

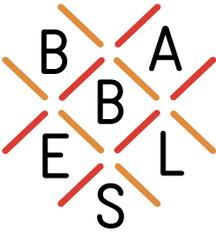
The city
as a border



What cities do
to migrants,
What migrants
do to the city

From multi-sited
ethnography
To public
anthropology

National Research
Agency (ANR)
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EHESS



[Borders Analysis and
Borders Ethnographies
in Liminal Situations]

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Presentation of the research programme

Babels research program brings together about forty researchers under the scientific direction of anthropologist Michel Agier to explore Europe's current "migration crisis." The latter initiated a political moment when asylum became an issue of public debate for states, city councils, human rights associations and even individuals.

Between public displays of hospitality and rejection (or even relegation in camps), the concrete forms of migrants' reception vary depending on the context. Drawing on comparative ethnographies in Europe and the Mediterranean, the Babels program seeks to analyze these contemporary border situations. It sees borders as both geographical – through the creation of barriers on the on European soil and the strengthening of external controls – and social, through systems of migrants' marginalization.

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The research program is grounded in different migratory, regional and urban contexts. Within these contexts, the movements, conflicts, and local forms of categorization, othering and social insertion allow to analyze the modalities of border policies, hospitality, securitization and repression. The spaces crossed and inhabited by the migrants are also border-spaces that migrants contribute to shape through their presence. These spaces, linked together by migratory trajectories, sketch unstable itineraries that evolve according to local situations and opportunities. Finally, the presence of migrants – whether settled or in transit – entails coexistence and interactions within these border situations. The modalities of this coexistence, which can be empirically observed, shape different ways of living an "ordinary" cosmopolitan sociability.

Cities have a central place in this research as they hold two roles at the same time: on the one hand, they are a space of coexistence for those who are subjected to a differential government of and by the border; on the other, they are the space where the different political levels producing these borders merge and are reshaped.

Cities are also places where the border takes on a specific texture – between assistance and control as well as a specific temporality. While some borders can be crossed quickly, others require lengthy stops which turn these spaces into waiting areas and lead to the emergence of urban forms for the organization of migrants' lives within and around cities.

The specific ways in which the passage and the integration of migrants is articulated locally – hospitality on the one hand and rejection on the other – provide the border with a unique “thickness” in each place and allow to distinguish between three types of cities: border-cities, refuge-cities and crossroads-cities.

Fieldwork sites

In order to tackle these questions in a large regional perspective, between Europe and the Mediterranean, this collective research focuses on a series of comparative ethnographies of border-cities, refuge-cities and crossroads-cities. Comparative studies examine each type of city, thus allowing to identify specific questions while still contributing to the broader reflection on migrants' trajectories and their reception in the city, between hospitality and exclusion.

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Border-cities (Nicosia, Valletta, Lampedusa, Calais, Algeciras, Ragusa, Pozzallo and Ventimiglia), located along political and geographical borders, are spaces where European, national and local policies intertwine, ranging from migrants' rejection (including the creation of camps) to hospitality. As transit zones, these cities are the places where migrants settle, most often in forms of “prolonged temporariness.” The presence of migrants in the city entails specific types of sociability – from proximity to avoidance – that take part in the production of the urban. (Coordinator: Karen Akoka, sociologist, kakokak@hotmail.com)

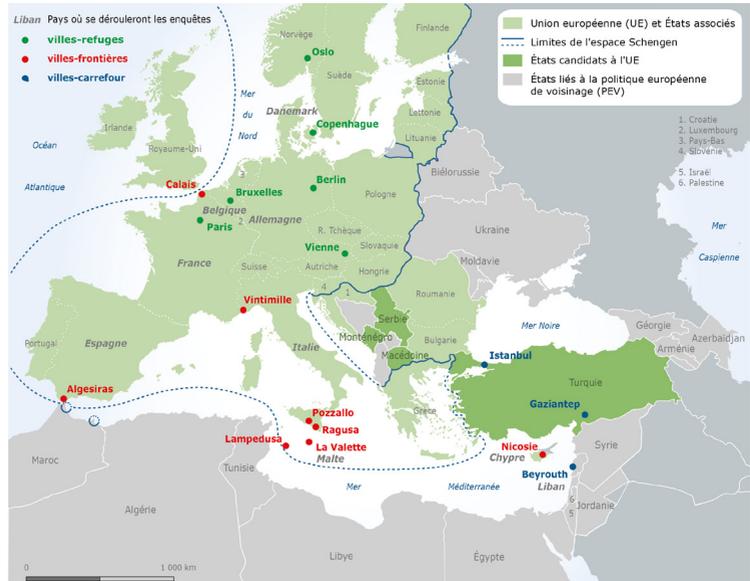
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Refuge-cities (Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Istanbul) have recently witnessed the formation of camps that make migrants' condition visible and trigger responses – between assistance and repression – by various public powers. Some cities have publicly declared their hospitality and presented themselves as “refuge-cities.” In addition to institutional management, the emergency of these “crises”

