

## Introduction

For over one hundred years, between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, Europeans emigrated to the southern Mediterranean. Italians, French, Spaniards, Greeks, Christians and Jews crossed the old sea of civilisation to carve out their future in the southern and eastern lands of the Mediterranean. Later, those who welcomed them with hospitality or who fought against the European colonisation began to emigrate in the opposite direction. Both Europeans and Arabs carried with them a cultural and religious baggage. This pendular and constant human movement of emigration and immigration has been repeated many times throughout history.

It could be said that what happens with men and women also happens with ideas and words: there is no border or boundary that can stop them. The great philologist Joan Coromines in his monumental work *Diccionari etimològic i complementari de la llengua catalana* [Etymological and Complementary Dictionary of the Catalan Language], reminds us about the prodigious Mediterranean circularity of words brought by the Arabs, such as *albercoc* (apricot) or *talismà* (talisman), imported from the Romans and Greeks, among whom they had already fallen into disuse and which came to form part of Latin languages. Here, etymology is simply a beautiful metaphor of what has happened with ideas and human migrations. Thanks to the first conquering emigration by Arabs, we are familiar with algebra and chess, alchemy – the mother of modern chemistry –, optics and physics. Without reference to this progress, we would not be able to understand the history of European science and technology. It is said that, in contrast, the waterwheel travelled with the Moors expelled from Spain to North Africa. In Tunisia, in the Medjerda Valley, these Moors placed waterwheels along the river and also had a clock installed on the minaret of the Testur mosque, because this was done in the belfries of the land from where they had been expelled. Today, words and knowledge travel by Internet, a curious word that unites a Latin and an English term, and they no longer require people to cross lands and borders. One of the travelling words and ideas is the term xenophobia, of learned Greek origin, which means hatred or fear of foreigners. This old phantom – and as we know phantoms do not die – has haunted our history, and disappears and reappears according to the dictates of the eventful history of social hatred. It is not an exclusively European phenomenon, although it is regrettable that, recently, the European electoral map has gradually been filled with black spots that bear the name of xenophobic parties.

Today, discussing emigration means discussing a problem, a serious political issue and a threat to peaceful coexistence. We must have done something wrong to create a situation where in the Europe of human rights and equality between citizens, difference is used

as an electoral platform and political slogan. This is why *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* is devoting this issue to “Migrations and Creativity” with the aim of contributing to disseminating the culture of coexistence and the creativity of plural societies.

The articles included in the dossier of this issue provide contrasted views on European policies (Catherine Wihtol de Wenden), integration through municipal policies, specifically in the case of Barcelona (Marta Ramón), the personal and artistic creativity of those who come from other cultures (Pius Alibek, Nathalie Alyon, Najat El Hachmi and Esther Bendahan), gastronomy (Sylvia Oussedik), the mainly Maghrebian intellectual and business contribution (Khélifa Messamah), views about the culture of the Other (Rogelio López Cuenca) and management of interculturality (María Elena Morató). Thus, we invite you to set out with us on this journey through interculturality. I hope you enjoy reading the journal.

**Andreu Bassols**

Director General of the European Institute of the Mediterranean