Civil Society in the Mediterranean Mirror

The photograph on the cover of this issue is a work by the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto, who also suggested the title "Civil Society in the Mediterranean Mirror": a table made of a mirror in the shape of the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by chairs of different styles to seat, in one moment or another, representatives of the Mediterranean countries. It was created in 2002, within the framework of the movement Love Difference, in Biella (Italy) as a synthesis and emblem of the Movimento Artistico per una Politica InterMediterranea. The objective of this movement was to bring together people and institutions in countries of both Mediterranean shores to create a new perspective that would provide another vision of cultural diversity, which would help us to "love difference". Through his work, the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto has reminded us on numerous occasions that "we live in a world that cries out to be transformed."

Social Movements: Beyond Demonstrations

What can we say in relation to this issue, after almost twenty-five years of the Barcelona Process? Is there another view or do the old visions attempt to protect themselves, even though the challenges are imminent? In 1995, the main aim of the Barcelona Process, or the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, was to achieve a certain convergence in the Euro-Mediterranean area, despite the existing differences and through financial and political channels. Of all this, perhaps the most innovative aspect of the Declaration signed during the meeting was that, for the first time, civil society was seen as a key factor for the development and democratisation of the countries of the South. During this last decade we see that, both in the North and the South, and even though the political outcomes are not optimal and the future is uncertain, it is hard to deny the strength of this association movement to bring about changes, even of mentalities.

In this issue 28-29 of *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, renowned analysts focus on the perspectives of civil society; they discuss the social movements, the binomial between the change of narrative proposed by society, especially by youths and women, and the authoritarianism that does not give in easily to these voices. They also remind us how in each country this analysis varies, as a result of the particular history, and how the infor-

mation and communication technologies powerfully influence individuals and society.

In the Maghreb, voluntary associations are one of the main social actors that seek to represent the heterogeneity and pluralism of civil society. According to the sectors in which they work, the causes they defend and the autonomy of action they enjoy, these associations are bearers, implicitly or explicitly, of a story that often counteracts the hegemony of the official accounts of the rulers. Thus, Thierry Desrues points out in his article that, since 2012, after the mobilisations of the Arab Spring, and despite the existence of three different political regimes in each of the countries involved – a young democracy in process of institutionalisation in Tunisia, authoritarian monarchy with subaltern democratic devices in Morocco and a gerontocratic, presidential, praetorian and corporatist republic in Algeria –, a convergent trend is seen towards the restoration of control of the association fabric.

However, in the Mediterranean region we find a new perception, set out by the Tunisian sociologist Bochra Kammarti in her article, which reminds us that, to analyse the social events that have occurred in Tunisia since 2010, it is necessary to adopt a phenomenological approach to the public space as a scenario where the actors acquire public visibility and act in a certain way. Although the authoritarian political leaders have tried to appropriate the public space, Tunisian citizens, since 2010, have unleashed a revolution – which has been carried out in several stages – whose objective is social change, which would have no meaning without this re-appropriation of the public space. Thus, the author affirms: "Through demonstrations, immolations, graffiti, sit-ins, dances or slogans written on the body, Tunisian citizens fight to express their social aspirations, as well as their willingness to redefine public rules and establish a dialogue that can redraw the moral boundaries of the national community."

Similarly, the researcher Laurence Thieux, after recognising the hard drift to which the Algerian people have been driven, considers that the Hirak – "movement", in Arabic – responds to a long-held feeling because, over the last few years, Algerian society has made numerous protests with which it has expressed the general malaise of the population faced with a government regime incapable of meeting its most elementary needs.

It is also interesting to consider, in the article by analyst Khaled Hroub, some observations that the author raises about the dynamics and changes that have taken place within civil society in the Arab world, and around it, and he therefore distinguishes three periods between 2011 and 2019. After his analysis, he concludes that the waves of mass revolts in the Arab region are an integral part of this historic change currently underway. For this reason, he adds, in the framework of this process, the coming years will witness an increase in tension and conflict between two forms of resilience that currently clash in the Arab region: on the one hand, the "bottom-up" resilience of the organised political opposition and civic activism, which is shaped in various familiar or novel ways; and, on the other, an authoritarian resistance "top-down" reinventing at local and regional level. Thus, he argues that "civil society activism lies at the heart of this historic and perhaps long process."

