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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/lerhistoria/7983>

DOI: 10.4000/lerhistoria.7983

ISSN: 2183-7791

Publisher

ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Printed version

Date of publication: 22 June 2021

Number of pages: 9-15

ISSN: 0870-6182

Electronic reference

Cátia Antunes and Giedrė Blažytė, "Mobility and Displacement in and around the Mediterranean: An Introduction", *Ler História* [Online], 78 | 2021, Online since 23 June 2021, connection on 30 June 2021.

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lerhistoria/7983> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/lerhistoria.7983>



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MOBILITY AND DISPLACEMENT IN AND AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN: AN INTRODUCTION

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Human, material and intellectual exchanges in the Mediterranean have developed continuously over time. Historiography has privileged the analysis of conjunctures and structures in which these permanent relationships have ensued. However, scholarship is still shy of viewing, analysing and questioning the human experience of mobilities and immobilities in the Mediterranean from the perspective of those who actually moved. Movement and displacement burden individuals, their families and communities in different ways as their reach informs diverse scopes of identity formation. Experiences of exile, expulsion, solidarity and creation of “otherness” develop from the individual to the group as much as from host societies to “new comers”. Displacement, one of the many consequences of movement, marks, differentiates and defines social identifications in the Mediterranean and, in doing so, ultimately carries the seed of in- and exclusion over time and across different spaces. This text offers an introduction to the special theme section on *Mobility and Displacement in and around the Mediterranean: A Historical Approach*, guest-edited by the authors.

Keywords: mobility, displacement, immobility, Mediterranean.

Resumo (PT) no final do artigo. Résumé (FR) en fin d'article.

Mobility, immobility and displacement appear as frequent phenomena in the history of the Mediterranean. The twenty-first century has witnessed an increase in public interest in these themes, with the Mediterranean continuing to be a vehicle of mobility for peoples from around the world, in what the scholarly debate and public discourse have often labelled as a “refugee crisis” or “migratory flood”. Growing societal apprehension about mobility in and around the Mediterranean has been at the very core of the Cost Action project *People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean (1492-1923)* (PIMo).¹ This interdisciplinary

¹ See www.peopleinmotion-costaction.org.

historical project aims to problematise current views of mobility around the Mediterranean by regarding mobility, immobility and displacement as part of the Braudelian structures of the Mediterranean (Braudel 1949). As a structure, people in motion across the Mediterranean's liquid space and its extended hinterlands should not be perceived as problematic, but rather as a historical phenomenon substantially impacting on the personal and communal lives of those located in the orbit of this "great sea" (Abulafia 2011).

The "refugee crisis" in 2015 has expanded the boundaries of Mediterranean mobility and has affected even countries not traditionally considered to be part of it or in its orbit. Under the emergency relocation scheme initiated by the European Commission, the EU Member States have committed to expressing their solidarity with the frontline Member States (Italy, Greece, Spain and Malta) by agreeing to accommodate asylum seekers whose first step on European soil was in these countries.² While the initial plan was for a two-year commitment, this has since been extended multiple times. But as these extensions have, in practice, failed to increase, increment or intensify intra-European solidarity, new policy instruments have been created to further this cause. The "Pact on Migration and Asylum" has been particularly insistent in establishing mechanisms aimed at promoting continuing solidarity among EU Member States on matters of relocation.³ The changing patterns of mobility in many EU Member States, particularly those further removed from the Mediterranean's historical paths, have mostly been "welcomed" with ignorance and resistance. Acceptance has been particularly challenging in those states without a long tradition and experience of mobile resettlement and hosting of international migrants. Indeed, recent studies in some of these states suggest an essential need to raise awareness and inform local communities of the "facts about migrants and refugees in order to be persuaded away from anti-immigrants' attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes" (Blažytė, Frėjutė-Rakauskienė and Pilinkaitė-Sotirovič 2020, 15).

PIMo connects the past and the present, and individual and community experiences, in seeking to understand which factors have contributed to shaping contemporary representation of migration in the Mediterranean region and beyond, as well as explaining similarities and differences in the experiences and emotional expressions of human movement between the

² The Council of the European Union. Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523, dated 14 September 2015 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32015D1523>).

³ The European Commission. Migration and Asylum Package: New Pact on Migration and Asylum, dated 23 September 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020_en).

fifteenth century and today. In this way, PIMo has been designed to follow the historiographical premises first proposed by Fernand Braudel (1949) and later amplified and diversified by David Abulafia (2011). However, it also innovates through its perspective and framing. The starting point of the project is that individuals departing from their places of origin become uprooted after a specific window of absence. During their journey, they engage in mobility and, as such, contribute to defining their communities of origin as immobile. In this context, reconstructing the departure of one individual or one community translates into three research axes: mobility (of the individual or community moving), immobility (of the community of origin) and displacement (integration of the individual into the host society). This three-dimensional approach thus introduces an individual and communal-centred focus to a theme often portrayed as a collective abstraction.

