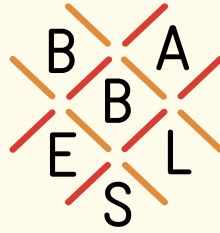


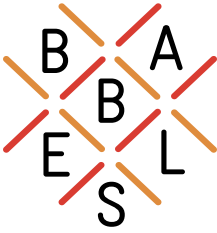
The city  
as a border



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

From multi-sited  
ethnography  
To public  
anthropology

National Research  
Agency (ANR)  
Programme 2016-2018/  
EHESS



[Borders Analysis and  
Borders Ethnographies  
in Liminal Situations]

## **The city as a border**

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—

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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)

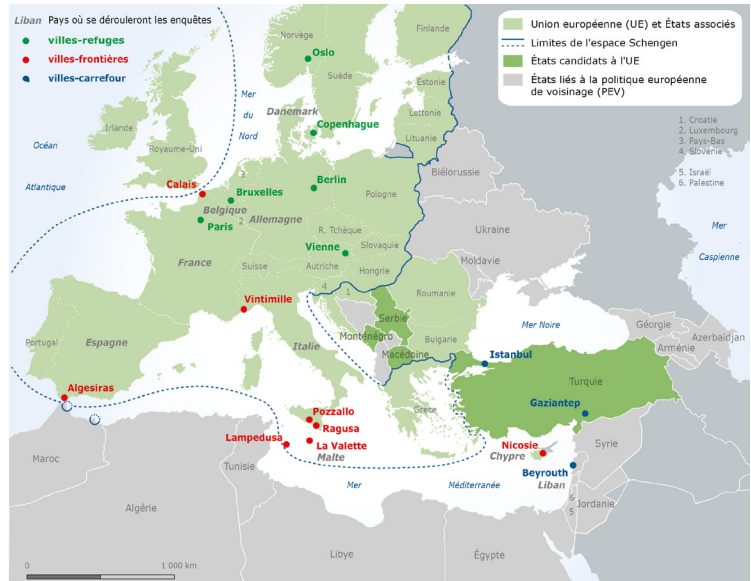
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Refuge-cities (Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Istanbul) have recently witnessed the formation of camps that make migrants' condition visible and trigger responses – between assistance and repression – by various public powers. Some 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](mailto:chowra.makaremi@ehess.fr) ; Véronique Bontemps, anthropologist, [veronek@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:nicolas.puig@ird.fr))

## Research team:

Coordination of the Babels program:  
Michel Agier  
With  
Stefan  
Le Courant

### Border-cities and crossings:

—  
Coordination  
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with  
Carolina  
Kobelinsky

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Sarah Barnier  
Sara Casella Colombeau

### Calais

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Maël Galisson  
Cyrille Hanappe  
Mathilde Pette  
Madeleine Trépanier  
Philippe Wannesson

### Valletta

Jacinthe Mazzocchetti

### Lampedusa

Carolina Kobelinsky  
Louise Tassin

### Nicosia

Karen Akoka  
Olivier Clochard  
Camille Schmoll

### Pozzallo and Ragusa

Marie Bassi  
Sara Prestianni

### Ventimiglia

Sara Casella Colombeau

### Crossroads-cities and refuge

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Coordination  
Nicolas Puig  
with  
Michel Tabet

### Beirut: Southern suburb, Sabra and Shatila

Hala Abou Zaki  
Michel Agier  
Assaf Dahdah  
Leila Drif  
Hoda Kassatly  
Nicolas Puig  
Michel Tabet

### Istanbul and Gaziantep

Didem Danis  
Pinar Senoguz

### Refuge-cities and the “asylum crisis”

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Coordination  
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with  
Véronique Bontemps

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Sarah Mazouz

### Brussels

Pierre-Joseph Laurent  
Jacinthe Mazzocchetti

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### Paris

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### (Centres of Reception and Orientation)

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Bruno Proth

## 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

### 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*

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.

List of the passed workshops on [anrbabels.hypotheses.org](http://anrbabels.hypotheses.org)



L'ÉCOLE  
DES HAUTES  
ÉTUDES EN  
SCIENCES  
SOCIALES

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*IIAC*

## 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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