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***Rescaling Mediterranean
Migration Governance: Setting
a Research Agenda that
Establishes the Centrality of Cities
for Region-Making***

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Background Rationale and Content

- In July 2018, a Euro-Mediterranean Research Network on Migration (*EuroMedMig*) was launched during the 15th IMISCOE Annual Conference in Barcelona, with an initial composition of 18 Members in the Steering Committee. Countries covered are: Algeria, Belgium, Egypt, Europe (EU), Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Norway, Netherlands, Tunisia and Turkey. It has initially received institutional support from The Union for the Mediterranean and academically recognized as an IMISCOE Regional Network.
- This WP Series is the first part of a specific action within a three-year (2019-2022) Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Network Program (Project Reference: 611260-EPP-1-2019-1-ES-EPPJMO-NETWORK) entitled “Mapping European Mediterranean Migration Studies” (*EUMedMi*) and coordinated by GRITIM-UPF. More information about the project can be found at www.upf.edu/web/euromedmig
- The main purpose of the *EuroMedMig Working Paper Series* is to disseminate research-in-progress that may contribute to the development of Mediterranean Migration Studies, with an effort to go beyond Eurocentrism, promote knowledge exchange between scholars from all the rims of the Mediterranean and beyond, and foster a Mediterranean Thinking in Migration research agenda. It also has the purpose of promoting the potentialities of Migration for Mediterranean Regional Development and placing Mediterranean Migration Studies within the Global Migration Agenda. Mediterranean Migration dynamics and Governance systems with several clusters are covered: Migration and Mediterranean Geo-Political International Relations – Migration and Mediterranean Governance and Politics – Migration and Mediterranean Social and Cultural relations – Migration and Mediterranean Economic and Market relations.
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Abstract

This article seeks to delineate a research approach and agenda with the ambition to rethink the governance of Mediterranean migration on a different scale: Mediterranean cities. The general purpose is to offer conceptual, theoretical, empirical and methodological preliminary arguments to support this rescaling proposal and to share insight on how it may contribute to reboot region-making and a potential paradigm change. Additionally, as I will frame it in the Introduction, the Med-Thinking approach will be key for this research enterprise. To go into more detail, in the **first section** I enter into the foundations of this research approach criss-crossing four critical reviews. In the **second section** I sketch the key-concepts shaping the theoretical basis of this research agenda. Then, in the **third section** I schematically present the main research areas following a multi-layered approach. In the **concluding remarks**, I tentatively channel the overall contributions towards a governance paradigm change argument.

Keywords

Mediterranean, Migration, Cities, Governance, Region

Author's biographical note



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Introduction

This article seeks to delineate both a research approach and a research agenda with a twofold ambition: to integrate the Mediterranean as a category of analysis in migration studies and, in this holistic context, to rethink Mediterranean Migration (MedMig) governance on a different scale than that of the States and to start to think from the point of view of Mediterranean cities (MedCities). Indeed, faced with the omnipresence of national reactive narratives, basically dominated by security and control rhetoric, my premise is that placing the centrality of MedCities at the core of MedMig research may allow us to argue for a more bottom-up approach of region-making and a potential governance paradigm change. I make mine the afterword written by Gallant: “modern scholarship has placed so much emphasis on nationalism that it has distracted us from examining other possibilities for political change” (2016; 208). Against this nested territorial view of the Mediterranean, and as a mantra for this research approach, I will take the braudelian definition of the Mediterranean as “Region of Cities” (*Région de Villes*).

From a policy viewpoint this could be an opportunity to relaunch Mediterranean mechanisms of region-making, which is now under review on this 25th anniversary of the Barcelona process, by placing urban governance at the core of the EuroMed migration Agenda. The context of the 2018 Migration Compact, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the latest reports from UN-Habitat III shaping the global agenda invites us to take this urban approach seriously. This paper will offer a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach but this cross-roads of disciplines will be managed from an applied political theory, which involves that I cannot conceive an empirical research plan without normative assessments and claims. The key normative notions that will allow me to carry out the main findings are, on the one hand, *regional cities* (namely, to consider the modalities of MedCities as first nodal points for Mediterranean region-making). I will also call the *Mediterranean village*, making emphasis to the view of the Mediterranean as multiple physical, but also virtual spaces of connectivity through Mediterranean transmobility and translocal practices.

To begin to present this particular approach, let me first briefly describe each pillar of this research architecture separately.

- a) *Towards local turn in Mediterranean migration governance*: the basic idea is to zoom MedMig governance at the ground floor, going from a current state-centric scale to a more city-centric scale, and from there having a holistic view of migration

governance. Namely, the purpose is to apply the “local turn” (R. Zapata-Barrero, T. Caponio and P. Scholten eds. 2018) which is already framing most of the migration research, but in Mediterranean spaces. This framework implies a change in national hegemonic methodological views of governance, while also incorporating local perspectives into the MedMig agenda (Roman *et al.*, 2017). The historical premise is that MedCities have developed through the influence of diverse people and cultures that have arrived at their territories along the centuries. Civilizations around the Mediterranean have been distinctively urban (A. Toynbee, 1967). Trade and colonialism nurtured MedCities in the past. Nowadays, globalization provokes human mobility with the consequence of placing migration at the centre of the urban’s political agenda. Cities located all around the shores of the Mediterranean have always been at the crossroads of migration flows. The duration and the intensity of current human mobility, the frequency of contacts, the variety of cultures, religions, languages and traditions shape the nodal points that represent today MedCities and reflect the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Mediterranean. Following this same path, Leontidou (1990) already described urban hybridity as a major characteristic of the Mediterranean city. Leontidou (2019) reminds us that the Med-unity has been characterized by reference to either ease communication (interactionist approach) or common physical features (the ecologizing approach). But now there is a third way: large migration waves that transform cities, but also incubators of new initiatives springing up in the most unlikely of places, and especially with digital communication creating new networks.

- b) *Towards a new “élan” for rebooting the Mediterranean region-making*: The view of the Mediterranean as a dynamic region fabric probably belongs to the most well-known “romantic yearnings” of the present and past of this geographical area. The “imaginary” of peace, stability, prosperity and common values, of free mobility of people, goods and information is of great importance, since it constitutes the normative horizon line of most governance instruments being deployed since the beginning of the EuroMed partnership framework in 1995. The fact is that in this 25th anniversary the failure diagnosis prevails. Not only because it has neither placed MedMig into the potential drivers of region-making nor managed to construct a positive view of Med-mobility, as it is always placed in the basket of security, but also because it has never considered the centrality of MedCities for region-making in spite of some preliminary intends. This focus will allow me to enter in the inspiring

debate on region-making mainly from international relations and geography, Med-identity and Med-values directly related to the view of the Mediterranean village and the MedCities as ‘regional cities’, as I will theoretically argue.

