



Follow the grid, follow the violence: The project for a transregional Mediterranean electricity ring

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Session 2: “Overcoming violence associated with environmental infrastructures”

Breakout group 1: “Energy infrastructures”

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Key argument:

- Efforts at greater trans-Mediterranean electricity interconnectivity are premised on different forms of violence observable at different sites of the envisaged trans-Mediterranean electricity ring.

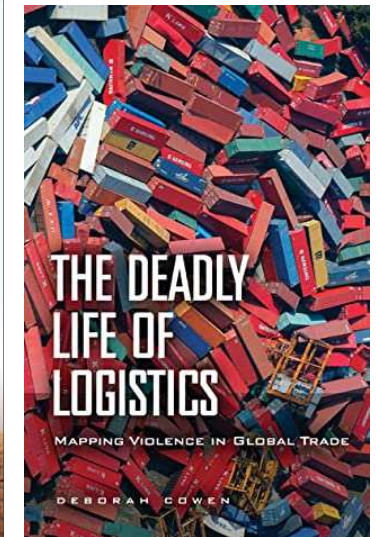
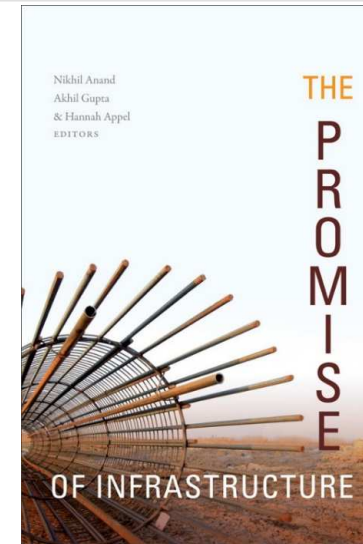
Project for a Mediterranean electricity ring:

- Governing framework for relations of EU Mediterranean with Southern Mediterranean in field of electricity
- Goal of greater electricity interconnectivity to facilitate greater expansion of renewables

Key concepts and literature (1/2)

Infrastructure studies:

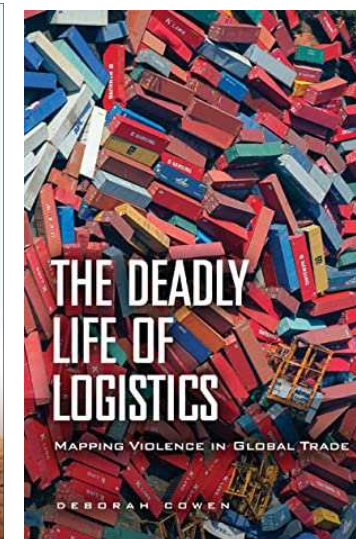
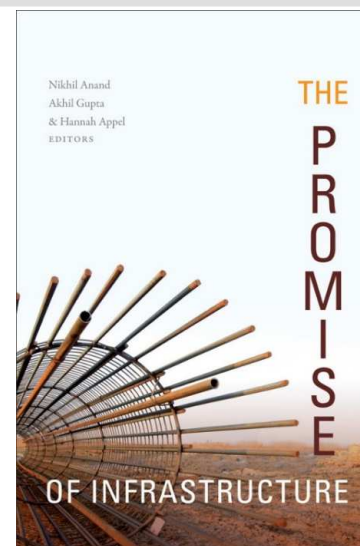
- Infrastructure is a technology of rule that presents itself as fundamentally apolitical (Anand et al, 2018)
- Infrastructures produce, enable and promise global flows of goods and capital, while also creating new forms of containment (Cowen, 2014)



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International dimension of authoritarian power:

- Authoritarian power as transregionally connected (Schuetze, 2019; Jenss & Schuetze, 2021) and territorially unbounded (Glasius, 2018)

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Rethinking Authoritarian Power: The Logistics Space and Authoritarian Practices in and between Secondary Port Cities of the Global South

