

THE CHALLENGES
OF ARTISTIC
EXCHANGE
IN THE MED.
ITERRANEAN

MADE IN THE MED ITERRANEAN

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Cultural mobility, a political issue

The disparity in the conditions of circulation increases the inequality between north and south shores

In our Euro-Mediterranean societies, mobility of people is inscribed in memory; it has fashioned our history. Without mobility, neither the Renaissance nor the European project would have taken place. For Mediterranean cultural actors and artists, mobility has always been an aspiration, a desire, indeed a real practice. These women and men - creators, producers of the imaginary, travelling artists of the Mediterranean - produce antibodies against indifference and isolation, the illnesses of the new century. The circulation of people is thus precious, and like the sea and the forest, it is threatened.

But the mobility of cultural actors is not a separate problem. It is intrinsically linked to the larger Mediterranean issues. If migration flows pose a question in terms of human rights, so does cultural mobility. If the fight against international terrorism has caused walls to be built around Europe, new barriers are raised along the paths of artists all around the Mediterranean.

There is a major political issue at the heart of cultural mobility: the disparity in the conditions of circulation increases the inequality between north and south shores.

On the cultural side, the absence of fluidity in the travel of the Mediterraneans reinforces reciprocal ignorance, producing an “Eldorado” effect postulating Europe as a paradise of free creation, and at the same time, a feeling of cultural domination in the south by a hostile or indifferent Europe. For all of these reasons, the mobility of people should be at the centre of all policies directed towards the Mediterranean just as it should be prioritised in alliances between artists and civil society activists.

However, the mobility of cultural actors also has its own undeniable particularity. It is often a necessity in the process of artistic creation and in the individual or collective paths of contemporary artists. Moreover, it is crucial for the structuring of a professional ecosystem appropriate to the performing arts sector relying on the exchange of experience, shared training and intercultural apprenticeship. Finally, mobility also represents an issue with regard to the societies in which artists evolve. The more the nations freeze or constrain circulation of people in the Mediterranean space, the less the processes of cultural development and democratic opening will progress.

Many people think that visas and other obstacles to circulation are inevitable in the Mediterranean. They are wrong. On the contrary, in this matter it is necessary to be both audacious and pragmatic. Audaciousness starts with disproving “facts”, those which predict that the opening of Europe’s doors is a threat, presenting a danger for the economy and European identity in the arrival of foreigners on her soil; those which propose a drastic visa policy as the only means to fight against illegal immigration. To renew the thinking, to rejuvenate approaches, to rethink policy: these are the first stages of the construction of the future. Pragmatism consists in relying on the realities of the people on the ground - artists and culture professionals - in order to invent new, realistic strategies and new tools to facilitate circulation in the Mediterranean space.

The present publication is a contribution to this collective construction.

Giovanna Tanzarella,
General Delegate
of the René Seydoux Foundation

Who are we?

The Roberto Cimetta Fund (RCF) is an international association supporting artistic exchange and professional mobility in the Mediterranean region, in the fields of contemporary performing and visual arts. Its mission is to facilitate the circulation of individual artists and professionals in order to help them find opportunities, partners and the means to achieve personal or group artistic projects. To do this, the Roberto Cimetta Fund has established a travel grant programme for individuals, which contributes to the travel and visa costs necessary for participation in a professional cultural network meeting, workshop, artists' residency, festival, seminar, etc.

Following its creation by IETM in 1989 when it supported professionals from Central and Eastern Europe, the Roberto Cimetta Fund was relaunched, dedicated to the Mediterranean and officially established as an independent entity in 1997, at the instigation of culture professionals working in organisations dedicated to European and international diffusion: Velia Papa, Mary Ann DeVlieg, Fabien Jannelle, and Manuèle Debrinay-Rizos. The Fund has been fully active since 2000.

The Fund carries the name of the Italian theatre and festival director, Roberto Cimetta, who was at the origin of many initiatives which contributed to the development of the international theatre community - the Inteatro Association and Festival of Polverigi (Italy), IETM (the Informal European Theater Meeting), the ACARTE programme of contemporary performing arts of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal.

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Foundation
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Did you say 'mobility'?

There is no time to waste if we want to give meaning to mobility – in every sense of the term – in the Mediterranean.

We always come back to mobility. It's the magic word of cultural co-operation. But what exactly are we talking about? Between migration – mobility limited by a search for better conditions of life – and what we would call 'travel', mobility always has many causes. Between the traveller who freely chooses a destination and the one who depends on a right of entry granted by someone else, the conditions of mobility are hardly the same. Between quick trips and residence, the impact of mobility on the mobile person – and on those who stay behind – is very different.

This publication addresses the mobility of cultural players: a mobility founded, in principle, on a desire for discovery, for reflection and for working together with those who operate in a different cultural context... from one side of the Mediterranean to the other.

And, here again the term mobility begs several questions. • Is it only mobility which counts? Or is it as much about the way it is exercised? Mobility in itself does not automatically mean engagement ; physical mobility doesn't necessarily mean mental mobility. It depends on what baggage one is carrying, in terms of objectives, beliefs, prejudices and questions. ...and what one brings along in terms of knowledge, experience, understanding, images of the other, of other places. ...and what mobility means for those who welcome the incomers, and for those who stay behind.

• Between the departure, the arrival and the return, how do we conceive of mobility programmes which, going beyond physical displacement, stimulate the interior voyage of those who are involved?

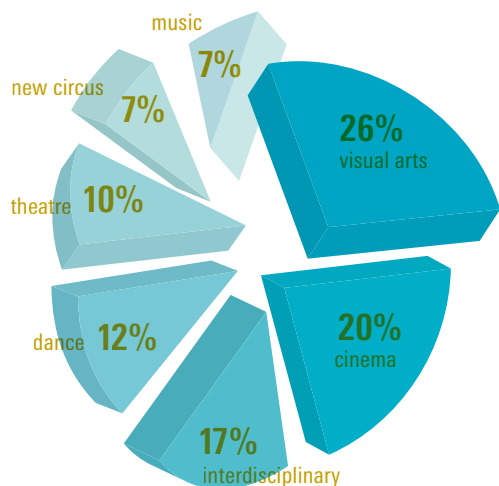
- In what direction is the mobility? The question is particularly delicate in the perspective of Euro-Mediterranean exchange where North-South mobility is asymmetrical, and timid in comparison with South-North mobility which is even more difficult. As if we could not escape a geography designed in terms of centre and periphery; as if it was not time for European cultural actors to also travel more in order to try to learn, to understand how to work in, and with 'the South'.
- Cross-border mobility: what borders are we speaking of? Mobility should not be confused with distance...and the most difficult frontiers to cross are not always the furthest. We can't think of mobility across the Mediterranean without also thinking of the cultural borders which cross our European cities, of the historic frontiers which cross the Arab world and of all other visible and invisible borders which, like all borders, always have two faces which divide but paradoxically, also connect.

This publication tackles these questions and many others. Through stories, analyses and experiences, mobility is placed in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership today. This publication, with its multiple voices, comes at the right time. There is no time to waste if we want to give meaning to mobility – in every sense of the term– in the Mediterranean.

Odile Chenal
European Cultural Foundation

ARTISTIC MOBILITY: 'MADE IN MED' ENCAPSULATED

Allocation of grants by artistic sector in 2006 Source: RCF



The Roberto Cimetta Fund: statistics

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It's the number of travel bursaries awarded since 2000 to artists and professionals of the contemporary performing and visual arts. The aim? To allow them to acquire new skills or to find resources to develop their artistic projects. Half of the grantees come from the south Mediterranean.

