Foreword: a critique of Mediterranean Europe as a “migration place”

Natalia Ribas-Mateos and Jorge Malheiros

Critical thinking is a broad classification for a diverse array of reasoning. In this Foreword we will underline different topics by breaking down arguments and claims, to see how these apply to a supposed model of Mediterranean Europe, in order to advance a critical understanding of the Introduction and the following chapters, identify significant commonalities, enhance connections and facilitate dialogue with the authors and their ideas. This Foreword will outline the broad contours of such critical thinking through the discussion of two topics that we have selected as the basis for a meaningful analysis in Mediterranean Europe: (1) the topic of place (which includes Mediterranean borders, an exploration of cities and the changing rural world); and (2) the topic of contemporary mobilities.

FRAMING THE TOPIC OF PLACE

The 7 Climates are traversed by 7 Seas of which we speak following, if it pleases God. The 7 Seas are called also Gulfs. Six are contiguous; one only is separated without communication with the others.
They are; 1) the China and Indian Seas at 13 degrees latitude and to their south is the Equator; 2) the Gulf of Persia, 440 parasanges in length; 3) the Gulf of the Red Sea, 1400 miles long; 4) the Mediterranean Sea, 18 miles wide at the Detroit; 5) the Gulf of Venice, 1100 miles long; 6) the Pontus Euxine, 1300 miles from the Detroit; 7) the Caspian Sea, 1000 miles x 650 miles.

(Preface to Al-Idrisi World Map, 12th Century)

The idea of place corresponds to a notion inspired by cultural geography. A place is not a simple location in abstract space (Holzer, 2003), but a spatial entity with a meaning and a value that is lived, conceived and appropriated by social communities (Tuan, 1977). Places have a memory and an identity, and result from the consequential transformation and appropriation of a physical space by a community. In this sense, places have not only a socio-cultural value but also a political one.

Using this notion of place as a point of departure, the first problem we face is identifying a reference point for the discussion. The debate can be launched by
asking: Is it really meaningful to consider the Mediterranean or even Southern Europe as places where ‘common’ geopolitical features and socio-cultural processes are strong enough to justify unified approaches? Obviously, there is no single answer to this question. From a historical perspective, the geopolitical unity of the Mediterranean region was much stronger in the past, when this sea was conceived as the Mare Nostrum, the space around which the Roman Empire was structured and the ancient Greek *thalassocracies* established their navigation routes.

Moreover, to the set of common natural features that justify the classification of the Mediterranean as one of the world’s biomes and climate zones corresponded the construction of a connected socio-political space, the division of which only became clear after the 15th and 16th centuries (Lois-Gonzállez, 2021). After the 7th century, the vital dynamics of the region were marked by the diverging geosocial paths of Christianity, Catholicism in particular, organised in medieval times around the central power of Rome; and Islam, with a less centralised structure but oriented towards the East having places such as Mecca and Baghdad as references. In fact, if religion played an important role in the division between the North and South (and East) Mediterranean, the deepening of the division that transformed the Mediterranean Sea from being a place of connection to one of cultural, socio-economic and political hard borders lay in the geopolitical changes that marked the trajectory of the European continent after the 15th century.

The beginning of Portuguese and Spanish expansion in the 15th century opened the route for European colonialism and expanded the worldview of Europeans. Geographically, this meant that the Mediterranean progressively lost centrality to the Atlantic, the navigation route to Asia and the connection to the Americas. The arrival of the Spanish vessels led by Columbus to the Americas in 1492, and the fall of the Kingdom of Granada in the same year (the last area ruled by Islamic leaders in the Western part of the North Mediterranean), had a determining symbolic impact, on both the deepening of the Mediterranean divide (between the expansionist Christian North and the Islamic-dominated South and East) and its geopolitical peripheralisation. In addition, the political transformation of Europe in the second half of the 17th century with the Peace of Westphalia, which opened the path to the principles and characteristics of the modern nation-state geopolitical format that European domination later ‘exported’ to the entire world, turned European nations inward-looking and pushed them further from the African and Middle Eastern nations that shared the Mediterranean space.