Individual and communal mobilities have an equally transformative effect on their societies of origin as on their host societies. Upon arrival, individuals, even when transient, fit in and integrate through complex processes of adaptation, inclusion and exclusion. In these processes, three elements are crucial for framing the place that individuals assume in the new society. The first of these is the personal experience of mobility as voluntary, forced or traumatic, with this experience formatting the way individuals perceive their own existence. The second reflects the emotions surrounding the experience of mobility (of the self) and immobility (of the group of origin), given that emotions define the extent of tolerance and acceptance of and in the new society (O'Loughlin 2017). The third and final element entails reconstructing a memory of displacement, whereby new identities are forged and belonging is redefined. The ultimate result of this process is the development of construed ergo- and exo-identities, the former referring to the identity conceived of by the "self", and the latter to the identity assigned by host societies to the individuals or groups (Hoppenbrouwers 2010).

For historians, exo-identities can be found in institutional archives (of states, towns, religious institutions and so on). Ergo-identities, by contrast, are more difficult to pinpoint, given that ergo-documents (such as diaries, personal descriptions, personal correspondence and novels) for the period before the eighteenth century do not abound (Antunes 2014). However, the combination of institutional archives and ergo-documents offers a unique window for understanding the emotions individuals experienced while moving, while their feelings of displacement, integration and mobility shed unique light on the human experience of the multiple Mediterranean cross-

ings (Tarantino 2020). In the case of this special issue, religious minorities, maritime groups, diplomats, merchants and writers take centre stage. Even though other groups deserve particular attention, as is the case of armies, captives, refugees or intellectuals, the allotted space of reflection (a total of four articles) imposes some unavoidable analytical constraints.

This special issue provides insight into the way different individuals and communities moved and circulated in and around the Mediterranean from the Middle Ages up until the early nineteenth century. It unites four complementary and innovative ways of looking at Mediterranean mobility, immobility and displacement. In the first place, it covers a geographical space that includes the Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean in its internal dynamics and connections to worlds beyond the “great sea”. This approach highlights the importance of not limiting studies of the Mediterranean to its geographical constraints. The work by Barros and Tavim privileges the circulations between Morocco, Portugal and, to a lesser extent, Spain, with a particular focus on the Moorish and Jewish communities on both sides of the Mediterranean and the way these communities reacted, dealt with and responded to the mobility of specific individuals. Hugo Martins, on the other hand, looks at Mediterranean mobility as a consequence of communal customs and needs of Jewish groups located primarily outside the direct scope of the Mediterranean and, as such, redefines a geographical conceptualisation of the “great sea” well beyond the boundaries imposed by its shores. David do Paço, meanwhile, combines the centrality of the Mediterranean as a space of circulation and connection between empires (Ottoman and Habsburg) in seeking to conceptualise the importance of the sea as a means of imperial integration of political entities perceived as socially and geographically distant. Lastly, Katrina O’Loughlin analyses how the Mediterranean geography was paramount in defining an abstract space for incorporating displacement and establishing who may be perceived as “the other”.

Secondly, the authors rethink the Mediterranean geography through the lens of mobility and as a result these articles provide innovative insights into the human experience of motion. All the authors reflect on how historical actors’ mobility determined their fate (historically or fictionally), but also on how the same mobility condemned communities and families left in places of origin to immobility. The articles reflect the many ways in which this dichotomy seems to have weighed heavy in how people perceived, felt and communicated their sense of displacement and, in so doing, greatly influenced the forming of individual and communal identities in the host society. It was this latter process that ultimately determined the levels of

integration into, adaptation to or rejection of people's new social context, thus influencing the core of their identity transformation and reshaping of belonging (Antunes 2014).

The third way in which these articles advance scholarly understanding of human motion in and around the greater Mediterranean is by examining how specific individuals framed their mobility as a life experience and, as such, re-created, construed and shaped what Pierre Nora (1984-1992) has long associated with the *lieux de mémoire*. The articles demonstrate how spaces that Nora would readily associate with a *lieu de mémoire* were shaped and imagined by the individual and communal experiences of the few and entered the collective memory of the many as truisms. This insight is particularly helpful for historians as the often almost emotional relationship that scholars develop with their historical actors can endanger the neutrality that historians have been required to contemplate ever since Marc Bloch (1949) defined the major principles of the profession.