Projects which took place in 2006

Travel Grants of the association, AMA. Art Moves Africa allocated 73 travel grants allowing artists and cultural operators who live and work in Africa to be involved in information exchange, skills improvement, the development of informal networks and to research cooperation possibilities within the African continent itself.

The Travel Grants of the Roberto Cimetta Fund
Over 100 artists and culture professionals have been able to benefit from mobility support which aims to help a personal or collective artistic project materialise.

Mawa3eed, by Culture Resource. This is the new programme of support for artistic creation launched by the association whose original name was 'Al Mawred Al Thaqa'fy' [see also the interview with its Director, page 15]. It supported the presentation of eight works or artistic projects taking place at festivals, forums, training workshops...

Step Beyond, of the European Cultural Foundation, 144 artists and cultural operators were supported by this artistic mobility programme which facilitated artistic exchanges between Europe and Eastern European countries.

Mobility support from YATF
The Young Arab Theater Fund, which supports the production and the circulation of artistic works (visual or performing arts), has supported the travel of numerous artists in order to participate in events in the Arab world and at international festivals.



Fatin Farhat, Artistic Director, Palestine Mobility...not so easy...

“Invited by the Roberto Cimetta Fund to the first ‘Mobility Meeting in the Mediterranean’ organised in Fez in 2006, I requested a visa at the Moroccan Embassy located in the Gaza Strip. But for me, a Palestinian from Ramallah, it was going to be difficult. A victim of the separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, I had to do everything by post. After numerous exchanges, I finally got the visa. In order to leave the country, Palestinians have to fly from the international airport in Amman, Jordan. It takes about ten hours to get there. From there I had to get a flight for Casablanca, but




with a nine hour wait in Paris. If I’d had a Schengen visa, I would have been able to get a hotel room to rest in, but as I wasn’t allowed to leave the airport, I had to settle for a chair in the waiting area. Finally the flight time arrived, well, almost.. the flight was delayed two hours! The result was that, in Casablanca, I missed my flight to Fez. Therefore I had to stay one night there. My suitcase, which meanwhile had been lost, was finally delivered two days later. Shall I tell you what happened on the return trip?”

Art goes up, art comes down

The arrival of new artistic media such as video, photography and digital art has facilitated the emergence of visual arts in the Mediterranean which are free from tradition and classical forms. Contemporary dance which, unlike Arab theatre, does not rely on a staged tradition, is inventing new forms of representation and relations with the public. With this greater freedom of experimentation, visual arts and contemporary dance are currently the most dynamic contemporary artistic disciplines in the Mediterranean and the most connected on an international level.

Armed conflict and sensitive areas



 Sensitive areas  Areas of armed conflict  Sensitive borders

Ong Keng Sen: "I believe in this journey"

Extract of a speech given in 2006 in Lille,
by the Director of TheatreWorks
and Founder of Artists' Network Asia.

Today, I spend only 4 months a year in Singapore, my home city. As a director of international performances collaborating with diverse cultures, I have to make the journey to connect with traditional wisdoms of societies which are not mine. I believe in this journey. In order to be an engaged labour force, an engaged individual, we have to become citizens of the world. Citizens of the world who are not afraid of borders, who are open to new experiences.

I desire mobility even though my body is weak. Many a time I have called myself a citizen of jet lag city. Many a time, I have woken up in a new hotel room walking into the wall in the middle of the night because in the last hotel room, that was where the bathroom was!

I am a firm believer that mobility alleviates the poverty of knowledge, the poverty of empathy, the poverty of imagination, the poverty of spirit. I don't want to be poor, to be poor in knowledge, to be poor in empathy for another human being, to be poor in imagination, to be poor in spirit.

UNDERSTANDING MOBILITY

The paradox of mobility

Mobility, a phenomenon which goes far beyond the cultural sphere

“...to promote the mobility of artists and professionals in the cultural field and the circulation of all artistic expressions beyond national borders...”

This is one of the objectives in the European Commission’s ‘Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World’¹ of May 10th, 2007. The notion of mobility has indeed become a real concern of the European Union with regard to cultural cooperation. It is also regularly evoked by the Member States as a priority for the cultural sector, as was the case during the ‘Meeting on Europe and Her Culture’ organised in Grenada in April 2006. Mobility is now recognised as essential to the European project, and specifically valued in all of the programmes of the EU.

Nevertheless, with regard to cultural affairs, mobility is not always the object of a dedicated programme either in internal or in external policy.

How can this paradox be explained? In the Euro-Mediterranean space, not focusing on mobility as such is due notably to the problematic character it represents in the region. Behind ‘mobility’, there are eminently political questions on both national and international levels. Thus, the question of population flow refers back to that of migration risk and to issues which are sensitive in the current context, linked also to security and economic questions, among others. Today we are witnessing a reversed

perception of migration risk, Catherine Lalumière² reminds us. “At the beginning of the 90’s, when we established the Shengen Area, the threat of migration was perceived as being within the European space, as coming from the East, the countries which today are part of the EU.” Today, the mobility of people from the South is perceived as the risk. On the contrary, the mobility of individuals in civil society, such as artists and cultural actors, should be perceived as a tool for the development of societies. It should also be valued as a catalyst in the development process of the Mediterranean region regarding global problems such as the closing off of societies, limits on the freedom of expression or isolation of communities.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/communication/pdf_word/COM_2007_242_en.pdf

² Formerly Vice-President of the European Parliament and General Secretary of the Council of Europe, she is currently Director of the Maison de l’Europe in Paris and President of Relais Culture Europe.

CULTURAL MOBILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE PLAYERS AND THEIR STRATEGIES

Promotion of, and support for artistic mobility, no matter who is promoting it, responds primarily to strategic concerns. If the European Union (EU) promotes mobility in general as a means of cohesion and the construction of a shared identity, national organisations and ministries in particular have made it a device for spreading and reinforcing their image.

Private foundations, rarely motivated by artistic concerns, are interested mainly for political reasons, as a factor of development and/or intercultural exchange. The professional sector, finally, supports mobility as a means of structuring the sector itself and to encourage the development of artistic practice.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The cultural dimension of the European Union's external action rests on a series of values belonging to the European project (the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights...). In the Mediterranean at the regional level, this approach is interpreted as a priority for intercultural dialogue, the development of civil society and the strengthening of the media's role. The mobility of artists, recognised by the EU as a factor of cohesion and understanding between peoples, is seen in the Euro-Mediterranean as being in service to these principles but is not the object of any specific programme.

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

The cultural actions of international foundations in the Mediterranean rest principally on global priorities for building bridges between peoples and for opening up civil society. Foundations follow political agendas which vary according to the source of their funds. They thus have various geopolitical approaches for the Arab world, the Euro-Mediterranean, South East Europe etc. Very proactive and directly involved in the implementation of projects, they have initiated the principal programmes which support cultural mobility in the region.

THE NATIONAL LEVEL

As a general rule, nations support the mobility of artists (nationals going abroad or foreigners coming into the national territory) in a rationale of visibility, as a device for diffusing, strengthening and exporting national culture abroad. In the context of bilateral partnerships between states, mobility in the cultural sector can also be a part of the more general policy of co-development; in this case mobility is recognised for its capacity to facilitate exchange of knowledge and skills.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities are key players of cultural cooperation in the Mediterranean, notably via the creation of mechanisms for decentralised cooperation and via bilateral partnership agreements. The development of a chapter for trans-border cooperation in the European Neighbourhood Policy should allow them to strengthen their role with regard to European initiatives, especially in the south Mediterranean. Current strategies concerning artistic mobility are based on models of development and of promoting the attractiveness of territories, within a perspective of reinforcing their international positioning.