These two pillars will be launched by the particular approach: “Mediterranean Thinking”¹ and with a specific theoretical background on translocalism, which I will develop later. Med-Thinking is first of all an invitation to frame migration research within a holistic view of the Mediterranean and from there with a particular normative region-making horizon. It is beforehand a “relational thinking”, a term so nicely discussed by multiple geographers (M. Jones, 2009; K. Varro and A. Lagendijk, 2012; M. Jones and A. Passi, 2013; A. Paasi and J. Metzger, 2017). Relational thinking suggests that the Med-region should not be seen as a bounded nested territory but as a net space of nodal places with given practices and narratives that have its origin in MedCities. This necessarily involves thinking of the Mediterranean in a multi-scalar perspective A. Caglar and G. Schiller (2018), but having its centrality in cities. Med-Thinking is also an invitation to scratch European positionality and reflexivity in depth when researching migration governance, with a critical post-colonial lens following three main propellers.

a) *Towards a new epistemology of Mediterranean migration governance*: We want to express our concern regarding the way knowledge is produced, disseminated, and how it impacts current migration governance (C. Boswell, 2009). It is a reflexive invitation regarding the role knowledge plays at the level of politics, policies and actors involved. The question of who may potentially benefit from the data, information and knowledge produced, is an important ethical position (R. Zapata-Barrero and E. Yalaz eds. 2020). This perspective allows me to enter in current epistemological debates on the evidence-based policy movement (M. Baldwin-Edwards et. al, 2018), the construction and role of “fake-news”, but particularly to claim for a “multiple-voice” approach (I. Chambers, 2008, chap. 1). This is a direct inquiry against what we may call the *politics of knowledge in Mediterranean migration*, or the way different actors, including Med-states and the EU, conceptualize problem-making and construct crisis-narratives. It is a deep positionality’s criticism on the given system of categories informing MedMig studies and governance, which are always following an instrumental logic of benefits/disadvantages towards oneself, leaving in the background a more all-

¹ First articulated in the editorial of a special issue, Zapata-Barrero (2020). I owe this notion from the seminal work of Cooke, 1999, but I am responsible of its conceptual development.

encompassing Mediterranean view. This political solipsism receives different names depending on where we place the focus: Euro-centrism, West-centrism and even, State-centrism or National-centrism (National methodology), if we consider reference-frameworks and prevailing knowledge infrastructures from where information is constructed and disseminated. The premise here is that a MedCities-based approach may help us to identify not only the knowledge deficits, but also to identify some emerging translocal patterns that may inform region-making. The argument here is that the practical knowledge produced by other Med-networks, like institutional ones, but basically by migrants, local actors and civil society organizations (CSOs) operating in all the rims of the Mediterranean, and focused on their experiences can be a good starting premise to fulfil this epistemological claim.

- b) *Towards a more positive and pro-active view of Mediterranean migration:* I have a critical outlook on how the policy/research agenda defines MedMig as a problem, because most of the time it directly fuels a reactive governance. I would rather adhere to a much more positive and pro-active view that may inform alternative governance approaches. There is a need for a deep sociological analysis to map positive translocal experiences since these patterns do not usually reach the public debate dominated predominantly by more emotional and conflict-based views. These positive views may constitute potential alternative data/information for a migration governance paradigm change. This involves having a more resource-based and opportunity-based view of Med-movers and Med-settlers, and to carry all these arguments towards the Med-advantages in terms of the development of an ecology of Mediterranean values. The Mediterranean as a source of creativity and innovation, as a source of development through trans-Med human relations, as well as its cities' connectivity, needs to be assessed. An initial starting point could probably be identifying first its by-products such as diversity, interculturalism, cosmopolitan Mediterranean values.
- c) *Towards a Mediterranean migration philosophy of history:* We cannot contribute to MedMig studies without a particular philosophy of history. Indeed, this historical dimension is often absent in migration studies in general, and we know how important it is for an accurate understanding of current patterns. If context is often said to be crucial, I want to place history at the same ranking, or better, to speak about "historical context". Inspired by the *longue-durée* braudelian view of Med-history, I suggest focussing on what is so repetitive that it seems almost immobile and imperceptible in the long-standing historical process. Cities are the only historical fixed points we

have, even before the dominance of space of mobility by national-states. The whole architecture of this research agenda will be anchored at this scale.

These permanent patterns have a structural function for drawing the minimum Unity required to support Mediterranean region-making. F. Braudel (2017 [1949]) not only placed at the core definition of the Mediterranean its networking nature, but suggested that most current MedCities are the product of past networks (p. 267-8). The combination of *uniqueness* and *distinctiveness* shape my Mediterranean philosophy of history. It is a way to link diachronic and synchronic analysis, to put into a temporal/space dialogue both a strict philosophy of history and a philosophy of the present. This last dimension connects the historical unity with the present reality, and guides me towards the future of region-making, placing it in relation to other web of spatial relations and particularly the Global agenda. For instance, if trans-Med mobility is a key historical regional feature in terms of Unity, the distinctive reality also tells us that the Mediterranean is considered as the most diasporic region in the world (Gallant, 2016; 205), and according to the Global Peace Index 2018, it remains the world's least peaceful region. UNHCR and IOM last reports also warns us that the Mediterranean is by far the world's deadliest zone. This "disquieting account" in Chambers' terms (2008; 3) and this puzzling centrifuge political arrangement stretches outward into extraterritorial space in North-Africa, creating quarantine sanctuary spaces of migrants through camps and hotspots and a brave network of NGOs and CSOs operating at sea and land trying to reduce the humanitarian consequences, often with MedCities' alliances.

The general purpose of this article is to offer some conceptual, theoretical, empirical and methodological preliminary to support this rescaling proposal and to share insight on how it may contribute to reboot region-making and a potential paradigm change. To go into more detail, in the **first section** I enter into the foundations of this research approach criss-crossing four critical reviews. In the **second section** I sketch the key-concepts shaping the theoretical basis of this research agenda. Then, in the **third section** I schematically present the main research areas following a multi-layered approach. In the **concluding remarks**, I tentatively channel the overall contributions towards a governance paradigm change argument.

1. Foundations of the research agenda: Criss-cross four main initial critical reviews

The following critical reviews must be seen in complementary ways since all lead us to the same direction: the need to rescale MedMig governance.

1.1. Mediterranean reading of the global migration agenda

Today there are three main UN non-binding documents shaping the global agenda: one on Migration (Global Compact), another on sustainable development (Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development), and a third one coming from UN-Habitat for a better Urban Future, which place migration within a new urban agenda (2016). All three of these documents express a concern on the way states are focusing migration governance. My basic perspective here is to do what I may call a “Mediterranean reading” of these recommendations following the Med-Think approach.

