operations are intelligence-driven (Frontex, 2019h). This means that they are organised based on risk analysis. Reflecting this intelligence prioritisation, CIRAM, whilst assessing risks, uses, sorts, processes, produces and evaluates intelligence. In addition, Frontex has promoted the construction of risk analysis networks and risk analysis cells in third countries for the collection of intelligence. In this spirit, by 2020 the agency plans to have deployed ten liaison officers to non-EU countries enhancing intelligence’s input (Frontex, 2019ia). Recently, the agency has decided to start using services for social media analysis to gather intelligence and keep up with migration trends (Management Board, 2019). Similarly, Frontex emphasises its debriefing activities. Debriefing allows Frontex officers to collect directly from irregular border crossers intelligence about crime networks and smuggling routes (Frontex, 2014e: 17). The prominence of debriefing for Frontex is attested by the fact that only in 2016

¹¹¹ Title of a Frontex’s documentary film (2016b: 34).

Frontex carried out 3,861 debriefing interviews (Frontex, 2017d: 83) and organised more than 100 debriefing workshops attended by around 400 national officers (Frontex, 2017d: 100). Through intelligence, the agency gets prepared for the likely, the possible and even the unknown factors and events at the borders (Frontex, 2014f: 15-19). Aside the collection of intelligence, the agency also shares its intelligence via intelligence products, such as risk analysis and risk assessments reports, alerts, periodic briefings and situational overviews. The importance attributed to intelligence by Frontex is evident in the following institutional discourses and texts:

[Head of the Frontex Situation Centre] *'The future is intelligence-led working'* (Frontex, 2019xiv).

[Frontex Executive Director] *'We know that intelligence and information are crucial for formulating an appropriate response to real and potential threats'* (Frontex, 2019xi).

[Director of Operations Division] *'Frontex is an intelligence-driven organisation'* (Balkananalysis.com, 2011).

Surveillance constitutes another border control assumption of relevance for Frontex. Actually, it seems that border surveillance has taken over from border checks and now constitutes EU's border control driving force (Jeandesboz, 2011: 117). In Frontex Executive Director's words, 'the purpose of border surveillance [...] is to prevent illegal border crossers' (EBCG Day, 2014). Here, border surveillance encloses a proactive context, in which vision is turned into action (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017: 226-229). Using an array of sophisticated surveillance devices, such as radars, satellites, unmanned aircraft, aerostats and sensors (Frontex, 2017ic; 2019xv) as well as specialised human resources (Jeandesboz, 2017: 257), namely border surveillance officers, the agency seeks to maintain real-time and 24/7 surveillance at the EU external borders and at the pre-frontier area. All the information deriving from surveillance is being collected and sorted by the Frontex Situation Centre. Main enabler and implementer of this surveillance environment constitutes the Eurosur system.¹¹² Actually, Eurosur's implementation has brought a transformation in EU border control,

¹¹² For more information about Eurosur, see chapter 2.3.2.

given that it has expanded the situational knowledge and has created new centres that generate and manage this knowledge (Jeandesboz, 2017).

At the same time, Frontex implements a technocratic border control. Being an agency, Frontex represents a bureaucratic and managerial solution that brings to the fore its technocratic expertise and authority (Haas, 1992: 11). Actually, Frontex's creation was an attempt to de-politicise EU borders (Neal, 2009; Johnson, 2017: 782). Building on this, Frontex's activities are perceived as neutral and managerial (Paul, 2017: 704), which foster a logic of technocracy. In this regard, Frontex focuses on numbers. It reports on a monthly basis the number of detected irregular border crossings, functioning as a supplier of objective data and neutral facts. To do so, it uses technocratic tools, such as computer systems, standardised templates and report formats. Furthermore, the agency develops handbooks, best practices and standard operational procedures. It also evaluates its activities and establishes centres of excellence. It has a Management Board and an Executive Director. It sets business objectives, business plans and characterises member states as its customers (Frontex, 2018c: 17) putting forward a managerial perspective. In addition, Frontex produces strategies for the acquisition of technical equipment and manages its operational resources through a management system, entitled Opera (Frontex, 2017id: 22). Moreover, advancing this technocratic function, Frontex's documents regularly evoke the agency's experience and knowledge (Frontex, 2016e). In a similar context, there is constant use of the words 'efficiency', 'effectiveness'¹¹³ (Horsti, 2012: 303) and 'professionalism',¹¹⁴ which constitute main elements of a technocratic bureaucracy (Centeno, 1993: 311). So, Frontex clearly implements a technocratic approach to border control, although this does not mean that it is exempted from politicisation (Belina & Miggelbrink, 2013).

The above constitute the border control assumptions of Frontex. Nevertheless, apart from assumptions, Frontex with its function engages in and promotes certain border control practices that define its border control approach. In this regard, multilateral cooperation is a key border control practice for Frontex. The agency officially cooperates with more than thirty-five national authorities as well as various

¹¹³ For examples regarding the use of 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' in Frontex's documents, see Frontex (2016e).

¹¹⁴ For examples regarding the use of professionalism in Frontex's rhetoric, see the analysis for the border control practice of professionalisation in this chapter section.

international organisations, third countries, EU agencies and institutions (Frontex, 2019i). Moreover, almost every Frontex function is materialised through multilateral cooperation, such as its joint operations that rely on member states' contribution of officers and equipment. Furthermore, implementing its coastguard functions, Frontex acts in synergy with the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) (Regulation, 2016). So, Frontex embodies a spirit of multilateral cooperation for the protection of EU external borders, as manifested in the following testimonies:

[Frontex Executive Director] *'Common challenges...require a joint response. We can only effectively tackle many challenges at our borders if we work together across borders'* (Frontex, 2019xvi).

[Head of Risk Analysis Unit] *'We had to build a community based on the recognition that I need to share with you what I know so that we could work together'* (Frontex, 2010a: 64).

The above phrases highlight that for Frontex multilateral cooperation is materialised through 'working together'. Implementing multilateral cooperation, Frontex enhances trust among national authorities and objectifies the principle of solidarity promoting the rationale that each external border is a common EU border.

Another border control practice of Frontex is professionalisation. Actually, the agency's webpage lists professionalism as the first value of Frontex assuring that the agency has 'the knowledge, skills and competencies needed' to accomplish its mission (Frontex, 2019v). Accentuating professionalism, Frontex's reports state that the agency's staff 'share and live the corporate values' and as a result, 'they perform their activities in a highly professional way' (Frontex, 2012d: 11). Therefore, it identifies itself in terms of professionalism. This is also shared by Frontex staff:

[Head of Frontex's Information Fusion Centre] *'I am happy to lead a talented team of professionals in the fullest sense of the word'* (Frontex, 2019xvii).

[Frontex Expert] *'Professionalism and cooperation are the first things that come to my mind when I think about Frontex'* (Frontex, 2019xviii).

Seeking and urging for professionalism, Frontex has created codes of conduct that set ‘professional and behavioural standards’ (Frontex, 2017b; 2018ib). It has also developed professional education and training, which entail skills and competencies specifically designed for and addressed to border guards enabling therefore their career advancement. Moreover, at a regular basis, Frontex produces programming documents, periodic reports and handbooks with best practices and operational guidelines. These documents introduce specific rules and technical procedures fostering, in turn, the professionalisation of border control. By the same token, they create organisation knowledge (Interviewee 13). These rules and procedures not only advance the profession of border guarding - demarcating it from other law-enforcement sectors, but also they place Frontex at the centre of these processes.

Frontex also operates through information gathering and analysis. This enables the agency to acquire situational awareness, share data with its partners and analyse border control trends. Orchestrator of this endeavour constitutes the Frontex Situation Centre, which gathers all the collected information (Frontex, 2019d). Information gathering and analysis takes place in almost every Frontex activity, such as the operation of liaison officers, the creation of regional operational offices and the establishment of networks and partnerships with other actors. To implement and foster information gathering, Frontex has designed and now operates new IT reporting systems, like JORA, FOSS and Eurosur. The users of these systems upload border control data or other relevant incidents, such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, border conflicts or even contagious diseases among Frontex staff. The importance of information gathering for Frontex is also traced in the following discourses:

[Director of Operations Division] *‘Everything starts with awareness; therefore we have to strengthen the capacity to monitor information sources and to analyse the data’* (Balkananalysis.com, 2011).

[Frontex Executive Director] *‘We know that intelligence and information are crucial for formulating an appropriate response to real and potential threats at the EU’s external borders’* (Frontex, 2019xi).

Hence, border control has entered and now functions in the ‘Information Age’ (Frontex, 2013c). Frontex’s function enables this information environment. Simultaneously, this

information environment strengthens Frontex's role, because this agency manages all the information and knowledge (Haas, 1992: 2-3; Scott, 2008).

Regarding technology, the agency employs modern technological tools to perform its tasks, such as IT platforms, automated tracking software, geospatial imagery, space-based infrastructure, remotely piloted aircraft systems, artificial intelligence and virtual reality. The aim is to 'deliver the most up-to-date technologies for the service users' (Frontex, 2018c: 51), namely the member states. Using 'state-of-the-art technology' (Frontex, 2018c: 51), the agency builds new panoply for addressing the border control challenge. To do so, it cooperates with the industry, and especially defence and surveillance companies (Marin, 2011: 143). Key role has the Research and Innovation unit, which, according to Frontex's own wording, 'is rapidly becoming the source for member states needing advice on new technology' (Frontex, 2010a: 55). This Frontex unit studies emerging technologies, conducts tests and demonstrations as well as proposes innovative products. As a result, Frontex has a dual role. It can become the initiator of a research project or technology requesting the industry to search for and propose solutions to specific needs identified by itself or member states. In contrast, it can function as the buyer and even end-user of new technological products already developed by the industry, which then deploys at the EU external border (Frontex, 2019e). However, the inclusion of these technological tools in the border control conduct fundamentally influences and eventually alters border control's nature. Arguably, each new technological tool employed for border control reconfigures both the space as a territoriality and the social landscape creating new divisions of inclusion and exclusion (Walters, 2006: 154).

The last border control practice reflected in Frontex's operation is policing. The processes of identification, authentication and filtering of persons that Frontex performs through its activities constitute part of a policing methodology (Dijstelbloem et al., 2017: 228). In this category belongs the use of reporting systems that graphically visualise each border control incident with specific details regarding the location, time and means involved. Another example is the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) (Regulation, 2018), a system planned to be operational by 2021, which refers to a pre-travel authorisation that Frontex will host its central unit. Operating this system, Frontex will filter potential travellers that intend to cross the borders. In reality, instead of borders, Frontex manages and controls cross-border flows of persons. In parallel, it collects background information about individuals and their

actions producing, processing and managing knowledge about persons (Tazzioli & Walters, 2016: 454). This is implemented, for example, via debriefing, which constitutes a form of police interrogation, as well as lie-detection technology, already tested at the borders by Frontex (Frontex, 2012e). These activities render Frontex a border-policing agency (Pickering & Weber, 2013; Aas & Gundhus, 2015). After all, most Frontex staff have a policing background taking into account that experience in law enforcement or police is often an essential prerequisite for Frontex staff recruitment.¹¹⁵ Thus, they operate and think in line with policing terms. In this spirit, there are document versions for ‘law-enforcement only’. Moreover, many operational documents are not publicly accessible. All these maintain a level of secrecy (Carrera, 2007: 2; Pollak & Slominski, 2009: 919) and reflect a policing mentality. Apart from that, Frontex’s incident reports are characterised by a factual and evidence-based writing referring solely to the time and location of events with clear and neutral language like ‘this morning at 6:45, a Royal Netherlands Marechaussee patrol boat [...] detected [...]’ (Frontex, 2019ixx). Also, there is regular reference to ‘crime’ and ‘criminal’ or ‘threats’, like ‘terrorism’.¹¹⁶ The above wording and method of writing are usually encountered at police documents. In summary, Frontex operates in line with a policing context, contributing therefore to the expansion of policing activities at the borders (Lutterbeck, 2006).

These assumptions and practices reflect Frontex’s cultural traits for the border control conduct.¹¹⁷ Actually, they constitute part of the agency and, as a result, they are operationalised through its activities, discourses and organisational choices, as shown from the above analysis. In parallel, this analysis underscored that there are certain elements that, apart from Frontex, they have not been encountered at the borders. More specifically, policing is a practice traced solely at Evros border, whereas the assumption of fundamental rights was extracted only from the research on Frontex. Thus, after analysing the place of border control in the previous chapter, namely the border itself, and Frontex as a border control actor, the next section will investigate the culture of border control.

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Frontex’s advertisements in the careers section, like Frontex (2019xxi).

¹¹⁶ See for instance, Frontex (2018a).

¹¹⁷ For an overview of the assumptions and practices, see table 6.a.