The Reformation and Counter-Reformation processes of the first half of the 16th century contributed to the socio-cultural and political break between Northern and Southern Europe (especially in the west of the continent), a division that has progressively deepened as a result of capitalist development
supported by industrialisation and modern imperialism in the 19th century. The political and economic centre of Europe was relocated to the northwest of the continent after the 17th century, when the hegemonic empires of the Netherlands, followed by the United Kingdom and fiercely challenged by France (Modelski, 1978), became the dominant countries, thus relegating the Iberian powers to a secondary position, making the internal divisions of Europe clearer (Lois-González, 2021), and creating a new system of domination. The domination of the world system (Wallerstein, 1984) by the Central and Northern European powers in the 19th century that resulted in vast colonial empires extending over the Caribbean, the Pacific islands and the Asian (including the Middle East) and African continents is crucial in understanding the contemporary construction of the geopolitical zoning of the world, and had a fundamental impact on European societies.

As a result, going back to our region of interest, the impact was also fundamental to such societies. Not only are the macro-regional spaces of Europe and the Mediterranean viewed as separated places, but they are also structured by a hierarchy that still influences both commonsense and geoeconomic approaches. The division still prevails between the enhanced stereotypical images of the developed and disciplined countries of Northern Europe, and the undisciplined, unindustrious people of the less developed Southern European nation-states. These stereotypes have their roots in the transfer of the geopolitical and economic centre of the world to Northwest Europe after the 16th century, and were strengthened by the disciplinary culture of the industrial capitalism of the 19th century. Southern European nation-states that declined after the 16th century would become dominated formally, for example as was the case with Greece in relation to the Ottoman Empire, or informally, as with Portugal in relation to the United Kingdom (Lenine, 1916/1984). In the colonial partition a direct colonisation came into force; the colonised South and East Mediterranean mostly fell under the colonial rule of the British and French, with fragments ruled by Spain, and was exploited for the benefit of their metropolitan industrialisation processes.

The post-World War geopolitical order was marked by South and East Mediterranean countries achieving independence, and by the emergence of dictatorships in several Southern European countries that only ended in the 1970s, and so did not affect the historical process of division. Having become democratic states, Greece, Spain and Portugal joined the European Union (EU) in the 1980s. As the financial crisis of 2008 has recently revealed, despite being economically, politically and even symbolically ‘more European’, Northern Mediterranean countries remained distinctly peripheral places, with politicians and even citizens of Northern and Central Europe continuing to hold a prejudiced view of the region which is reflected in their discourse.
Therefore, an approach that might be derived from the analysis of the Mediterranean Sea as a barrier, with Southern (and Eastern) countries on one side and Northern countries on the other, constituting two distinct macro-places, would be an oversimplification. Relations between peripheral countries on the shores of the Mediterranean tend to be weaker than those between central countries and those on the peripheries (Fernandes et al., 2021). The latter relations were enhanced by specific connections (migration, trade, culture, and so on) between the shores of the Mediterranean supported by specific colonial and postcolonial ties, examples being the connection between Northern Morocco and Andalucía, the ‘proximity’ between Marseille (the colonial harbour par excellence) and the coast of Algeria, and the flows between Sicily (and other Italian islands) and the Libyan shore. Despite these existing connections, the role of the longitudinal barrier to South–North migration, attributed in political and securitarian terms to the Mediterranean Sea, cannot be overlooked. However, and in spite of the deadly consequences of dramatic crossings that receive daily media exposure, migration flows continue, and the Mediterranean remains porous. Thus, we once more face the inescapable image of a dangerous but still permeable sea. Additionally, as mentioned by Fernandes et al. (2021), there are other processes that simultaneously affect various Mediterranean countries, sometimes generating interpretations whose impact spreads beyond specific borders. The concept of the ‘Third Italy’, developed in the 1980s and 1990s by Italian authors such as Bagnasco (1977) and Garofoli (1992), aimed to capture the dynamics of ‘semi-peripheral’ regions characterised by diffuse industrialisation and made waves in Southern Europe and even in North Africa (Fernandes et al., 2021). The ‘Arab Spring’, that spread from Tunisia to several other North African countries in 2011, has also contributed to bringing together the two shores of the Mediterranean with regard to contemporary mobilities (Beaugrand and Geisser, 2016).