The UN’s Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the first-ever global migration pact, which was adopted by 152 out of 193 UN governments in December 2018, aims to ensure that the overall benefits of migration are optimized, whilst addressing risks and challenges, for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. From the Mediterranean, Israel declined to sign, Italy, Algeria and Libya abstained. The first objective directly calls for the collection and utilization of “accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies”; commits signatory countries to strengthen the “global evidence-base on international migration” under the guidance of the UN; and calls for a “comprehensive strategy for improving migration data at local, national, regional and global levels.” Enhancing positive views and incorporating cities into the governance agenda is also in the list of recommendations. The Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development is not directly migration-focused, since it draws a plan of action for eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. But there is a clear migration focus on the 2030 Agenda, as long as it is recognized that poverty is a driver of human mobility, and also as long as migration is considered to be an indicator of current vulnerabilities and social exclusions. It calls for well-managed migration (paragraph 10.7), and recommends the mobilization of partnerships and for the strengthening of global solidarity. Among other declarations, the signatories “recognizes the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development”. It also encourages international cooperation to ensure full respect for human rights and to strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. Finally, in the same section (paragraph 29) it

underlines the importance of mobility in whatever direction, appealing to the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recalling that states must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received. With a similar perspective than the Global Compact, the Agenda 2030 also insists in providing regional and local authorities the tools to foster community cohesion and personal security (paragraph 34).

Finally, the UN-Habitat III which took place in Quito, incorporated the migration agenda at the Global Urban level. The reasons are twofold. Migration is considered to be a key driver of cities' growth, and this urban agenda globally recognises that urbanization processes make cities diverse places to live but also hold many spots of exclusion and inequalities. Migrants are also seen as agents of development when the right policies are put in place. It also incorporates inclusive and resilient cities.

These key-documents are milestones of a general global trend these last decades. My particular Med-Thinking reading is that they offer us solid arguments demanding a change in the MedMig governance paradigm, as well as identifying knowledge deficits and routes to close these gaps between knowledge and governance. They also invite us to have a multiple dimensional governance approach and a multi-layered research agenda with three main interconnected appeals:

- a) *Request a multiscale approach of migration:* local and regional levels are key for implementing principles and policies, and potential new dividend for pursuing MedMig regional mechanisms of coordination and cooperation. This involves giving more prominence to cities as actors and to zoom towards the multiple translocal relations. In fact, this focus on how territory and relations interact is key for our understanding of regional-making, as an alternative focus to the most geo-migration political state-based dominant framework.
- b) *Request an effort in focusing on positive views of migration:* this involves pointing towards an advantage-based approach and the innovative dimensions of migration, or how MedMig can be analysed as an asset and a resource for Mediterranean region-making. These positive views are central to an understanding of migrants as pioneers of Mediterranean region-making.
- c) *Request reducing the gap between governance and knowledge by endorsing an evidence-based approach:* This requires a critical overview of those who produce data, information and knowledge related with Mediterranean migration (knowledge infrastructures), its purposes and impacts, to confront the knowledge deficits in the current governance of Mediterranean migration. This also explains the need to seek

other ways of producing knowledge to frame new partnerships and networks on the dynamics and governance of Mediterranean migration at the city scale. In other words, we need to know more about MedCities in relation to city-making and urban migration governance.

1.2. Empirical premise: Mediterranean urbanization as a main challenge for Mediterranean migration governance

The urbanization of Mediterranean cities is a direct result of migration (World Economic Forum, 2017). In fact, it is widely recognized that the genesis of MedCities is essentially a migratory phenomenon. Following the philosophy of history that grounds Med-Thinking, if the link between cities and Med-mobility is a permanent historical fact that shapes the *uniqueness* of the Mediterranean, the current process of urbanization or urban-making, with direct consequences on political stability, social cohesion, with potential impacts on increasing inequalities and power relations, place the *distinctiveness* of Mediterranean urban governance within the global agenda.

The Mediterranean has been shaped through the development of its city's networks. This interactive nature is a guiding thread of Braudel's approach: "la ville de Méditerranée est création de routes et, en même temps, est créée par elles » (p. 268). In fact, the emergence of cities as regional leaders in determining migration patterns is the result of continuing interaction between urban-making due to external/internal migration. In recent decades there has also been significant inflows from rural areas (N. M. Duta *et al.*, 2019). The MedMig advent have rocked all the sides. In the North, many MedCities have increased population with migrants coming from the South. But southern MedCities are also experiencing continuous inflow of migrants. A Med-Thinking approach of this Med-urban-making invites us to explore in depth the role this dynamic context plays as pull and push factors in current migration patterns. It is a fact that many of those forcibly displaced have moved to urban areas in search of greater security, better access to basic services and greater economic opportunities, but the lack of favourable factors for their vital expectations and continuous risks of exclusion also push many to initiate a migratory process to other MedCities.

To summarise, when the urban dimension comes into play, further governance challenges arise with the considerable differences between southern, Eastern and northern Mediterranean cities in terms of size, infrastructures, development, and level of governance autonomy. All sociodemographic data and reports coincide that the

Mediterranean will become an increasingly crowded urban region. The unprecedented geographical extension and demographic volume of MedCities have also articulated extensive nodes of urban migratory corridors. We need to explore in depth this emergence of a multiplicity of urban narratives and network alliances related to migration governance, and how each MedCity articulates their own particular urban-making challenges. The right to the city as a new urban paradigm based on the principles of global justice, equality, democracy and sustainability (Woertz and Ali, 2018) also have their own place in this analysis. Whatever particular research route we may take, this puts urban governance at the top of the MedMig agenda for the coming years. The issue is no longer how to stop this increasing urbanization trend, but how to better organize it in order for cities to benefit from migration and Med-mobilities, and even, as I will push my rationale a step further, to analyse how MedCities could ground a new way of region-making, and even more can drive a paradigm change.

In more concrete terms, according to UN Mediterranean Data population, the total population of the Mediterranean countries grew from 281 million in 1970 to 419 million in 2000 and to 472 million in 2010. The prediction is to reach 572 million by 2030. The population of the coastal regions grew from about 100 million in 1980 to 150 million in 2005. It could reach 200 million by 2030 (UN World Population Prospect 2015). The population density in the coastal zone is higher in the southern Mediterranean countries. Population growth combined with the growth of coastal urban hubs generates multiple population pressures that is often translated into political instability, social/political protests and emigration options. In other words, there can be a new and additional push factor around urbanization processes. Moreover, about 1.600 cities (more than 10,000 inhabitants) with around 100 million inhabitants are located in the Mediterranean coastal regions according to the World Population Review (2020).

This empirical trend is currently provoking political and social Med-concerns all over the Med-governments. The last UN report on Arab cities confirms these Med-worries and even incorporate these issues within the forthcoming Med-human ecology debates, widely recognized when we speak about the urban resilience in the Med-region (UN Development Programme, 2018). MedCities can certainly be considered as laboratories for new migration urban politics. The urban governance capacities will probably become a determinant new structural driver with new migratory patterns, such as climate change and now current pandemic scenarios. The recognition of the power of cities to influence transMed mobility and their role in the inclusion and diversity policies of migrants needs

to be assessed. Most documents focused on Med-urbanization processes insist that there is a need for a strategic coordinated migration urban governance framework. Its function would be to give collective answers to common MedCities concerns and reduce the risks of urban governance becoming a new factor of instability. To summarise this empirical premise in one sentence, there is a strong interface between urbanization process and migration patterns that needs to shape a future MedMig research agenda. Developing conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools for its exploration would certainly help to enhance a Med-region-making.