THE PROFESSIONAL CULTURAL SECTOR

The cultural and artistic sector has, already for some years, brought into being networks and support mechanisms for mobility, to facilitate the creation of international artistic productions. The sector has thus recognised mobility as necessary to the structuring of its activities. Mobility and exchange with foreign artistic scenes, including that of the Mediterranean, are recognised as bringing qualitative added value which allows for the enrichment of aesthetics and critical thought on art.



PASCAL BRUNET: “NETWORKS ARE THE GUARANTEE OF ARTISTS’ FREEDOM”



In Tunisia, you exist as an artist because you have contacts abroad

From 1995 to 2003, you were the President of the network, DBM (Danse Bassin Méditerranée). Today, as Director of Relais Culture Europe (the EU Culture Contact Point for France), you are confronted with the question of cultural networks and Euro-Mediterranean cultural cooperation. What do you think is the interest of cultural networks in the Mediterranean?

These networks act on three levels which should interact:

- Aesthetic comparison: by allowing artists to meet one another and to work together where there are limited possibilities for exchange, cultural networks are indispensable meeting points which simultaneously offer the chance for a renewal of equal relations between the North and the South.

- Professionalisation: the networks are often places of shared training in all its forms – artistic, technical or in management. They therefore offer the capacity to strengthen individuals or groups, structuring the sector above all by facilitating the acquisition of intercultural and professional competence.

- Political: as spaces for creation, the networks are also places for reflection on the conditions for this creation. They encourage a questioning of the issues around cultural policies (where these exist or where they do not) and on the relations between the stakeholders of these policies on the national, regional or international levels. Indeed, artistic creation can be a dangerous process for certain societies, especially if they are victim to censorship.

How can a network fight for freedom of expression?

The struggle against censorship goes beyond the political terrain and its coercive or economic extensions, to financial issues for example. It is necessary to find spaces of expression – which networks offer through the exchange, meeting and mobility of their members. They are at the same time a breath of fresh air for debate, a laboratory for ideas, and construction sites for solidarity, facilitating the emergence of projects. More or less formal, the networks can help an artist exist as such where he or she wishes to live and work. Consider the theatre piece, “Corps-otages” of Fadhel Jaibi. Produced and rehearsed but not actually played in Tunisia, it was able to be programmed at the Théâtre de l’Odéon in Paris in May 2006. It is a question of active and concrete solidarity which enables joint projects. This is where the ‘soft power’ of networks is played out. Beyond a mobilisation to guarantee the integrity of an artist, it is necessary to be able to construct and guarantee the conditions of his or her work - the means to produce – abroad if need be – to think, to confront, to move. A de facto alliance can arise between networks and the European cultural diplomatic services. For example, when the network of the French cultural centres supports the Conference of Euro-Med Mobility in Fez organised by the Roberto Cimetta Fund, they are participating in the emergence of a space of free expression in the public sphere of the South.

What is the result of this de facto alliance?

Evaluating a linear process is difficult. Alliances, in the plural, evolve at the rhythm of events and people’s schedules. The artists’ concerns remain rather the same (to seek, elaborate, propose, show work...) and don’t correspond to political priorities in the Mediterranean. Moreover, political and institutional time differs from that of artists. Artistic creation is often urgent, falling within a short and limited period.

Thus, when innovative projects start, they must seek their own means of existence before attracting the attention of the political sphere. For DBM, years of continuing collaborative action was required before achieving visibility with the political institutions. And still today, no permanent alliance exists. Changing perspectives, multilateral institutions often offer an evolving field which is interesting for cultural actors. The translation of their policies, however, involves hard work requiring well-trained professionals to access rare and complicated financial support.

But funding does not solve all problems... Obviously not. The objective is continuation, not of the networks but of the projects they support. A network is only a given method of organisation which responds to a given problematic in a given time and place. The rule seems obvious, but in reality, organisations have trouble transforming themselves.

More precisely, I think that the challenge of the cultural networks, especially in the Mediterranean, is to focus first on the conditions for the constitution of a lively artistic space, an artistic and cultural ecosystem, and then to focus on their own transformation. This complex reflection - how to make the conditions of artistic production sustainable - can only be carried through if certain conditions are in place:

- Democratic governance and functioning: a site of equality, the network has to be a place of negotiated and collective intelligence.
- A process of continuous work: a network has to be open to everyone, to different ways of thinking, and has to constantly adjust itself to the interactions provoked by these relationships.
- A taste for complexity: solutions are to be found in the process, not in the measures and still less in the institutions. There must be simultaneous transformation of the artistic, social, economic and political processes.
- A space of personal transformation: things happen day-to-day, on the ground.

The network is not the actor, it is the essential site where the capacity to grasp its complexity is developed by its members.

Types of networks, according to Pascal Brunet

North-South Networks

As with DBM, the aim here is the transfer of competence. But it is necessary to avoid political and economic dependence from becoming artistic dependence, with the risk of the South falling into 'folklorisation'.

South-South Networks

They encourage exchange between the countries of the south shore of the Mediterranean. An example is the Young Arab Theater Fund (YATF). Often financed by funds from the South and the North, they start by building up the artistic production system. Although constructed at a local level, they are not at all cut off from the rest of the world.

Institutional Networks

Here there is often an abuse of the word 'network'. The action of promoting culture here serves a particular political function. The members are not independent in their decision-making but are linked to political institutions, like the network of the French institutes or of the Goethe Institutes.



Giovanna Tanzarella: “Europe Embodies a Vision of the Future”

General Delegate of the René Seydoux Foundation, you work with just about everyone involved in artistic and cultural mobility in the Mediterranean. What are the real forces of change? First of all, it is the artists themselves. It is they who, in this period of globalisation, feel the need and the desire to be mobile. Next are the public authorities, but the nations today are an obstacle to free circulation. With their very restrictive visa systems, they carry a huge responsibility. On the other hand, the European Union is now taking a much more courageous position. According to the EU, if one wants to discourage immigration, it is counter-productive to have obstacles to free movement. That’s why visas for certain categories of people (such as athletes or scientists) have been made easier to obtain. It’s an intelligent position because more flexibility allows many individuals who don’t necessarily want to stay in Europe, to come and go freely. Europe – which has free circulation in her genes, can thus be decisive in the future of mobility.

But at present, the means are not there. Will Europe succeed? It’s too early to tell. For the moment, the political European project is at its lowest ebb. On the other hand, Europe continues to embody a vision of the future.

Is it the same for non-public sources of funds? Mobility is increasingly becoming a priority for them. But we are still far from an ideal situation. European foundations should, like the European Cultural Foundation, seriously work on programmes financing mobility. Next, amongst the key players, we mustn’t forget public authorities! Numerous regions and city councils include a strong dimension of ‘mobility’ in their programmes, each with ‘its own’ geography. Lately I met the Deputy Director for Culture and the Mediterranean from the Regional Council of Puglia (in South East Italy). For them, the ‘Mediterranean’ means, in the first place, the

Balkans (Albania is less than 100 km away). And ‘artistic mobility’ means, for example, providing artists’ residencies for artists from the other side of the Adriatic.. What is developing today is a real regional diplomacy.

One could say that you have a ‘glocal’ vision of the galaxy of the mobility players... Yes, it’s true. Between the local authorities and the European level, there are a lot of elements currently in play. I believe that it is the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ which will push the national to change.