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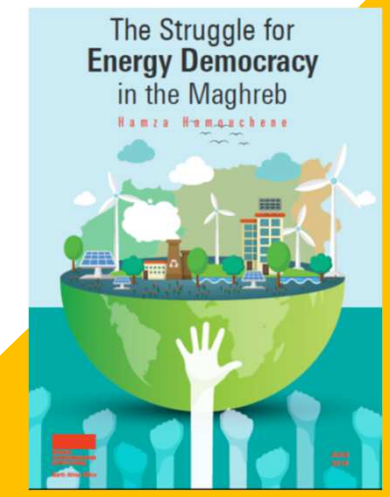
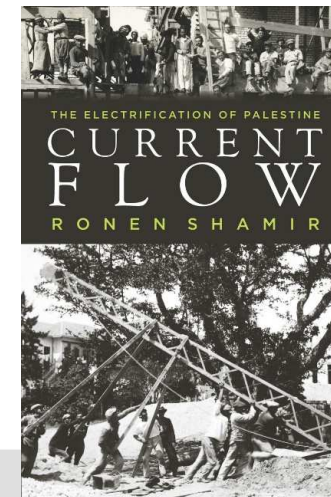
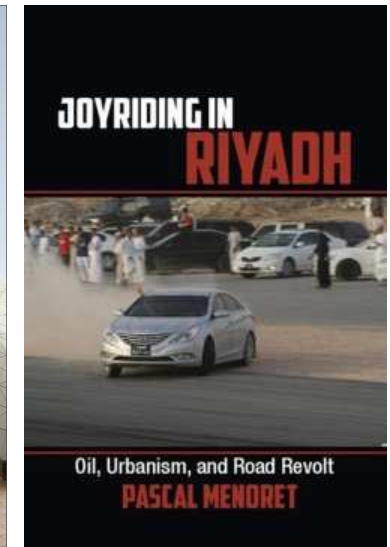
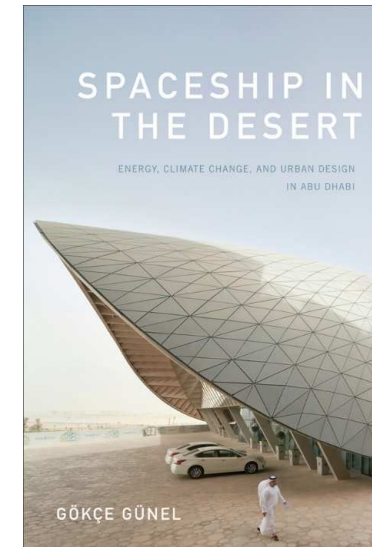
How to rethink authoritarian power in ways that better account for authoritarian connections beyond nation-state boundaries? By reconceptualizing the context in which to analyze authoritarian power, we bring to light transregional authoritarian connections between the secondary port cities Agaba/Jordan and Buenaventura/Colombia. We demonstrate that processes of privatization and a continuum of pre-emptive, technocratizing, and repressive authoritarian practices with the overall purpose of enabling capital accumulation occur in a remarkably entangled manner in both locales, even if located at seemingly unconnected geographical sites. By thinking of Agaba and Buenaventura as occupying the same “transregional authoritarian logistics space” (TALS), we understand Buenaventura through Agaba, and vice versa. This crisscrossing of established notions of context has important implications for our understanding of authoritarianism and future transregional research designs. As a unit of analysis, the TALS allows us to highlight the role of global logistics players and “developmental aid” agencies—actors rarely discussed in literature on authoritarianism—in rearticulating boundaries within and beyond the nation-state based on class and race. Our contribution calls for an understanding of authoritarian power as transregionally entangled, rather than separate and limited to the nation-state and builds on literatures on authoritarian practices, authoritarian neoliberalism, critical logistics, and transregional connections.



Key concepts and literature (2/2)

Energy politics in the MENA:

- Energy as social relations (Menoret, 2014)
- Plurality and contingency of transitions (Rignall, 2016; Hoffmann, 2018)
- Possible continuities despite 'transition' (Hamouchene, 2016; Günel, 2019)
- Dark side of RE (Kramarz et al, 2021)
- 'Follow the wires' (Shamir, 2013)
- Energy infrastructures 'as a vehicle through which political and economic relations are constituted' (Jabary Salamanca, 2014)



Research gap

- Geopolitical importance of electricity still remains undervalued.
- Descriptions of efforts at greater electricity interconnectivity as technocratic necessity, as facilitating shared security and welfare (Westphal et al., 2021), and as creating new interdependencies, thereby reducing the risk of geopolitical conflict (Overland, 2019: 36)
- Risk of downplaying uneven power hierarchies and of ignoring extent to which forms of energy interconnectivity are premised on forms of violence
- MedRing project as stage for performance of desires of European sovereignty beyond Europe's borders (Haleh Davis, 2017)