In issue 26 of *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, "Imagining the Mediterranean" (www.iemed.org/quaderns), the Turkish sociologist Begum Özden Firat noted, in relation to the protests that took place in the public squares of the Northern and Southern Mediterranean, that although it is evident that the uprisings in Egypt and Turkey and the occupations of squares in Greece and Spain are not comparable, since they differ in a complex way, they are linked by a series of common images, or a visual language, and even an ideology. As the so-called Invisible Committee very poetically put it, "revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by resonance. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shockwave emitted by something constituted over there. A body that resonates does so according to its own mode. An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire, a linear process which spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of a music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythm of their own vibrations, always taking on more density."

Although in Europe, as Michel Wieviorka says when referring to the French yellow vests, violence became a taboo for forty years, as far as France is concerned, we have just entered a new era. The intellectual warns us that "perhaps we can consider the uprisings in the suburbs that took place in 2005 as precursors of this assertion: the social violence of the time, in fact, and contrary to what is claimed by reactionary and ill-informed minds, was neither ethnic, racial nor religious, it was not an 'anti-republican pogrom' either. It was, basically, the anger and indignation of an excluded youth, with no social future and subjected to racism and discrimination, and this violence aroused a deep understanding among very important social sectors."

But it would be a mistake to think that authoritarianism only occurs in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: in Europe, thirty years after the end of the Cold War and the proclamation of a new liberal era in world politics, liberal values and institutions have also been attacked in Western democracies. Over the last few years, many EU member states have experienced a dramatic increase in authoritarian and intolerant trends, while some candidate countries have been sliding towards the grey area that lies somewhere between authoritarianism and liberal democracy.

As the researcher Cengiz Günay explains, this increase in authoritarian and intolerant trends has had a series of negative effects on civil society. On the one hand, we have seen the emergence of many right-wing, xenophobic and nationalist organisations that defend intolerant and undemocratic values; on the other, we see that governments are trying to tighten control of civil society organisations (CSOs) and restrict their activities when they clash with the political interests of the day. This has been specifically the case of human rights defence organisations devoted to assisting and rescuing migrants and refugees. The CSOs that work in these areas have received financial and legal pressures and, in many cases, their activities have become criminalised. Italy and Hungary are two examples of EU member states whose governments have limited the operational reach of CSOs working with refugees and migrants.

What has happened in the Mediterranean for years and, in a very particular way, the absence of an effective reaction to the repeated scenario of loss of human lives is, according to Javier de Lucas, the greatest challenge for civil society, not only as an agent involved in the public space but also in its most radically political condition; in other words, in that of the whole of society as subject of the *demos*: as sovereign. Therefore, the professor of law and political philosophy concludes that "we are faced with one of the most serious fissures in democratic political legitimacy."

Intercultural Movements: Women, Climate Change, Migrations and Refugees

Young people and women are, perhaps, the most appropriate subjects to produce this desired shift in paradigm. In the West, the Me Too movement or the feminist associations of the Southern Mediterranean, which have brought about legal changes in the last three decades, are clear examples of the courage of women fighting against patriarchal abuse.

In this respect, political scientist Loredana Teodorescu argues in her article how in the year 2000, responding to a very clear need, the UN recognised the central role and responsibilities of women in the international security policy agenda. Given that most conflicts affect civil society and, especially, women and children, they must be treated as agents capable of providing important resources and powerful voices in favour of peace to prevent and resolve those conflicts. The analyst asserts that, in recent years, the participation of women in mediation processes and gender awareness raising in peace agreements has increased to a certain extent, but not enough: "Women can often be found but not always seen at the forefront of conflicts and violence prevention innovations. In order to enhance their work, networks of women have an important role to play. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network is a good example in this direction, as it is working to promote women's contributions to stability in the Mediterranean region."

Every day those who make their voices heard, especially against climate change, are younger. The Youth for Climate movement, initiated in 2018 by fifteen-year-old Swedish student and activist Greta Thunberg, has so far elicited a very positive response among young students from many countries, who have organised a series of strikes, marches and protests to urge the rulers, whose responses, at times, have been significantly irate, to stop global warming and climate change with effective long-term policies.

Greta Thunberg says in her speeches: "Why should I be studying for a future that soon will be no more, when no one is doing anything whatsoever to save that future? And what is the point of learning facts within the school system when the most important facts given by the finest science of that same school system clearly means nothing to our politicians and our society? We have not come here to beg the world leaders to care for our future. They have ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time."