1.3. The Mediterranean as scenario of geo-migration governance: Process of disenchantment of the Barcelona Process and current blockage scenario

From a policy point of view, this research agenda is contextualized within the Barcelona process, which for the first time in 1995 a partnership framework logic of action was established with clear ideals of contributing to create a space of peace, stability and prosperity through coordination and cooperation mechanisms. This included the reinforcement of political and security dialogues, construction of a shared zone of economic prosperity and a free-trade area, and the rapprochement between people, societies and cultures. This European Mediterranean regional (EuroMed) governance framework is still the background of the Union for the Mediterranean created in 2008. Today it continues to shape the horizon of the current neighbourhood Mediterranean governance and the externalization of policies, conceived after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union (Schumacher et al., Eds., 2018). One of the main changes from the original focus is that we have gone from an ideal multilateral governance approach to a much more bilateral one. This basically means that the regional mechanisms today are placed within a clear geo-migration politics dominated by a conditionality logic, with democratization and development programmes coping with root causes.

My starting diagnosis is that today the Barcelona process has not managed to reach its region-making imaginary. To date, the Mediterranean has not succeeded in creating an environment where people, products, ideas and services are allowed to flow freely. At the moment, there are too many bottlenecks in the system (S. Calleya, 2004), and this will prevent the region from competing and prospering in the global Mediterranean Village of tomorrow. Within this disenchantment process, a reactive governance legitimated by narratives of control, security, negative and conflict-based views of migration prevail.

Moreover, this dominant geo-migration politics drags with it hegemonic binary perceptions of we/us, dividing the Mediterranean in a patchwork of migration and refugee policies and national (and unilateral) initiatives of control, nurturing a Med-view as a fragmented scenario. In other words, the regional Mediterranean process has been dominated by several strands that shape current migration governance paradigm's orthodoxy: it is national and state-based and dominated by Euro-centrism (West-centrism). The current scenario is moreover a history of restrictions and blockage of Med-mobility. States dominate Mediterranean spaces and when cities have spatial initiatives of networking with other MedCities and even civil society actors, they are interpreted by mainstream state hegemony in similar ways to NGOs operating in the Mediterranean. These cities resilience is often the main factor for networking Med-strategies, and these strategies should be analysed in depth, since they may ground new ways of region-making.

It is also a fact that even before the Barcelona process in 1995 there had always been some attempt to scale Mediterranean governance at the city level, but these desiderata never reached institutional and structural EuroMed architecture, thus further reinforcing my critical overview. This timid city agenda began with Med-programmes and in particular Med-Urbs as a cooperation program between local authorities in the field of urban development. A sub-program, Med-Urbs Migration, opened in 1995 and endeavoured to grasp the problems linked to migratory flows. The basic objective was to strengthen municipal powers and improve policy-makers contact on common concerns. But Med-Urbs had a short life and was suspended by the court of auditors of the European Community on the grounds of management difficulties (E. Sole i Lecha, 2005; 118). Something that maybe today is being capitalised by the peer-to-peer learning platform City2City network and especially Mediterranean City-to-City migration projects (MC2MC) aiming at improving migration governance. The same Barcelona declaration in 1995 included this sub-state governance scale,² although it was never implemented, it incorporated cities within social partnerships, at the same level that civil societies. Another failed attempt occurred during the tenth anniversary in November 2005 as a Barcelona City Council's (2005) initiative in collaboration with Eurocities and UCLG

² The Barcelona declaration included a section called Municipalities and regions in these terms: "Municipalities and regional authorities need to be closely involved in the operation of the EuroMediterranean Partnership. City and regional representatives will be encouraged to meet each year to take stock of their common challenges and exchange experiences. This will be organised by the European Commission and will take account of previous experience" (Barcelona Declaration, 1995).

(United Cities and Local Governments) with a much clearer autonomous claim for a decentralised mechanism of collaboration and cooperation. But no more steps continued this second great attempt.

1.4. Mapping the current Mediterranean migration research agenda: Conflict-based and event-driven

In the last few years, due to large-scale human displacements, the Mediterranean gained more and more relevance in migration studies (H. de Haas, 2011). Indeed, if we review the recent scholarly, the keywords identified in current research would probably be ungovernability, unmanageability, instability, uncertainty, unpredictability, complexity, and even one identifying MedMig as one of the major geo-political cleavages today. There is also a trend among scholars that in spite of being engaged and critical most of the time, they tend to, paradoxically, be too Eurocentric and so they probably miss to conceptualise research topics within a broad holistic Med-view.

As a first premise let me start with an apparent paradox that today governs MedMig research: despite the great importance of Med-mobility, and despite the huge number of studies that have been carried out these last years, there is not a focused meta-debate tackling MedMig as a distinctive area of studies nor Med-Thinking in migration studies, addressing epistemological, pro-active views and historical dimensions.

Seeing globally, the Mediterranean is a geographical area of coexistence of different political regimes and national ideologies, many understandings of the role of religion, nationalism, and diversity in society and politics. This means that to conduct MedMig research is to enter in a complex area which is inherently driven by political and social tensions, and where short-termism often blurs the scope of many researchers' agendas. These particular cases often dominate and probably contribute to an event-driven history. Instead of concentrating on what is *unique* and *distinctive*, current research is often trapped by urgencies and contingencies, and sometimes it takes an engaged critical stand, but often without a clear viable, pragmatic and credible alternative to invert the current blind situation.

There are several theoretical frameworks dominating the current MedMig research agenda (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2020). Most of them combine descriptive and explanatory arguments with normative claims, at different grades and intensity. Probably, there is also

a need for more multi-sited and comparative research, multi-level analysis, and intersectional studies. Let me briefly review some of them.

Above all, there is a permanent claim to assess the distance between policy, social and research agenda. The fact that a link exist is beyond doubt. However, how this interface takes place is much less evident. Sometimes I wonder if the fact that there is a merging agenda between research and media, and research and policy is good for the development of migration studies. This often uncritical reproduction of newspaper headlines and/or political practices of most MedMig research also falls within this “disquieting account”. The dominance of political ideologies and state decisions over social and research distinctive agendas can be a matter of concern. This dependence probably explains why most of the research carried out today falls within the event-driven mood, instead of having a long-term Med-Thinking approach.

Quickly surveying Google Scholar analytics (May 2020) on “Mediterranean Migration” and the last five years, we can infer several premises. First, negative aspects by far dominate the research narrative over the positive ones, governed by the same rhetoric most governments have constructed: crisis and instability, Mediterranean “disordered” migration. This may invite us to reflect on the extent to which a research agenda, which is too often conflict-driven, may fuel mainstream policies and hegemonic reactive governance narratives.