The Mediterranean Index

Created with the aim to list the best research institutes for Mediterranean issues, the Mediterranean Index lists “close to 700 organisations which today include NGO’s, human rights organisations and more recently, specialist magazines”, Giovanna Tanzarella explains. Initiated by the Seydoux Foundation, it is freely accessible on their internet site. After verification by the editor, each entry can be updated directly by the listed organisation, as long as it has previously registered.

www.fondation-seydoux.org

BETWEEN THE HAMMER OF CENSORSHIP AND THE ANVIL OF CONSERVATISM

MASHREK HERE! **Basma El Husseiny: "We don't need any active role from the West"**
"What Euro-Mediterranean partnership?!"



In Cairo, you are the Director Al Mawred Al Thaqafy, an organisation which supports artistic creativity and mobility in the Arab World. Would you say there are problems of censorship in Egypt?

It's a fact in this country – censorship is a legal procedure. Take the example of the film industry. Foreign productions need a 'visa' in order to be distributed. The Da Vinci Code, for example, was prohibited in order to please the Egyptian Church. Regarding nationally-made films, they need a green light from the authorities even before they can be made.

How do you react to this situation?

In the Arab World, the margin of manoeuvre is different according to whether the censorship is legal or illegal. Take the case of the Spring of Culture Festival in Bahrain in March 2007. A musical production based on lyrics by the famous poet Qassem Haddad and music by the Lebanese Marcel Khalife was banned by the Parliament because of alleged obscenity. We protested vigorously but in this case there was a legal procedure and thus we could not do anything about it.

In which situations can you protest?

When the censorship is not on a legal basis. In Egypt, there is no official censorship in the publishing

industry. But in the case of the writer Helmy Salem, some of his writing, published in a magazine, was declared blasphemous by print workers who unilaterally decided to destroy all the copies.

Do you feel that the West does enough to support your struggle? The West has its own problems of censorship. Consider the controversy around the creation of the State of Israel or even Guantanamo. Apart from know-how transfer and sources of funding, we don't need any active role from the West here. You know, censorship is not an abstract concept - it is the people here who have to resolve their problem.

What do you think about artistic mobility in the Mediterranean? Without mobility we couldn't do anything. In this region, the professional infrastructure for culture is very underdeveloped. Even in Lebanon, cultural effervescence limits itself to the capital, Beirut. Mobility is a means to unite the forces of the cultural operators, to capitalise our opportunities.

What about the role of the State? It depends if the State has had a socialist system or not. In Algeria, for example, I don't think that cultural players call for 'more State'. In Syria, artists would want 'less State' whereas in Lebanon they would like to have a Ministry of Culture which is far more present. In Egypt we have a huge Ministry – almost all cultural venues belong to the State. Everything! So of course it's not surprising that artistic productions are very political. The culture budget, which includes restoration of ancient monuments, is about 6 to 7% of the total State budget!

Are there independent cultural venues in Egypt?

My organisation runs the El Genaina theater in Azhar Park. But in February 2006, Cairo's Governorate decided to close the theater without giving us any official explanation. We learned that this ●●●

MAGHREB HERE! **Sofiane Hadjadj:**
“To be a publisher here is, first
and foremost, a mission”

was due to the political content of a show by Nagham Masry. After an active protest campaign, the theater was re-opened in August of the same year.

Did you change your policy afterwards?

We are more careful, of course. We ask for permits beforehand. But we always knew the situation.

Do you feel supported by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership? What Euro-Mediterranean Partnership?! [she laughs] That has nothing to do with culture! It's a political and economic agreement, that's all.

In 2000, you founded Barzakh publishing house.

What is it like to be a publisher in Algeria today?

It is a mission first and foremost. After the fall of socialism in 1992, the State separated itself from the publishing world. It was the beginning of a liberal economy but also the bleak period of terrorism. There were no more bookstores, no publishers; writers were leaving in exile. After our studies in Paris, we therefore decided to listen to our deepest desire: to create an independent publishing house.

What is the profile of the Algerian reader?

Essentially there are two. The first, whom we address, is over 40 and reads in French due to their bilingual education. They prefer novels, essays or history. The second is a younger public, completely Arabic-speaking, who turn either towards practical books or religious publications.

And you, in what do you specialise?

Our catalogue covers literature, history and luxury books. On principle, we don't cover the religious book market because it is generally propaganda and we are fighting against Islamic extremism. On the other hand, we publish writings on Islamic reform.

Do you suffer from censorship?

During the period of the managed economy every book had to receive a certificate from a reading committee. Today, contrary to television which is a State monopoly, in the book industry there is no more official censorship. For example, in 2001 we published 'Zarta!' ("Deserter"), a novel by Mustapha Benfodil. He wrote it during his military service in the middle of the civil war, and the least you can say is that he was not exactly tender with the world of the army. On the other hand, there is very much a form of self-censorship. In Algeria there is what one calls the triangle of prohibitions: sex, politics, religion. If you speak of these subjects, you take risks.

You belong to the enlightened elite; you publish for the most part in French... You don't think you're living in the clouds?

Not at all. Literature is the mirror of a society which does not want to see itself. To live in the clouds means not to be in step with your society. We don't want to fall back into one culture for all. We are aware that we reach a minority.

Do you feel supported by Europe in your struggle?

Unfortunately European funds for our country don't touch publishing but are reserved for actions around good governance. On the other hand, we develop co-publications with publishers on the other side of the Mediterranean. But I have to say that I often feel a great deal of contempt from European publishers.

What do you mean? I will give you an example. An Italian publishing house, Edizioni Della Meridiana, has never paid us the author's rights for "Cinq Fragments du Désert", a novel by Boudjedra Rachid. It's around 1500 euros but they know that we don't have the resources to go to court. You see, this is symptomatic of the power relations between the north and the south of the Mediterranean but I must add that in general we work well with Europe.

Don't you feel abandoned by your European neighbours? No. But when you see that in Algeria the culture budget is 0,18% of GDP, whereas UNESCO has called for at least 1%, you can well see the problems which we face.

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Literature is the mirror of a society which does not want to see itself



THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP AS VIEWED BY...

A CULTURAL ACTOR

Ferdinand Richard: "It's not the fault of the EU, but of national selfishness"



As Director of AMI (Aide aux Musiques Innovatrices/ Assistance to Innovative Musics), you have experienced the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership via exchange in the popular music field. What's your assessment?

The basic problem is the opposition between 'clan' and 'network'. The EU is pushing for the establishment of networks whereas the societies of the South, including those in southern Europe such as Marseilles, are closer to the logic of clans. In addition, culture is largely missing from the European project, except in this morsel called Culture 2000. It's not the fault of the EU, but of national selfishness!

The States balk at investing in culture at the EU Community level because they see culture first and foremost as being of service to national prestige. In France, since Malraux and De Gaulle, culture professionals - myself included - serve the authorities in power. As to the Anna Lindh Foundation, at least it has the merit to exist - it's already a small miracle that it manages to do something with such a modest budget! Finally, when I am admiring the dynamism of the London or Irish popular music scenes, I wonder about our French model where State intervention is really too great. It is not about aligning with extreme economic liberalism but finding a balance between public and private intervention.

What is the principal problem for cultural cooperation in the Mediterranean?

There won't be cultural integration in the Mediterranean as long as we, Europeans, have not perfected our own cultural integration! Arab artists themselves do not see any unity between Europeans; we are in competition between ourselves. The problem is that everyone wants to hold on to his own patch!

How can this problem of disunity among Europeans be resolved?