The Mediterranean has long been conceived of as the heart of civilisation, the plaque tournant of migration, the meeting place between East and West. Despite the significant socio-cultural and geopolitical divide that marks the European and the African and Asian shores of the Mediterranean, according to Brenner’s (2000) classification system the Mediterranean can be characterised as a contemporary region, on a macro-regional scale, where multiple scales converge and interact. Such a space can be viewed from the perspective of many time periods, creating continuous forms of movements (Ribas-Mateos and Sempere Souvannavong, 2006), and multidimensional networks between different Mediterranean spaces. This concept is sometimes referred to as ‘caravansar’, in reference to its circular nature. The ability to take advantage of the space in terms of mobility varies by social class, gender, age and ethnicity, and by regional area. A critical perspective of the geography and geopolitics of the Mediterranean should nonetheless not be limited by the relevance of the
‘Mediterranean Rio Grande’ and the loss of unity, in a Braudelian sense, but should instead focus more on its connections (and their construction), both longitudinal and latitudinal, than on its barriers. It should explore the dynamics and the diversity, and combine processes and perspectives departing from various places, some in North Africa, and others in Southern Europe.

**The Legacy of the City as the Core Mediterranean Place**

The dynamic understanding of the long historic and socio-economic perspective of the Mediterranean world requires a reading of its cities. They represent the effective pillars of the spatial structure of the Mediterranean and were constituted as ‘world-cities’ or *villes monde* (as per Fernand Braudel, where the city is the main nexus of an *économie-monde*), which forms a meeting place for people coming from very diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds.

In the 15th and 16th centuries the urban system of the Mediterranean was the most compact and integrated in the world, from Istanbul to Lisbon, and incorporating big cities such as Venice, Naples, Genova and Barcelona (Braudel, 1966). Profoundly open to the exterior, this system of powerful cities with large commercial hinterlands has led to the development of cultures of migration and circulations involving both local populations and foreigners settling in these places. A culture of contact developed within the Mediterranean space, with an internal dimension corresponding to the cities and their hinterlands, and an external one that led to contacts with the cities of Northern Europe and the Near East and Middle East.

The beginning of the construction of the world system as described by Wallerstein (1984) with Iberian navigation and the conquests of the 15th and 16th centuries increased contacts and led to the articulation of the urban system of the Mediterranean with cities in South Asia and the Far East. As previously mentioned, the centrality of the Mediterranean gave way to the centrality of the Atlantic, a process that became more pronounced when the leadership of the European expansion – that would turn into European imperialism – moved towards the emerging powers of Central and Northern Europe and their main cities: Amsterdam, London, Paris or Liverpool.

Though the early stages of industrial capitalism emphasised the logic of spatial concentration in the Northern European capitals to which other urban centres have progressively joined, metropolises on both sides of the Mediterranean have also acknowledged significant processes of change and growth, especially after the second half of the 20th century. Significant change in several Mediterranean cities had already occurred during the second half of the 19th century, framed by the impulse of modern urban planning with its principles of sanitation and embellishment. Early examples of this process of urban reform that are still visible in the centres of several metropolises include...
the reconstruction of central Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake, Haussman’s comprehensive urban reform of Paris from 1852, and the 1860 expansion of Barcelona drawn up by Ildefons Cerdà. Istanbul and Cairo underwent significant modernisation dating back to the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century and to the reigns of Muhammad Ali Pasha and Isma’il Pasha in Egypt. The establishment of European imperialism in North Africa during the 19th and early 20th centuries led to more urban reforms in cities such as Algiers, Oran, Cairo, Casablanca and Tangiers (see Ribas-Mateos, 2015, for more examples), that contributed to restructuring the urban space with the repositioning of city centres, the introduction of European-style constructions, and the segregation between the new ‘European’ quarters and the pre-colonial spaces. Despite the commonality in the principles and timing of the structural and physical changes in urban space, the advent of European imperialism in the Southern Mediterranean has contributed both to deepening the divide between the two shores, and to promoting specific connections between the metropolises and their colonies.