The second premise we can infer is that current MedMig research is still too state-centric, dominated by national concerns on border control, regional geo-political considerations related to insecurity, and ideological values related to democracy and human rights. It is true that most researches include cities as case studies, but with little comparisons and with little efforts to seriously reflect on their key role in shaping Med-region. If we are looking at what makes unity and at the same time distinctiveness within the Med-region, we need to dig into the important role urban governance currently has and can potentially have if there were a governance framework promoting cooperation and coordination among MedCities. There are a group of studies that focus on the Mediterranean as being one of the most significant extra-European regions that may capture our interest, with a long history of colonial engagement from states that are now members of the EU (Collyer, 2016). The framework of security and stability nexus (Roccu & Votolini, 2018), together with the area of externalization of EU policies since the seminal work of Boswell (2003), among others, also offer us some interesting potential Med-Thinking insights. The leading argument within this research avenue

highlights that the dangers of a hyper-crisis narrative can legitimize rapid, informal and flexible policy instruments and legislative proposals that are often at odds with democratic principles and fundamental rights. It can also justify the lack of regular channels (de Vries, Carrera, & Guild, 2016) or even, and in practice, for instance, hotspots system (detention centres without regulation), Jungle Calais practices and an overall absence of a humanitarian approach.

2. Key-concepts and theoretical socket shaping the MedCities research agenda

Let me briefly introduce the conceptual and theoretical map that will cement the main walls of this research agenda. Some of them have a neological character, and some others will come from main theories, but with particular meanings given the focus of this research approach.

2.1. Regional theories and the Mediterranean Village approach

Regional building theories (region-making as we call it) basically come from international relations and geography. They are often based on a number of shared markers and a set of assumptions under which a “region” makes sense and is thus given a shared meaning (Pace, 2005; 27). Regionalisation (the making of a region as a shared space) and regionalism (the making of a region as an actor in the global agenda) is then often portrayed as something functional. The premise is that a region is not a natural entity, but rather a political and social construct. In this scholarly literature, there are broadly speaking two different ways of explaining the making of regions. My understanding will combine both. Materialist theories emphasise the resource basis such as commonly shared characteristics, like geography, language, religion, economic ties and institutions. Ideationist scholars, on the other hand, have argued that although material factors matter, regions are above all “imagined communities”. This means that regions are socially constructed entities, created by common narratives and shared spaces that may contribute to creating a sense of belonging. Sympathizing with most of the Pace’s focus on regional identity building, ideationists hold that structures of human associations are determined before by shared ideas rather than material forces. Hence regions are determined by shared discourses and narratives. For both these materialists and ideationists to take place, interdependence, common fate, and self-restraint may be

responsible for regional formation. The fact is that material factors become intelligible only in light of ideational factors (Pace, 2005; 10).

I am also very sympathetic with the geographers' debate, specially the one that asserts that region-making is the sum of relations, connections, embodiments, narratives and practices, involving a large series of different scales of actors (M. Jones and A. Paase, 2013). This relational view of region-making usually links politics, territory and power (A. Paasi and J. Metzger, 2017). For me, I fish from this stimulating debate the key-focus that region is a relational concept (K. Varro and A. Lagendijk, 2012 even speak about "the relational turn") made by different territorial networks that belong to different state jurisdictions and even political regimes and religious/nationalist ideologies, which for us, have its origin in MedCities. From this perspective, the complexity of the Mediterranean lies in that most of the differences in ideologies and political regimes take the configuration of different ways of living and civilizations, dominated by different collaborative and often conflictive interactions with religions in public life, and also with different national ideologies that most often restricts cities external actions. This makes the Mediterranean a complex web of encounters and disagreements, most of the time dominated by state-hegemony of space and clash of interests. One of the central drivers is relation, but I prefer to speak about spatial connectivity and mobility. Geographers often use region-making in descriptive terms, in general as a set of relations, but less on the added value of this region-making in normative terms as building a space of shared-value-making and even identity-making as I will try to carry on throughout my rationale. I will even argue that a region is made by political processes and social process with an origin in MedCities.

Both geo-political and geographers underline the process-based approach for region-making. I will take Med-regionalism and regionalization as a city-led project, which means to reorganize a particular geographical space along defined transMed mobility and diversity patterns of connectivity. As a making-process, MedCities can be interpreted as nodal places originating a process of Mediterranean physical and virtual space-making. These connections are often done by needs for their own Urban governance, as informational node, but also as mobilisation nodes against state narratives, and as organizational nodes, and so on. These relations can frame new ways of region-building. It can also take shape by translocal relations of the same migrants with their cities of origin. This basically involves that the attachment of the population to the Mediterranean

can follow various spatial ties which are constructed in the translocal practices of everyday life and social action.

Taking this relational focus in a historical perspective, the premise is that the two main defining regional features of the Mediterranean is Diversity and Mobility. Of course, if these are the main defining pillars, I also assume they are both by-products of “connectivity”. The Mediterranean as a region is a “multiple interconnected virtual/physical space” (here we can even think of a cyberspace) shaped by translocal practices and narratives of cities and their Mediterranean population. From this particular cyberspace approach, we can state that, if there is a system of filters, channels and restrictions of connectivity, this has a direct negative consequence to the making of Med-region. In this sense Med-mobility can be interpreted as a mechanism for connectivity, and Med-Diversity both as a consequence of mobility and as an opportunity for new ways of connectivity challenging initial nested territorial spaces bordering limitations.

This follows that the best way to reconceptualise the Mediterranean is to view it as a dynamic plurality of spaces that are interconnected with huge human networks and city-nodes. My argument is that the Mediterranean can keep its regional-making expectation if it has the means to maintain and reproduce city-links across its geographical space. A view of the Mediterranean as a cyberspace is also a way to combine simultaneity and juxtaposition, to connect the near and the far. This Net-thinking (if I may use this expression) of the Mediterranean also invites us to change the ways of knowing and producing knowledge, forcing what Cooke (1999; 296) calls a “deterritorialized consciousness of place”. This de-spatialization of interaction erodes, then, the traditional symmetry of state, place and belonging. For instance, diaspora and transnational researches developed in migration studies points towards this direction (see one of the last works: R. Zapata-Barrero and S. Rezaei, eds. 2019). This way of thinking about the Mediterranean suggests to us then the need to reconceptualize this geographical area as both physical and historical places and virtual reality of multiple spaces that are interconnected through migration and with city-nodes.

A way to underline this interconnectivity background is to speak about the *Mediterranean Village*, which sees human mobility as channel connecting different city-centres, and migration as a cluster of region-making. In the *Mediterranean Village* cities are hubs of human mobility, and migrants can be considered as pioneers of the *Mediterranean Village*. This notion is definitively a way of regionalizing the original

Global Village and Global cities approach (S. Sassen, 1991) with a particular MedCities' reading.

2.2. Med-mobility and translocalism: New ways of living the Mediterranean multiscalar region-making

The concept of Mobility that I have been using so far includes spatial displacement, as cross-territorial mobility. It also holds a social and political meaning since we adhere to the perspective of mobility studies (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007; Benhabib and Resnik, 2009), in considering mobility as essential in the making of societies. In a similar vein, transMed human mobility connecting MedCities is the making of Med-region (Med-societies and Med-values, Med-identity). Pointing to this constructivist view, this also involves how societies are ruled through connections. This relational view of mobility will be linked to a power dimension through the meaning captured under the notion of "Governmobility", so nicely put forward by Baerenholdt (2013). It is a neologism allowing us to emphasize how mobilities are involved in governing societies, inspired by M. Foucault's concept of governmentality. Mobility is also used to underline trends and patterns in migration studies, and then we can speak about mobility Mediterranean regimes (Jensen, 2013; Schiller and Salazar, 2013, among others). The innovation here will directly be that these international migration category of analysis will be MedCity-based, and this will allow me to speak about Med-City mobility regime, corridors, and even reformulate seminal questions such as why people migrate and how to explain differentiated mixed migration patterns, giving them a city-based approach. Needless to say, I try to escape from a unidirectional understanding of transMed-mobility and also from assuming a particular stage of the migratory process. Return also falls within these categories.

