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The Mediterranean region in the German research tradition

BODO FREUND

Zusammenfassung

Der Mittelmeerraum in der deutschen Forschungstradition

Der Mittelmeerraum hat seit der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts Geographen aus dem deutschen Sprachraum angezogen. Durch die Publikationen der beiden Klassiker Philippson und Th. Fischer wurde er über Lehrbücher im Bewusstsein etabliert. In der Zwischenkriegszeit herrschte noch die naturwissenschaftliche, insbesondere morphologische Forschung vor. Ab Mitte der fünfziger Jahre ermöglichten die wieder gewonnenen Reisemöglichkeiten der Westdeutschen einen starken Aufschwung der Forschungen bei gleichzeitiger Verlagerung auf humangeographische Themen (speziell auf wirtschaftsperiphere Agrarräume, neue Bewässerungsgebiete, industrielle Großprojekte, Tourismus, Herkunftsgebiete von Gastarbeitern). Obwohl man nach 1969 kaum noch Länderkunden hätte erwarten sollen, sind seit den späten sechziger Jahren geographische Monographien über sämtliche Staaten erschienen, worin sich die regional spezifische Kompetenz der Autoren spiegelt. Auffällig ist zugleich die große Zahl nicht-geographischer Länderkunden, ein Hinweis auf ein breiteres Bedürfnis nach wissenschaftlich fundierter Regionalinformation.

In den letzten zehn Jahren sind besonders viele Forschungen zur Stadtgeographie betrieben worden (Stadtentwicklung, geschlossenen Wohnkomplexe, Geschäftszentren). Tourismus wird stärker unter den Aspekten der Nachhaltigkeit und des Übergangs zum Altersruhesitz untersucht. In der Physischen Geographie dominieren Themen der Umweltgeschichte und der aktuellen Landschaftsentwicklung, wodurch sich gute Kooperationsansätze mit Humangeographen bieten. In beiden Teildisziplinen werden Verfahren der Fernerkundung angewandt.

Für die immer nur schwache Organisation der deutschen Meditteranforschung gibt es viele leicht verständliche Gründe (Vielfalt der Kultur- und Sprachräume, sachlicher oder räumlicher Wechsel der individuellen Forschungsgebiete, fehlende institutionelle Basis). Unter jüngeren Geographen scheint es einen Rückgang des Interesses am mediterranen Raum zu geben, vielleicht ein Effekt der stark abgeschwächten Reizes an Fremdheit und Exotik. Eine Minderung der Forschungsintensität wäre längerfristig von Nachteil, denn mit dem größten Teil Südeuropas sind Deutschland und Österreich in der EU vereint, so dass regionale Entwicklungen in einem Zusammenhang stehen. Zu bedenken ist auch, dass die Länder jenseits des Meeres seit Ende der neunziger Jahren zu indirekten Nachbarn geworden sind.

Mittelmeerraum, Disziplingeschichte, Länderkunde, Tourismus, Migration, Agrargeographie, Physische Geographie, Industrie

Abstract

The Mediterranean region has been attracting geographers from the German-speaking world ever since the second half of the 19th century. Two classic publications by Philippson and Th. Fischer brought it to the countries' attention as textbooks. During the interwar years, research was predominantly centred on natural sciences and on geomorphology in particular. In the mid-1950s, the West Germans regained their freedom to travel, which triggered a great upsurge in research, but with a shift in emphasis to human geography (particularly agricultural areas on the economic periphery, new irrigation zones, major industrial projects, tourism and guest worker origins). Although nobody expected any more regional geography studies to be published after 1969, geographical monographs on all the states have been written since the late 1960s, reflecting the regional expertise of the authors. At the same time, it is striking that a large number of the regional studies are non-geographical, indicating a wider need for scientifically founded regional information.

The last ten years have seen a great deal of research on urban geography (urban development, gated communities and business centres). Tourism is looked at in more depth, particularly with regard to sustainability and the transition to retirement homes. Physical geography is dominated by environmental history and current landscape development topics, offering excellent opportunities for collaboration with human geographers. Both sub-disciplines make use of remote sensing procedures.

It is easy to understand why German Mediterranean research remains poorly organised (diversity of cultural and linguistic zones, changes in subject matter or spatial area of individual research fields, lack of an institutional foundation). Younger geographers seem to have lost interest in the Mediterranean region – perhaps because it now appears far less different and exotic. However, it would be a disadvantage in the long term if research were to become less intensive since Germany and Austria are united with the majority of southern Europe in the EU and regional developments are thus connected. It must also be borne in mind that the countries across the sea have become indirect neighbours since the end of the 1990s.