Table 6.a Frontex's border control cultural traits	
Border assumptions	EU external border
	National territory
Border control assumptions	Fundamental Rights
	Securitisation
	Technocracy
	Extra-territorialisation / Intra-territorialisation
	Surveillance
	Intelligence
Practices	Policing
	Information gathering & analysis
	Multilateral cooperation
	Technology
	Professionalisation

6.3 Border control culture: Warsaw

The research in Evros and Lampedusa uncovered certain assumptions and practices for border control conduct. Their existence not only in different border locations, but also within Frontex signifies that they are not isolated characteristics emerged in a particular geographic area or institutional context. Conversely, they are components of a border control culture (Zaiotti, 2011: 23). This culture consists of border assumptions, border control assumptions and border control practices,¹¹⁸ which are inscribed in texts and shared by a border control community. On border assumptions, borders are considered both national and EU external borders. This denotes a binary nature and function for borders. On the one hand, borders delimitate national sovereignty. On the other, they represent a common EU external border built upon the ideal of supranational

¹¹⁸ For an overview of the assumptions and practices constituting the Warsaw border control culture, see table 6.b

integration. This binary representation of borders has led to the establishment of a ‘shared responsibility for the management of the external borders’ (Regulation, 2016) between Frontex and national authorities, consolidating its role as a border control actor.

The underlying border control assumptions are securitisation, technocracy, extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation, surveillance and intelligence. In particular, border control is securitised, because irregular migration is framed as a security problem or threat that must be combatted (Council of the EU, 2018). This leads to the adoption of emergency measures both at national and EU level, like the reintroduction of internal border control within the Schengen area ‘in exceptional circumstances’ (Regulation, 2016/399) and the development of policy tools for the management of the ‘migration crisis’ (European Commission, 2015a). Border control is also shaped by technocracy, due to the increasing importance of technocratic expertise and technological tools. It is conducted through computer systems, like Eurosur, and experts that have specialised profiles, such as return expert, debriefer and screener which build technical skills and technocratic knowledge. It also reveals an extra-territorialisation and an intra-territorialisation (Reid-Henry, 2013: 218). The conduct of border control does not merely take place at the borderline. Instead, border control activities are performed beyond and inside the border, shifting in turn the space of the border as well as the border control approach, which now refers to an EIBM accompanied by measures both within and outside the Schengen zone (Hobbing, 2005; Marenin, 2010; Frontex, 2019xx). Moreover, border control relies more and more on the collection and use of intelligence on migratory routes, intended travellers and developments at local, regional or international level that may affect cross-border mobility. In response to this, border control is reinforced with the establishment of risk analysis structures and intelligence-sharing networks to act in a ‘proactive way’ (European Commission, 2015e: 4). Lastly, there is constant surveillance with the installation of sophisticated monitoring tools across borders. Thus, border control is not defined exclusively as border checks; it also encompasses border surveillance for the ‘monitoring, detection, identification, tracking, prevention and interception’ of irregular border crossings (Regulation, 2013). This creates a ‘panopticon’ across borders, involving not only watching and observing, but also processing, managing and regulating individuals (Jumbert, 2012: 38), leading to ‘social sorting’ (Lyon, 2003).

The common border control practices are information gathering and analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology and professionalisation. Regarding information gathering and analysis, border control is being conducted through the collection and then analysis of data. Actually, effective border control relies upon a better use of information (European Commission, 2015a; Regulation, 2018) and its dissemination ‘in a timely manner’ (Regulation, 2016). For this reason, many computerised information-sharing mechanisms have been established collecting, storing, processing, analysing and exchanging data, like Eurosur (Regulation, 2013) and the Entry/Exit System (Regulation, 2017). At the same time, these systems produce knowledge and therefore impact on the border control conduct by granting social control or - put differently - power to the actors that administer them (Jeandesboz, 2017). As far as multilateral cooperation is concerned, border control is being conducted practically through a co-bordering (Longo, 2016). Migration is a matter of common concern that transcends national borders (European Commission, 2015a). Therefore, it requires a broader and more collaborative approach. Building on this, Frontex embodies a spirit of solidarity and operational support especially to the frontline member states. In parallel, to accomplish an effective border management, various channels for formal and informal cooperation with third countries, agencies, institutions and stakeholders have been established (Frontex, 2019xx). Turning to technological development, border control became synonymous to the deployment of ‘state-of-the-art technology’ (Regulation, 2016; Frontex, 2019xx). Technologically mediated border checks, sophisticated monitoring devices, high-tech vehicles and automated systems reconfigure border control and construct borders as ‘technological fortresses’ (Marin, 2011) or ‘cyber-fortresses’ (Guild et al., 2008); whilst multiplying them by expanding both the geographic border area and the time window for border control (Glouftsiou, 2018). Last border control practice is professionalisation. According to the Schengen Borders Code, border control should be carried out in a professional manner (Regulation, 2016/399). In turn, high-level professionalism constitutes a core value for the EIBM (Frontex, 2019xx). Over the last years, many efforts have been put forward to professionalise border control through the development of specific skills, professional standards and the articulation of codes of conduct and operational strategies that foster a ‘professional habitus’ (Bigo, 2014) or professionalisation of border guarding (Horii, 2012), distinct from other law-enforcement or military job categories (Olsthoorn & Schut, 2018).

These border (control) assumptions and border control practices constitute a border control culture which is inscribed and coded in specific texts, allowing its progressive institutionalisation (Zaiotti, 2011: 51). Accordingly, certain documents have been used as reference material, while analysing the border control assumptions and practices. These documents are the 2016 Frontex Regulation (Regulation, 2016), Eurosur Regulation (Regulation, 2013), European Agenda on Migration (European Commission, 2015a), Technical and Operational Strategy for the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) (Frontex, 2019xx), Schengen Borders Code (Regulation, 2016/399), ETIAS Regulation (Regulation, 2018) and the Smart Borders Package, which includes the Entry/Exit System (Regulation, 2017). All these documents reflect certain assumptions and practices of this culture; the most relevant being those capturing all tenets of the border control culture such as the 2016 Frontex Regulation, the 2013 Eurosur Regulation and the 2019 EIBM Strategy. Apart from the textual manifestation in border control texts, this culture is evidenced in the community's commonsense and everyday routines (Zaiotti, 2011: 14). Crucially, for a culture to emerge and become performed, it depends on the border control community.

Table 6.b Warsaw border control culture	
Border assumptions	EU external border
	National territory
Border control assumptions	Securitisation
	Technocracy
	Extra-territorialisation / Intra-territorialisation
	Surveillance
Practices	Intelligence
	Information gathering & analysis
	Multilateral cooperation
	Technology
	Professionalisation

6.3.1 The border control community

The previous chapter's analysis in Evros and Lampedusa manifested empirically the existence of a border control community. Building on this, the preceding section referred to a border control culture drawing from common border control assumptions and practices that exist at the borders and within Frontex. Actually, the development of a border control culture proves the existence of a border control community, taking into account that the members of the community, after having internalised it, formulate and materialise this culture by thinking and performing border control duties. After all, apart from assumptions and practices that compose it, precondition of a border control culture, according to its definition,¹¹⁹ is the existence of a border control community (Zaiotti: 2011: 23). Indeed, the border control community selects, gives form and pursues the border control culture by sharing its underlying assumptions and practices (Zaiotti, 2011: 23). As a result, both the theoretical and empirical contexts attest the existence of a border control community.¹²⁰

The same conclusion is derived from an analysis of Frontex's institutional discourse. More specifically, Frontex in its webpage regularly refers to a 'community', for instance: 'strengthen and improve the European community of border guards' (Frontex, 2010i). Likewise, Frontex staff invoke a 'community':

[Head of Analysis and Planning Sector] *'One of the good things about the EU border guard community is that they're open and keen to work together'* (Frontex, 2010a: 65).

[Frontex Officer] *'Now we have a community [...] Frontex builds this community'* (Interviewee 13).

[Frontex Officer] *'Frontex and the member states are the facilitators of the community, but we also participate in this community through border operations'* (Interviewee 14).

The above illustrate the existence of a border control community based on trace and account evidence.¹²¹ This, according to a process-tracing methodological prism that

¹¹⁹ For the definition of the border control culture, see chapter 3.4.

¹²⁰ For the definition of the border control community, see chapter 3.4.

¹²¹ Trace evidence refers to a type of evidence whose mere existence confirms a claim. Account evidence derives from narratives (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 175, 182).

involves the development of predictions and expected outcomes to collect evidence and trace processes (Beach & Pedersen, 2013), can lead to the following prediction: if a border control community exists, then this community will also be institutionalised. This refers to an institutionalisation that takes place by virtue of an agreement of the members of the community and its environment to recognise and legitimise it institutionally (Searle, 1995; Zaiotti, 2011). Actually, a border control community could exist without being institutionalised. Yet, the opposite does not apply. A border control community could not have been institutionalised if it was not existing, So, the community's institutionalisation undoubtedly manifests the existence of this community and for this reason it has been chosen to be included as a prediction clause. Indeed, this border control community has been institutionalised. This has occurred by its inclusion as a term in the EIBM Strategy. 'EBCG community' is being used three times in the EIBM Strategy (Frontex, 2019xx). Reproducing a characteristic extract, the Strategy calls for 'development of activities [...] in an integrated and synchronised manner across the EBCG community' (Frontex, 2019xx: 62). Hence, this community does not constitute an aspiration or a keen desire. Instead, it already exists redefining border control as well as shaping its culture.

Regarding now its composition, this community is composed of border control practitioners, namely actors that participate in the border control conduct. For this reason, this research has chosen to label this community as 'practitiocratic' referring to the actors that practice border control carrying out border control tasks and therefore being directly and actively involved with the border control conduct. The actors that compose this 'practitiocratic' community are national border guards and Frontex. In particular, there are approximately 400,000 border officers (Frontex, 2010a: 12). Only in 2018, these officers were involved in more than 150,000 detections of irregular borders crossings at the EU external borders (Frontex, 2018i: 9). Regarding Frontex, this agency can deploy from 1,300 and up to 1,800 officers at the borders and 10,000 by 2027. At the same time, it has more than 530 staff (Frontex, 2018a: 7), which will become doubled by 2020.¹²² Thus, Frontex has already a human capital involved in border control, increased budget,¹²³ as well as a significant operational capacity, including its own equipment.

¹²² For Frontex's staff growth, see table 6.c.

¹²³ For Frontex's budget growth over the years, see table 6.d.

By virtue of its border control actorness, Frontex has become a new member of the border control community. This confirms the first sub-hypothesis, namely that Frontex is part of the border control community (H1), attesting also the empirical findings of the research at the borders that reached the same conclusion. Yet, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, a community cannot remain frozen. Rather, it adapts to shifts in the social environment becoming reconstructed (Adler, 2008; Scott, 2008: 78; Kitchen, 2009), as it constitutes a social fact based on a representation of the social world (Pouliot, 2006: 124). Due to its border control role, since its establishment, Frontex started interacting with national border control authorities and especially national border guards. Actually, Frontex has become a new 'colleague' for national border control authorities and a tangible symbol of the EU at the borders that aims at bringing together all the national border control actors under its flag. Thus, Frontex's addition in the border control community triggered a change. It altered the community's social environment and, in turn, the border control community. Accordingly, with Frontex's establishment and function, the border control community became reconstructed emphasising the border control practitioners. For this reason, this research labels this community as 'practitiocratic'.

At the same time, through training, education and the organisation of various socialisation activities, such as workshops, conferences and exchange programmes, this community has become identified (Græger, 2016: 481) cultivating a collective commitment among its members (Wenger et al. 2011: 12) and a spirit of 'borderguardship' (Frontex, 2015g: 109).