The notion of place involves the relationship between physical space and its population, which justifies an analysis of the demographic dynamics at the centre of which we find migration. If relevant cultural diversity was already present in the urban system of the Mediterranean of the late 15th century in the two cities of Istanbul and Lisbon, that bookmark East and West, we should investigate the urban population growth and urbanisation of the 20th century, in particular that of the post-Second World War period, to understand the current nature of Mediterranean metropolises. Globally, between the 1950s and the 1980s, the spatial concentration of manufacturing and services led to an intense rural–urban migration of people attracted by the possibility of work. The population of Istanbul increased tenfold between the 1950s and the end of the century; the population of Tunis tripled between 1956 and 1984; and Algiers experienced an increment of approximately 50 per cent between 1966 and 1977 (Turan, 2010; Stambouli, 1996; Hadjri and Osmani, 2004). Today, the conurbation of Cairo–Giza is the largest metropolis in Africa, with a population just over 20 million. Northern Mediterranean cities also experienced a rural exodus in the same period, resulting in significant urban population increases as well as informal suburban expansion promoted by a lack of building regulations. At the same time as the rural exodus, Southern European countries exported thousands of migrant workers to Central and Northern European countries between the 1950s and the early 1970s. Southern Mediterranean countries did the same about a decade later, during the Fordist virtuous cycle of capitalism (Ribas-Mateos and Malheiros, 2002). The process that contributed to reducing the population of the rural areas of Northern Mediterranean countries did not prevent the continuous growth of their metropolitan areas,
even if current growth is much slower. Urbanisation in Eastern and Southern Mediterranean regions is even greater.4

Although contemporary cosmopolitanism arrived later to the metropolises of the Mediterranean than it did to their counterparts in Central and Northern Europe, it is now a relevant phenomenon, especially in the case of Southern European cities, with thousands of migrant workers and their families settling in these cities following the increase in international migration of the 1980s (King, 2000). The migration turn has been explained by the expansion in public works and construction that followed the entry of Greece (in 1980), Portugal and Spain (in 1996) into the European Community that enabled their access to extensive development funds. In addition to the recruitment of foreign workers to this activity branch, also the progress of intensive market agriculture in several regions of Italy, Spain and Greece, and the development of the service sector that followed the expansion of consumption, have been responsible for this increase in the demand for non-EU workers. Also, the limited level of institutionalisation experienced by Southern European countries in certain areas of public policy, that authors such as Ferrera (2010) have sought to explain in the light of three variables (the role of the family and especially the role of women in taking care of the family, the extension of the informal economy, and low administrative capacities) contributes to explain the recruitment of migrant workers, namely women. In such a welfare frame, the family finds it increasingly difficult to assume the tasks and responsibilities that ensure care in the countries of the Mediterranean regime, strongly based on ‘familism’. It is in this context, aggravated by the very high ageing level of these societies, where we see the connection between the crisis of welfare seen as a crisis of care, and the commodification of care through migration chains that mainly target women’s immigrant labour. This largely informal solution seems to contribute to resolving the care crisis in the short term, but it can call into question the medium- to long-term sustainability of the welfare regime, the integration of immigrants, and the need to ensure social justice (Moreno et al., 2014).

Having taken into consideration the population and economic activities in the main urban spaces and their consequences for the dynamics and diversity of the urban labour markets, it is not a surprise that the proportion of immigrants in these Mediterranean metropolises is always higher than in the respective countries, and that diversity is now a hallmark of these spaces. With the exception of Paris, Madrid and Barcelona are the EU cities with the highest absolute foreign population numbers. Athens and Lisbon also rank in the top ten cities in terms of foreign-born inhabitants.5 The percentages of the foreign-born population tend to be smaller in the cities of the Southern Mediterranean, but their role as places of refuge and/or transit spaces to Europe where migrants tend to accumulate are transforming the panorama.
Crossings to Europe are hindered by the control of the Mediterranean by EU authorities in partnership with the police and armed forces of the North African countries, as the result of cooperation agreements signed with the purpose of preventing migration and returning migrants. Many migrants are currently taken by Moroccan, Algerian and Libyan authorities to their southern borders and left there without humanitarian support. Despite the expulsions and the rotation of the migrants, their regular presence is now a fact in many North African metropolises. Mediterranean cities have historically been the core of Mediterranean spaces. These cities are restless places that structure regions and act as nodules of intra-regional and international connections. Despite historical ups and downs, these urban places are marked by cultural and social diversity, and interact with each other but often establish stronger links with places beyond the Mediterranean region, reproducing on an urban level what previously formed the discussion in terms of regions and countries.