Mediterranean region, history of the discipline, regional studies, tourism, migration, agricultural geography, physical geography, industry

From 12-15 August 2008, the capital of Tunisia – the most strongly Europeanized country in northern Africa – will

play host to the 31st Congress of the IGU. One month before that, on 13 July, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership that

was born in Barcelona in 1995 shall be transformed into an intensified “Union for the Mediterranean”. These two events

are occasion for a retrospective review of German geographic research activities in the Mediterranean region and a brief outlook under discipline-political perspectives.

For some 150 years now German geographers have been travelling the countries that form the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and pursued research activities there. Their studies are a reflection of changes in perspectives resulting from political circumstances (travel opportunities, migration), discourses within the discipline (regional geography, glacial and climate morphology, environmental history), but at least to a similarly strong degree also by discourses beyond the boundaries of the discipline (the foreignness of other countries, the fascination of major projects, and interest in issues of ecology and sustainability).

In the meantime, the Mediterranean countries have forfeited a great deal of their exotic appeal. This may be one of the reasons for the decrease of dedicated foreign research activities by younger geographers. With regard to the public interest, however, from the discipline-political viewpoint it would be a loss to neglect the southern regions of the EU and their neighbouring countries on the other side of the sea in terms of research and scientific cooperation.

Prior to geography as an institutionalised discipline: reports by researching and literary travellers.

For many centuries, the principally cultural and “empirical” interest in the Mediterranean region focussed essentially on Italy. A very early literary document is the *Journal de Voyage* by Michel de MONTAIGNE, his report of his travels through Switzerland, southern Germany, and above all Italy in 1580-1581, of particular interest to the modern-day reader on account of its entirely different perception of nature. It can justifiably be considered a precursor of the “educational journey” (*le grand tour*) that was undertaken in the 18th and 19th centuries by aristocrats and affluent bourgeois citizens from the English- and German-speaking countries. Goethe’s book *Italienische Reise* (“Journey through Italy”), reporting his travelling experiences there from 1786 until 1788 and published in 1816, met with acclaim. This book has touristic consequences right up to this very day: if one were to plot the tours to Italy offered by travel organizers on a map by

route and frequency, the book can be identified immediately. The fascination of the Mediterranean region has persisted in Germany ever since, even down to the preference for certain landscapes (HARD 1965). Meanwhile it is even being attempted to reconstruct Goethe’s route geographically with a comprehensive and up-to-date documentation (FUCHS & MÜLLER 2002).

Due to the strong orientation of the interest towards aspects of antiquity and culture, the reports – at least those written by German authors – prove to be relatively sparse documentation from the human-geographical perspective (ROTHNER 1991). This is also true for reports on travels in other countries in southern Europe, which either partly served the exploration of natural resources (e.g. LINK 1801-1803), or else were favoured by monarchic relations of German houses of nobility, for instance with Greece (Otto von Bayern 1831) and Portugal (Haus Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha 1836; cf. von HERINGEN 1836).

Early geographers as researching travellers

The 19th century saw the start of a long tradition of travels and research expeditions made in the Mediterranean region by “genuine” German geographers, in most cases with a strong dominance of natural-scientific objectives (BARTH 1849, 1860). More comprehensive reports “on the country and people” show only a limited degree of systematic thought and focus on the area that would later become part of geography *per se*. This is true, for example, of Johann Georg KOHL, who was particularly interested in historic and ethnographical issues. Notwithstanding this, his book *Reise nach Dalmatien und Montenegro* (Journey to Dalmatia and Montenegro) published in 1851 already deals with aspects of land use as well as with the political and social issues in greater detail.

What motivated German geographers and scientists from related disciplines to undertake journeys into the Mediterranean region? There was obviously less of a practical interest than was the case for their colleagues of the long-established colonial powers of France (Algeria from 1830) and the United Kingdom (Gibraltar 1704, Malta 1899, Cyprus 1878, Egypt 1882), followed later by Spain (Morocco 1904) and Italy (Libya 1912). All the same, the reports by BANSE (1910,

1915) and PHILIPPSON (1904, 1911) may have been favoured by the fact that since the end of the 19th century there were already good relations between the Ottoman and the German empires, with the latter interested in railway construction, concessions, and the development of the country.

In his report, published in 1911, titled “Reisen und Forschungen im westlichen Kleinasien” (Travels and studies in western Asia Minor) describing his travels there in 1901, PHILIPPSON uninterruptedly follows the geological formations and landscape morphologies; his strongest interest was in geomorphology, including changes in the coastlines since the days of antiquity. The text is incidentally interspersed with many comments relating to the exploitation of raw materials by foreign entrepreneurs, the antique cities that were already being excavated by Germans and Austrians, the condition and ethnic differentiation of the small towns and villages, transportation infrastructure, and land use. Due to the changes in the local place names following the “population exchange” in 1922, it is relatively difficult to retrace his route exactly. It is still interesting, however, to map the enormous changes that have occurred especially since the 1970s, for instance the expansion of Turkish holiday settlements, cities and industrial zones.

