

► IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION

The history of the peoples of the Mediterranean through the ages reflects the reciprocal fascination between the northern and southern shores. Throughout history, many conquerors quenched their thirst for land and riches by territorial thrusts to gain much-coveted prizes in this region of the world. The European Orientalists of the 19th century unceasingly described the Levantine shores, so enchanting because so different.

This craving for discovery is no doubt related to the emergence of cartography in ancient times in this region of the world. The first maps of the region were probably drawn up between the 6th and 4th century B.C. by cultured Greeks who were in contact with both the western and the eastern Mediterranean. The Hellenic geographers needed of course to represent this “national” area combining sea and land as part of a vast empire.

AN ATLAS FOR IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND ACQUAINTANCE

As science has progressed, the representation of space has become more precise and less arbitrary. Once places have been located and named, regions have been topographised, rivers have been placed and underground resources recorded, one might imagine that this is the end of geography, which is thus reduced to a discipline describing physical space. This geography, which was also a basis for justifying war, since it could be a tool for inspiring strategies, was completely transformed in the second half of the 20th century. What is more, the description of political, economic, social and geopolitical phenomena has brought

new impetus to the discipline, whose essential tools are cartography and computer graphics.

The success of atlases with which one can apprehend a world where issues overlap as the world changes is no doubt due to the fact that maps and other illustrations provide a means of grasping in a moment a reality which would not be revealed as immediately or with the same acuity by a series of statistics. The Mediterranean lends itself particularly well to contemporary cartography, given the significance of the geopolitical developments in the region. Although the demographic and geo-economic centres of gravity in the world have moved between the American and Asian continents, it has to be admitted that world stability is still very much conditioned by the stability of the Mediterranean region. Even from the demographic point of view it is impossible to disregard this region, and, more broadly the Euro-Mediterranean region, which will have a population of one billion people by 2025; nor can its economic significance be ignored, since it creates 30% of global wealth each year.

In this major epicentre of world developments, the agricultural and rural worlds and the food issue have too long been excluded from the representation of human phenomena – yet they play a part in the developments that are taking place in the Mediterranean basin, also from the geopolitical point of view. The food crisis in 2007 and 2008 shook certain regions in the basin, revealing the crucial role of food in political stability. Similarly, the land and water question, both scarce resources, is also a determining factor in the political and social balance

of the countries in the region. Furthermore, this field is a patent illustration of the new trends under way and of the ongoing recomposition of the global geo-economy.

AN ATLAS IN THE SERVICE OF COOPERATION

These phenomena – decisive factors for the future of the region and indeed of the world – merited representation that was as exhaustive as possible. At a moment in history when globalisation is coupled with the development of more or less integrated regions, the Mediterranean zone – with albeit variable contours – is one of those regions, and one that is both ancient and re-emerging. For although the shores of the Mediterranean are linked by age-old economic and human bonds, the cooperation processes that are under way are binding the peoples of the region in progressive solidarity. Agriculture, food, and fisheries – all essential sectors in the Mediterranean – are a potential field of tangible solidarity. In this context, the present Atlas, which aims to illustrate the dynamics of these sectors at the level of the basin, and indeed of the Euro-Mediterranean region, as a whole, is intended not only as a tool for knowledge and understanding but also as an aid for reflection on policy. By describing phenomena and showing where they converge, but also by identifying the threats they entail, it can foster reflection with a view to joint action.

It was with these purposes in mind that the CIHEAM, which has been involved in studying agricultural, food-related, rural and environmental issues for fifty years, convened researchers from its four institutes to design this atlas. The result is thus a collective work, the researchers mobilising their resources to present this region of agriculture and fisheries, this Mediterranean that is very much alive and creative, that is suffering yet progressing. The knowledge that has thus been collected better reveals the face of a Mediterranean that is developing its land and water resources in an effort to feed its people and often to gladden their eyes. It is the CIHEAM's ambition to know, comprehend, and improve this portrait with a view to

promoting agricultural cooperation in the Mediterranean region through research, training and political dialogue.