The Changing Nature of Mediterranean Rural Societies: Non-Urban Places

We have assumed that metropolises form the core of the Mediterranean world, and mentioned the depopulation process experienced by rural areas (rural exodus). Despite the concentration of economic activities, wealth and population in urban spaces, it is necessary to refer to rural places in the Foreword to this book. The definitions of the ‘Mediterranean world’ by the geographers and historians of the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, such as Vidal de la Blache, Fernand Braudel, Pierre Birot and Orlando Ribeiro, included key aspects such as the rural landscape, often being portrayed romantically, and supporting socio-cultural elements. Rather than perceiving of rural and urban spaces as opposite types of places, the connections between them should be viewed from the perspective of a continuum.

With regard to Mediterranean landscapes, degradation of some traditional sensitive ecosystems such as several wetlands has occurred (Sivignon, 2007), along with the expansion of monoculture (for example, of olives) with consequences in terms of excessive homogeneity, biodiversity loss and soil erosion (Paniza Cabrera et al., 2007). Long summer droughts and the concentration of rain in the winter months are climatic traits that influence both the type of vegetation and the various land systems that, despite local specificities, share common natural and agricultural traits (Ribeiro, 1945/2021; Claval, 2007). The two dominant modes of land use in rural Mediterranean spaces were intensive polyculture of vineyards, olive trees, cereals (namely wheat and rye), together with legumes and some fruits (figs, almonds, carob, citrus fruits), and extensive cereal monoculture combined with raising cattle (Ribeiro, 1945/2021; Birot and Dresch, 1953). Claval (2007) recalls a system, based on
the Vidalian perspective, in which the local land systems provided the basic resources for the survival of their populations, but these were not sufficient to support wealthier and more complex civilisations. This required the settlement of trading structures supported by a network of cities, essential for the organisation of the socio-political and economic systems. In different historical cycles, rural–urban interaction took different forms, from the exchange food and raw materials to migration, financial capital, ideas and, more recently, mass tourism. The contemporary rural world is experiencing significant economic and social changes that are associated with the presence of immigrants: men, women and entire families.

Since the 1980s, major reforms in the agriculture sector have taken place in the Mediterranean, particularly in Southern European countries, as the result of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the progressive intensification of foreign investment (Paniza Cabrera et al., 2007; Pereira et al., 2016). Although this financing process has taken place at a different pace in various countries, it generally features the intensification of agricultural activity in terms of capital and labour, an orientation towards global markets, and an expansion of agro-industry (see the case of the Spanish province of Huelva), and frequently a regional or local specialisation in certain products. Within this process, food chains become consumer-driven and dominated by transnational food suppliers and big international supermarkets, resulting in significant changes in the Mediterranean ecological and agro-food systems (Pereira et al., 2016). Social systems have also undergone profound change, with the replacement of family agriculture by external investment, and the expansion of the hallmarks of ageing and depopulation. The intensification of global market-oriented agriculture has led enterprises to extensively recruit foreign workers as a way of ensuring labour needs are met (especially in the seasonal peaks) at reduced costs (Escrivà, 2022; Gimenez Romero, 1992; Kasimis, 2008; Pereira et al., 2016). The presence of migrant workers coming from distant geographical origins marked by socio-cultural features very different from those of local populations represents a huge potential (in terms of innovation, and demographic and economic sustainability) but is also a challenge due to the emergence of forms of employment exploitation, housing exclusion, cultural clashes and racism.

**The Border as a Place of Nuance**

The Mediterranean setting is key for observing cross-border mobility in historical terms. It also serves to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of mobility – of people both inside and outside the Mediterranean region – in connecting with borders. The Euro-Mediterranean context can be described in diffuse and general ways, in relation to the presence of border restrictions
in mobility filters, proliferation of the maquila export-assembly industry, the existence of a binational community, and humanitarian action.

