

## New Ways of Understanding Human Mobility

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In the age of globalisation, a key challenge is to define the 'new areas of mobility'. Ribas argues that such mobilities cannot only be expressed by the 'physical mobility' of the people themselves, but can also be related to the increased flows of information between social lives in the Mediterranean as well as migrant communities dispersed across the globe. From the inter-relations in a public square to the experience of cultural-tourism routes, Ribas explores different examples, redefining our understanding of human mobility.

The Mediterranean can be considered as a space of circulation and a place of exchange in a period characterised by a strong impact of communication technologies. People of the Mediterranean mention in the Report different ways they interact with people on the other shore. They pinpoint interactions that go beyond migrations: like business, tourism, neighbourhoods as well as the internet thought as the most common tool of communication especially among young people, and public spaces, which may or may not impact positively on the quality of mutual perceptions. Despite the considerable impact of the changes related to global migration in the Region, the cultural question is still a complex one. This a particular Region, with a historical presence of a diversity of cultures, diversity inside cultures, forms of domination of cultures (colonialism, orientalism, etc). Nevertheless it configures a space where one can think of the idea of cultures from a relational sense, it is from that specific angle that we understand the idea of the Mediterranean dialogue, even though the exotic and colonial perspective has not yet disappeared. But such space constructed through this Report as an intercultural space is a particularly complex one, especially when we take into consideration the increased human exchange across the Mediterranean, where we detect many global circuits which enable interaction but also many closed doors and conflicts. We will try to answer to part of such intercultural scenario by directly addressing the question of mobility in the age of globalisation trying to give an operational definition which is better adapted to the new mobilities of the circular migration, transnational networks and return migration which are nowadays characteristic of the dynamics of human mobility in our Region.

### Mobilities and Circularity

Most of these complexities have been shown a long time ago by Tarrus' work on Mediterranean mobilities. He was able to elucidate that migrant identities are not reaffirmed as characteristically stable but as populations featured by their movements; they function through a combination of territory

and movements. Tarrus mints the term circular territories to refer to certain population groups who are hallmarked by movements, the coming and going, the type of entry and exit between worlds designed as different (Tarrus, 2000).

Notwithstanding, those circularities cannot only be expressed by the actual physical mobility of the people themselves, but can also be related to the circuits of information which bound transnational communities, flows of information with the help of today's technologies and bound peoples' social lives between Mediterranean locations as well migrants' dispersal over the globe. The importance of migratory networks and survival strategies, the role of migrants as entrepreneurs responding to the structural conditions of labour migrations, the role of investors and remittances and their social development in the countries of origin, the new forms of migrants' political deterritorialization are some of those examples. Mobilities of contemporary migrants would be characterised by the intensity of the movements, even circulation movements, the intensified migration culture, the use of the diasporas network and the references developed by an intensified diaspora identity.

Furthermore, such mobilities work also in conjunction with other types of social interactions. In the past years I have been particularly interested in examining in-depth the global circuits that can be identified in the Mediterranean Region. In such Region I have considered how in border cities (Tangiers and Dürres, in Ribas-Mateos, 2005), we can examine many types of circuits between the North and the South, such as the textile circuits (matching industrial relocation trends). However, many other circuits can be described such as the internationalisation of non-governmental organisations, the circuits affecting the vulnerable actors of border crossing and being affected also by the commodification of the body, arranged marriages among others.

Therefore, contemporary mobilities can be thought as the sensor for all intercultural changes in the terms of post-Fordist

flexibility, in contrast to the conception of Fordist arranged migrations. Nowadays such mobilities can be featured through different concepts: the old community network, the complexity of categories, circularity and the impact of new technologies.

