INTRODUCTION

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Migration as a social, cultural, political and legal phenomenon has been at the forefront of global debate in the last two decades. 'Migration as crisis' is a powerful legal and political narrative that dominates the discussion on the movement of people and ultimately shapes policies and regulations at the EU, national and international levels. In its broadest sense, the concept of migration is strictly intertwined with that of borders. Borders are one of the oldest ways to separate and draw distinctions between different societies. From Roman times to the Congress of Vienna, the idea of drawing and protecting borders between people and societies has been a powerful tool used by law and policymakers. The implications of bordering practices and the very concept of a border are worth exploring: what is a border, how is it produced and how does it regulate the lives of people on one side and the other and movement across it are questions that should be answered through an interdisciplinary approach that borrows, among other things, from anthropological and legal research. Border management is an equally fundamental concept, even more so within supranational organisations like the EU, where twenty-seven Member States share the same external border. Within this border, EU citizens live largely borderless lives, where the movement of people, goods, services and capital is free from traditional limitations, and are caught unaware by the reintroduction of borders, as recent events like Brexit have clearly shown.

The central Mediterranean area, together with what is now the Eastern land border with Ukraine and Belarus, is a key paradigm of the meaning and significance of the concept of the border from a legal, political and even anthropological perspective. The interaction between different states (Italy, Malta, Libya and Greece), supranational (EU) and non-governmental organisations and institutions, as well as EU agencies (such as Frontex and the EUAA), demonstrated the limits of the legal framework applicable to search and rescue operations as well as to asylum and immigration procedures and the requirement for its profound restructuring to meet the challenges of the next decade. It is, in this sense, extremely problematic to note up to which extent the national and supranational institutions are unable (or only limitedly able) to coordinate their respective efforts in ensuring an orderly and fundamental rights-compliant movement of migrants along the sea and land border of the EU. Moreover, since empires and states rise and fall over the management of borders, as history teaches, the questions posed by this book are timelier than ever.

This book aims to bring together researchers and experts from different backgrounds to reflect in an interdisciplinary perspective on the questions that the interaction

between borders (and their management) and migration pose to our societies. The book is divided into three parts. Part I collects contributions on the concept of border from a legal-anthropological perspective. Chapters on questions like the rule of law and migration, inter-religious marriages, migration in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' will reflect on the meaning and significance of the concept of border, border practices and the operations of EU and national agencies and NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea. In Part II, contributors reflect on challenges posed to land borders and their management with regard to the situation in the Balkans and the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union. Part III concludes the book by reflecting on the challenges and perspective of reform for migration in the Mediterranean Sea from a predominantly legal perspective.