Table 6.c¹²⁴

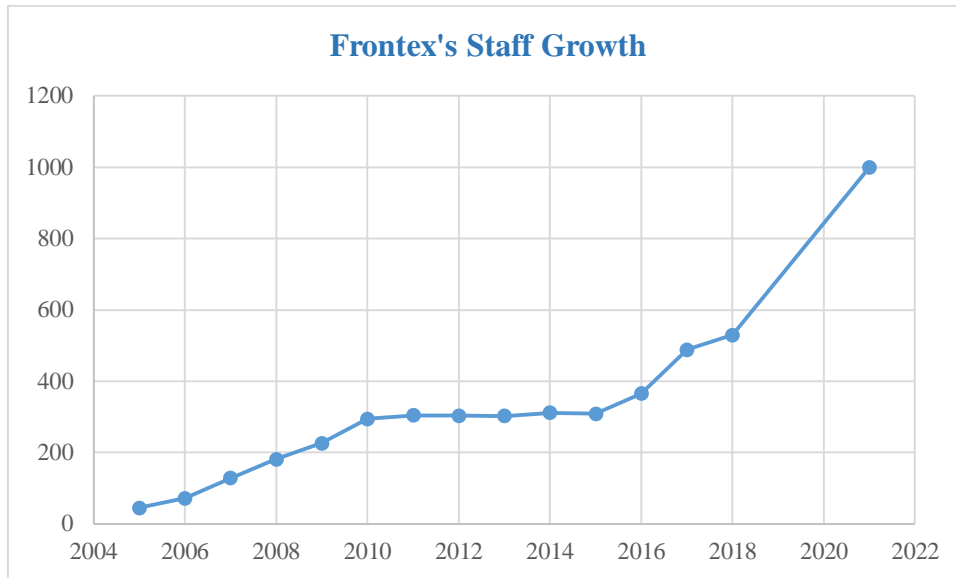
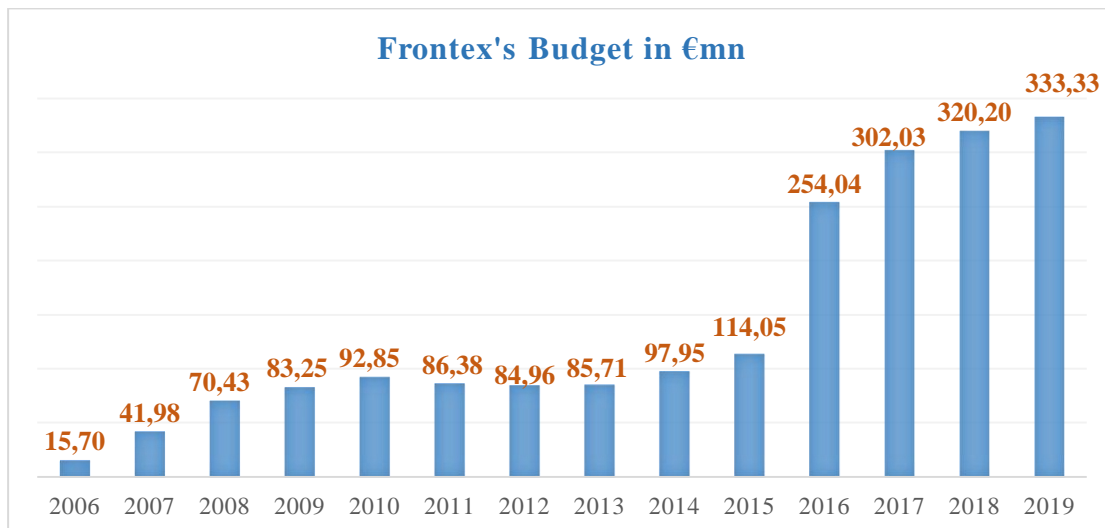


Table 6.d¹²⁵



6.3.2 A new kid on the block: Frontex & Warsaw culture of border control

Frontex being a border control actor is also a social actor that possesses agency (Scott, 2008: 78) and creates inter-subjective structures of meaning and social facts (Pouliot, 2004: 320). In fact, as an actor, Frontex pursues its own agenda seeking to diffuse its understanding to the other members of the community (Berger, 1996: 327) through social interaction (Adler & Barnett, 1998). After all, reality can become reconstructed and redefined through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, Frontex can reproduce or contest established systems of meaning or power (Fligstein, 2001: 111)

¹²⁴ Data extracted from Frontex Annual Reports and Programming Documents.

¹²⁵ Data extracted from Frontex Annual Budgets. These data refer to voted budgets without including any later amendments.

creating new. A possible prediction deriving from this context is that Frontex, after its establishment, has promoted an alternative border control culture different from Schengen, as Frontex, contrary to Schengen, does not represent an intergovernmental institutional structure. The expected outcome is the emergence of a new culture.

Rival explanations would have predicted the opposite, namely that Frontex as a product of the Schengen culture would not have developed elements alternative to Schengen (Wolff & Schout, 2013; Ekelund, 2014). A possible outcome in this case would involve the absence of any new border control culture or the non-reactivation of dormant cultures, namely Brussels and Westphalia, in case of Frontex's formation under these culture's auspices. Another prediction of antithetical approaches would have been that, even if a new culture has emerged, that would be due to other actors and not Frontex, given that Frontex is just a dependent instrument or a vehicle and not an actor (Jorry, 2007; Vaughan-Williams, 2008; Léonard, 2010; Chillaud, 2012; Horii, 2012; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Paul, 2017; Csernaton, 2018). These predictions are assessed throughout this chapter to uncover the answer to the main research question: whether and how Frontex impacts on the culture of EU border control.

Frontex, apart from a change in the substance of the border control community, it also initiated a new reality on the ground, namely at the EU external borders. The previous chapter referred to specific operational activities and tools that Frontex imported at these two borders, like dog and boat patrolling in Evros, satellite monitoring and surveillance systems in Lampedusa as well as debriefing in both borders. These constitute new elements for the border control conduct, which reflect Frontex's spirit and method for border control. In addition, Frontex brought new border control assumptions and practices. Indeed, Frontex, as a border control actor is composed of certain assumptions and practices. These are embedded in its rationale and action. Therefore, they can be diffused to the other members of the community through interaction, learning and socialisation (Saurugger, 2013: 894; 2014: 152-154). Analysing these assumptions and practices, this chapter uncovered some elements that are not part of the border control culture, because aside from Frontex, they were not traced at both borders, like the assumption of fundamental rights and the practice of policing. Yet, there are certain common assumptions and practices encountered in Frontex and at the borders. These compose a border control culture.

The above indicate that Frontex with its role and function as a border control actor at the EU external borders has introduced or promoted alternative assumptions

and practices for border control confirming the second sub-hypothesis (H2). Actually, Frontex as an agency has taken on a life of its own (Trondal & Jeppesen, 2008: 421). By developing its own vision, values, best standards, working procedures, codes of conduct, guidance documents, model of risk analysis, knowledge and relations with other actors (Parkin, 2012: 1), it has progressively constructed and then fostered its own conception and performance of border control. This manifests an alternative border control mode consisting of different border control assumptions and practices from those of the Schengen regime. In sum, after Frontex's creation, border control evolved. New patterns of action, habits, structures and social relations (Græger, 2016: 479), which were introduced or promoted by Frontex, were developed. These elements were not part of the previous border control regime. The most important change in relation to the pre-Frontex border control institutional regime constitutes that integrated border management has now become a shared responsibility between Frontex and member states (Regulation, 2016). Thus, as manifested empirically, derived from the institutional reality that has been formed at the borders due to the now 'shared responsibility' and drawn from the theory of social constructivism that refers to structure and actors' evolution (Wendt, 1999; Adler, 2008; Saurugger, 2013), Frontex's operation has introduced or promoted alternative assumptions and practices for border control. This means that Frontex not only has impacted the border control conduct and the border control policy field but also the border control culture. In fact, it has reconstructed it, due to its participation in the border control community.

Frontex constitutes a variation from the composition of the Schengen border control community, as it did not exist during the consultations and development of the Schengen paradigm. But as shown in this research, after its creation, it became a significant border control actor and member of the border control community, ascribing it the characteristic of 'practitiocratic'. As part to it, Frontex also defines and shapes the border control culture, because it constructs new inter-subjective meanings (Haas & Haas, 2002). For this reason, this research has chosen to analyse both the borders and Frontex to elucidate the current border control culture. Underscoring the inclusion of Frontex as a new element in the EU border control, this research has chosen to label this culture as Warsaw, given that Frontex's seat is in Warsaw, namely the capital of Poland. The next step is to compare this culture with the hitherto dominant border control culture of Schengen as well as with the alternative cultures of Westphalia and Brussels (Zaiotti, 2011). This enables to discern if this culture is different from the other

border control models. Thus, whether a new border control culture has truly emerged validating this section's prediction.

6.4 Schengen, Westphalia, Brussels and Warsaw: Comparing the four *loci* of border control

Ruben Zaiotti (2011) in his book has formulated three typologies of cultures of border control, which represent three different models and approaches for the border control conduct in Europe. These are the 'Westphalia', 'Schengen' and 'Brussels' cultures of border control. Each of these three cultures has distinct tenets and components. However, the current research at two borders and at Frontex revealed an alternative regime regarding the management of the borders that differentiates itself from the three aforementioned paradigms. This indicates that a new border control culture has emerged and is actively pursued. The name this research has given to this culture is Warsaw in order to differentiate it from the other three cultures in Zaiotti's book, whilst maintaining the same name spirit with geographical references of Zaiotti's typology. This section compares Warsaw culture with those of Schengen, Westphalia and Brussels.¹²⁶ Regarding the three, the comparison rests on the features attributed to them by Zaiotti (2011) and certain data extracted from other secondary sources.

Starting with border assumptions, Westphalia considers borders as linear and barriers; Schengen as semi-linear, while, for Brussels, borders, being a symbol of Europe, function as bridges (Zaiotti, 2011). Yet, these underlying border assumptions do not match Warsaw's twofold conception of borders as national borders and EU external borders.

On border control assumptions, Westphalia perceives border control as governmental/national with a clear distinction of the internal and external field that nourishes a military emphasis (Zaiotti, 2011: Chapter 3). For Schengen, border control is trans-governmental, security-focused and with an asymmetric distribution of responsibility among EU states (Zaiotti, 2011: Chapter 4; 5). Brussels considers border control as supranational and balanced, prioritising the economic dimension (Zaiotti, 2011: Chapter 4; 6). But for Warsaw, it is based on securitisation, technocracy, extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation, surveillance and intelligence, while technocracy, surveillance and intelligence are not included in the Westphalia, Schengen

¹²⁶ For an overview of cultures' comparison, see table 6.e.

and Brussels paradigms. Although Schengen culture includes security, its focus is on national security and the security-freedom continuum; instead, Warsaw's reflects a securitisation logic drawn from an emergency context and the proactive tackling of constructed threats and risks. Thus, securitisation is a social process (Williams, 2003: 523) and a pursuit (Buzan, 1991: 37), not a normative state.¹²⁷ This highlights the incompatibility between Schengen's security and Warsaw's assumption of securitisation. On the geographic dimension of borders, both Westphalia and Schengen refer to an internal/external distinction, whereas for Brussels this is irrelevant due to these dimensions' continuity. Yet, Warsaw, despite emphasising these categories, accounts for a shift in the space of border control with extra-territorialisation and intra-territorialisation; extra- and intra- denote a deeper and wider context than the categories of internal and external.

Concerning border control practices, Westphalia has formal and unilateral or bilateral practices (Philpott, 2001: 12-13; Zaiotti, 2011: 26). Schengen is organised around trans-governmental and flexible border control practices (Walters, 2010: 76; Zaiotti, 2011: 26). Brussels' practices, instead, are supranational, multilateral and legalistic (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). Now, regarding Warsaw culture, its practices are information gathering and analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology and professionalisation. Aside multilateralism encountered as a practice in Brussels culture, no other element of Warsaw's border control practices is relevant to Schengen or Westphalia. Actually, even multilateralism is conveyed and materialised differently for Brussels and Warsaw cultures. More specifically, Warsaw's practice of multilateral cooperation describes a multi-actor setting with the deployment of border guards and equipment from other member states, as well as the construction of formal and even informal collaborations with third countries, international institutions, EU agencies and stakeholders. Conversely, Brussels' multilateral practices refer to a common area governed by mutual legal provisions that ensure the four freedoms of movement in the EU, namely free movement of goods, services, capital and persons.

As for the border control community, Westphalia's is composed of officials from national governments and has a nationalist or governmental identity. Brussels' has a supranational character and consists of EU officials and particularly officers from the European Commission. Schengen's has a regionalist or intergovernmental identity and

¹²⁷ For the different conceptions of security, see Baldwin (1997).

a dual representation of officials from governments and the EU. Warsaw's is characterised as 'practitiocratic' for it is composed of border control practitioners. Although the latter two have a binary composition, they are diametrically opposite. The national officers of Schengen's community are Ministers of Interior, whereas, in Warsaw's, the national category refers to border guards. Similarly, Schengen's EU officials are members of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, while Warsaw's are Frontex officials. Hence, Schengen's community refers to a top level, whereas Warsaw's to the actual border control practitioners or the bottom level.

The difference of these cultures is also illustrated by the separate texts that promote the spirit of each culture. In this context, Westphalia culture is internalised in historic documents, such as the 1933 Montevideo Convention (Albahary, 2010; Rickart, 2015). Schengen's commonsense is being presented in the Schengen *acquis* (Walters, 2002; Marenin, 2010). Brussels, instead, has been inspired by the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty.¹²⁸ All these documents represent a different mentality for border control, given that they have been configured in different historical periods. In fact, Westphalia was a dominant culture for border control in Europe until the 1980s. Schengen, which replaced Westphalia, became the new dominant culture of border control in Europe in the 1990s, whereas Brussels, which was also a product of the 1990s, has never reached its full maturity and thus has not become a dominant culture. The chronological period during which these cultures were formed and the documents on which they were based upon are outdated, given that they responded to the needs and preoccupations of bygone circumstances.

Accordingly, Schengen culture, which was the last dominant culture for border control, reproduces the assumptions and practices for border control brought to European borders by the Schengen Agreement. Thus a border control spirit and reality that was relevant thirty-five years ago. Now, certain aspects of this reality, if not all, seem obsolete. Borders have changed as well as the tools and actors involved in border control. Likewise, Europe is not the same. After fundamental crises, membership expansion, deepened integration and new competences in the field of border management a new context has emerged that Warsaw culture seeks to address. This culture evolved after Frontex's consolidation as an EU border control actor in EU,

¹²⁸ For the importance of Maastricht Treaty for European integration, see Barth & Bijsmans (2018).

especially after 2011, which this research has set as a chronological starting point. Traces of this culture are found in contemporary texts, like the Eurosur Regulation (Regulation, 2013), the 2016 Frontex Regulation (Regulation, 2016) and the 2019 EIBM Strategy (Frontex, 2019xx). This means that Warsaw culture is a product of today's environment. It outlines the current border control regime and refers to the present, not to the past.