The real problem is national sovereignty. The current return to nationalism is a catastrophe. Today, Europe

A POLITICIAN

Sandro Gozi: "Today a Euro-Mediterranean Civil Society Exists"

does not exist. How can we have any real dynamic in the Mediterranean without a European Foreign Minister?

What is your feeling about the artistic avant-garde in the South? The question is not if there is an avant-garde – there has always been. It is if there is a strong enough sector to help it emerge and be seen. This is the role of cultural mediators. It's the role of communication, of schools, of training.

How can the sector in the South be improved? A sector is only efficient if it responds to need. It's impossible to create a strong industry without taking its context into consideration as fully as possible: what exists, the difficulties, the potential for development... Now, we don't have integrated tools for studying this. Today we are working in a dangerous empirical fashion, often tainted with the arrogance of the North and the short term-ism of the South. I would note that this imprecision, this weakness is closely linked with the instrumentalisation of artists or of culture. It would be necessary to encourage the emergence of a group of Arab researchers or universities, or Southern and South East Mediterraneans – to come together to form a cultural observatory which would be transversal, inter-Mediterranean, pragmatic, concrete and multidisciplinary (not merely confined to heritage, sacred art or cultural tourism.) In this way, the cultural operators of the Med could understand the realities of the situation and set themselves planned objectives. Let's start with that... I can't predict what would come out of it but probably we would then need to implicate large sections of society, beyond the strictly cultural field, such as economic, education and communication sectors.



Between 2000 and 2004, you advised Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, on Mediterranean questions. Twelve years after the launch of the Barcelona Process, what would you say about its state of health? It was with tremendous intuition in 1995 that Europeans, Arabs and Israelis were united in a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. But today it has to be admitted that the Barcelona Process did not reach its expectations.

Why not? For reasons such as the Israeli-Arab conflict, which are independent of the process itself. In addition, multilateralism was the cause of much delay, and we finally ended with a lack of flexibility.

Should the political players have done more? It would have been necessary to correct the political absence of the EU within the Middle East. And I really mean the "Middle East" because we would have to ask ourselves today about the possibility of extending the partnership to all the countries in the region. (see the article on page 31) Another problem is that the regional initiatives undertaken by the European Union and the United States, crossed without ever really meeting.

How can the transatlantic partnership be re-launched today? Nothing is going to change until the US presidential elections in November 2008. However, on the European side, all the conditions are ripe because the European leaders - Prodi, Sarkozy, Merkel – are all pro-Atlantic.

Let's get back to Barcelona. What did the Process do for culture? The socio-cultural chapter has produced significant results. I am thinking here of youth exchange, artistic heritage, audio-visual cooperation and also in the university field. We can say that today there is a Euro-Mediterranean civil society. Let's think, for example, of the Euromed Civil Forum in 2003. That said, we have to do much more! ●●●

What do you think about the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) that you created with Romano Prodi? At the moment it is not what one would have liked it to be. The governments are reticent about its autonomy. Then, on the operational side, it must be said that it doesn't work. How could it be re-launched? Perhaps by finding a high profile President? The ALF is the first institution common to the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. Thanks to it we can see that the problems of mobility in the Mediterranean have an increasingly cultural dimension. This is why, against all the extremisms, it is necessary to repeat loudly and clearly that it is only through cultural dialogue that the region can be stabilised. Certainly the economy is fundamental, but a deep engagement with culture on the ground is indispensable!

What do you think of Sarkozy's project of a Mediterranean Union? It's a familiar concept for us. We've been saying for a long time that it was necessary to create a regional institution for the Mediterranean, one of the rare regions in the world not to have one. What is needed is to be inspired by successful models such as the European Union, with regular summits, a commission, an international secretariat, 'eco-fin' councils etc. This would need to evolve from reinforced cooperation in the fields of water, energy or infrastructure... a bit like what was done with coal and steel in Europe. As a founder of the programme Erasmus Mundus, I cannot forget the university field. Why not encourage the emergence of common curricula between universities on the two shores? In brief, we ought to apply the European Community model to the Mediterranean.

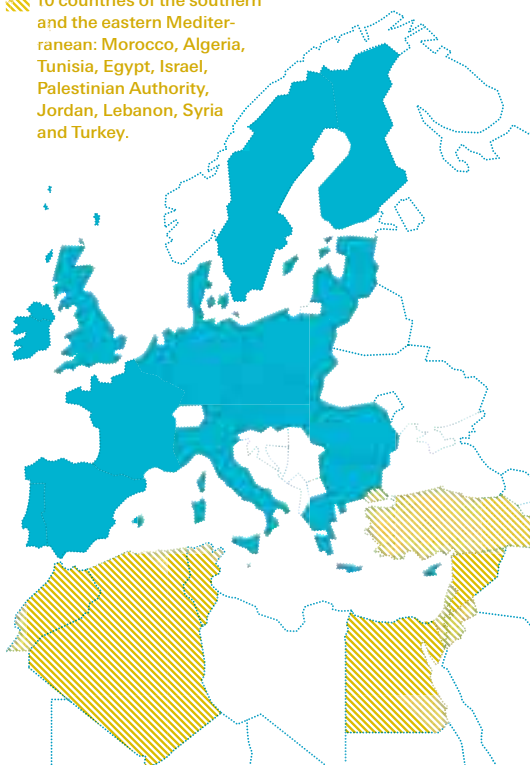


A region in a globalised world

The Mediterranean can also be seen in the light of the major issues of our globalised world: the lack of balance between the North and the South, the problematic of new countries entering into the globalisation process, ecological upheavals, the increasing introversion and isolation of some societies, the development of religious fundamentalism, etc. To these are added global cultural problems: cultural diversity, linguistic pluralism, digital culture, access to knowledge, safeguarding material and immaterial heritage, etc.

■ 25 Member States of the European Union

▨ 10 countries of the southern and the eastern Mediterranean: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.



MOBILITY TO DO WHAT?

MOBILITY STORIES **Soline Daccache,**
actress (Okaybeh, Keserwane, Lebanon)

Lebanon and the adjacent region is currently going through a period of crisis. Many misunderstandings and prejudices hinder our relations with our Mediterranean neighbours and isolate us. It is important for us to re-establish a dialogue and a just perception of our cultures. Artistic and cultural exchanges are, in my view, the best way to initiate dialogue and to bring civilisations closer together. Artistic residencies, workshops, festivals, seminars, fora... are the means by which we meet one another, know each other better, widen our horizons, strengthen our network and train ourselves.



An anti-fundamentalist vaccine

In the Mediterranean area, artists are up against a growing conservatism. Especially in the Arab world where for some years religious fundamentalism has diminished the status of art in the public arena. “Today”, observes Radhouane El Meddeb, Tunisian choreographer and theatre director, “it is difficult for a contemporary artist to feel necessary to the society in which he or she lives.” “Many subjects are still taboo and the reactions of the public are sometimes anticipate that of the censors! This is very bad because censorship is, in reality, the reflection of what society thinks”, adds Lamia Joreige, Lebanese visual artist. The rationale of conservatism, pushed to the extreme, can turn into withdrawal into one’s own identity, this is why the opening up of Arab societies to the exterior world is a real issue in the region.