In the case of the old community network, the base of such mobilities is constituted by the experience consolidated during the Fordist times, which constructed the labour migration model as well as the social network bases for such mobilities. Of course networks are remade today with others, including neighbourhood networks, peer groups based relationships, as I could find out through research among youngsters in the city of Tangiers (Ribas-Mateos, 2005). Today, families in the South quite often use such resources between relations built up in the Euro-Mediterranean space and draw new strategies taking into account structural factors such as political issues related to border restrictions and economic issues related to economic crisis and unemployment. With regard to the complexity of categories, these are constructed around global migration and are much looser and more heterogeneous than in the Fordist times, but the Fordist model is often still the reference for the projects of social mobility for migrants and for their families. The feminisation of migrant flows and the diversity of women strategies would be also considered under this complexity of categories illustrated at a later stage through some examples concerning cultural tourism.

Furthermore, another novelty in the projects of the migrants is the idea of circularity between different spaces of the Mediterranean. This is connected with the ideas explained above by the works of Tarrus. In this article, we will see it through the example of Moroccan migrants in Catalan flea markets. Finally, as far as new technologies are concerned, in principle, such technologies are used to attend the needs of the diasporas network; however, in a very unequal way, where we think of the Jebala region in North Morocco where hardly any village has internet access or where telephone mobile network functions badly during the winter (Ribas-Mateos, 2009). On the other hand, new technologies serve mobilities to other needs and other forms of exclusion and

a specific example is given by the phenomenon of pink telephones.

### The Impact of Cultural Tourism

Among these differences of mobilities I would like to show some examples of mobilities and tourism (Ribas-Mateos, 2008). I think here of the idea of 'caravanserai', as a nodal place in a Mediterranean route, as a route where markets (commodities), mobilities (people) are connected and where information is exchanged about such routes. The mobilities of people are highly diverse: nomads, passengers, tourists, pilgrims, temporary migrants, long-term migrants, temporary refugees, definitive refugees among others. Such mobilities are also connected with other processes thanks to the attraction caused by archaeological and historical sites like the case of Syria. We encounter in our research tourists thirsty for historical knowledge about the cradle of the Middle East, of old civilisation, of the crossing cultural space among continents. To such historical legacy we can also add, the Syrian kindness, the interest for the gastronomic Levant. Those are the people who are brave enough to come, away from the list of the forbidden countries. They are tourists who in many ways still look for the intact images of the Orient of the 19th century: the laziness of the atmosphere, the narguile, the images of Old Damascus and its everyday life, the citadels, horses and camels, and specially the icon of the desert as the old travellers were also attracted to. In other words, the images which are still untouched in the imaginary of many people, and especially in the imaginary of the tourist and of the cultural tourist.

In a context of global changes characterised by a process of intense economic liberalisation, a process that we can see very evidently in the last seven years in Syria, and most particularly in its capital, we analyse the increase of Spanish tourists in the urban site of the Damascus intra-muros, recognised as a protected area by UNESCO in 1979. The mobilities and cosmopolitanisms of this city which has been inhabited for over 5000 years, show us a suitable analytical perspective to see contemporary changes under Mediterranean conditions, which in such a case are very particularly connected to a very

### Germany - Urban Immigration Exhibition

The investigative exhibition project 'Crossing Munich' is the result of a unique and innovative cooperation between international scientists, academics and students of history and cultural studies. The research dimension of the initiative focused on thirteen migration-related themes within the urban setting of Munich, carried out over 2008 and 2009, with the main aim of scrutinizing widespread images, opinions and policies related to immigration. By drawing on information from the city's archives, as well as examples from work in the field, it was possible to widen the perspective on issues related to Munich's pluralistic society. In total thirteen installations were featured in the final exhibition, which presented the city in its context as a place of immigration since 1955, the year in which Germany signed the first labour agreement for 'foreign workers' with Italy. The exhibition addressed a range of topics including globalisation, transnationalisation and the hybridization of European urban societies.

[www.crossingmunich.org](http://www.crossingmunich.org)

particular setting of the Middle Eastern migratory pattern.