Most border regions currently feature militarised border enforcement as well as similar (non-)humanitarian policies, directed at asylum seekers and irregular migration (see Ribas-Mateos and Dunn, 2021 for a consideration of the humanitarian/non-humanitarian focus from different angles). State policies are generally becoming increasingly inhumane, and humanitarianism goals are, in principle, provided by advocates and activists, in addition to the welfare state and international institutions. Year on year, militarised barriers (combined natural and human-made) that prevent the entry of migrant labourers and the working classes from the Global South are strengthened against both the uninspected entry of unauthorised workers and entry attempts by asylum seekers. But in current policies we can also witness the official rejection of humanitarianism of various kinds, both in the state management of migrant bodies to avoid bad political publicity, as well as resistant humanitarianism from below by activists and organisations.

The Mediterranean setting – beset by conditions of socio-economic crisis, weak social policies, restricted borders, and multiple forms of mobility – exceeds rigid, established fields of investigation and spills over into the relationships between the EU, Southern Europe, North Africa, the Arab/Berber North Africa, the Middle East (including Iran, Turkey and Kurdistan) and the Balkans. Its borders are intertwined with mobility filters that differentiate people according to social categories in what is one of the most militarised and heavily patrolled areas in the world, and which has become, over the last decade, the most lethal border region in the world. Despite the quantity of research carried out in recent years (compared to the 1990s) and frequent exposure in the media, the Mediterranean world needs to be understood from a longue durée perspective of policies in the changing construction of ‘Fortress Europe’. Thus, we would like to consider how the transformation of borders in the Mediterranean (also including the Middle East here) is accompanied by severe social inequalities expressed in different ways: increasing limitations on the mobility of refugees and migrants, yet decreasing limitations on the cross-border flow of goods; the proliferation of refugee encampments and settlements (formal and informal); human vulnerability and rights violations; and expanded border securitisation (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013).

Due to the context of mixed migration flows,6 camps of all sorts are becoming a central step in migrants’ and especially refugees’ journeys, as they constrain their mobility and drastically limit their access to human and social rights; as a result, many contemporary authors are considering the importance of humanitarian work during their border fieldwork research. One classic example from the Middle East is the humanitarian images that politically position the concepts of ‘refugee’ and ‘camp’ as moral indictments.
of the states and agencies that impact upon refugees’ lives. In the case of the Palestinian camps, the idea of not settling into new countries has come to be seen as a form of agency, with the refugees focused instead on their economic survival and return. The refugees are viewed as revolutionaries rather than recipients of international aid or subjects of humanitarian crises (Marron, 2016). A current case in point is the situation of the ‘migrants trapped in Libya’ where United Nations institutions, European actors, national actors, multiple militias, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), a hegemonic media and an independent media all play an important role in creating and revealing a complex situation of multiple forms and sources of violence – particularly sexual and gender-based – and eliciting a politics of compassion and mobility in the Mediterranean (for the Libyan case, and the Lebanese case regarding Syrian refugees, see Ribas-Mateos, 2020).

In this humanitarian border setting, the politics of compassion is illustrated by the following two examples. The first example is Morocco, with Jiménez’s (2019) illustration of the politics of compassion in the processes of European externalisation of borders in the Western Mediterranean region. By means of migration control policies, a process of victimisation occurs when counting, investigating and assisting the migrants. According to Jiménez, these humanitarian practices position the migrants as passive ‘objects in receipt of compassion’, while mediators such as aid workers, doctors and translators are considered as active subjects, and are recipients of funds dedicated to implementing migration policies. The second example is provided by Poguisch’s (2018) theoretical–empirical work on the Central Mediterranean route, in which she analyses post-2013 migration policies, including Operation Mare Nostrum, where ‘saving lives was put on the European Agenda’, and later treaties between Italy and Libya. The treaties were an attempt to integrate humanitarian rhetoric into governmental migration management policies. However, Poguisch points out multiple ambiguities in the humanising policies: for example, the contradiction between border control and humanitarian rescue preventing many migrants from reaching Europe. NGOs currently working in the Mediterranean do so from a humanitarian perspective that is both rational and emotional, with a fraternal spirit and a concern for the situation of other human beings, by expressing compassion and solidarity. This has arisen along with the displacement of millions of additional people in a brief period, resulting from multiple conflicts, many of which are tied to disastrous foreign policy and coercive interventions in the Middle East and North Africa by the United States and major European powers.