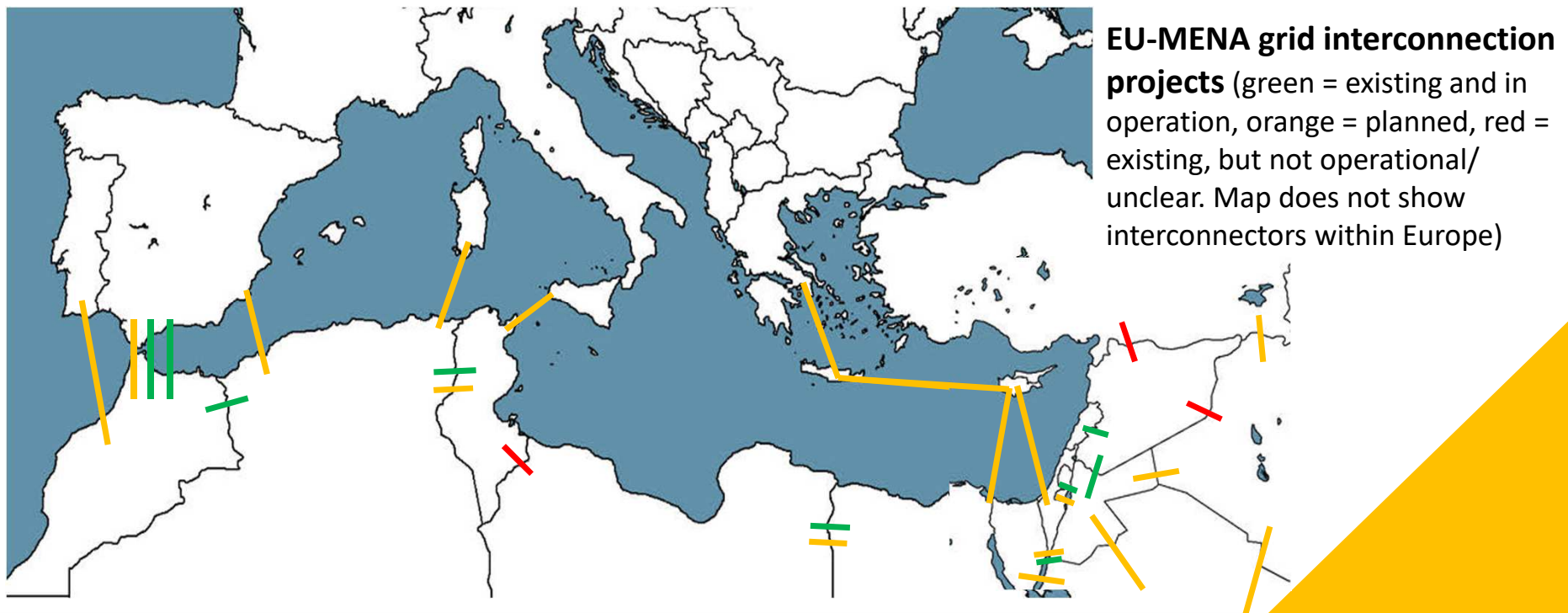
The project for a Mediterranean electricity ring

- New electricity interconnectors enable further expansion & greater integration of REs
- However, they also risk reproducing pre-existing inequalities



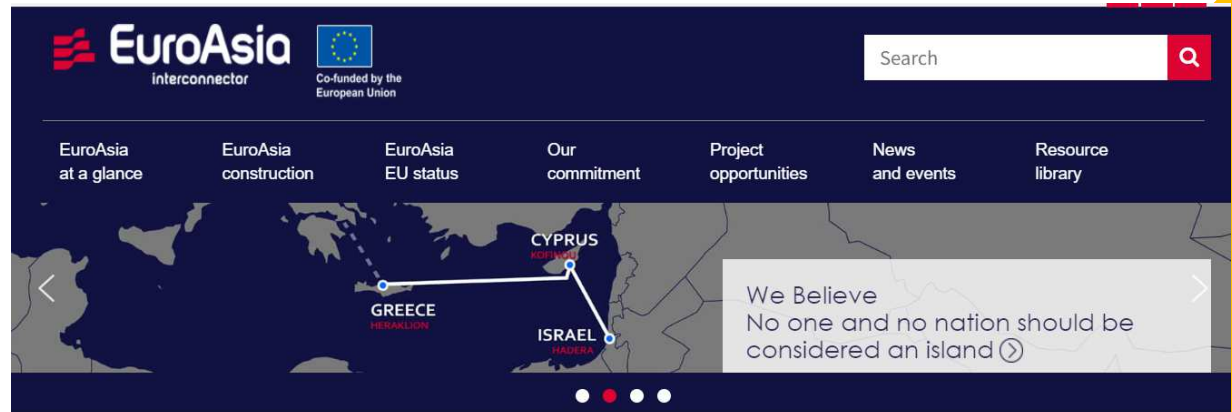
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Selective connectivities and the greening of colonial occupation

