

## Foreword

For more than two decades, the quarterly *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* has been dedicated to an interdisciplinary reflection on the voices, history, imaginary and knowledge of both shores of the Mediterranean, with the aim of establishing a better dialogue in which the contributions of the authors are complementary rather than excluding. Currently, memory interests not only historians and philosophers but also neurologists, psychologists, anthropologists or literary theorists. It is a crucial issue for citizens of our global village, of which, to a great extent, the Mediterranean is the epicentre. Hence, we felt it opportune to dedicate issue 33 of *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* to “Travel and Mediterranean Memory”, at a time when it is necessary to keep in mind the history and current times in which this stormy sea, as Homer called it, continues to churn.

The Mediterranean is a long-term laboratory where memory consists of myths, history and narratives; of images and feelings not only of the winners, but also of those voluntary or forced travellers who have been adding kaleidoscopic visions to this melting pot of cultures. True or fanciful narratives, with memories that are often shared, but filtered by the vicissitudes of local history.

The authors are specialists in various fields and evoke, through history, anthropology, literature or art, the complexity of the human soul faced with events that they themselves have experienced, or analyse historical documents, biographies and artistic visions. All these works make up a complex memory of the Mediterranean countries woven by multiple identities, almost always in conflict, but which share many common elements in their daily practices.

At the present time, we are trying to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, which has ravaged the world for two years, a world where millions of displaced Ukrainians and Syrians, victims of war, as well as those fleeing social and economic conflicts in their countries of origin, try to preserve their memory to access new realities. The world is, therefore, an ordered place only in appearance, which at any time can move, unbalance or shift.

Through around twenty articles, the authors show us the importance of memory in identity, while reminding us of the instability of life, maps or borders. Some authors remember their family, who also lived in exile like them; for others, the journeys, whether initiatory or not, of historical figures who embarked on various voyages also offer us narratives evoked by poets, writers, merchants, adventurers or missionaries. We cannot approach memory without the history of those travellers and wanderers who, although sometimes half-forgotten, have permeated Mediterranean culture far more than we know or believe. Nor should we forget our present time, a crucial moment for the planet.

Culture is a dynamic concept that adapts to the changes imposed by contemporaneity. Accepting this fact is one of the main elements that make up its evolution. For this reason, we argue that culture, although not explicitly manifest, becomes the key factor that cuts across the fundamental issues of our contemporaneity. The defence of culture is, therefore, a key element in the immense hurdle posed by the new, or sometimes not so new, challenges of our time. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda proposed by the United Nations are therefore of vital importance, both locally and globally, for committed citizens. In keeping with these objectives of sustainable development, cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible – as our authors also explain in “Travel and Mediterranean Memory”, referring above all to the latter –, is a necessary resource to value our multiple identities, far from the deadly identities that the writer Amin Maalouf condemned in his day.

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