Following the modalities of MedCities, I seek to apply the multiscalar approach put forward by A. Caglar and N. Glick Schiller (2018), but for region-making (instead of city-making), and then translocalism to refer to the fact that mobility involves juxtaposition of personal spaces and it is done basically among cities. I am very sympathetic to the particular debate of transnational urbanism (M.P. Smith, 2001 and 2005, N. Glick Schiller, 2005) and translocal spatial geographies (K. Brickell and A. Datta, eds. 2011) applied at city levels (A. Christou, 2011), or simply translocality (C. Greiner and P. Sakdapolrak, 2013) which I understand both as physical and virtual, spatial-city connections. To me, this can be analysed at three levels: the level of external city

networks, social migration practices with their cities of origin, and also functionally linking cities through the same migrants in process of mobility. It is not only a way to focus on the link between space and people, space and governance, and then an invitation to rethink the role of space and territory in migration governance, but also to stress the new Med-spatial geographies (topographies?) that may arise when we focus on migration relational ties with their cities of origin and the *Mediterranean Village*. I am also particularly attracted by the specific trend within this literature that focuses translocalism as a driver for the new values-making fostering connections, and the promotion of a new sense of belonging based on diverse place and city-attachments (M. P. Smith and J. Eadde, 2008), and that even frame this debate with cosmopolitanism (M. P. Smith, 1999).

Taken normatively, all these potential research frameworks and avenues, the basic premise in using translocal Med-mobility is to highlight how migrants keep their attachment to local places of origin and destination, and how important it is for them to establish networks following their social and cultural capital, that benefits their well-being and their inclusion. This also involves the incorporation of transurban communications and connectivity at the individual and at the city levels. This virtual communication is also under-researched in migration studies. This research agenda can be an opportunity to compare physical and virtual spaces of interactions and connectivity in the Mediterranean Village.

2.3. Mediterranean cities as regional cities

The notion of ‘regional cities’ applied at the Mediterranean level assumes that the city is a repository of migration concerns, and a main factor for potential solutions. As a category of analysis it has a high degree of normative semantic, since ‘regional cities’ express not only a fact but rather a function: connecting cities contribute to region-making. Probably the main challenge in theorizing “regional cities” is the variety of political regimes that sustain MedCities and the diversity of multi-level governance structures. Cities in the North of the Mediterranean have stronger traditions of municipal self-governance and autonomy than in the South and the East. Religious and National state-ideologies often limit their way of migration governance through networks.

This category allows us to also incorporate the translocal urban governance perspective into MedMig research. For us, ‘regional cities’ are nodes of connectivity within the Mediterranean Village, but also mobility and settlement hubs. This category

also allows me to underline the spatial dimension of migration. We can examine new geographies of translocal connectivity. Both virtual and physical people-to-people, people-to-city and city-to-city connectivity in the Mediterranean Village. The focus can be on virtual networks related to migrant's social and cultural capital, but also processes of translocal spatial Med-mobility using different means of transport and infrastructures. Here is where some research questions can arise. One related to the link between migrants' translocal activities and translocal connectivity. Another asking how far translocal connectivity helps to shape migration processes. In fact, the relation can be better seen as an interaction. This involves both how current translocal migrant relations may influence translocal connectivity (migrants as bridge of translocal relations), and how translocal connectivity may influence migratory patterns (translocal relations as a factor of translocal migrant relations). Here, we can clearly see how simultaneity and juxtaposition of spaces interact, something that probably Braudel would have never imagined. These distinctive features of "regional cities" are at the core of this research architecture. "regional cities" are those cities that may have some translocal external relations with other cities, they may share narratives and concerns related to their migration governance and by doing this contribute to region-making through material and ideational patterns. A deep exploration of "regional cities" may probably help us to argue for a migration governance paradigm shift.

For me it is very difficult, not to say impossible, to understand "regional cities" outside the Mediterranean Village framework. Connectivity between MedCities has already been present in the last IOM's *World Migration Report 2015*, drawing our attention to the formation of partnerships within cities for managing migration, including for the economic development of the cities themselves. The report argued that migration should be seen, not as an unfortunate burden for cities to cope with, but as representing significant potential benefits for cities. Many of the partnerships and even informal translocal connections can be focused on the positive aspects and then it invites us to draw more pro-active governance.

There is a need to incorporate the international relation and cities literature within MedMig Studies. The only work I know dealing with city external relations is an Eurocities report completed in September 2017. In this study the understanding of external relations includes both formalized relations, such as written partnerships, and more informal relations, for example based on individual projects. This Eurocities report identifies trends and patterns and it is specially focused on cultural policy relations.

This MedCities network dynamics is probably not a new pattern, but the way I suggest to analyze them, as a driver for migration governance, and “regional cities” as a driver of regional fabric, is a potential promising research route. My premise is that MedCities external relations are never done without reasons. These reasons can be both to enhance MedMig urban governance capacities and also to better address shared Med-challenges. In both cases, this networking formal and informal practice may enhance region-making. There is of course a need to look at the reasons MedCities have to relate each other today and try to map their main external relations’ reasons. Most of them may have cooperative and even service providers’ reasons, following solidarity principles and seeking to deal with root-cause of migration through development policies, but there are probably other functions related to the same migratory process and the translocal migration relations. This exploration may also help us better understand why MedCities better connect with some MedCities than others, and what are the main structural factors of these networking practices. It is a fact that MedCities sometimes reproduce state-alliances between North/South and East, but with probably different narratives.

Braudel already tried to establish a topology of cities in the Mediterranean following their networking functionality in the Mediterranean economy, with a real distribution of specialisations. In the same vein we can establish a topography of MedCities going beyond the simplistic definition of cities as transit, destination and reception. This would help us gain a better snapshot of the complexity and multifaceted networking nature of MedCities. There is a wide current literature in migration and urban studies we can review. I can just quote some of the most prominent debates addressing border cities, refugee cities, gateway cities, colonial cities, resilient cities, transit cities, sanctuary cities, intercultural cities, solidarity cities, welcome cities, and so on and so forth. Specially in the sub-regional area of South and East, MedCities become relay cities directly linked to migratory processes and also most cities have developed an industry of migration and focus their urban development on this mainstream activity. For instance, in my exploratory visit to Algeria I discovered there are city hubs such as Tamanrasset, as the entrance-door of migration coming from Mali and Niger. Then from Tamanrasset, migrations are distributed to other cities on the coast. Most of the time through Ghardia and Ouargla. For the migration coming from the East there is a city entrance in Constantine. Additionally, depending on where you want to migrate, you have different city hubs. For example, in Algeria, if you want to go to Italy, then the last Algerian port is Sidi Salem; to Spain, then it is best to go to Beni Saf

(S. Chena, 2018). Djanet and Amenas are two entrance doors from Lybia, as Béchar plays the same role in the Morocco border (S. Chena, 2018; 53). In the Balkans, there are also city-routes that are in need of analysis, not to speak about the Eastern Mediterranean cities networks.