In summary, each culture represents a different border control mentality and even era. Westphalia formed in the 1930s focuses on state sovereignty (Ruggie, 1983; Krasner, 1999). Schengen, which was dominant in the 1990s, puts forward an intergovernmental approach. Brussels, developed in a parallel period to Schengen, considers borders as bridges (Zaiotti, 2011: 26). Yet, these references do not describe the current situation at the borders. Therefore, Warsaw's emergence seems like a foregone conclusion. After all, as analysed in this section, Warsaw culture is different in every level from the Westphalia, Brussels and even Schengen cultures. Nevertheless, to be formed and become selected by the members of the border control community an evolutionary path was followed.

Table 6.e¹²⁹

Cultures of border control in Europe				
	Westphalia	Brussels	Schengen	Warsaw
<i>Period</i>	1940s - 1980s	1985 - 1990s	1985 - 2000s	2011-Today
<i>Borders</i>	linear, barriers	bridges, no internal / external	semi-linear, internal / external distinction	twofold role: national border & EU external border
<i>Border control</i>	national, governmental, strict, military emphasis	supranational, balanced responsibility, economic emphasis	trans- governmental, asymmetric responsibility, security emphasis	securitisation, technocracy, surveillance, intelligence, extra- territorialisation / intra- territorialisation
<i>Practices</i>	unilateral, formal	supranational, multilateral, legalistic	trans- governmental, flexible	information gathering & analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology, pro- fessionalisation
<i>Community</i>	national (governmental)	supranational (European)	regional (inter- governmental)	practitiocratic
<i>Community Members</i>	officials from national governments	EU officials (Commission)	officials from national governments & EU officials (Council, Commission)	Border control practirioners (border guards & Frontex)
<i>Reference Texts</i>	Montevideo Convention, UN Charter, national Constitutions	Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty	Schengen acquis	Frontex Regulation, Eurosur Regulation, EIBM Strategy

¹²⁹ The elements included in Westphalia, Schengen and Brussels cultures are based on Zaiotti's analysis and typology (2011: 26).

6.5 Cultural evolution: From Schengen to Warsaw border control culture

The transition from one culture to another, as already mentioned in the theoretical chapter, occurs with a cultural evolution. Following that, this section applies Ruben Zaiotti's (2011: 27-43) method for the operationalisation of cultural evolution presented in Chapter 3 (Schema 3.c) in order to trace how Warsaw has emerged as a border control culture becoming the new 'norm' in EU border control and taking the place of the Schengen culture. This investigation takes a process-tracing form, because methodologically it follows a sequential path shedding light on policy or social change (Kay & Baker, 2015).

The first step for a cultural evolution is culture's variation. Cultural variation refers to the emergence of an alternative border control culture (Zaiotti, 2011: 31-32). The previous section demonstrated that Warsaw culture varies from the border control cultures of Schengen, Westphalia and Brussels. In fact, Warsaw culture is composed of different assumptions and practices compared to the other. This illustrates that a cultural variation has already taken place. As a result, the dominant culture, Schengen, has become challenged. Yet, the members of the border control community, instead of moving towards the already formed alternative cultures of Brussels, even Westphalia, they concocted a new culture, namely Warsaw. An essential and critical juncture that visibly shifted the circumstances at EU borders and activated this cultural variation was the establishment of Frontex. Since its operational activation, this agency started being involved in EU border control. This involvement created an altered context, which could not be explained by Schengen's tenets formed in the 1990s. Still, the creation of this border control actor was not the sole change in relation to Schengen's regime. New technologies, more intense migratory pressures, increased cross-border mobility represent just a few of last years' developments affecting borders and border control (Tholen, 2010). All these have triggered questions about the relevance of the Schengen model (Carrera et al., 2013), leading to its variation.

After variation, the next step of the cultural evolution is culture's selection. This process has two phases. First, culture's pursuit and second, culture's anchoring (Zaiotti, 2011: 33-37). The pursuit of Warsaw's culture started after the development of the 'practitiocratic' community. As already mentioned, the community of Schengen culture was composed of Ministers of Interior and top EU officials from the European Commission or the Council. During Schengen's consolidation, border control practitioners did not have many chances to communicate, exchange views and feel

connected with their European colleagues. Despite being the persons that were actually conducting border control, they were left on the fringes of their national borders. So, everything about border control was decided away from the borders.

However, this changed when border control practitioners realised their common disposition. The establishment of specific work standards, rules, training curricula and codes of conduct diffused a spirit of ‘borderguardship’ (Frontex, 2015g: 109) and harmonised border control actions (Paul, 2017). Moreover, the initiation of certain socialisation activities, like joint operations, exchange programmes, field visits, workshops and seminars enabled border guards to interact, communicate and start perceiving border guards from other member states as their colleagues or even friends (Interviewee 3; 13). The same applies to challenges at the borders or difficulties in border control, as they became common preoccupations (Interviewee 12). All these diffused a commonsense among border guards and progressively built the feeling of a community as border control became a ‘joint enterprise’ (Adler, 2008: 199). However, this community could not be related to the Schengen culture, because border control practitioners were absent from the composition of the Schengen community and therefore did not participate in the development of the culture. As a result, they started forming and pursuing a different approach that seemed more relevant to their working environment and more effective in addressing contemporary border control preoccupations. So, the pursuit of a new culture stemmed from a reasonable decision of the members of the community to address more effectively border control challenges (Zaiotti, 2011: 34).

Subsequent to the decision to pursue an alternative culture, is its anchoring, which includes culture’s performance testing and, if considered successful, its collective adoption by the members of the community (Zaiotti, 2011: 34-37). This testing has been enabled mainly through Frontex’s operational activities and especially its joint operations. Accordingly, in December 2005 Frontex coordinated its first joint operation demonstrating a novel border management and border guarding for the EU borders. In 2006, the number of joint operations increased to twelve and in 2007 to twenty-seven (Frontex, 2007a: 17). This numerical boost was accompanied by a significant expansion in member states’ participation (Table 6.f). These joint operations incorporated the assumptions and practices of the Warsaw culture, thus testing their materialisation. For instance, the operational presence of Frontex at the borders reflected the assumption that, besides being national territories, borders also have an

EU external dimension. Also, the method upon which these joint operations were based, such as risk analysis, multilateral cooperation, information gathering and analysis, the use of technology and the deployment of guest officers, incorporates Warsaw's assumptions and practices enabling their experimentation. 'Hard' proof assessing Warsaw culture's performance includes data regarding the apprehended irregular border crossers, overstayers, smuggled goods, returned migrants and other cross-border crimes, which Frontex regularly publishes assessing its operations.

The outcome of this evaluation has been determined as positive leading to Warsaw culture's collective adoption. In particular, the increase in the number of operations as well as the member states participating in these operations confirms the positive predisposition towards this border control model. The same affirmative evaluation can be extracted from the increased budget for Frontex's operational activities¹³⁰ and the agency's institutional enhancements (Regulation, 2007; 2011). Likewise, the activation of Frontex's RABIT mechanism in 2010 after a Greek request for the provision of operational assistance during exceptional migratory pressure at the Greek-Turkish land border (Frontex, 2010d), indicates that Frontex, representing this new model, deemed an effective solution to tackle a border management crisis. Apart, from member states and EU actors, there was also an increased acceptance of this border control regime as implemented by Frontex among third countries. For this reason, in 2009, just four years after the first joint operation, border guards from neighbouring third countries¹³¹ started participating in Frontex coordinated joint operations (Frontex, 2009a: 28). All these indicate that the testing of Warsaw's culture has been considered successful. Following that, the border control community finalising culture's anchoring has adopted the Warsaw model.

Last phase for a cultural evolution is culture's retention. This phase refers to culture's institutionalisation, which takes place with the integration of its assumptions and practices in a legally binding context (Zaiotti, 2011: 42). In practice, the last decade there has been a significant expansion of border control documents, which formally incorporate the elements of Warsaw's culture into the border control policy domain, after their testing at the borders. Key documents representing this shift from Schengen to Warsaw culture is the Eurosur regulation that sets a surveillance system (Regulation,

¹³⁰ See table 6.d.

¹³¹ Border officers from Albania, Croatia, Moldavia, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine (Frontex, 2009a: 28).

2013), the 2016 Frontex regulation that turns border management into a shared responsibility (Regulation, 2016) and the EIBM Strategy that both develops and operationalises the EIBM context (Frontex, 2019xx).

Yet, in addition to these key reference texts, there is a general shift towards Warsaw's spirit as manifested in various border control documents. Indeed, comparing the Schengen Borders Code of 2006 and its 2016 revision, there is a substantial rise in the use of the words 'risk' and 'security' across the 2016 document.¹³² Both words reflect Warsaw culture's mentality. Moreover, the new documents emphasise the use of technology, like the EIBM Strategy (Frontex, 2019xx). However, the word 'technology' was missing from earliest IBM definitions (Council of the EU, 2006a). Similarly, the concept of the pre-frontier area, which implements the border control assumption of extra-territorialisation expanding the border area in neighbouring countries, has started to be used officially after 2008 (Commission, 2008). Another effect of the Warsaw regime is the 'hotspot' approach introduced in 2015 with the European Agenda on Migration, which materialises a securitisation context due to its emergency character (Commission, 2015a). Thus, the adopted new EU documents manifest a change in border control rhetoric and a diverse border control approach with new measures and tools. Besides confirming this change, these documents also constitute a channel for the institutionalisation of the new culture's tenets leading therefore to Warsaw's retention.

Summarising, these were the different steps for a cultural evolution (Schema 6.g), which were presented in a chronological sequence in order to follow a process-tracing inquiry (Collier, 2011: 824). This analysis showed that a cultural evolution has been successfully actualised with the emergence of Warsaw as a new dominant border control culture. Thus, this section confirmed the third sub-hypothesis, namely that new assumptions and practices have been initiated and adopted by the border control community contesting Schengen culture (H3). Actually, since the finalisation of the cultural evolution with the phase of cultural retention, Warsaw now constitutes the dominant culture of EU border control replacing Schengen. This analysis was based on sequence evidence (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 99), which manifests that the sequential steps undertaken coincide with the path for cultural evolution.

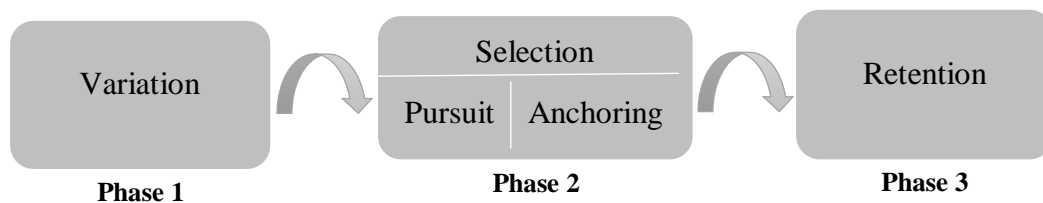
¹³² The word 'risk' is mentioned 25 times in the 2016 document, in comparison to 16 in the respective 2006 text and the word 'security' 51 times in relation to 35 in the 2006 document (Regulation, 2006; 2016/399).

A new border control culture has emerged, supporting the earlier prediction on the promotion of an alternative border control culture by Frontex as it confirms the expected outcome: the emergence of a new culture. With this outcome as a guide, an inductive path will be followed to trace Frontex’s impact on Warsaw culture.

Table 6.f^{f133}

Comparison of member states participation in Frontex joint operations	2006	2007
Sea Borders	15	22
Land Borders	8	23
Air Borders	18	26

Schema 6.g Cultural evolution¹³⁴



6.6 Beyond Schengen: Exploring Frontex’s impact on Warsaw border control culture

The previous sections uncovered the emergence of a new culture in EU border control labelled as Warsaw, which varies from the regime of Schengen that constituted the dominant culture in the 1990s. But what about Frontex’s contribution to this culture? Addressing this question, the research will now move to the role of Frontex in promoting Warsaw culture. Accordingly, this part, which constitutes the last analytical section of the thesis, investigates what was Frontex’s role in the formation of the border control culture of Warsaw and its subsequent consolidation as the new dominant EU border control culture. A border control culture, as presented previously, is composed of a set of border control assumptions and practices. In addition, to become shaped and materialised this culture depends on a border control community as well as on reference texts that institutionalise the culture’s main tenets. These elements apart from components, they also constitute essential conditions for a border control culture.

¹³³ Reproduced by Frontex (2007a: 17-18).

¹³⁴ Based on Zaiotti’s model of cultural evolution (2011: 36).

Drawing on this, the analysis of Frontex's role regarding the consolidation and promotion of Warsaw border control culture, examines Frontex's impact on these conditions, namely the border control community, the regime's texts as well as the border control assumptions and practices of Warsaw culture. Following a process-tracing research design that includes the formulation of predictions (George & Bennett, 2005: 206), these three conditions are analysed separately for an in-depth examination of the causal process that facilitated their development.