Even if the geographers of that day principally regarded themselves as natural scientists, the education system and the “spirit of the times” certainly left them marked unawares. The interest in antiquity and archaeology and also in the “oriental way of life” may well have played a role in the choice of travel destinations, also to the Maghreb (Theobald FISCHER).

The classic: the Mediterranean region as unity in diversity

Two geographers who started out pursuing scientific research projects and whose lives were characterized by them from there on count as classics for the Mediterranean region, namely Alfred PHILIPPSON and Theobald FISCHER. For the former, this applies to the extent that after first presenting lectures to women teachers (1900) he published the first comprehensive summary of the entire region (1904). The subtitle indicates his contention that he was primarily interested in the “geographic and cultural singularity”, where “geographic” can reasonably be inter-

preted as meaning “naturally caused”. As he writes in the preface, he expressly follows Richthofen’s concept of geography, which should present a “causal relationship between the human phenomena and the nature of their location” and be based on “truly scientific perception”. Only about 22 % of the text is devoted to human-geographical phenomena, significantly partly as brief addenda to physical-geographical chapters on the sea and the flora and fauna, and partly in the longer final chapter.

The second, more important classic for the Mediterranean region is Theobald FISCHER who, following research in the Maghreb, travels in southern Europe and studies on the climate and cultivated plants, published his book “Mittelmeerbilder” (Images of the Mediterranean) in 1906. The book, similar to PHILIPPSON’S “Mittelmeer”, saw several reprints in just a short space of time. Independent of the conventional classification of the world by continents, he defined the unity of the region by the climate and the related vegetation, in particular by the area of the olive tree. It is then just a short intellectual distance to derive restrictive and promoting factors for the agricultural use of the land, which in turn does not remain without consequences for the way of life.

Taking his definition literally, however, would mean that none of the countries bordering the Mediterranean is characterized by an entirely “Mediterranean” territory. On the other hand, an Atlantic country such as Portugal can possess a more strongly Mediterranean character than do many countries on the shores of the Mediterranean, and even in a landlocked country such as Jordan the most important parts from the human-geographic viewpoint can have a Mediterranean character under ecological and land-use aspects.

While on the one hand the aspects of climate, the strongly anthropogenically modified vegetation, and also the land use may all be taken as indicators of the unity of the Mediterranean region, on the other hand both authors and all their successors see the historically caused variety in the cultural-geographic area. The human-geographical part of regional monographs, which in PHILIPPSON constitute little more than a small annexe, is expanded in further publications (e.g. MAULL 1929). The concept of the chapters of geographic publications reflects to a certain part the status of scientific

research of the day, and in part the historic, economic, and social-scientific knowledge gained by the authors. On the one hand, factors of the physical environment appear to exert – almost directly – an influence on the economy; on the other, the acting societies have modified the environment in the course of the centuries. There is no restriction to a decidedly natural-scientific perspective on the one hand or a social-scientific one on the other, and the argumentation is correspondingly heterogeneous. Regional geography hence becomes “hybrid geography” (SCHULTZ 2007) with a more or less strong geodeterministic tendency, since too little attention is devoted to the relativity of all natural factors set in relation to the changeable social interests and the respective technical-economic skills employed in their application.

1919-1945: dominance of morphology, weak human geography

In the almost 25 years’ existence of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, there were not all that many studies made by German geographers in the Mediterranean region. The examination of the bibliography of C. SCHOTT (1977) – which is obviously not comprehensive – yields a total of just 53 titles. The predominance of physical geography (33) is evident, especially the predominance of studies into the ice-age transformation of mountain ranges in all southern European countries – a consequence of the strong influence of Penck – is somewhat surprising and alienating. Coming in at a distant second place are studies into coastline morphology; in rare instances karst phenomena are involved. All three directions are continuations of traditions with their roots in the late 19th century. Strangely enough, the aspects of climate and vegetation, which from the publications by Th. FISCHER on count as constructive right up to the present day – are virtually not touched upon at all.

Besides the explicitly physico-geographical studies, SCHOTT lists eleven regional-geographic publications that relate in most cases to clearly delineable regions, for example islands, peninsulas and areas under irrigation. This bypassed the problem frequently discussed at the time concerning how a landscape should be defined as a “central research object of the discipline”; at the same time, the aspect of individuality was taken as an a priori fact.