## Exclusion and Cosmopolitanism in the Public Space

Other examples of public interactions refer to public squares and markets. Many studies have been conducted in the last decade on the different relations between migrants, ethnic communities and natives in different parts – in particular cities – of the North of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless most of them have emphasized the conflictual social interaction between communities which have reached catastrophic episodes such as the one in El Ejido in Spain in 2000, and from that onwards we find many others, concerning the construction of mosques, and many other types of neighbours affected by pro-security mobilisations which have been developing in Spain in the last years and had already a significance in Italy in the 1980s. We do count also on ethnographic research conducted for example on the interrelations that can happen in a public space such as the square. In that respect I would like to highlight the results of the research of Díaz-Cortes (2009). The author, by researching the living practices of the public space in popular Catalan urban neighbourhoods found a suitable background where to analyse intercultural practices. In such neighbourhoods, identity and belonging is explained by the social and material constructions where public spaces are intimately linked to a recent history. The history of activism towards ameliorating living conditions and a political fight against the Franco regime. Such an identity can today be used as an exclusionary tool against foreigners and against a harmonic interaction between different communities (not only according to ethnic differences, but also on the bases of age and gender). The problem is often put in the spaces of the living practices. We refer in particular to the tensions provoked by the use of emblematic squares, where ethnic inequality and conflict have often opened up in real battlegrounds. Another example is the cosmopolitan space of the market of Encants in Barcelona (Ribas-Mateos, 2004). This market is a flea market of Barcelona different from traditional shops and developed by Moroccans in the form of an ethnic business. Weekly markets, their sellers and their buyers follow

the insertion of Moroccan in the Catalan geography. Markets are a clear geographic expression of the relational spaces of Moroccans in Catalonia. What it is here most interesting is that they do constantly relate in cosmopolitan relationships which use constant bargaining as a commercial strategy. Some of them they even travel to Perpignan in France, once a week. Reciprocity relations are here sustained by ethnic affiliation, so is ethnicity which serves as a form of adaptation to the market and to society. Nevertheless, such relations consider a wider scope of talking and related with natives, with Ecuadorians and with other Africans.

## A Shared Mediterranean Project?

The shared Mediterranean project is, of course, a human exchange, but such an exchange should not be understood in a totally abstract way. It is a result of the historical construction of the Mediterranean as an area of communalities, interaction but also of hard conflict. Some of the selected cases have shown us some of this complexity. Such a human exchange is also heavily conditioned by global socio-economic conditions and by the internal socio-political evolution of each of the Mediterranean countries and by the impact of the Europeanization process of Southern European countries. Mobilities are at the core of such exchanges and show the real experience of structural global contradictions. On the one hand, by the closing of European borders and on the other, through the will of people to move, representing two contradictory faces of the global economy. What will be the final definition of such specific places where to analyze mobilities in the Mediterranean South in the time of globalization? Are they simply products of peripheries? Spaces of transit or are they places where images, and desire for mobility – be it social mobility or geographical mobility – play a strong role? In a few words, the difficulties encountered, contradictions and paradoxes on the issue of Mediterranean unequal mobilities are among the biggest handicaps for a strong foundation for a shared Mediterranean project.

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## Jordan - Trips for Cross-cultural Understanding

A cultural tourism initiative, the 'Abraham Path' aims to promote mutual understanding through focusing on the Region's unique and common history. Since 2008, a tourist route has been developed which follows the footsteps of Abraham in the area of Ajloun in Jordan, retracing a journey which is shared by more than three billion people in the world and has been kept alive for some four thousand years. During 2009, more than one thousand walkers organised trips and took part in the route, and through working in collaboration with the media, around one hundred and fifty million readers were able to follow the story. Through the initiative, the organisers - 'Ideal for Developing Cultural and Tourism Routes' - also set out to promote economical development through sustainable tourism and protect the natural environment and historic places of the area, with the project bringing income to rural areas through the way it has encouraged local people to turn abandoned village houses into guesthouse and provider tourists with food from their gardens.

[www.abrahampath.org](http://www.abrahampath.org)