6.6.1 Frontex and the condition of the border control community

To validate that Frontex is promoting Warsaw culture, the condition-specific prediction of this part is that Frontex has developed Warsaw's border control community. This prediction is correct, because Frontex as a border control actor enabled and, at the same time, constructed, Warsaw's 'practitiocratic' border control community. Thanks to Frontex, the practitioners of border control across the EU borders came into direct contact forming a community. The phrase of its Executive Director 'let the machinery work' reflects Frontex's emphasis on border control practitioners (EBCG Day, 2014). After all, border control practitioners 'know much more about borders and what Europe is than politicians' (Interviewee 13). In the community's development, Frontex had a key role manifesting a sequence evidence:

[Frontex Officer] *'Frontex builds this border control community. Things were different before Frontex. They changed after Frontex'* (Interviewee 13).

The institutional structures that existed before Frontex, like SCIFA+,¹³⁵ referred solely to the heads of member state border control services. This means top-level officials, most of which did not stem from border guarding services. Rather, they belonged to a broader professional corpus, such as the police, which was meeting in the context of SCIFA+ to conduct preparatory discussions about migration, border control and asylum issues for the Justice and Home Affairs Council meetings.

Thus, before Frontex there was no opportunity for border control practitioners to meet and discuss practical matters of common interest. After Frontex, this intangible

¹³⁵ For more information regarding SCIFA+, see chapter 2.3.1.

boundary separating border guards from their European colleagues has been lifted. Accordingly, Frontex enabled the deployment of border guards to borders other than their national. Hence, border officers that were not high-ranking staff were able to go abroad, guard other borders and enrich their professional knowledge and personal experiences (Interviewee 13). Characteristic of this is the narrative:

[National Border Guard] *'Frontex has broadened our horizons'*
(Interviewee 1).

Apart from joint missions, border guards started interacting with each other during workshops, conferences and seminars. In this vein, of particular importance is the EBCG Day, which started in 2010 by Frontex. It takes place annually in Poland with an aim 'to strengthen and improve the European community of border guards' (Frontex, 2010i). In addition, Frontex has produced a monthly newspaper labelled 'The Border Post' that keeps the border guard community informed about current border control trends and Frontex's actions. The interaction among border control practitioners was also fostered with the development of common training activities. Actually, only in 2018, Frontex trained 4,000 officers (Frontex, 2019h). On education, Frontex has developed a European Joint Master's Programme in Strategic Border Management, which constitutes the highest education accreditation for border guards. Actually, as a Master's course it sets standards, transfers knowledge and seeks to 'promote a European border guard culture' (Frontex, 2017ie: 14).

At the same time, the harmonisation of border control tools and policies with the development of best practices and standard operational procedures diffuses a commonsense among border control practitioners. To this end, Frontex produces handbooks, codes of conduct, reference material, technical programmes, specialised training and education as well as common indicators - for instance regarding risk analysis or evaluation standards. All these construct shared understandings and common routines guiding actions and behaviour. Border officers work in a similar way (Interviewee 8). Simultaneously, shared understandings and common routines function as a transmission channel to other actors (Interviewee 13). In turn, this transmission weaves together border guards enabling them to communicate and socialise with their colleagues finding more things uniting them than keeping them apart resulting in the development of a 'we feeling' (Nathan, 2006: 276)

Turning to account evidence, this community spirit and like-mindedness is reflected in several narratives from border guards, like:

[Belgian Officer] *'We are constantly learning from each other. We are building a network of officers that you can always ask for help'* (Frontex, 2018id).

[German Officer] *'Guest officers are like a large family now'* (Frontex, 2014g: 27).

Hence, with the establishment of Frontex, a palpable change occurred that led to the construction of a border guard community consisting of border control practitioners. Accordingly, Warsaw's border control community did not exist before Frontex. Instead, it started being formed after Frontex's establishment. Thus, Frontex became the initiator of this community enabling its members to socialise and interact.

Besides its initial construction, Frontex also sustains this community with the development of an *esprit de corps* among border guards (Frontex, 2014g: 49), given that almost every Frontex activity nourishes and maintains a professional 'habitus' (Bigo, 2014). For instance, with the publication of risk analysis reports, the production of operational plans for each joint operation, the development of handbooks for best practices and training strategies, Frontex conveys and transmits the community's language or, better explained, its meaning of discourse (Crawford, 2002: 65). So, it gives to the members of the community not only the space and occasion for interaction but also the tools to interact and interpret the others. Furthermore, it produces specific signification signs (Wedeen, 2002: 720), which allow the community's identification. These signs include common symbols, like the Frontex armband that Frontex guest officers wear during their deployment at national borders, common rituals, such as the EBCG Day, as well as common norms and values as presented in Frontex's Codes of Conduct. All these constitute trace evidence of Frontex's role within the community.

In other words, Frontex is the actor that enabled the development of this border control community, because it initiated all these activities and means for social learning, social interaction and socialisation among its members (Checkel, 2001b: 53-59). These permitted the community's consolidation and sustenance through the diffusion of collective intentionality (Searle, 1995: 23-26). In other words, Frontex functioning as a 'melting pot' built a border control community (Interviewee 13). It could be assumed

therefore that without Frontex the ‘practitiocratic’ border guard community could not have been developed and, in turn, the Warsaw culture could not have emerged. In fact, this reveals a causal role for Frontex portrayed as a causal chain in the following process-tracing visualisation:

Frontex ———▶ Practitiocratic Border Control Community ———▶ Warsaw Culture

In sum, the prediction according to which Frontex has developed Warsaw’s border control community is correct as inferred from sequence, account and trace evidence. Moreover, this conclusion is in line with the theoretical approach of this research as well as with the empirical manifestations of this process-tracing part.

6.6.2 Frontex and the condition of reference texts

To continue unfolding Frontex’s impact on Warsaw border control culture and assess whether this agency actively promotes it, this part’s condition-specific prediction is that Frontex has participated in the production of Warsaw culture’s reference texts. As mentioned, key reference texts for Warsaw culture are the 2016 Frontex Regulation, the 2013 Eurosur Regulation and the 2019 EIBM Strategy (Frontex, 2019xx).

Starting chronologically, the 2013 Eurosur Regulation has established the European Border Surveillance System, namely Eurosur. According to Frontex’s Executive Director, Eurosur revolutionises EU border control by providing a ‘pan-European dimension to situational awareness’ (Frontex, 2012f: 5). Crucially, with the employment of modern technological tools, it sets the European frontiers under a state of constant surveillance (Jeandesboz, 2017: 256).

Tracing Eurosur, it was first proposed by the European Commission in November 2006 (2006: 3). However, this proposal was based on two studies prepared by Frontex, namely MEDSEA and BORTEC (Commission, 2008). In particular, MEDSEA was delivered by Frontex in July 2006. This means four months before Eurosur’s conception by the European Commission as a possible system for border surveillance. As a Frontex staff mentioned, ‘the MEDSEA study was the foundation of everything which followed’ [...] and BORTEC and Eurosur ‘came from MEDSEA’ (Frontex, 2010a: 43). Although MEDSEA constitutes a feasibility study concerning the development of a Mediterranean Coastal Patrols Network, it also addresses the issue of surveillance. In this vein, it states that ‘surveillance [...] has to cover not just an entry

point, but a variable-depth surface' (Council of the EU, 2006b: 11). This conforms to a wider monitoring in the pre-frontier area and not just at the border crossing point, which is now being materialised via Eurosur.

The other study based on which Eurosur was drafted is BORTEC. This study was carried out by Frontex in the end of 2006 and was presented in January 2007. Though only few parts of this study are publicly accessible (Commission, 2008), BORTEC constitutes a key document for the establishment of Eurosur, because it explores the technical feasibility for its establishment (Wolff, 2012: 144). In particular, it presents the basic axes of Eurosur's design putting forward a 'system-of-systems' approach for border surveillance (Jeandesboz, 2017: 174), which places Frontex at its centre with the agency acting as its chief coordinator (Frontex, 2007d). Both studies constituted the basis for Eurosur's implementation, taking into account that the initial suggestion of the European Commission for Eurosur creation did not entail any concrete measure regarding this system's establishment or components (Commission, 2006). Consequently, Frontex's studies became the reference guide for the articulation of the Eurosur proposal. After all, the structure model proposed by MEDSEA referring to the creation of National Coordination Centres as well as BORTEC's proposal for attributing to Frontex a coordination role, are all included in the adopted Eurosur Regulation. Thus, evidently, Frontex has participated in the production of the Eurosur text. Nevertheless, most importantly, the agency has also defined Eurosur by designing it and proposing concrete measures for its development.

Regarding now the 2016 Frontex Regulation, Frontex has participated in the discussions during the document's preparation. In particular, this Regulation has been based on a proposal of the European Commission (European Commission, 2015b). This proposal has been drafted in line with the recommendations of Frontex's Management Board. Actually, the Commission acknowledges that the proposal 'reflects the majority of recommendations' of the Management Board regarding Frontex's enhancement (European Commission, 2015b: 7) clearly approving Frontex's Management Board rationale in its entirety. Apart from the input of Frontex's Management Board, European Commission's proposal, and in turn the 2016 Frontex Regulation, have been drafted having as reference the feedback and suggestions of Frontex staff. In fact, Commission's proposal has been written in accordance with a feasibility study produced by the company Unisys (2014). This study was examining the prospect of the creation of a European System of Border Guards. Investigating this issue, various

stakeholders were contacted, including EU member states, the European Commission, the European Parliament and Frontex. Unisys conducted interviews with representatives of Frontex as well as visited Frontex's headquarters to collect the agency's expertise (Unisys, 2014: 11). Fourteen Frontex officers contributed information to this study, whereas regarding representatives of other stakeholders at EU level, only seven Members of the European Parliament and one officer from the European Commission were contacted (Unisys, 2014: 40-41). The difference in these numbers highlights the increasing importance attributed to Frontex's border control expertise. Hence, Frontex was actively involved in the drafting of the 2016 Frontex Regulation providing its expertise, general input as well as concrete suggestions about the agency's future development. It should be noted that apart from being a mere participator, Frontex has shaped the provisions of this Regulation. Accordingly, several Frontex proposals have been included in the final text, like a strengthened role in the field of returns, the development of a common integrated risk analysis model, the establishment of common training standards, co-ownership with member states of technical equipment and new responsibilities during emergencies (Unisys, 2014: 18-19; Regulation, 2016).

The last document for investigation constitutes the EIBM Strategy produced by Frontex in 2019. This strategy, though operational and technical, it constitutes component of the EIBM at both national and EU level. Actually, it sets the parameters for the mapping and then implementation of an overall EIBM Strategy. In particular, the 2016 Regulation states that any national IBM Strategy must take into account the EIBM Strategy drafted by Frontex (Regulation, 2016). This means that Frontex, besides being responsible for the content of the technical strategy developed, it also affects the national strategies of its member states, because they need to be in line with that of Frontex's. After all, Frontex's strategic document chronologically proceeds national strategies.¹³⁶ The same applies to the theoretical work for EIBM that will be put forward by the European Commission (European Commission, 2018d), which is still under consultation, and therefore it will follow Frontex's text and lead. All these indicate Frontex's running start and, as a result, comparative advantage, in the EIBM development. Actually, Frontex's Executive Director has stressed - since 2014 - the

¹³⁶ Exception to this is Finland, which since 2018 has developed its national IBM Strategy (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 2018).

necessity for the articulation of a renewed IBM in order to be valid in today's circumstances (EBCG Day, 2014), taking into account that the last document describing IBM's components was tabled in 2006 (Council of the EU, 2006a). Thus, since the very beginning, Frontex has brought in the border control policy agenda the prospect for an IBM reform. Frontex not only pushed for an IBM reformulation but also defined its final trajectory. The EIBM Strategy produced by Frontex, even though it is recognised as technical and operational, still is a strategic document that entails a vision, values, priorities, strategic objectives and proposed actions (Frontex, 2019xx). These elements reset the whole border control policy and place Frontex at its core by rendering the agency as EIBM's guardian (Frontex, 2019xx: 17). Crucially, this Strategy reflects Frontex's vision for border control and the EU borders incorporating Frontex's and Warsaw's assumptions and practices.

In this vein, this Strategy refers to pre-frontier surveillance, advanced use of technology, information sharing, multilateral cooperation, professionalisation as well as it diffuses a securitisation rhetoric with frequent use of the words 'security' and 'threat' (Frontex, 2019xx). Furthermore, with this document Frontex proposes specific measures for the EIBM operationalisation at national and European level. So, it encourages both the member states and the EU actors to adopt the approach presented by Frontex. Though this Strategy has been drafted after consultations with national and EU stakeholders, it still constitutes a Frontex final production. This is evident throughout the document, because the Strategy's layout, terminology, structure and even selection of colouring correspond to Frontex's previous publications. Thus, the EIBM Strategy constitutes a Frontex document, because it has been produced by Frontex and entails the agency's spirit. The above analysis validates the condition-specific prediction according to which Frontex has participated in the production of Warsaw culture's reference texts. As it was demonstrated by sequence, account and trace evidence, Frontex had a key role in the drafting of the 2013 Eurosur Regulation, 2016 Frontex Regulation and 2019 EIBM Strategy. This role was not constrained to technical expertise or statistical data provided by the agency; Frontex was also actively involved in the preparation of these documents shaping even their content with the inclusion of Frontex's suggestions. This uncovers Frontex's causal role represented with the following process-tracing visualisation as a causal chain:



Yet, apart from these documents, Frontex has also participated in the drafting of various key border control texts, such as the Smart Borders Package (Interviewee 12; 14) and ETIAS (PwC, 2016). Moreover, Frontex regularly provides national and EU authorities with statistical data about irregular border crossings, which act as evidence for the articulation of new initiatives and policy tools. Thus, Frontex is promoting Warsaw culture via its involvement in the production of key texts that institutionalise parts of this culture.