Many subjects are still taboo and the reactions of the public sometimes anticipate that of the censors

Contemporary art puts the liberalisation of morality into play by questioning subjects as sensitive as the relationship with the body, the place of women in society, the possibility of artistic comment on religion, political subversion... “Artistic mobility, because it encourages meeting, comparison and exchange, holds an important place in the process of opening up to others and to foreign cultures. It can be seen as a process of transformation; it brings renewal and creation”, affirms Leila Badis, manager of cooperation projects at Relais Culture Europe (France’s Culture Contact Point). Today’s artworks present complex representations of the societies around us which go beyond folkloric clichés or mass-media images. The circulation of these innovative artistic forms thus contributes to refining the public’s appreciation and to opening the field of critical observation.

THE PERFORMANCE

Les Amoureux du Café Désert

Impertinent, the productions of Fadhel Jaïbi have met with lively popular success for thirty years. They present theatre which constitutes more than a cultural intention – it's an issue of freedom. Witness the success of the piece, *Les Amoureux du Café Désert*, created in 1995, which, despite the radical nature of the subject, reached a large public in the Arab world. The play relates the story of a woman researching the disappearance of her daughter. A scandal in the university world where the young girl is maturing, seems to be the cause. The mother undertakes a real initiation into the secret and complex universe of youths in search of new reference points. This piece, tough and violent, which brought together thirteen actors who play these young rebels, emotionally moved the public in Tunis and in numerous other cities of the Arab world where it played, uncovering cruel truths such as rape, corruption and suicide.

MOBILITY STORIES

Karim Dakroub, puppeteer (Beirut, Lebanon)

It is clear that institutions, foundations and other funding sources which support cultural action in the Mediterranean have precise development aims for the region. However, the programmes' procedures and eligibility criteria are heavy-going and have the negative tendency of pushing artistic projects into pre-ordained formats. For some years ahead, creativity and artistic exchange risk becoming predictable and inflexible. It's necessary to give more freedom to artists and organisers – the freedom to create, to be inspired, to travel.



Professional Infrastructure: a dream?

“Mobility? For my artistic career, it’s fundamental”, sums up Karima Mansour. For this Egyptian choreographer, professional travel allows artists to “feel that they themselves also have access to the exterior world, to new expressions and to relations which make them feel alive, useful, connected and listened to.” And if, on the south coast of the Mediterranean, Karima’s need is not rare (see the story p. 21), it is because the artistic landscape of this region suffers from a chronic lack of professional infrastructure. And a real deficit of resources – limited training workshops and rarely available performance and exhibition spaces, extremely scarce opportunities for critical exchange... In certain countries of the South, contemporary art only exists thanks to funds from certain foreign sources, such as the Ford Foundation, or from opportunities offered by the international market. This deficit causes a lack of circulation of information, a lack of networking, and a weak financial framework which hampers, for example, South-South exchange. “It is often easier for a festival of the Arab world to invite European artists whose costs are paid by the cultural services of embassies, than to invite an Arab artist who isn’t supported by any cultural diplomatic service”, observes Ahmed El Attar, Egyptian theatre director.

“The professional infrastructure of the Euro-Mediterranean’s artistic and cultural landscape”, Pascal Brunet, Director of Relais Culture Europe insists, “can only be achieved on the basis of a diversification of competences and a clear definition of the degrees of specialisation in countries where almost all the layers of the cultural ecosystem are yet to be created.” Managers, producers, technicians, programmers, researchers and critics are amongst the professional categories which are nearly nonexistent in the southern countries. Countries in which indeed it is common to see artists wearing two or three hats - that of producer, tour manager... for example, an artist such as Ahmed El Attar, Egyptian theatre

professional, is also an initiator of international projects, founder of an artistic residency space, organises events and training and is the president of a network.

Often in the South, the artist has to be the producer and the tour manager at the same time

Taking all of this into account, it is important today to consider mobility not as an end in itself, but as a formative means which serves to dynamise and structure the sector, because it can facilitate a clarification of competences and a differentiation of the different levels of activity. Mobility represents, in this sense, a fundamental step in a professional pathway in that it provides exchange, meeting and comparisons which are as much technical (the acquisition of new competencies and working methods) as artistic (by the possibilities it offers to bring about the evolution of a vision or an intention which is in contact with other forms of creation). According to Mary Ann De Vlieg, Secretary General of IETM, the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts, direct cooperation between professionals from the North and South, acting on the same levels, speaking the same ‘language’ and having the same kind of practices can help the artistic and cultural community to create a professional structure for itself”. And to develop a real market for the arts at home.



THE FLOW OF ARTISTIC MOBILITY

South-South The Maghreb-Mashrek Gap

The continuing weakness of mobility between the Maghreb and the Middle East is linked to several factors: a structural weakness in the professional landscape (resulting in little circulation of information, rare networking, and certainly hardly any framework for funding), a heavy political context and a lack of appeal. For professionals in the South, the key influences are, in fact, in the West - in Europe and North America. Regional mobility amongst Middle Eastern artists is, however, rather strong. This is facilitated on the one hand by the presence of important international donors such as the Ford Foundation, who develop programmes on a regional basis, and on the other by the work of independent 'umbrella organisations' like the Young Arab Theater Fund, who operate throughout the territory.

On the other hand, artistic regional mobility within the Maghreb is weak because of the political context but equally because of a lack of artistic stimulation in the region and the isolation of independent cultural actors.

South-North The Weight of the Past

Northern Europe remains the principal destination for travel associated with training and with production. In other respects, it is noticeable that 'classic' circulation patterns persist, linked to bilateral frameworks inherited for the most part from post-colonial relations notably between Europe and the Maghreb. Cultural actors in the Maghreb countries firmly place their mobility projects in the framework of bilateral cooperation, especially with France which has an extremely active local network for cultural cooperation, in Morocco for example.

North-South Solidarity Objectives

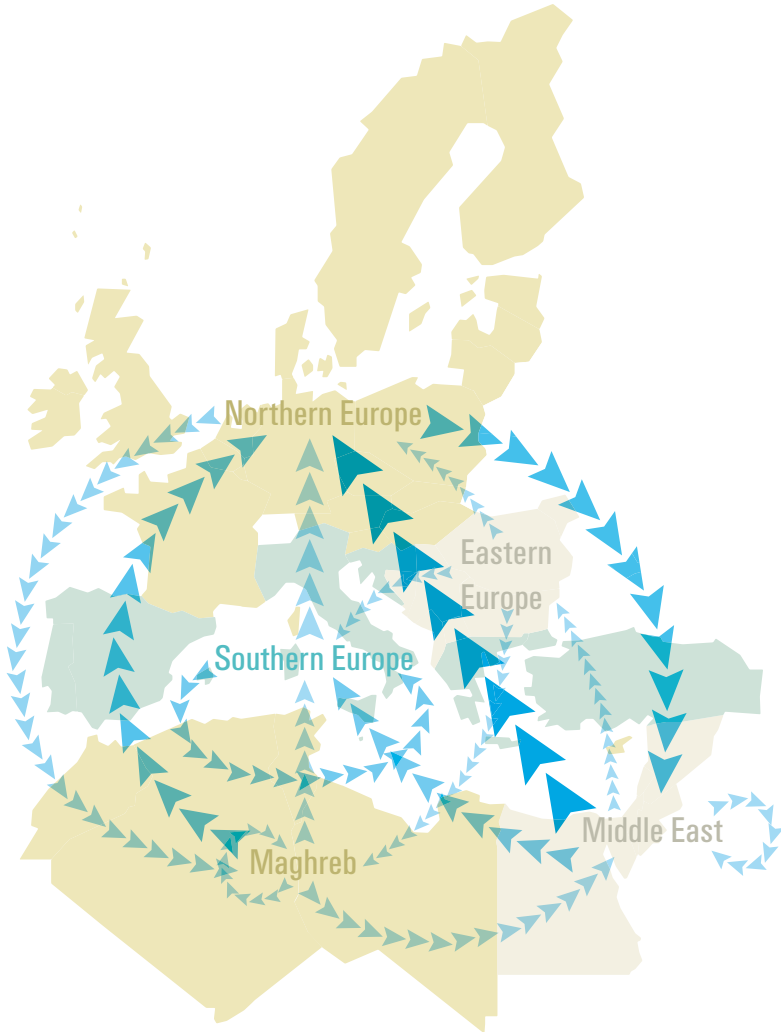
In the North-South flow within the Mediterranean, socio-cultural projects and those aiming for solidarity strongly predominate over those which are purely artistic. The Palestinian example is the most striking – Europeans go to Palestine more for solidarity reasons than to discover the local artistic scene. This is often the case for projects with Algeria and Morocco, but also with Syria and Lebanon. Thus, even if travel by European culture professionals to the Southern Mediterranean are quantitatively important, they don't demonstrate an artistic appeal for the region. Instead, they demonstrate the great sensitivity in Europe for the political and socio-economic stakes today being played out in the Mediterranean region.