The unprecedented mobilisation for climate is not only the responsibility of adolescents, but also has its response in the ballot boxes of the last European elections, especially by those aged under thirty. French and German youths and, to a lesser extent, Belgians, have voted massively for green parties. However, the trend is not unanimous in Europe: in Spain, Italy, Greece and the countries of the East, green parties have very little weight.

With good reason, environmental experts Jérémie Fosse and Najib Saab warn us about the fragility of the Mediterranean ecosystem, which has an exceptionally rich environmental, human and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, the region is experiencing an accelerated process of desertification, accompanied by an increasing scarcity of water and a series of increasingly frequent and damaging climate events. The concentration of population and economic activities in coastal areas adds to their vulnerability to rising sea levels, ocean acidification, droughts, floods or fires. These changes in the climate system are already causing a reduction in agricultural productivity, while they accelerate migration from the South to the North and make their tourist destinations less attractive and competitive.

Najib Saab argues that the Arab population and rulers are more aware of the seriousness of the impact of climate change, to which their countries are among the most vulnerable. However, despite the fact that twenty-two member countries of the Arab League signed the Paris Agreement, Saab regrets that there have been no actions in the region to deal cohesively with the risks of climate change: "In Arab countries, which are particularly sensitive to climate change, the youths' response has not been as enthusiastic. Although there have been good intentions, these have not resulted in visible actions, and students have barely participated in the world protests." Therefore, "transforming awareness into real and significant actions on climate change is, therefore, one of the most important current challenges facing civil society in Arab countries." Hence, we need specific actions linked to the local reality.

In 2017, Morocco witnessed the largest social protests since 2011. Unlike then, the focal points were now in the marginal rural periphery, especially in the Rif, the northern region, on the Mediterranean coast, which also has the highest rate of migration to Europe. A massive protest movement, the Hirak, was formed there after the death of a poor fisherman from the port city of Al Hoceima, in October 2016.

Compared to the protests of 2011, the Hirak managed to mobilise the Moroccan diaspora in Europe to a much greater extent, particularly those of Rifian origin. The Hirak movement is a significant case for Mediterranean studies, both in terms of spatiality and temporality, because it illustrates the complex socioeconomic and political entanglements produced by migratory processes in the Mediterranean. In this respect, Christoph H. Schwartz, doctor in sociology, offers a very interesting case that allows the role of transnational migration in political socialisation to be analysed, as well as the political relevance of the concomitant superimposition of different national, regional and local identities and identifications.

Regarding the specific cases of immigration, these pages offer two reflections. On the one hand, Orland Cardona describes the case of Catalonia, where the association fabric of the territory has clearly reflected a transformation, because migrants have understood that forming associations in the Catalan tradition can help improve their visibility, achieve a particular objective for a specific community or secure subsidies from public authorities. Thus, there are many examples of associations that work both to improve the lives of immigrants and to respond to a specific need. However, sometimes they are somewhat endogamous and, therefore, this mediation expert points out, it is necessary to network so that people of immigrant origin can actually participate in Catalan multicultural society and interact transversally, covering all areas.

From a national perspective, the historian Leila Boussaid sets out the case of Algeria, a country of majority emigration that, in recent years, has also experienced a boom in the immigration phenomenon. Similarly, permanent migrations have given way to temporary migrations. Women and young people are increasingly numerous among the migrant population, which previously mostly comprised unskilled male workers. On the other hand, the number of migrants has increased due, above all, to the conflicts in the Sahel region. Thus, many immigrants arriving in Algeria are asylum seekers and refugees.

The perspective of this section is concluded by the sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin, who, through the reflection he provides in "Educating in Peace to Hold Back the Spirit of War", calls for the reform of teaching so that education is a antidote to violence through knowledge: "We must integrate into teaching, from primary to university, 'knowledge of knowledge', which makes it possible to detect in adolescence, when the mind is still forming, the perversions and risks of excitement, as well as oppose reduction, the tendency to see things in black and white and the reification of a knowledge capable of uniting the diverse aspects, sometimes antagonistic, of the same reality to recognise the complexities within the same person, the same society, the same civilisation."