6.6.3 Frontex and the condition of assumptions and practices

Last aspect for investigation constitutes Warsaw's assumptions and practices. More specifically, this section explores whether Frontex impacts on the assumptions and practices composing the Warsaw culture. Actually, it has already been proven that certain assumptions and practices of Frontex constitute part of the Warsaw culture. Yet, the examination now focuses on Frontex's role for the production of these assumptions and practices. This part's condition-specific prediction is that Frontex has developed Warsaw culture's assumptions and practices.

Starting with border assumptions, the consideration that borders constitute part of the national territory, of course cannot be counted as a Frontex conception. Rather, it is traced back in the Westphalian state-centric system (Zaiotti, 2011: 48). Conversely, the assumption that borders are also EU external borders has been developed by Frontex through the agency's involvement with border control. Accordingly, the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Schengen Agreement introduced the term 'external border' at the EU lexicon. Following that, the EU started acquiring competence in the policy area of migration and border control adopting new legal instruments and policy initiatives, which referred to EU's external borders. Nevertheless, Frontex has rendered the EU external border from a policy issue and vocabulary term into a border assumption. Border guards do not perceive any more borders as just their national borders but borders of Europe (Interviewee 12). More specifically, before Frontex, national officers were managing their national borders, which, institutionally and legally, were also functioning as EU external borders. After Frontex's introduction, in these borders started operating officers from other EU member states. This development transformed the EU external border into a border assumption, namely a cognitive structure. Characteristic of this is the following narrative of a border officer deployed to Greece:

[Slovenian Officer] *'I'm European, and I consider Greece's borders to be our borders too'* (Frontex, 2019xxii).

Turning to border control assumptions, securitisation, technocracy, extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation, surveillance and intelligence constitute elements encountered at the borders well before Frontex's establishment. Nevertheless, they did not constitute border control assumptions.

Regarding securitisation, border control was always perceived to be diffusing a securitisation logic (Huysmans, 2000). However, Frontex's working method and activities gave a concrete substance to this securitisation as well as formalised it with the inclusion of a securitised terminology in its documents.¹³⁷

Technocracy was not a border control characteristic encountered in every EU external border (Baldwin-Edwards & Fakiolas, 1998). It remained dependent on national choices for policy design and implementation. Yet, technocracy, started being more evident with Frontex's operation. Accordingly, Frontex, being an EU agency, it constitutes a technocratic actor (Parkin, 2012: 1). Building on this, it started performing its tasks spreading a technocratic mentality across the EU borders. For instance, this has occurred with the development of specialised IT reporting tools, which now compose compulsory border control components for every national border control authority, like JORA.

Extra-territorialisation/intra-territorialisation, namely the shift of the border control 'topos' has been a characteristic of the meta-Westphalian era (Agnew, 1994). However, Frontex intensified it facilitating and, in parallel, normalising with its actions the management of borders away from the fixed geographic borderline, for instance with surveillance in the pre-frontier area. As a Frontex officer has mentioned, in five years from now there will be no concrete geographic point functioning as a border. Instead, border control will be conducted through the collection of background information about indented travellers (Interviewee 14). Thus, the border becomes less and less a geographic point at a map.

Intelligence constitutes another assumption, which though not coined as a term by Frontex; however, this agency has rendered it a central border control characteristic.

¹³⁷ For this terminology, see chapter 6.2.1.

Actually, Frontex is considered an ‘intelligence-led’ agency (Wilson, 2018: 46). Promoting this role, according to the agency’s institutional narrative, Frontex implements an ‘intelligence-driven approach to border management’ (Frontex, 2017ic: 7). In doing so, it has integrated intelligence in most of its border control functions. For instance, every Frontex operation is intelligence-driven. Furthermore, the agency has established intelligence communities to collect data and intelligence sharing platforms. All these measures have operationalised intelligence rendering it an assumption for EU border control.

Last border control characteristic is surveillance. The empirical research at the borders has already manifested that Frontex has installed modern surveillance systems in both Evros and Lampedusa. Moreover, the previous part uncovered that Eurosur, namely the system that for the first time offered real-time pan-European surveillance, has been developed by Frontex studies. Hence, though Frontex did not invent the wheel of surveillance, it enabled its implementation at an EU context putting European frontiers under constant and total surveillance (Jeandesboz, 2017: 256).

Now concerning border control practices, namely information gathering and analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology and professionalisation, they do not constitute a Frontex innovation. Yet, they have been intensified at the EU external borders becoming border control practices via Frontex’s function.

In particular, to enable and ensure information dissemination, the European Commission and the member states chose to create Frontex (Regulation, 2004). This means that information gathering and analysis was always a border control preoccupation. Still, it was not an achieved goal. Frontex, responding to this need, started functioning as an information hub. It built new IT reporting systems, like JORA and Eurosur, which allowed the gathering, sharing and then analysis of border control information. Furthermore, after Frontex’s proposal, new permanent structures were established in each member state at local and national level, namely National Coordination Centres (NCC) and Local Coordination Centres (LCC), which facilitate the implementation of information management (Frontex, 2019d).

Multilateral cooperation and Frontex could be perceived as synonymous. Accordingly, Frontex missions are named joint operations indicating that they cannot be conducted solely by one member state. In parallel, over the years Frontex has built its cooperation with various actors at national, EU and international level as well as with private companies. However, multilateral cooperation was not initiated by

Frontex. Instead, it can be traced in the Schengen initiative as well as the formation of certain bilateral or regional cross-border cooperation structures.¹³⁸ Still, Frontex, with its function transformed multilateral cooperation from a contractual provision or *ad hoc* institutional setting into an organised activity, namely a border control practice.

As for professionalisation, the pursuit of professionalism in the field of border control did not constitute an EU border control priority. Instead, it rested upon national systems to promote their border control authorities' professionalisation leading to severe differentiations across Europe. This omission at the EU level is reflected by the fact that the European Commission's Communication for IBM did not include any reference to professionalism (Commission, 2002). This has changed after Frontex. The agency has made professional excellence its 'institutional mantra' (Frontex, 2014g: 15) compelling it to urge for professionalism during its operation at the borders and through its interaction with other partners. Also, Frontex has listed professionalism as the first value in the EIBM Strategy (Frontex, 2019xx: 11). Thus, Frontex has enabled professionalisation to become an EU border control practice.

Last, but not least, is technology. The advancement of technology has been accompanied by its proliferation in the border control conduct. This constitutes a global trend that transcends the EU borders. Trying to keep up with this development, the European Commission has repeatedly prompted its member states to employ new technologies for border checks (Commission, 2002). Yet, it remained a national issue dependent on budget restrictions and policy choices. Frontex has tried to remedy this. For example, it has brought modern technological tools at the EU borders during its operations, such as thermo-vision vehicles in Evros that Greece still has not acquired, yet is able to use because of Frontex. In addition, the agency tests and proposes new technological solutions for a harmonisation of technological capacities across the EU and innovative border management products. In this context, since its creation, Frontex has promoted the use of biometrics and automatic border crossing (ABC) systems (Interviewee 14) producing studies, operational guidelines and best practices as well as organising conferences. Measuring Frontex's impact, in 2011 seven member states were operating or testing ABC systems (Frontex, 2011g), whereas in 2015 fourteen (Frontex, 2015h). Of course, this significant increase, which also constitutes a pattern

¹³⁸ See for instance the Nordic Co-Operation (2019) and Spanish-Moroccan relations in the 1990s (Lixi, 2017).

evidence (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 180), is linked to the general technological progress, but up to an extent it can also be attributed to Frontex's fixation with these operative solutions. So, Frontex has enabled and intensified the use of technology for border controls purposes.

The above manifest that Frontex, though it did not invent new border control concepts, still it has developed them into border control assumptions and practices. This analysis, drawn from trace, pattern, sequence and account evidence (Beach & Pedersen, 2013) validates the condition-specific prediction that Frontex has developed Warsaw culture's assumptions and practices. Exception constitutes the first border assumption, namely that borders are part of the national territory, which derives from the Westphalian regime. All the other assumptions and practices have been consolidated and reproduced by Frontex. This unfolds Frontex's causal role, taking into account that these assumptions and practices constitute a condition for Warsaw culture's emergence, as delineated in the following causal chain schema:

Frontex → Border Control Assumptions & Practices → Warsaw Culture

Accordingly, from a fragmented adoption dependent on national prioritisation or an EU aspiration limited to text references, these elements of border control were converted into border control assumptions and practices redefining the border control conduct. This has been enabled by Frontex, which operationalised all these elements with concrete measures, terminology and initiatives giving them concrete substance. In turn, this analysis confirms the fourth sub-hypothesis, namely that the newly adopted assumptions and practices, that is Warsaw assumptions and practices, have been promoted by Frontex (H4).

6.7 Frontex's impact on Warsaw culture: Process-traced?

The research path followed in the previous sections traced Frontex's impact on Warsaw culture. After confirming that a new border control culture has emerged, the research tried to validate this chapter's general prediction, namely that Frontex has promoted an alternative border control culture and not Schengen. This has also been shared by Frontex staff and national border officers, as manifested with the narratives:

[Frontex Officer] '*Frontex is developing this culture*' (Interviewee 14).

[Frontex Officer] *'There is now a common culture [...] Frontex promoted this culture'* (Interviewee 12).

[National Border Officer] *'Frontex has created a common culture'* (Interviewee 10).

Examining the components of this culture, which also constitute its essential conditions, the analysis based on empirical manifestations as well as sequence, trace, account and pattern evidence confirmed that Frontex has produced Warsaw's border control community, reference texts as well as border control assumptions and practices. Consequently, Frontex impacts on Warsaw culture producing, promoting and consolidating its components. This, then, answers to the main research question of the thesis: *'how does Frontex impact on the culture of EU border control?'*

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine whether there is a new border control culture and, if yes, what was Frontex's role in the production and promotion of this culture. This was the last analytical section of this thesis aiming to complement the research at the borders by exploring Frontex and the current dominant border control culture. Drawing data from institutional discourse analysis, document analysis, interviews and process-tracing, this chapter addressed the main research question, that is how Frontex impacts on the culture of EU border control. To respond to this question, the sub-hypotheses were set as a sequential map guiding the structure of the chapter.

Accordingly, the chapter proceeded to Frontex's scrutiny, including its role as a border control actor and the agency's border control assumptions and practices. This investigation revealed the existence of common border control assumptions and practices at the borders and at Frontex that compose a border control culture; labelled by this study as Warsaw. The next part presented its main elements, namely Warsaw's assumptions and practices, and its 'practitiocratic' border control community, part of which is Frontex (H1). Essentially, Frontex as a border control actor and participating in this community has introduced and promoted new border control assumptions and practices (H2). After that, Warsaw culture has been compared in relation to the border control cultures of Schengen, Westphalia and Brussels, as presented in Zaiotti's typology (2011). This comparison unveiled that Warsaw differentiates itself from these cultures. Rather, it represents a new border control culture and model for border control.

Following that, Warsaw's path of cultural evolution has been traced demonstrating that Warsaw culture has indeed contested Schengen (H3), and now constitutes the new dominant culture of border control. The last part, through condition-specific predictions inspired by process-tracing, investigated Frontex's impact on Warsaw culture. The analysis concluded that Frontex impacts on Warsaw culture by producing and promoting its components, which function as conditions for the culture's emergence. These conditions refer to the border control community, reference texts and border control assumptions and practices (H4). The next chapter reviews the thesis' main findings and contribution, by linking them with the research goals formulated in the beginning of this research pursuit. Furthermore, it will discuss the limitations of the research design and analytical approach, propose areas for future scrutiny and indicate Frontex's prospective trajectory in EU border control.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

‘The common European border guard culture needs leadership’

(Frontex, 2017ie: 14)

7.1 Borders and Frontex: Restating the research question

Borders are more than an image or a cartographic representation. They are social constructions (Newman & Paasi, 1998: 187; Newman, 2006a: 173) that produce symbolic meanings, by regulating practices of power (Newman, 2003; van Houtum et al., 2005) and rites of passages (Hazarika, 2000). Keeping ‘borders on the mind’ (Agnew, 2008), epochal changes brought to the fore new turbulences and controversies about their function. But, instead of becoming obsolete in today’s world, borders are being redefined providing the field for the construction of new social and power relations (Lefebvre, 1991). We currently witness pressing border control challenges, which spur new questions on the relevance of border conceptions. These challenges emanate from a different trend than the reality that was moulded at the borders in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Iron Curtain and the rise in cross-border mobility in the 1980s and 1990s due to globalisation imperatives.