South-East The Divide

Despite many structural similarities and a cultural kinship with the Arab world, the countries of Eastern Europe, even the Balkans, face more toward Europe than toward their southern neighbours. Nevertheless, some initiatives which bridge Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean have taken place over the last years, such as a project bringing together a Serbian company, DAH Theatre, with artists from Morocco. We can also note here the efforts achieved by certain networks such as IETM or DBM to open up and build links between the people in various geographic regions which tend to be rather closed.

70 grants/year 40 to 60 less than 20

RCF travel grant program 2000-2006



LET'S BRAINSTORM...

In order for political decision makers to understand the issues concerning artistic mobility in the Mediterranean region, it's necessary to provide a detailed analysis of needs, and a deeper comprehension of the actual practices on the ground. At present, there are very few channels of communication which allow the decision makers to benefit from artistic professionals' ideas. The cultural sector is a minority among the organisations which represent civil society such as the Euromed Civil Forum. In the EU's cultural policy for the Euromed region, there is very little place for contemporary creation. 'Intercultural dialogue', for example, is often focused on 'inter-religious dialogue'. Therefore it is urgent for the artistic sector to make its voice heard... and to seize the political imperatives which are being drawn in the region. This is why, based on a 'bottom-up' methodology, the Roberto Cimetta Fund, like the European Cultural Foundation or the Young Arab Theatre Fund, aims to encourage the 'ideas box' of mobility in the Mediterranean.

Judith Neisse
President, Roberto Cimetta Fund

THINKING MOBILITY

Objective: Accompaniment

Mobility has no sense unless it is productive

Being mobile? “It’s not without obstacles”, admits Cristina Farinha. “It’s necessary to have logistic and organisational skills to plan, some expertise to choose the places where you want to go; you need to know how to communicate in several languages...”, says Farinha, sociology researcher specialising in questions of mobility in Europe. “What’s more is that being mobile is to have aspirations, and this is not innate; a desire for personal or professional development is acquired by one’s education and the system in which one evolves.” To this is added the problem of a lack of professional structure in the cultural sector in the Mediterranean countries and especially in the southern countries.

The mobility of artists and cultural actors lies within a systemic framework - if we wish to promote mobility widely, without turning constantly to the same ‘privileged’ artists, but instead reaching the most isolated cultural actors, it is important to consider educational and social factors for example, taking into account adaptations for people who do not have a facility for foreign languages or who don’t have the necessary intellectual baggage to develop a well-constructed argumentation as requested in application procedures. “It would be useful for funders to provide training for their beneficiaries, to help them fill in application forms, for example”, observes Khadija El Bennaoui, Coordinator of the mobility programme, Art Moves Africa. According to her, “It is important to develop the capacities of cultural actors - to work with small funds, to go and seek information... all the skills which are inescapable in order to make a project concrete.”

The question of the accompaniment of cultural actors is fundamental. This is why mobility needs to be an essential part of the professionalisation process. “Mobility has no sense unless it is productive”, adds Ferdinand Richard (see interview on page 18). “Today knowledge is transmitted increasingly by experiential learning and apprenticeship.

This is a result of the global mix - and no one is complaining, because this is how new aesthetics are born (and have emerged in the last century). This type of experimentation is nourished by intangible elements, by human connections impossible to depict. No real transfer of knowledge is achieved by a mere exchange of data on the internet.” Mobility should be recognised as an essential tool of career development, as a necessary step in the professional development of Mediterranean artists which allows access to informal training, to the transference of knowledge and to critical development.

IDEAS BOX **THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION**

In 2008, the European Cultural Foundation plans to launch a pilot programme: a North-South Placement Scheme for European culture professionals to visit colleagues in North Africa, the Middle East or Turkey for a 2–4 week working period. Objective: to support the European professionals to better understand the everyday reality of cultural work in the south Mediterranean countries, to facilitate relations of real cooperation.

www.eurocult.org

Make it easier for artists to travel

The role of culture must be valued

With the Schengen Accords, many countries have put into place a common visa policy whose restrictive character is exacerbated by measures taken following the events of 11th September in New York and Washington. Result: the Euro-Mediterranean finds itself cut off more than ever. Visas are refused for security reasons, there are long delays, high visa costs, short validity periods – all these are obstacles to the circulation of our neighbours from the southern Mediterranean. If it is clear that visa policies arise from more basic policies upon which it will be difficult to have an influence, we have to think about flexible means which can encourage the mobility of certain categories of people, such as cultural players. One solution for facilitating visa procedures has been proposed for several years by cultural actors. It is to create a cultural passport by means of a recommendation ‘label’ for artists and/or events for which the circulation of professionals would be encouraged. This raises a question highlighted by Giovanna Tanzarella, General Delegate of the Rene Seydoux Foundation, “How can a specific device for the cultural sector be put into place without demanding special privileges for this sector and without competing with other sectors of civil society?”

The concept of the cultural passport also faces a major structural obstacle: who is an artist or a cultural operator in a context and in a sector where there is a real lack of a professional framework? (see article p.23) It is extremely improbable that the Member States would give easier visa conditions by means of a ‘label’ for artists; indeed, how do we define an ‘artist’? “Member States would never accept formal positive discrimination regarding artists, as it would open the door to all sorts of abuse”, argues Anne-Marie Sorensen of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. “The big problem is a lack of figures and quantitative data, which considerably weakens the argument and gives place to speculation on the security risks”, adds Cristina Farinha, sociology researcher.

Data is missing on two levels: first, at this moment no statistical study exists demonstrating visa problems in the cultural sector, or more generally in civil society, which would allow an analysis of the magnitude of the problem in the Euro-Mediterranean. Secondly, we lack territorial analysis allowing us to define professional categories in the cultural sector in the South Mediterranean. This analysis could act as an applicable framework for specific measures such as those which facilitate the delivery of visas for certain professional categories like business people, or certain events like the Olympic Games.

“Within the European Neighbourhood Policy, exchange between the actors of civil society is recognised as an important element for the achievement of the EU’s strategic cooperation objectives. However, within the global question of the dialogue between societies, the specific role of culture is difficult to define and to put a value on,”

observes Leïla Badis, project manager at Relais Culture Europe (the EU Cultural Contact Point for France). In a process of political advocacy, it is fundamental to put forward the link between the question of artists’ mobility and that of exchange between civil societies, and to work closely in this rationale with the other actors of civil society, such as human rights or youth networks.”