Art and Communication: Spaces of Civic Memory

During the uprisings and revolutions of the so-called "Arab Springs", unleashed from winter 2010-2011, graffiti and murals proliferated on the walls of the countries that participated in these movements. Historically, urban art is intrinsically linked to opposition to public order. Graffiti and signatures (tags) are generally considered as a means of expressing anger and frustration, and their presence in the public space, as a symbol of destabilisation and loss of social order on the part of governments. The article by the researcher Soléa Bulfone tries to question the strategies and intentions of the impact of urban art in the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East taking into account the political events of recent years.

Urban art, besides being a means of communication and revolt, is also a method available to the population of re-appropriating the public space. Bulfone argues that "thanks

to urban art, the population recovers artistic and political themes at first reserved for an élite in the private sphere – museums and public institutions – to shift them to a public place: the street," and complements her reflection with a set of Tunisian and Palestinian examples.

In this third section we set out several initiatives of great artistic and communicative value, normally carried out by the association and university worlds, such as that presented by Emanuela Baldi and Filippo Fabbrica on the arts association artway of thinking, which tries to consider reality from a creative perspective in order to express forms and languages in specific contexts and communities according to previous observations. It usually works with groups and employs interdisciplinary methods with the aim of developing collective and participatory visions. Through the practice of various interdisciplinary activities, participants are able to express their concerns and better assess their abilities when it comes to self-management in the host country.

Moreover, we present in this section the Association of Independent Producers of the Mediterranean (APIMED), which was founded within the framework of the Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators held in Marseilles in 1997 in response to the need to create a representative body that brings together independent professionals in the region. Very soon, APIMED was established as a group capable of strengthening relations between members, facilitating co-productions, stimulating the circulation of projects based on Mediterranean cultures, exchanging experiences and learning from our differences. Through initiatives such as the MEDIMED documentary market, participants can showcase their audiovisual projects and promote them for international distribution. Thus, numerous projects have seen the light and found funding to reach the public. Through the association fabric and the creation of networks, it is possible to confront those who see the audiovisual sector as a mere commercial product. Its manager, Sergi Doladé, says about it: "We must harness the power of the image as a creator of stereotypes and make it a tool for dialogue and knowledge of the Other."

Heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is a necessary aspect for forging citizenship and self-esteem with which it can contribute to the expansion of an active global citizenship, with the capacity to make a social and political impact. The doctor in cultural heritage of the University of Valencia Ximo Revert urges us to make a new assessment and forge a civic awareness through cultural heritage, and his pedagogical approach can be applied to anywhere as he does with the city of Valencia. So, in his article he suggests: "Beyond knowing or consuming heritage, beyond our own well-being, we are called upon to make our commitment to human development insofar as we understand the legacy of those achievements in the form of cultural heritage manifestations that we are able to recognise, use or create."

The article by Teresa Velázquez is also located in the university context and based on two pieces of research carried out in the Autonomous University of Barcelona's Prospective and Research Laboratory in Communication, Culture and Cooperation. Both focus their study on the press of Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Morocco, Spain, Syria, Tunisia

and the United Kingdom. Analysis of the contents reveals transformations and variations in a sample selected between 2009 and 2013 in relation to how the subject of women is approached. Teresa Velázquez, the director of the study, notes that "according to what has been observed, women as actors in public life have little presence in the thematic agendas of the press in the Mediterranean region, so the media should address and highlight the gender objectives and recommendations proposed by international organisations."

Today, there is a clear need for the media to be responsible and not to promote stereotypes, but rather the complex diversity of today's world. The Socially-Spirited Journalism initiative of the Catalan Association of Journalists has been working for almost twenty-five years to improve the approach to multiculturalism in the media. Thus, in collaboration with NGOs and other organisations, many initiatives have been developed aimed at eradicating any trace of xenophobia, racism and discrimination in the media. Journalist Alícia Oliver points out in her article: "Thanks to the good practices promoted by this task force, journalism can decisively encourage people to regard migrants from an inclusive perspective of respect and dialogue rather than influenced by alarmist and sensationalist discourses."

If, as the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto and the young activists of Youth for Climate, argue, "we are in a world crying out to be transformed," protecting our world from climate change, defending the values that underpin human rights and shining a spotlight on women and citizens as a whole are factors that can contribute to this desired transformation. Undoubtedly, ethical and culturally diverse journalism, education that helps to understand the complexity of today's societies and good private and public practices are now, more than ever, necessary for our Mediterranean environment and the planet as a whole. Art and communication are key elements that can create empathy so that citizens adopt good intercultural practices locally and universally.

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