3. Exploring a MedMig Research urban agenda in the Mediterranean Village: A multi-layered Atlas

The best way to capitalise data/information and knowledge on both current migrant's translocal relations, and MedCities networking practices, as well as to theorise "regional cities" in the Mediterranean Village, I propose to channel all the research areas within a multi-layered MedMig Urban Atlas.

An Atlas is a great opportunity to gather existing dispersed data and information with the purpose of picturing current situations and evolutions. Thus, offering a data ground-floor for comparative research. It can also include some first information and even knowledge-based research using the first data collected. More important, it can allow us to identify promising approaches and formulate first research hypothesis that may contribute to this specific area on urban governance and strengthen MedMig studies. In particular, this Atlas can help us advance an empirically-grounded political theory on "regional cities" and may potentially contribute to a paradigm change debate.

When we lower our focus from a state to a city scale in migration governance the first two key-messages the reality transmits to us is a) there is a general lack of data at the city scale b) there are a variety of urban governance regimes depending of the national context, ideology and the place the country has in the geo-migration politics scene. Both perhaps reflects (1) the long-standing focus on the nation as the unit of analysis in MedMig research and governance and (2) a general disjuncture between migration national and local policies on data collection for governance purposes. These are the grounds of most epistemological and methodological challenges we may encounter in the practice of this research agenda.

But there is no research without risks awareness. These initial research limits, by itself justify how essential it is to follow a Med-Thinking approach, which may allow us to justify why MedMig may be a useful category by itself for scanning current Med-urbanization processes and the consequent processes of inequality and discriminations

we may associate with urban governance (hence the social dimension of a category of analysis) and also current processes of power relations that may arise (hence the political dimension of a category of analysis), at the individual and local level, between cities.

This approach will also allow us to combine a much needed philosophy of history for advancing Med-regional building, to focus on the positive side of MedMig, and advance towards a new epistemology informing an urban politics of knowledge. This is why it is so important for this Atlas to identify and work knowledge production with current main stakeholders and policy representatives influencing urban governance. Knowledge based on experience is key for this research agenda. MedCities current external relations will also be key information to map the Mediterranean Village, as well as patterns of migrant's translocal connectivity.

To tentatively summarise this agenda, we can identify at least seven areas of research. A multi-layered framework of research can allow us to see these areas in complementary ways.

- a) *History of Mediterranean migration cities*: The general purpose is to frame current MedCities dynamics within a Med-Thinking philosophy of history. This may include (a) to explore the historicity of the link between Med-conflicts and Med-mobility; (b) to analyse how MedCities' hybridity is the result of past urban networks; (c) to show how politics in the past have also paved regional thinking by facilitating/restricting human mobility and forced return, as well as how in the past cities have managed their diverse societies. The effort of linking the history of relations between migrants, cities and region-making will help me to place region as a historical process rather than a ready-made entity. The substantial argument we can put forward is that human mobility is what makes the Mediterranean unique and distinctive through urbanisations process today. Finally, these historical lens can help us to argue how current state reactive governance legitimacy rest on false premises on a supposed existence of a homogeneous society and even link this "false premise" as condition of society cohesion.
- b) *Socio-demographics*: This involves including MedMig as a statistic category with political and social potential dimensions when we work with segregated data and inter-sectionality. A Med-mover may both use legal/usual/safe routes and risky/unsafe and illegal routes. It can be from the same nationality but born in another city (this may allow us to analyse, for instance, rural-urban mobilities, so important

in the South), or a different nationality (a Spanish living in Tangier or a Tunisian living in Naples).

- c) *Structure: Political and policy data on urban governance*: The main purpose is to identify the leading political and policy narratives, as well as policy practices and evaluations, and identify tensions and challenges related to the migration and urbanization processes' nexus. One potential output may be a first mapping of MedCities, with potential typologies of urban governance. We can follow a macro structure analysis and identify multi-level relations in terms of distribution of competencies, but also tensions and alliances between level of governments (vertical dimension) and within same level, among different cities in the same country (horizontal dimension). In particular, we can explore the distance or proximity between urban and national narratives, and try to identify factors explaining these differences and similarities.
- d) *Agency: Identifying city stakeholders and CSOs*: The main purpose is to identify the main city stakeholders and CSOs working and/or influencing urban migration governance, as to identify tensions and alliances between them and among them. We can also do a mapping analysis with typologies of alliances and tensions focused on different views on how to deal with migration governance and the urbanization processes, focusing on knowledge production through relations. We can also map how they contribute to knowledge formation through their narratives and practices, and how thus far they are doing in offering alternative narratives from the mainstream urban/national ones. We already know there are several networks among stakeholders and CSOs, most of them strongly engaged with humanitarian claims and even challenging state legal restrictions on mobility. We can think, for instance, in the network of cooperation between Red Cross and Red Crescent entities operating through a Centre of co-operation in the Mediterranean,³ and even a more activist new "Palermo Charter Platform process: from the sea to the cities!"⁴ claiming a free mobility Mediterranean space. The role played by some cities welcoming them also need to be assessed within this framework analysis.
- e) *Linking urban governance with Med-mobility patterns*: The initial empirical premise is that MedCities play different roles in migratory processes. We can even try to

³ See website [here](#)

⁴ See website [here](#)

tentatively speak about a real distribution of functions. From this perspective we can challenge the usual classification between destination, transit or origin. This diversity of functions is visible when we analyse how each city develops specific strategies according to their own topography, with policies and actions designed to respond to each urban migration governance context. These different nodal functions are connected with the role each city plays in the migratory process according to their geographical location and migratory historical function. This topology of nodal cities may also invite us to make distinctions between port-cities and those that keep a relation with them and that inner-cities with material and virtual nodal connections (this way, we may for instance understand how African city routes may influence Med-region-making). To begin with, there is also a huge dispersed literature driving prominent debates we can review: refugee cities, sanctuary cities, solidarity cities, welcome cities, etc. This literature review may help to better frame an empirical fieldwork.