BUILDING THE IMAGE OF THE CONTEMPORARY MEDITERRANEAN

Precedence was given to the State level in the design of the atlas, since many trends need to be evaluated on that scale. Larger scales are nevertheless used regularly in order to apprehend a particular ongoing phenomenon with greater precision. This focusing on a particular region does not concern isolated phenomena or minor details, however; it aims to explain processes which are also occurring elsewhere. The atlas does, of course, use smaller scales in order to examine current trends on a global scale. A wide variety of spatial areas has been included, but also of time bands. Since the degrees of phenomena are measured over long periods, the time variable is essential for understanding them. And when time is combined with space, the resulting movement is more readily apprehended.

The image is of course revealed progressively. It was considered essential to approach the topic through Mediterranean societies, for, as an integral part of those societies, the agricultural and rural worlds are undergoing profound transformation. Demographic upheavals take on different forms from one region of the basin to another: a population that is increasing and growing richer on the whole means that food demand is exploding. The same is true of the economic trends and changes which are taking place in the region and to which special attention is devoted.

The agricultural and rural worlds, although rooted in very ancient history, are conditioned by recent demographic and economic trends. A digression proved necessary, given that the relics of that history still pervade the daily diet and farming practices of a region where one of the first seats of agriculture emerged. And although the Mediterranean has been a zone where peoples have peregrinated, intermingled, rivalled and traded, and despite the current geopolitical convulsions, it

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is the scene of innumerable arenas of dialogue and cooperation. All of these initiatives tend to draw the changing contours of a Mediterranean which is still in the making.

That cooperation, particularly in the field of agriculture, is all the more desirable since the Mediterranean shores are so close yet so unequally endowed with water and land resources. There is no doubt that that land and water imbalance will grow as the result of major climate changes and demographic upheavals, increasing the need for solidarity on the resources issue, which is amply illustrated in this atlas.

Many farmers whose roots are in these Mediterranean lands and who often have to contend with aridity work the land with techniques that have been handed down by their forbears as well as innovations, which seem to be accelerating. It is important to convey the vast number of farmers as well as the wide variety of farms and to depict the agro-food and distribution sectors with which farming activities in the various product lines are now closely interlinked.

Like the actors of the Mediterranean basin, the agricultural products of the region are not only extremely varied but are regarded by many as veritable branders of “Mediterranean-ness”; the olive tree even serves to define the bioclimatic boundary of the region. The maps and illustrations in this atlas are designed to inform the reader about the main attributes of these products, which nourish the population and colour the rural areas.

Although these lands can be enchanting, some zones are nonetheless greatly disadvantaged. The gap between the coastal cities and certain rural enclaves is very real. This reality, which attracts little media attention, thus merited a special place, since it concerns the hard lives of women and men who are still only too often missed out. However, rural development policies have managed here and there to revive certain deprived regions. Given the importance of these policies and the hope they bring for those who have been left out of the development process, it was essential to outline the main objectives.

The illustration of rural and agricultural realities must not detract attention from another source of food in the Mediterranean region. In addition to the land, the sea has always offered Mediterraneans the treasures of its depths. In a world where anthropic pressure is growing, seafood products are all the more important since they form the core of the world-renowned Mediterranean or Cretan diet. Like agriculture, the fisheries sector is developing, and the atlas endeavours to illustrate the changes that are taking place.

Seafood and the produce of the land are combined in the consumer's plate – but does this guarantee food security for all Mediterraneans? The answer to this question is twofold: food security does of course concern the quantity of calories that people can consume, but it is also a question of daily intake and food quality. Although this atlas demonstrates that the security of supplies is relatively well guaranteed in the Mediterranean, the fact remains that the region is still very dependent on external supplies. The picture thus would not have been complete without reference to the role played by the major external actors, whose food power enables them to become established in the Mediterranean for commercial purposes but also, in some cases, with geostrategic intentions.

There is thus external dependence in the Mediterranean, but the dependence is also internal: trade in agricultural commodities and agro-foodstuffs flows mainly from Europe to the countries in the south and east of the region. At a time when trade negotiations on agricultural commodities are continuing and, more broadly, a framework for cooperation amongst the various shores of the Mediterranean basin is being constructed, the agricultural relations that are taking shape merited description. Their presentation at the end of the atlas is also intended as an invitation to concerted action.

Knowledge for better understanding, understanding for better reflection, reflection on the Mediterranean in order to work together – such are the ambitions of this atlas.

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