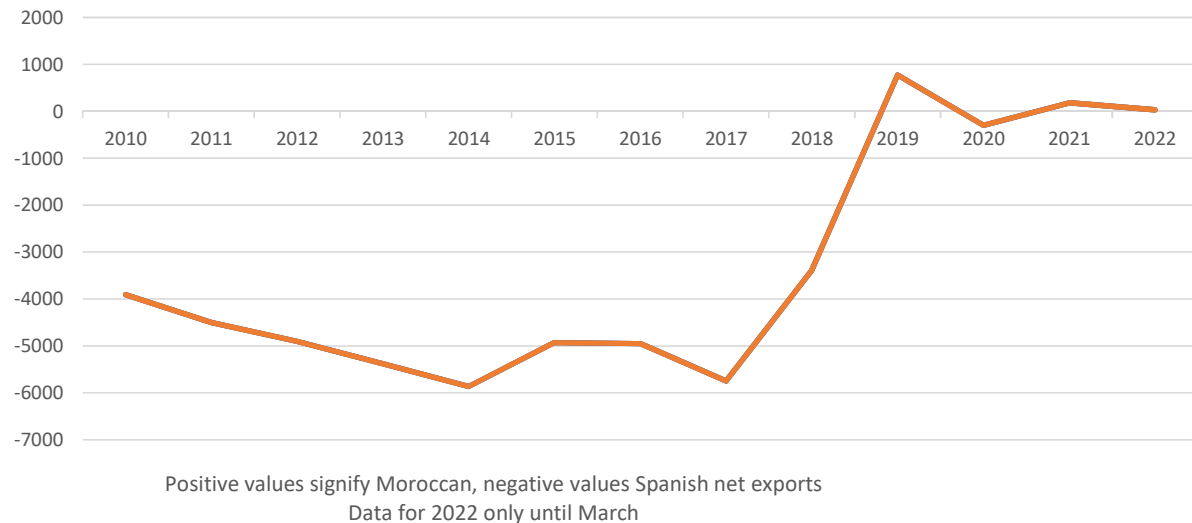
- Greater energy interconnectivity for some / critical energy shortage for others
- Do countries that connect with the continental European grid really join a common community of fate? (Westphal et al, 2021)



Carbon leakage and the perpetuation of uneven power hierarchies

Spain-Morocco energy relations

- Export of Moroccan electricity due to RE expansion + construction of new coal power plant
- Greater electricity interconnectivity bears risk of carbon leakage



Balance of Moroccan-Spanish electricity exchange (in GWh)

Safi coal power plant, Morocco



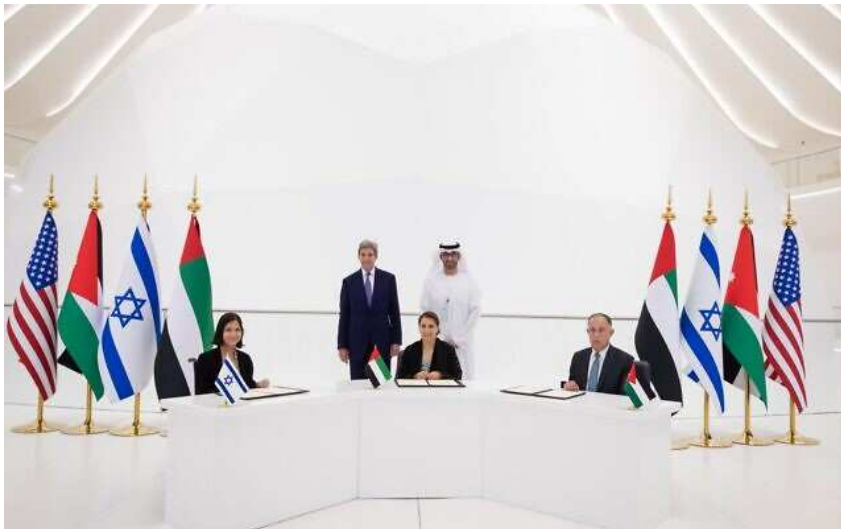
Carbon leakage and the perpetuation of uneven power hierarchies

UAE-Israeli-Jordanian declaration of intent (2021) for a water-energy deal

- concentrated energy politics
- highly unpopular among Jordanians

Context of 2014 Israeli-Jordanian gas deal

- Export of clean electricity to Israel / import of gas to Jordan → risk of carbon lock-in



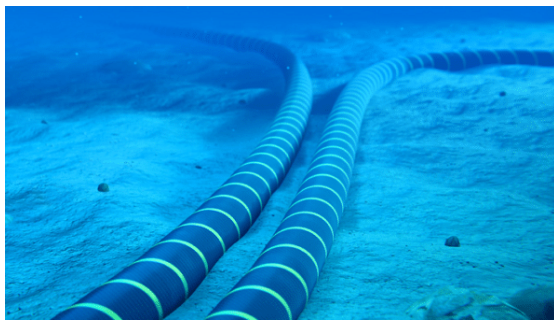
Signing of UAE-Israeli-Jordanian solar water deal (declaration of intent), November 2021

Protests against solar water deal, November 2021



Flowing electrons, floating bodies

- Fight against migration and project for Mediterranean electricity ring are part of the same colonial heritage
- Infrastructure as uniting factor and driver of selective connectivities
- Structures of authoritarian exclusion and repression are reproduced behind a façade of connectivity



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Thank you very much for your attention!