The construction of the Mediterranean setting has involved socio-economic changes in Southern European countries, the impact of the Arab Spring on mobility, the capsizing of boats of migrants in the Mediterranean, EU emergency policies, and the proliferation of push-backs. All of this has resulted in
Migration patterns across the Mediterranean borders being pushed South, towards sub-Saharan Africa, especially between 2011 (with the beginning of the Arab Spring) and 2015, and from 2015 onwards, creating a crisis of border externalisation paired with a new phase of turbulence at the maritime frontier.

MIGRATION AND MOBILITIES

Traditional migration studies assumed that migrants brought with them a strong sense of place of their country of origin as well as a unidirectional return project. Reterritorialisation is characterised by the reconstruction of daily routines and insertion into a new socio-spatial fabric at destination (Haesbaert, 2007). This implies an adaptation to the local and national features and norms, but in many cases is embedded in co-ethnic relations and support. More recently, the centrality of this territorialised ‘society’ has shifted as networks and mobility intersect across the globe, drawing a profiled place according to Lefebvre’s (1991) classification, articulated by a confluence of networks and paths, in a continuous interrelationship of mobility and societies, resulting in multiterritoriality (Haesbaert, 2007). Globalisation has resulted in one of the most significant transformations in the spatial organisation of power, and economic and political activity. It is our belief that theories of globalisation synthesise all these elements, distorting the classical notion of territoriality and the binary connection to countries of origin, driving the articulation of new concepts. In this scenario, globalisation and mobility find a way to break with the traditional binary perspectives (immigrant–emigrant; origin–destination; departure and return) in transnationality, allowing for a reconstruction of the connections between spaces at various scales and pointing to new perspectives on migrant families and recipients of remittances, capital and information flows.

Challenges to the concept of conventional mobility behaviours and patterns of seasonal or circular mobility, and the consequences of (im)mobility in times of global pandemic, call for further research. While transnationalism is not entirely novel, it did reach a particularly high degree of intensity on a global scale at the end of the 20th century, the reasons for which correspond to the processes associated with increasing global economic interaction, a reduction in transport costs, progress in the new technologies of information, and decolonisation (seen from a current controversial context of decolonisation and post-colonisation). If increased circularity, clear in the design of human corridors and the feminisation of international mobility (especially since the beginning of the 1990s), is to be considered decisive in current global migration, it is an additional significant element in terms of covering new paradigmatic regions and migration poles (for example, West Africa, Southern Europe, the Persian Gulf). In addition to this, it is now possible to observe the configuration of new
countries of emigration, immigration or transit, which involve the Maghreb or Turkey. Studies into circularity, inspired by the work of authors such as Alain Tarrius, have presented mobility as a resource, with its origins in the analysis of migration complexities in the Mediterranean region. Tarrius’s work affirms that migrant identities are not reaffirmed through permanence in place, but are marked by movement, understood as something that combines geographical mobility and connection with the territory. He coined the term ‘circular territories’ to refer to certain population groups characterised by ‘movements, comings and goings, by constant ins and outs in worlds designated as different’ (Tarrius, 2000: 8). Such perspectives allow us to address issues arising from the study of social structure in migration, in connection with analytical time-space re-readings, which go beyond the polygonal space delimited by national sovereignty, and point to the relevance of network space. Along similar lines, Peraldi et al. (2001) propose that contemporary migration flows can no longer be conceived of in the same way as Fordist and controlled migration (in Sayad’s terms; Sayad, 2004). According to Peraldi et al., the novel forms of mobility associated with economic adaptation, demonstrated by his empirical studies carried out in Marseille in the 1990s, demonstrate a variety of movements (including commuting), built on functional routes such as pilgrimage, commerce or diaspora (family celebrations, care arrangements, and so on) (Ribas-Mateos, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the mobility paradigm that appears to have wobbled during the global COVID-19 epidemic is a clear starting point. The theoretical proposal of the mobility turn forms part of a critique of the social sciences, in which theories were derived from the assumption that migration phenomena begin from a static position. In contrast to this, researchers such as Sheller and Urry (2006) point out that the ‘mobility turn’ aims to study strategies motivated by ‘family projects, for leisure and enjoyment, by politics or protest’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 208). This paradigm does pay close attention to the concept of ‘space’, rather than the controversial new role of the state, and includes the study of movements that take place ‘in the de-territorialised and de-centralised world, without a centre of power and without fixed barriers’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006: 209). As Sassen (2013) points out, when we stop in this space, the focus is on the gap between the territory and the legal construction of the sovereign territorial authority of the state, that is, territoriality.