The fourth and final way in which these articles contribute to a new understanding represents a direct response to three historiographical challenges posed by Maria Fusaro, Rogers Brubaker and Joep Leerssen. In revising Braudel's oeuvre, Fusaro (2010) calls on historians to view the mobility of goods (trade) as being inherent and concomitant to human mobility. This revisionist approach thus envisages a Mediterranean playing its part in a global world of human and material exchanges extending from China to Scandinavia. Although less geographically extensive, the articles in this issue translate the human geography of Mediterranean mobility well beyond the constraints of its shores and, as such, highlight the need to include the Mediterranean in the current historiographical turn towards global history. In adopting this global approach to Mediterranean mobility (here understood as motion, displacement and immobility), the authors reflect on the crucial problem of identity formation and identification. In doing so, they replicate the call by Rogers Brubaker (2004) to rethink and reconceptualise ethnicity as a social phenomenon outside the group and not necessarily aligned with it. The consequence of such realisation is that labelling human mobility as diasporic or communally based falls short when seeking to explain the development of construed identities, identity hybridity and, ultimately, alterity as postulated by Joep Leerssen (2007).

The solution that this special issue found for resolving the apparent paradox between answering Brubaker's call and responding to Leerssen's premises is to offer a multidisciplinary approach to the identity/hybridity/alterity problem by combining methodologies and scientific queries well

known to historians and complementing them with the enriching analytical views of anthropologists and creative writers. This collaboration represents a first step towards rethinking the meaning and impact of mobility in the Mediterranean in both the past and the present. One final note is in order. While preparing this special issue, we learned, discussed and reconceptualised our approaches and the interpretation of the respective primary sources. This was an enjoyable and fruitful exchange that we will cherish moving forward. However, we faced a great loss during the last phase of this project. The sudden passing of Filomena Barros, co-author of one of the articles, left us shocked and stunned, leaving Medieval and Early Modern historiography on *mourisco* communities in Portugal and elsewhere poorer. This special issue stands partially as a celebration of her work on mobility, displacement and identification of religious minorities.

Acknowledgements

This paper was financially supported by the COST ACTION project *People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement Across the Mediterranean (1492-1923)* (PIMo) as a result of the PIMo workshop “Movement and Displacement”, Centro de História, University of Lisbon, 9-10 March 2020.

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MOBILIDADE E DESENRAIZAMENTO NO MEDITERRÂNEO: INTRODUÇÃO

As trocas humanas, materiais e intelectuais no Mediterrâneo desenvolveram-se ao longo de séculos. A historiografia corrente tem privilegiado a análise de conjunturas e estruturas que enformam estas trocas. Porém, os historiadores em geral continuam a demonstrar pouco interesse na análise da mobilidade e imobilidade mediterrânicas do ponto de vista dos seres humanos que nelas participaram. Mobilidade e desenraizamento influenciam e alteram identidades individuais, familiares e comunitárias no espaço e no tempo. Experiências de exílio, expulsão, solidariedade e construção do “outro” têm origem na experiência individual, alargando-se ao grupo e dele à sociedade de acolhimento. O desenraizamento surge, portanto, como consequência da mobilidade, ao mesmo tempo que cria estereótipos, constrói a diferença e define identidades individuais, familiares e colectivas por todo o Mediterrâneo, carregando consigo as origens de movimentos de inclusão e exclusão através do espaço e do tempo. Este texto constitui a introdução ao dossier temático *Mobilidade e desenraizamento no Mediterrâneo em perspectiva histórica*, organizado pelas autoras.

Palavras-chave: mobilidade, desenraizamento, imobilidade, Mediterrâneo.

MOBILITÉS ET DÉPLACEMENTS EN MÉDITERRANÉE: INTRODUCTION

Depuis l'Antiquité, la Méditerranée est un espace où circulent et s'échangent les hommes, les biens et les idées. Les historiens se sont souvent limités à constater ces dynamiques et à en proposer une analyse presque-exclusivement structurelle afin d'expliquer la pérennité des circulations. Peu de travaux ont en effet tenté de saisir les différentes expériences de mobilité et d'immobilité du point de vue de ceux qui circulent. À bien des égards, circulations et déplacements constituent un ensemble de contraintes sur les individus, leurs familles, leurs communautés tant ils affectent les différents niveaux de la formation d'une identité qui est elle aussi toujours en mouvement. L'expérience de l'exil, de l'expulsion, de la solidarité et de l'altérité s'inscrivent ainsi autant dans le rapport de l'individu au groupe que dans celui qu'une société d'accueil entretient vis-à-vis des étrangers. Le déplacement – qui n'est que l'une des nombreuses conséquences des circulations – marque, distingue et participe à l'élaboration des processus d'identification sociale en Méditerranée; il peut être vecteur d'inclusion ou d'exclusion en fonction des différents espaces et époques. Cet article est l'introduction du dossier *Mobilités et déplacements en Méditerranée: une approche historique*, dirigé par les auteures.

Mots-clés: mobilité, déplacement, immobilité, Méditerranée.