Nowadays, amongst the most pronounced border concerns is irregular migration, which has re-entered the border lexicon ‘with a vengeance’ (Vallet et al., 2014: 1; Andersson, 2016). Accordingly, in U.S.A., irregular - or illegal - migration became the ‘centrepiece’ of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign (Pierce & Selee, 2017), whereas, for the region of Europe, the surge in migration flows indicate that European Union has never escaped from the 2015 migration crisis rendering it a perpetual preoccupation for its member states and citizens. In this new context, borders and border control acquired a rising significance (Carrera & den Hertog, 2015; Bellamy et al., 2017; Csernaton, 2018). Regardless, this border control prominence has not led to the return of the Westphalian orders of territoriality. Instead, borders are being constructed and managed in terms of characteristics that differ from the border control regimes promoted by Westphalia or Schengen.

To explore the current border control approach in Europe, this thesis zoomed in a new border control actor, that is Frontex, which constitutes the EU’s border control agency. The aim was to explore the role of Frontex in EU border control elucidating the inner dynamics, workings and rationale of the present border control regime implemented at the borders as well as the actors and the processes that construct it. This

aims at reorienting the discussion about borders and border control in Europe by inserting new elements in their analysis, as those represented by culture.

7.2 Thesis main findings

This thesis constituted an exploratory scrutiny of Frontex's role in EU border control. Proceeding from the identification and formulation of the research question: '*what is Frontex's role in EU border control*', it addressed the question by applying a cultural approach operationalised through the analytical framework of 'cultures of border control (Zaiotti, 2011). Deriving data from multiple sources, such as interviews, fieldwork, process-tracing, case study analysis as well as institutional discourse and document analysis, it extracted important research findings as summarised below.¹³⁹ It unveiled the existence of a border control community, which operates at the borders shaping the border control conduct. This is an important research finding in that, as the scholarly review of Chapter 2 showed, the academic literature was not recognising its existence missing therefore an important element, that is a community of border control practitioners, with discrete cultural traits and socio-cultural exchanges.

To reach to this finding and assess Frontex's role, this thesis, firstly, proved that Frontex is a border control actor. This finding was attested by the empirical research at the borders as well as document and institutional discourse analysis. Possession of actorness led to the conclusion that Frontex is more than an instrument or a vehicle (Reid-Henry, 2013: 200). Instead, Frontex constitutes a mature border control actor that acts at the borders producing new meanings and actions as well as promoting its own assumptions and practices for border control. Research at the borders uncovered the border control assumptions and practices that exist in Evros and Lampedusa. The *in-situ* analysis as well as data from primary and secondary literature exhibited that there are certain common border control assumptions and practices in these two borders composing therefore cultural traits for the border control conduct. Based on the research at the borders and at Frontex, this study manifested that there is a new border control culture, which this study labelled as Warsaw culture. This culture consists of the common border control assumptions and practices traced in Evros, Lampedusa and Frontex. The border control assumptions refer to securitisation, technocracy, re-territorialisation, surveillance and intelligence. The border control practices include

¹³⁹ For an overview of thesis' findings, see table 7.a.

information gathering and analysis, multilateral cooperation, technology and professionalisation.

Analysing these border control assumptions and practices, the research found that this culture varies from the paradigms of Schengen, Westphalia and Brussels. Continuing this analysis, the thesis showed that Warsaw culture constitutes a unique border control trajectory included in reference texts and promoted by a ‘practitiocratic’ border control community composed of Frontex and national border guards. Next, by interrogating this new border control culture through the path for cultural evolution (Zaiotti, 2011: 27-43), this research detected that Schengen is no longer the dominant border control culture or regime for border control. On the contrary, after its successful institutionalisation, Warsaw culture has become the dominant border control culture replacing Schengen. These findings and analysis provided the basis for the exploration of Frontex’s role in EU border control. Accordingly, in the last section the thesis showed that Frontex impacts on Warsaw culture. This impact refers to the (re)production and promotion of this culture’s main components, namely its border control community, reference texts and border control assumptions and practices. More specifically, using a process-tracing methodology, this thesis proved that Frontex has developed Warsaw’s border control community, has participated in the production of Warsaw culture’s reference texts as well as has promoted Warsaw culture’s assumptions and practices. All these constituted essential conditions for Warsaw’s emergence manifesting Frontex’s impact.

Hence, this thesis’ research concludes that Frontex shapes EU border control through the promotion of Warsaw culture.¹⁴⁰ Actually, by promoting and producing the components of Warsaw culture, Frontex has not only created a new border control approach or a new border control policy community. It has also rendered it the new dominant culture of border control reshaping border control and borders in Europe. To recap, this thesis investigated Frontex and the border control conduct at the borders revealing the emergence of a new border control culture different from the Schengen paradigm, although Schengen was considered to be the dominant culture for border control (Zaiotti, 2011). Exploring this culture and the members composing its community, it showed that there is a border control community at the borders with a practitiocratic character. This community has been created by Frontex, because this

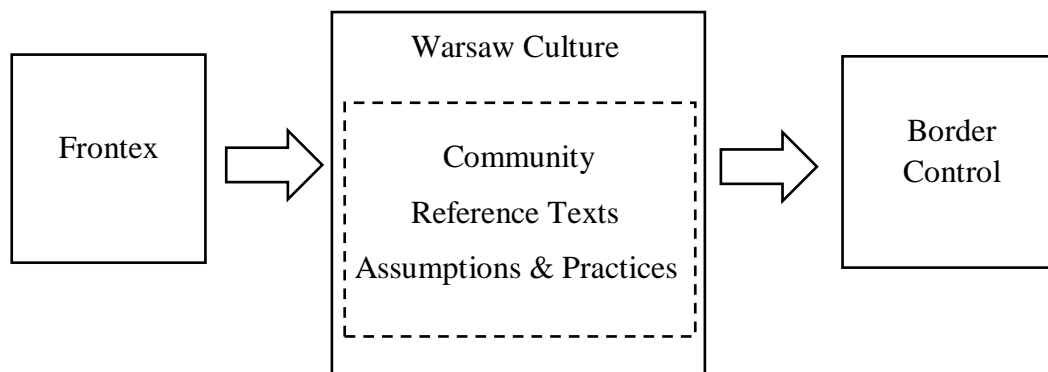
¹⁴⁰ See schema 7.b.

agency enabled border control practitioners to interact, socialise and communicate, developing a ‘we feeling’. Thus, Frontex, by initiating this border control community, also developed the Warsaw border control culture leading therefore to a fundamental shift in EU border control that refers to a different cultural approach pursued.

Table 7.a Overview of thesis’ research findings

Frontex is a border control actor
Frontex is part of the border control community
There are common assumptions and practices in Evros, Lampedusa and Frontex
There is a new border control culture
There is a border control community of border control practitioners
Schengen is no longer the dominant border control culture
Warsaw culture has become the dominant EU border control culture
Frontex promotes Warsaw culture
Frontex impacts on the EU border control promoting Warsaw culture
Frontex can impact on the EU border control

Schema 7.b Frontex’s impact



7.3 Thesis contribution

This study has generated new knowledge regarding Frontex, borders and border control in Europe. It captured aspects of Frontex’s role that had not been grasped before. These refer to Frontex’s promotion of a border control culture. Also, by proving the existence of a border control community consisting of border control actors that act and interact at EU external borders, it remedied a notable literature gap.

On border control, this research showed that border control assumptions and practices have not only been altered in relation to the Schengen regime. They also have multiplied significantly. In fact, this multiplication does not describe solely a side effect of Warsaw regime, but, in essence, it constitutes a new fact constructing a new culture and therefore border control model for the management of borders and cross-border flows. Specifically on Frontex, it brought into fore original knowledge, due to the fact that this agency had not been studied before through a cultural approach. It revealed Frontex's cultural elements: its border control assumptions and practices, manifesting its effect in producing and diffusing cultural traits. Through culture, this research inserted into Frontex's analysis the dimension of non-tangible elements. Also, it demonstrated that Frontex led to a change in EU border control. In this regard, it showed that Frontex is not just 'more of the same' (Wolff & Schout, 2013). Rather, it is an important border control actor with its own strategic goals.

As far as borders are concerned, the study conducted original research through fieldwork in two EU external borders, namely Evros and Lampedusa. This allowed new empirically drawn findings about borders and their function. Apart from this, these two borders had not been compared before as case studies. Consequently, this analysis provided a new comparative content as well as produced original parallels between Evros and Lampedusa that led to unique conclusions. This is noteworthy taking into account that both borders are neither easily accessible nor researcher-friendly. So, extra time and effort was required to succeed in conducting this research.

Methodologically, the study was structured upon an original methodological context, given that Frontex was studied as the independent variable. This prism of analysis was lacking from Frontex's investigations.¹⁴¹ Moreover, it contained rich primary material through the conduct of primary research, such as *in-situ* analysis in Evros and Lampedusa, interviewing of Frontex staff and national border control officers and analysing official documents, legislation and institutional discourse.

7.3.1 Value of fieldwork

In terms of border control, there is a research scarcity on this issue. Most analysts do not deal with the practical implementation of border control policies and the border control tools deployed at the borders. Instead, they focus mainly on theoretical

¹⁴¹ For more information on this issue, see 2.5.

considerations about the border control meaning and border control's impact on border crossers (Walters, 2006; Guild & Carrera, 2013; Ferrer-Gallardo & van Houtum, 2014). By visiting the border and interviewing border control practitioners, the study focused on the actual border control conduct. It produced new knowledge on current border control conduct and border control culture. Namely, it found that a new border control culture exists at the borders, which is not Schengen. In fact, with this research, for the first time this culture is being described, labelled and assessed.

7.3.2 Application of the theoretical framework

The study has also contributed to the analytical framework, as apart from its initial conception and application by Zaiotti, it had not been applied to another study.¹⁴² Thus, its inclusion produced new information about its application. Most importantly, by conducting rigorous empirical research, it showed that it could be employed in similar analyses as an analytical tool. Whilst using Zaiotti's framework, it focused on a different topic, the border control community. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the border control community remained a neglected and underdeveloped element in Zaiotti's research. Bringing into the analysis the role of the border control community, and in this case, Frontex's impact on border control as a member of the border control community, the study further developed Zaiotti's analytical framework, enriching it with a new research orientation. In the same context, taking into account that Zaiotti's analysis studied a different chronological period from this thesis and was conducted several years ago, this research, by exploring the current border control conduct, brought new findings for today's borders and border control in Europe.

7.3.3 EU policy domain

The study contributes also to the discourse on the drivers, dynamics and evolution of border control in Europe. By exploring borders, border control actors, and the different dimensions of border control, it unveiled and offered new explanations for the border control policy domain that can inform the border control policymaking and policy development. Frontex's scrutiny has added new insights into the institutional model of EU agencies. It shed light on internal dynamics, inter-institutional relations between

¹⁴² The only exception to this is a journal article that invokes Zaiotti's rationale to answer one of the research questions developed in the study (Frowd, 2014). This, however, describes a fragmented application of the research framework with a limited scope.

this agency and its creators, the European Commission and EU members, as well as post-delegation developments within EU agencies. Thus, besides borders and border control, it has also contributed to the EU public policy field, including EU policy responses to the migration challenge and the protection of borders. This does not only describe a current preoccupation, due to the continuing migration crisis. It also addresses the future development of border control and borders in the context of an increasing cross-border mobility. By 2025, the number of border crossings into the EU is forecasted to reach 900 million (Frontex, 2018ie). In parallel, new technologies, like avatars and virtual reality, which are currently being tested, will become new border control tools redefining borders. These portray a changing border control environment, currently being designed, in which Frontex has succeeded in consolidating its role. Thus, exploring the different dimensions and the dynamics that construct it, such as Frontex, this research builds on the debate regarding the future of EU borders contributing maybe to a more legitimate and accountable border control approach and therefore border control and migration policies.

7.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

7.4.1 Research limitations

This study, like any research, was subject to certain limitations that derive from its theoretical and methodological stance as well as from the nature of the research. In the preceding chapters, there has been reflection on most of these limitations and research challenges that are recapped here in order to retain the spirit of a ‘goodness’ research (Marshall, 1990: 194). In particular, the study’s pursuit was conducted within a 3-year time period. To achieve an in-depth analysis of the research problem within this time constraint, a 9-year research period was selected, namely from 2011 until 2019, which, in turn, has limited the chronological scope of the research. Yet, setting a specific time-limit did not equate to a total disregard of the developments that occurred outside this time selection. Many important events, like Frontex’s creation in 2004, were included. To assess the situation at the EU external borders, a comparison was carried out with the pre-Frontex era. Still, for practical reasons, it emphasised the period from 2011 until 2019, with a specific endpoint, 31 August 2019, so as to retain some time for reflection and data analysis before the final submission of this research.

This chronological emphasis created another research limitation. In general, the study of culture requires an extended investigation period (Meyer, 2006: 25). Culture, being composed of ideational elements, needs time to become cultivated and performed to an environment. Therefore, the more (years), the better (analysis). Nevertheless, an analysis of a 9-year period can still reveal cultural indications. This is especially the case in the event of a cultural evolution, which, as proven by this thesis, took place in the last years. Furthermore, it was neither within the research scope nor feasible in terms of time to proceed to an exhaustive investigation of borders and border control from the Westphalian era since today. For this reason, this thesis based its comparison of Warsaw culture with the other cultures of border control on secondary sources and especially on Zaiotti's research (2011).