generated new actors along with established groups. Neighborhood associations have provided care and support to migrants by setting up accommodation facilities such as the “Maison des Réfugiés (Refugees’ House)” in Paris and the “Maison des Migrant.e.s (Migrants’ House)” in Brussels. Comparing European contexts and the different solutions they implemented is critical for analyzing the forms of hospitality that develop through the interweaving of various public and private, official and civilian actors. (Coordinator: Chowra Makaremi, anthropologist, chowra.makaremi@ehess.fr ; Véronique Bontemps, anthropologist, veronek@gmail.com)

Between cities and borders:
A multi-sited investigation

Map designed by the members of the Babels team and produced by Olivier Clochard



Beyond Europe, **crossroads-cities** (Beirut and Istanbul) are crossed by significant migrant flows that have been increasing further since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. As crossroads of mobility, these cities are transit points where migratory trajectories are rebuilt depending on the information and opportunities available. European borders impose themselves on these cities, causing extended stays in these spaces. The forms of reception that take place in these cities are tightly linked to the presence of long-standing settled migrant communities in urban areas – such as the Palestinian community in Beirut. (Coordinator: Nicolas Puig, anthropologist, nicolas.puig@ird.fr)

Research team:

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Border-cities and crossings:

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Ventimiglia

Sara Casella Colombeau

Crossroads-cities and refuge

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Istanbul and Gaziantep

Didem Danis
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A collaborative research

The Babels program is based on a participative approach that merges fieldwork-based knowledge and the situated knowledge of associations, institutions and media interested in questions concerning migrants, asylum, migration policies and foreigners' reception in France and Europe.

Over the course of the programme, the monthly meetings of "Babels, the public workshop on border-cities" will be the framework for this collaborative research whose main goals are: to question and clarify terms (migrant, refugee, illegal immigrant, foreigner, etc.) by discussing what is at stake in these categorisations; to describe contemporary border situations by exploring the articulations between geographical borders and social borders; to show the fundamental relationship between cities and borders, both in capital cities and in border towns; to change the scale of public debates by comparing policies concerning migrants' reception and rejection that reinstate the North-South relation to support the innovation of public policies vis-à-vis migrants.

Workshops to come

Public
workshops on
border-cities
take place
on the fourth
Wednesday
of each month,
from 9.30 am
to 12.30pm.
Venues change
each month.

April 26

→ *From Beirut to Berlin (1): migrants' trails*

May 24

→ *From Beirut to Berlin (2): journeys and adjustments*

Babels' Books to come at le passager clandestin publishing house (books in French)

→ *From Lesbos to Calais: How Europe produces camps?*

→ *Death at the border: find, identify, commemorate*

→ *Between reception and rejection: what cities do to migrants*

→ *From Beirut to Berlin: trajectories, journeys and adjustments*

List of the passed workshops on anrbabels.hypotheses.org



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Contacts

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Anthropologist, researcher at the Research Institute for Development (Institut de recherche pour le développement, IRD) and director of studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, EHESS), Michel Agier has been working for over fifteen years on human globalization, the conditions and spaces of exile and new urban contexts. He edited the collective volume *Un Monde de Camps* (Ed. La Découverte, 2014, with the support of the French National Research Agency, ANR). In October 2016, he published *Les Migrants et nous : Comprendre Babel* (Ed. CNRS, collection Débats).

Stefan Le Courant (head of research development)
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Anthropologist, post-doctoral researcher at the Laboratory of Anthropology - Urbanities and Globalization (LAUM/IIAC-EHESS/CNRS). Stefan Le Courant has devoted his PhD thesis to the treatment of irregular migration in France.

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