- f) *Translocal connectivity and Mediterranean city networks*: The premise is to look at how far the current urban governance has gone with the support of city networks. This urban Mediterranean network dimension can have different approaches: from formal partnerships to informal ones, through circumstantial mutual help or through the sharing of common particular concerns and narratives (some solidarity cities created informal connections sharing the reception of Open Arms boat, for instance). We assume that the networks are the result of intense urban interactions and are binding cities together. Keeping the focus on migration, we can analyse structures of connection, multi-lateral and bilateral networks of private and public city actors. The premise is to place MedCities within a regional cooperation and coordination framework, and theorise MedCities external relations and diplomacy. Finally, we are interested to know how cities view themselves and their governance approaches within a holistic regional view of the Mediterranean, their historical unity and distinctive practices contributing to the Mediterranean Village. Whether they have developed some Mediterranean external policies by their own or within a multi-level government approach in cooperation/coordination with the region/State or autonomously, it could also be included within this list of particular research avenues. To identify common and different external city patterns could help to strengthen a “regional cities” political theory.

g) *Spatial and virtual translocal connectivity patterns in the Mediterranean village:*

The basic idea is to identify and compare the main translocal migration patterns and explore how this may shape translocal urban connectivity, and the other way around. We may assume that most of these translocal connections are made by young generations mobilising their own social and cultural capital, and we may also assume there are a variety of connectivity patterns: cultural (the promotion of cultural activities among MedCities may help to raise awareness of diversity and Mediterranean feeling of belonging), economic (business, remittances), political and social ones. The general concern is to analyse how migrants relate to their city/ies of origin, and how this relation shapes their Med-view as a regional village. Identifying positive patterns of migrants' translocal connectivity cannot be done alone, without inquiring about personal networks allowing this practice, and whether there is a structure of opportunities and policy support from either their city of origin (as a city-based diaspora policy) or the city where they now live.

These seven potential research areas must be seen as multi-layered. Each one has its potential methodological and conceptual focus, and their interlink could also have a potential for grounding new perspectives in MedMig studies. The overall general purpose is “to think migration urban governance in city terms and not national terms”. This is to invite people to challenge national-based approaches to diversity and instead propose to ask questions such as: How many “cities” live in your city? Or, even going further to our research rationale: how can we transform this city-based diversity into a potential for regional-making? The architecture of this Atlas with these seven preliminary areas of research can also be the basis for potential surveys on perceptions and attitudes on Diversity and Med-mobility, and even a survey on city-based Mediterranean shared values that may ground a potential notion of city-based Mediterranean Citizenship. There is also a potential basis for a scenario-building methodology, which would include main stakeholders and expert's input on the eventual consequences of changing the scale of migration governance.

Findings can also give us the opportunity to rethinking main international migration factors: Why do migrants choose one city over another, this could also be done for particular structural city networks. What are the cities' push/pull factors (rather than states)?, is also an under-researched question. Definitively this Atlas may help us understand the Med-region as being socially and politically constructed through city and people translocal practices and urban governance narratives. Comparisons may help to

theorise “regional cities” and definitively to incorporate international relations and external relations of cities in MedMig Studies. At this level of analysis some research questions may arise. One related to the link between translocal migrants’ activities and translocal connectivity. Another asking how far translocal connectivity helps to shape migration processes.

What more can this MedCities perspective tells us? We can draw some more potential contributions related to a paradigm change in the following concluding remarks.

4. Concluding remarks: Summarising the overall potential contributions that may channel a paradigm change

The initial premises of this article are common-sensical: cities are potentially more flexible to foster Mediterranean relations, they are politically and socially much closer to people, more pragmatic in diagnosis processes and problem-solving actions, with less pressure from geo-political state interests. Furthermore, it is easier to connect the city of Oran or Beirut with the city of Roma or Barcelona, than Italy/Spain, Lebanon or Algeria. This city-based approach is now contextually justified: on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, cities are becoming new agents and interlocutors within the EU in relation to human mobility challenges, integration policies and diversity management. On the southern shore, it has been widely accepted that the so-called 2011 Arab Revolutions have basically been an urban phenomenon and an action taking place in public spaces within cities (squares and streets becoming symbols of the revolutions). The state can provide resource, legal limits and administrative assistance, but everything falls within the urban responsibility, such as the management of retentions centres, the management of the arrival of people and of their departure or their return, coexistence of the population, transit migrants, interconnections of several migratory dynamics within the same city (for instance Tangier is the space of three migratory regimes: internal migration, African and European migration). MedCities are the first to balance security and humanitarian narratives, allowing us to enter in the domain of micro-politics, public spaces management.

The purpose of this article has been to delineate both a research approach and a research agenda along these initial premises, and to provide conceptual, theoretical, empirical and methodological reasons for enhancing the centrality of urban migration governance for region-making. The logic informing the research agenda is to propose a

rescaling process from states to cities. This change of scale implies to go from the current state-based and top-down approach of region-making to a much more bottom-up methodology and my argument is that this may ground a change of governance paradigm. In these concluding remarks, I would like to list the most substantial implications of this paradigm shift

First, this implies to contribute to change from a control/security/conflict narrative to a much more diversity-advantage, intercultural and translocal Med-mobility paradigm. Seen from the cities perspective, the Mediterranean Village is a hub of communication, transport and economic translocal activity. Through an increase of connectivity and mutual interdependence instead of the current state's connectivity blockages, cities can offer us new opportunities for promoting pro-active networks, which may revitalise the Med-regional building process.

Second, this involves changing the location of data collection, information contextualisation and knowledge production. Migrants' translocal individual practices, network of actors contributing to urban governance, and MedCities connectivity is what interest us to examine at micro, meso and macro levels. The premise is that the Mediterranean Village seen as a place where information goes in and out, as a simultaneous and juxtaposed space of interchangeability may help to change the current migration nested territorial paradigm. In cities there are already processes of de-spatialisation of interaction, eroding traditional symmetry of state/place/belonging. For instance, interculturalism applied at the Mediterranean area, diaspora governance, including return and translocal individual practices, point towards this direction. I would be particularly interested to explore potential policies supporting these individual trends. These are the main governance practices I will particularly place within this approach as counter-alternative to externalization of policies and (ab)use of conditionality. The outcome of this research scaled at the MedCity level would potentially generate information for a more pro-active governance in front of the current migration reactive governance.

This also involves the inclusion of new translocal practices patterns coming from individual migrants that may have a clear impact on nodal cities. Translocal civil societies intercultural relations can be examined as factors facilitating Med-region-making processes. In all these areas of analysis, there is a common trend: the exploration of MedCities exchanges may help us to change the view of Med-movers. They can be seen as a resource for strengthening MedCities external relations, rather than migrant-as-burden, as weapons according to the prevailing State's geo-migration political agenda.

This also involves changing the focus on the way we usually see translocalism in migration studies. Spatial connectivity in the Mediterranean Village is not only physical but virtual (even more so today after the COVID-19 pandemic historical physical mobility stand-by).

To summarize the whole article, one of the main problems we encounter in establishing this research approach and research agenda is that we realize we know very little on how MedCities contribute to migration governance, how they operate internally, but also externally through the establishing of links with other MedCities. We have even less information on comparative research, how MedCities establish alliances with private and public organisations, among other MedCities to improve their urban governance and/or strengthen their own narrative, against other MedCities narratives and even against their own State's narratives. In other words, we know practically nothing about tensions and alliances between MedCities and their links to urban migration governance. This knowledge deficit is probably also due to the difficulties in having reliable data and information. We also ignore if MedCities take proactive advantage of the same migratory dynamics once they are settled, whether their translocal activities can contribute to -region-making and even to a paradigm change debate. In short, there is a long way to go, and I hope that this paper has provoked enough stimulus to start this debate, which is both necessary for the consolidation MedMig research as a proper area of study, policy and socially relevant for migration governance.

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