IDEAS BOX **WHO ARE THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN ARTISTS?**

Faced with a lack of quantitative and qualitative data concerning mobility in the cultural sector, the Roberto Cimetta Fund has identified a series of studies to be made. The first concerns 'profiles' in the cultural field, and will define the typologies of beneficiaries and the means to identify them, aiming to create specific devices to facilitate their mobility. The research will analyse:

- legal contexts regulating the artistic sector
- positive actions brought into being by cultural policies
- the place given to artists in civil societies
- the role of mobility in the process of national and international recognition

Mobility of Artistic Work and North-South Dependence

It is imperative to start to create a structured network for distribution in the South

“The mobility of artistic work? It doesn't happen by itself! First of all it's necessary for artists and presenters to meet”, comments Fabien Jannelle, Director of France's National Office of Artistic Distribution (ONDA). In fact, to have real mobility of performing arts productions or visual arts in the Mediterranean, three elements must exist: the means of production, spaces for public presentation and a distribution network. The role of producers is crucial. But very often in the Mediterranean, either the producers are foreign, or the means of production are based on foreign finance, whether European diplomatic services or European festivals. “To add to this, there is a lack of programming as a career. The directors of

venues and festivals in our countries don't have the habit of discovering and programming new artists whether local, national or international. As to the distribution of foreign productions that one can see here, it generally relies on the choice of the cultural services of the foreign embassies”, confirms Tarek Abou El Fetouh, Director of the Young Arab Theater Fund (YATF). A fundamental structural problem emerges: it's the North which possesses the keys to distribution... in the South.

That “This strengthens even further the feeling in the region that it is the West who defines contemporary art tendencies”, is a concern of Fatin Farhat, artistic director in Palestine. “There is a great need in the South to develop a critical mass around artistic creation which would permit a 'reappropriation' of the discourse of Arab contemporary art.” It is also about facilitating the public's accessibility to art, not only by showing work but also by developing mediation tools which would allow the public to develop their curiosity and a taste for artistic creation. Esra Aysun, of DOT Theater in Istanbul, deplors “the gap between internationally recognised local artists and the difficulty they have to meet their local public”. Artists thus find themselves faced with an unresolvable dilemma - to position themselves in the experimental field of contemporary art in order to please Europeans, or to 'be appreciated' by their local public at a price of renouncing their professional vocation. It is therefore imperative to start to create a structured network for distribution in the South because only the meeting between contemporary artists and the public can avoid, on the one hand a drain of talent abroad and on the other hand, an aggravation of the cultural under-development of the southern region. Obviously, such a network can't be created without addressing the question of training, especially for programming and producing, and questions of fundraising and of policies which address audience development.

Immigrant communities... and if we modernised our gaze?

IDEAS BOX **MEETING POINTS: NINE CITIES, ONE FESTIVAL**

Since 2002, the Young Arab Theater Fund has been organising Meeting Points, an international and interdisciplinary contemporary art festival which takes place every two years in several cities in the Arab world. The aim of the festival is to stimulate artistic creation, and especially the circulation of artists and their works in the region. The next edition will take place in November 2007, and will include two European cities, Berlin and Brussels. 'Meeting Points 5' will present around thirty productions, from theatre to dance, from music to visual arts, from film to interdisciplinary performances. Artists who are rarely seen in the region will also be programmed.

IDEAS BOX **"MEETING THEIR GAZE" OR THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ARTISTS**

To analyse the perspectives of isolated communities originating from the south Mediterranean on their own cultures, to suggest new methods of cultural animation with isolated publics: these are the objectives set by the Roberto Cimetta Fund for 'Regards croisés', an ambitious project of contemporary Arab artists' residencies in immigrant communities in Europe. It will demonstrate the decisive place that contemporary artistic creation can take in intra-community dialogue. It will also allow artists to play a real social role with excluded groups, especially by updating perceptions of their own culture.

From the crisis of the French suburbs to the involvement of young British-born immigrants in terrorist acts in Britain, there are many current events which justify the renewal of interest in integration policies. But it would be an illusion to view this phenomenon from a strictly political, or indeed, a security, perspective. The question of intercultural dialogue within immigrant communities is fundamental, just as that of dialogue between the country of origin and the immigrant community.

Arab immigrant communities in Europe often have a fixed image of their own culture and are relatively uninformed about the current artistic scene in their country of origin. "Tunisians living abroad very often have an old fashioned and resolutely traditional image of our country and its cultural, social and urban environment", relates Radhouane El Meddeb, choreographer and theatre director. "Whether it is in Paris, Rotterdam, Berlin or even Barcelona, the Tunisian or Arab public is often shocked and disappointed by our performances. On the one hand, they don't see themselves in the experimental form and the critical discourse of the pieces shown, which they find...too modern to be Arab! On the other hand, they are often shocked to see us - us, young Tunisian actors, open and looking cool - in fact just like they are! ...except that we are supposed to live in the countryside and so we aren't supposed to look contemporary!"

In such a context, and to allow these communities to respond to their identity questions, there is a real need to stimulate the relationship of the immigrant communities with contemporary culture, especially that of their country of origin. What is at stake?

Coming to terms with, and accepting the realities of contemporary Arab society.

The Sun Rises in Dubai

There are countries of the Arab Muslim world where conditions for artistic creation are even tougher: Yemen, Oman, Irak but also Iran

In March 2007, the First Gulf Art Fair opened in Dubai. It is one of the signs that this emirate in the heart of the Persian Gulf increasingly wishes to affirm its place in the artistic world of the Middle East. What's more is the growing number of artists from the region, attracted by the excitement of this territory belonging to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Its economic and political context is undoubtedly the most favourable in the Middle East. In comparison, in 2006 the GDP per capita in Lebanon was slightly above 5 000 US dollars; in the UAE it reached 50 000 dollars - ten times greater.

"But the great dynamism of the cultural scene in the UAE has not yet spilled over to produce the emergence of a promising artistic community", cautions Zeina Arida, Director of the Arab Image Foundation. "We are still in a situation where politics precedes art. The professional fabric is still weak, but there is a strong will from the UAE to develop a strong cultural identity. The policy there is very proactive and financially supports the running of numerous initiatives, for the most part those organised by and with foreign groups and artists." Considering the development of artistic action and support programmes for mobility directed at Arab World artists, it seems in any case incoherent not to take this active Gulf region into account. "With an important nuance - the Roberto Cimetta Fund has always had support to artists in difficulty at the heart of its mission", Velia Papa, Director of Inteatro in Polverigi (Italy) and co-founder of the RCF, reminds us. "Maybe we should bring a particular attention to those Arab Muslim countries where the conditions for creation are even harder : Yemen, Oman, Irak but also Iran where there are major artists, especially in cinema and theatre." It is essential to think of opening up geographically and not to limit the region to the Mediterranean Basin. It's about staying open to

new types of exchanges and to new circulations of artists. "Opening the Mediterranean is also about considering that what's happening artistically in the region concerns everyone and not only those who live there", concludes Catarina Saraiva, Director of Production for Alkantara in Lisbon.

IDEAS BOX 'BIDOUN', WHEN DIASPORAS MIX

To think about opening up geographically is also to think about an articulation of the region with its often very powerful diasporas- an example is the quarterly revue, 'Bidoun', published in New York and produced by a team of editors throughout the USA, Europe and the Arab world. With 10 000 copies sold every three months, 'Bidoun' is the critical magazine on contemporary art from the Middle East which echoes current tendencies in the region and which brings an essential critical view of artistic creation today.

www.bidoun.com