Temporality creates temporary chains, flows, interactions, negotiations, crossings and meetings, producing a social situation that differs from sedentary societies with their own specific rules and norms (Tarrius, 2009). And in this sense, temporality is connected to the idea of circularity, creating a new supra-level space of migration networks called migration camps, in which migration and social networks are reproduced by migrants. The conception of circular migration thus represents a range of movements of subjects that
Migration patterns across the Mediterranean

repeat on a regular basis for certain periods of time, creating continuous forms of movement between different spaces, and for varying periods of time in the Mediterranean space (sometimes also referred to as ‘caravansar’ in reference to such circularity). Clearly, the ability to utilise this mobility space varies by regional area and by social class, gender, age and ethnicity.

Mobility in the Mediterranean can be examined on the basis of key axes of analysis (global care chains and relocation of care services, technological changes, marriage strategies, circularity and transnational practices). Mobility is intrinsically a resource (access to social economic or even cultural capital in other national spaces, for example), but also works as an engine generating a kaleidoscope of social inequalities that traverse the spheres of gender, generations, ethnicity and race. Such inequalities require a reflection on direct or indirect aspects of mobility such as asylum laws, or the segmented structures that characterise the organisation of the labour markets.

In his latest publication, *Memory and the Mediterranean*, Fernand Braudel retraces the Mediterranean in pre-historical times, as a long-standing scar on the earth: ‘if the Mediterranean seems so alive, so eternally young in our eyes ... what point is there in recalling this sea’s great age? What can it possibly matter, that the Mediterranean, an insignificant breach in the earth’s crust ... is an ancient feature of the geology of the globe?’ (Braudel, 2001, 3).

NOTES

1. The Mediterranean is one of the zones of the widely used Köppen climate classification. Because climate zones have a longitudinal nature, the Mediterranean zone also includes California in the Northern Hemisphere, and has expression in Western and South Australia, south-western South Africa and Chile (Southern Hemisphere). The Mediterranean climate zone is not solely comprised of the region around the Mediterranean Sea, but the designation arose there along with various studies about its communalities in terms of climate and vegetation. See, for instance, Ribeiro (1968), who outlines the idea of a unified space – *strictu sensu* – in bioclimatic terms.

2. For Moreno et al. (2014: 100) the Mediterranean Southern European (MSE) model would appear as an articulated political project around the values of equality and solidarity with the most vulnerable groups (particularly the elderly). However, the 2008 financial crisis shook up this framework and opened up spaces in which specific political and economic interests are attracted by the possibility of increasing economic benefits (for example, private provision of health and education services for the most solvent sectors, strong liberalisation in the housing market, criticism of the role of the state, overvaluation of markets).

3. Madrid, Milan, Barcelona, Naples, Athens, Rome and Lisbon are ranked among the 12 largest urban metropolises of the European Union. The urbanisation indexes of Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal are all over 66 per cent (CIA, 2020).

4. Libya, Turkey, Algeria and Tunisia have urbanisation rates over 70 per cent. Even in the cases of Egypt and Morocco, which display lower values, we
find some of the largest cities in Africa such as the Cairo–Giza conurbation. Alexandria and Casablanca are also placed in the top ten ranking of the most populated metropolises of Africa.


6. Mixed migration flows correspond to:
   A movement in which a number of people are travelling together, generally in an irregular manner, using the same routes and means of transport, but for different reasons. People travelling as part of mixed movements have varying needs and profiles and may include asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked persons, unaccompanied/separated children, and migrants in an irregular situation. (IOM, 2019: 141–142).

REFERENCES


Migration patterns across the Mediterranean