Due to the issues under scrutiny, certain practical research challenges were encountered linked to the political sensitivity of border control as well as to Frontex's secrecy.¹⁴³ Accordingly, there was limited or even no public access to certain Frontex and national border control documents. In addition, there was difficulty in gaining approval for the conduct of research interviews. At the same time, due to heavy workload amidst continuous arrivals of irregular border crossers, it was challenging conducting fieldwork in Evros and Lampedusa. Flexibility and persistence from the researcher's part enabled overcoming these issues, whereas my prior internship at Frontex helped me to establish contacts for the interviewee pool. Moreover, space-wise, the case-study selection has geographically limited the analysis of borders. To mitigate this limitation, selection involved two different EU external borders, a Greek land border, Evros, and an Italian sea border, Lampedusa. This variance allowed for wider conclusions on border control conduct, beyond the geographic border fence.

Also, the meta-theoretical stance of social constructivism in combination with thesis' ontological and epistemological position created certain research challenges, which have already been discussed in the theoretical and methodological chapters. To minimise these challenges, culture was inserted in the analysis in the context of a specific analytical framework, which permitted culture's operationalisation, despite its ideational elements. In a similar context, though Frontex's impact was not quantified, because of the qualitative methodology chosen to match with the cultural approach and social constructivism, the thesis was able to engage in measurement and assessment

¹⁴³ For more information, see chapter 6.2.1.

applying a multi-dimensional research strategy. For example, Frontex's impact was assessed in terms of concrete elements, namely the components of the border control culture, which were segregated from each other to trace the exact role of Frontex in the construction of each. Thus, though not quantitative, still the thesis was able to observe, measure and analyse Frontex's impact on the construction of knowledge (Smith, 1990; Antonakis et al., 2004: 50-51; Petit & Huault, 2008: 81).

Another issue encountered was the interplay between agency and structure. Frontex, though an endogenous factor of the border control regime –the structure–, still constitutes an agency. But how easy is it to extract the agency from the structure? It was challenging, yet surmountable. Frontex is a relatively new agency and for this reason, as this thesis has proven, the changes that it has brought to EU border control can be traced. Also, before Frontex, there was a variant border control trajectory. Frontex, not being part of this structure, promoted a different regime solidifying its position. Hence, this new agency shifted the old structure and initiated a new one.

In summary, every research project encounters its own limitations, given that, after all, it is a human construction. But given the importance of the topic, it is a worthwhile endeavour, and with a finely-tuned research methodology one is able to reach sound results. Thus, developing truth conditions (Pouliot, 2007: 360), this thesis has revealed original elements for both Frontex and the EU border control conduct.

7.4.2 Suggestions for future research

Relating to this thesis' contribution and research importance, the end of this project could signal the beginning of new research pursuits. After all, by focusing on a particular research problem, this thesis has left open several ends for further research. The findings of this study suggest that culture constitutes an important element for border control guiding thoughts, feelings and actions (Alvesson, 2013: 6). In this context, it would be valuable further exploring culture within border control not only at the EU external borders, but also in other regions, like in North America and Asia, where, over the years, significant developments in relation to borders and the border control conduct have been observed (Andreas, 2003a; Kaur & Metcalfe, 2006). This would enable, first, drawing what is the current border control culture there and, second, detecting if there are differences with the Warsaw culture. Both the latter would reveal if Warsaw culture resides only in the EU territory or if it has any common elements with border control cultures in non-EU borders.

Another research area which can be further developed is to explore Frontex's impact on third countries. As already mentioned, Frontex has prioritised its relations with non-EU countries signing agreements, participating in evaluation missions, opening risk analysis offices as well as conducting training and even an out-of-area operation in Albania. In this context, it would be of relevance to explore whether, via this cooperation, Frontex has started extracting its border control assumptions and practices or the border control model of the Warsaw culture outside the EU space. Similarly, there is room for further investigation regarding Frontex's relation with its creators, namely the European Commission and the member states. This thesis shed light on specific elements of this relation, such as Frontex's independence and enhanced role for border control. Yet, it would be rewarding to inquire further into the dynamics formed among them not only in relation to border control but also to a wider policy context established by cultural inter-links.

It may be of research relevance too to more rigorously assess the role of EU agencies beyond the phase of policy implementation. In general, agencies are perceived as technocratic instruments that implement policies (Moravcsik, 1998). But, as this thesis has illustrated, their role surpasses this definition. Frontex, through culture, promoted an alternative border control model, which now has become the dominant border control regime at the EU borders. So, it has escaped the policy implementation confines moving to the construction of shared meanings, collective understandings and common practices. This can set the direction for a new prism in the scrutiny of other EU agencies, such as the European Medicines Agency, the European Defence Agency and Europol. However, it may not be applicable in all the EU agencies. For instance, in the case of EASO, taking into account that the agency's recruitment pool is rather diverse and it is not yet possible to identify a policy community. All these point at new theoretical and empirical research paths and suggest that it would be conceptually intriguing to continue this research, by enriching it with more information and answers to currently emerging research questions.

7.5 Concluding notes

7.5.1 Implications for national policymakers

Coming to a close, this study seems ever more timely. Escalating migratory pressures at the EU external borders, continuous institutional amendments and the prevalence of

border control in the public discourse frame a fluid and therefore uncertain context for the border control policy. The study unveiled and discussed certain aspects of this context, highlighting the reasons for this border control orientation. Beyond this wider portrayal, it could also provide a useful analytical potential at the national level, for instance, for small states affected by persistent border control challenges, given that national border control solutions are rather futile in today's increasing interconnected world. To develop this argument, the example of Greece is being employed.

In particular, as this study revealed, Frontex constitutes a key member of the border control community, impacting on EU border control. So, a more active and engaged representation within Frontex could potentially lead to more chances of co-shaping the EU border control. Indeed, a small and regional state, like Greece, could not exercise a detrimental impact on the EU border control system. Even during EU Council meetings, Greece has encountered difficulties in promoting its national position.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, instead of zooming in the system, it might be more feasible and effective to develop a strategic action oriented towards the key border control actor. By influencing the actor, namely Frontex, which, as already proven, impacts on the EU border control and has shifted border control's culture, Greece might have a better chance of informing, indirectly, the overall border control system. To this end, more resources - political, economic, technical, institutional, operational, human - allocated to influencing Frontex, could lead to substantial results regarding the promotion of Greece's position for border control and migration management issues. In this context, Greece's participation in Frontex should be elevated into a national priority implemented according to a long-term strategic plan that is not limited solely to border control or police imperatives, but instead to a broader agenda that takes into consideration key policy domains affecting and being affected by cross-border mobility. A channel to achieve this might be through the integration of matters relating to Greece's representation in Frontex in the Cabinet or in the context of the Prime Minister's office preparatory work. Furthermore, given that border control is shaped by the ideational context of culture, there is a need for the production of more theoretically informed studies or even policy reports on border control issues. Through this activity, national considerations could be converted into helpful assumptions transmitted to the border control community and especially to Frontex.

¹⁴⁴ Greece has been repeatedly threatened with exit from the Eurozone and Schengen.

7.5.2 What future for Frontex and EU border control?

What does this research denote for the future trajectory of Frontex and the EU border control? This study, inserting a cultural approach, concluded that Frontex impacts on EU border control through the promotion of the Warsaw border control culture. Crucially, it unveiled hidden aspects of Frontex's function and drivers for border control evolution. Thus, it captured the function of border control actors, the current border control model implemented at the borders, and the conditions for border control change. All these elements and the thesis' findings could provide important information about Frontex's future trajectory and the prospective development of border control in Europe. Although it is bold formulating predictions for events to come, let alone in today's turbulent and ever-changing era, still this research, by displaying a different analytical context, has offered new knowledge that could inform our understanding regarding Frontex, borders and border control in the years to come.

In arguing that border control has recently moved from Schengen to Warsaw culture, this could indicate that border control might continue to be shaped by the Warsaw paradigm at least for the foreseeable future. In practice, for a culture to become challenged and overturned, ample time is required and a fundamental change that would trigger this cultural evolution.¹⁴⁵ Until then, border control would continue to be shaped by Warsaw border control culture. In this spirit, the characteristics of this culture may become even more pronounced at the EU external borders reconstructing therefore the border as a concept and function. Indeed, Warsaw's border control assumptions and practices could become diffused from border control to the border shifting the border towards becoming not just a 'locus' of border control assumptions and practices, but a fully-fledged constructor of these characteristics. As a result, this would equate to a border redefinition. By this token, borders might become more securitised, technocratic and re-territorialised infusing surveillance and intelligence.

As far as Frontex is concerned, this agency, by being Warsaw's culture main promoter and enabler, might continue occupying a key place and role at the EU external borders. As long as Warsaw culture remains being the dominant culture for border control in Europe, Frontex would be expected to enjoy an even more strengthened remit with new powers and tasks. Actually, whilst writing these words, Frontex announced an advertisement for the recruitment of Frontex border guards. These officers would

¹⁴⁵ For more information, see chapter 3.4.

become part of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. This development represents a true revolution for both Frontex and the EU border control, as these officers, under Frontex's flag, would be able to decide who will enter into the EU and who will not (Frontex, 2019xxi). Thus, Frontex, by pursuing Warsaw culture, would remain a key border control actor with the prospect of widening its remit. This may change if Warsaw culture becomes defeated by alternative narratives of border control, not supported by Frontex. Yet, even in the case of new models, as an institution that cares about its longevity, Frontex would be expected to adapt to the new circumstances, becoming a supporter, not an adversary, of any new regime with a strong potential to developing a border control culture. Like any actor that aspires to become a leader, Frontex needs to follow its intuit and strategic purpose. After all, as put by the agency itself, 'the common European border guard culture needs leadership' (Frontex, 2017ie: 14); and so does EU border control. Becoming a leader, culture may rise as a (border control) sign in challenging times.

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Interviewee 6: Border guard in southern Evros, 23.10.2018.

Interviewee 7: Border crosser, 06.03.2019.

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Interviewee 9: Border officer in Lampedusa, 10.05.2018.

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Interviewee 11: Border officer in Lampedusa, 12.05.2018.

Interviewee 12: Frontex officer in Warsaw, 11.06.2018.

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Annex

Annex I: Maps



Evros Map (Republished from Perdikaris et al., 2007)



Lampedusa Map (Republished from WHO, 2012a)

Annex II Photos from fieldwork

A. Photos from fieldwork in Evros



Alexandroupolis Airport



Towards Kastanies BCP



Kastanies BCP



Kipi BCP



Evros River



Region of Evros



Roads to Evros River



Greek Flags in Houses in Evros



Frontex Guest Officers in Evros

B. Photos from fieldwork in Lampedusa



Favaro Quay



Lampedusa Port 1



Lampedusa Port 2



Italian Naval Vessels



Porta d'Europa



Lampedusa Island 1



Lampedusa Island 2



Lampedusa's Rocky Shore



Military Zone Sign

Annex III Interview Guide

Guide developed for the interviewing process. It contains indicative questions adapted for each interview.

A. Questions for interview with national border officers:

- How long do you work at this border? Where have you been deployed before? Could you tell me some things about your professional background?
- Could you describe your daily work and tasks? What are the most important challenges that you face in your everyday working routine? What is the added value of your work?
- How do you conduct border control? What means do you use (technology)?
- From your experience, has there been any change in these means or, generally, in the border control conduct the last 5 or 10 years?
- According to you, what includes an effective border control?
- Which documents do you consult? What are the main border control texts?
- Have you participated in any Frontex joint operation? If yes, in your country or elsewhere? Have you done any training organised by Frontex? Have you participated in any activity organised by Frontex?
- Have you met any colleague from another member state? How? Describe your experience. Are you still in touch with this colleague? Have you become friends? How do you communicate?
- What is your opinion about Frontex missions? Do they help?
- What is your opinion about Frontex guest officers deployed here? How do you cooperate with them?
- What do you think about Frontex's presence at the border? Has it brought any change in your work or at the border?
- Do you cooperate with staff from Frontex's headquarters? How often do you cooperate with a Frontex staff? Describe this cooperation.
- Do you think that Frontex has developed a common spirit for border control (common values, practices)?

B. Questions for interview with Frontex officers:

- How long do you work at Frontex and why did you choose to work for this Agency?
- Could you describe your daily work and tasks? What are the most important challenges that you face in your everyday working routine? What is the added value of your work?
- What includes an effective border control?
- Which do you consider to be the basic documents for the EU border control?
- From your experience and knowledge, has there been any important change in border control the last 5 or 10 years? If yes, has this change been initiated or promoted by Frontex (how, why)?
- Do you think that there is standardisation or harmonisation, namely common EU norms, standards, practices or even ethics, in EU border control? If yes, what was Frontex's contribution in this? If not, is this one of Frontex's goals?
- What is Frontex's strategic vision or goals for EU border control? Does it have a strategic plan or promote a particular model for EU border control? Is this model still relevant?
- What do you consider to be the main threats and possible changes that may affect the security and management of the borders in the coming years? In which direction should the Agency go?
- What is Frontex's added value (border control, borders)?
- Do you think that Frontex has developed a common spirit for border control (common values, practices)?