The correct concept of forms of regional geography as the prime objective of the discipline was also a subject of controversial debate among the experts of the day; however, only relatively few studies were published in this regard, at least as far as the Mediterranean region is concerned (LOUIS Albania, 1927; SCHULZE-JENA Macedonia, 1927; MAULL Southern Europe, 1929; LAUTENSACH Portugal, 1932/1937). These studies were generally conceived in such a way that stringent basic physical conditions were given preference, while the further phenomena (vegetation, land use, etc. all the way to ethnopsychology and the shaping of national territories) were at least in part “explained” on their basis. All declarations to the contrary notwithstanding, these studies are hence at least tendentially geodeterministic in their approach.

Regarding the relatively scarce human-geographic studies, it must be stated that these are as to topics and places individual studies, without doubt an effect of the (according to SCHLÜTER 1906) delayed development of the subdiscipline. All the same, it is apparent that virtually only rural areas were involved, a fact that can soonest be explained by the call for “landscape relevance” (KAYSER 1931; LOUIS 1933; NIE-MEIER 1935; URBAN 1938).

In 1938, E. MÜLLER supplies a pan-Mediterranean overview of transhumance (seasonal migrational pasture farming), an aspect already dealt with in 1916. A particular interest in traditional irrigation regions (Granada, Valencia, Argolis) and in land reclamation (Greece) is at least rudimentarily discernible. These studies are obviously founded on the question of man’s relation “nature”, be it by adaptation or mastery.

From the discipline-historic viewpoint, the share of the studies accounted for by human-geographic papers appears to be low and from the social-scientific aspect weak; this notwithstanding, it was useful to the writing of a monument of modern-day historiography. In the first volume on “Le rôle du milieu” (The role of the milieu) published in 1948, Fernand BRAUDEL, who was able to work on his study on the Mediterranean world in the epoch of Philipp II as a prisoner-of-war in Mainz, cites a number of German geographers, for example BUSCH-ZANTNER, KREBS, LAUTENSACH, H. LEHMANN, NIE-MEIER, PHILIPPSON and WILHELMY.

The extent to which studies on the Mediterranean region reflect a national-

socialist way of thinking must remain unanswered here. For certain well-known authors of the day, the bibliography by SCHOTT and obituaries for the 1933-1945 period contain either no details whatsoever, or only with regard to their physico-geographic publications. When reading human-geographic versions even from the time of the Weimar Republic, from the language-critical viewpoint it must be stated that in many cases the works are written with personalisations, organisistic arguments, and suggestive analogies from the sphere of mechanics (barrier, gate, bridge etc.), and also that the territorial patterns of the map exert a fascination and not rarely stimulate the imagination.

There can be no doubt that even before 1933 there were many geographers who were motivated by the widespread interest in geopolitics and whose publications took on a corresponding taint. In matters of social-spatial organization, not only is "nature" repeatedly used as an argument: there is also the aspect of a hypostatization of space, which is "demanding" and "whose demands must be fulfilled". In his publication in 1929, MAULL finds words of admiration for Mussolini's Italy, in which he sees a rising major power deserving dominance – if not actually direct domination – over the Mediterranean region. This is still the era of colonialism, and it appears to be normal for European powers to have mastery over the territories on the "opposite" shores.

During the First World War the supply of many products from the industrially more developed countries of the continent to southern European countries was interrupted. As a consequence, their economic weakness became evident and this enhanced the interest in import substitution. Furthermore, in the wake of the October Revolution in Russia, many southern and southeastern European countries saw the emergence of strong movements aiming at a socialistic reformation of the economy and society; these movements were not, however, able to gain the upper hand. Now came the era of authoritarian and fascist governments, led by the protector of a debased nation (1918/1922 Kemal Atatürk), a "saviour from Bolshevism" (Mussolini 1922-1945), a guardian against national bankruptcy (Salazar 1928/1932-1968), a protector of national unity (regal dictatorship in Yugoslavia 1931), and a victor over the left-wing Republicans (Franco 1939-1975).

It is conceivable that autarkist and isolationist tendencies, which were particularly distinct in southern European countries and lasted long there, contributed to the fact that well into the post WWII era even geographers such as LAUTENSACH tended towards an isolated observation of the southern European countries, where since the 1920s technocratic mastery over nature formed part of the political programme and was cause for admiration (battle for wheat, meliorations, reforestation, dams for hydroenergy and irrigation schemes). This is not meant as criticism of LAUTENSACH's excellent (for his generation) geographic studies (1932/1937; 1964), nor of his theoretic achievements (1953).

The innovative approaches of some authors – two of whom even worked in the Mediterranean region – remained without appreciable effect on the research activities in the Mediterranean countries. Of particular interest are the books written by Alfred RÜHL, who as a versatile geographer dealt with geomorphology in Spain (1909) and migration from Italy (1912), but did not evolve into a true specialist for the Mediterranean. In his work into the economic spirit in the Orient (1925) and in Spain (1928) he elaborated with considerable sensitivity the religiously founded "fine differences" in the social behaviour patterns of a European-Catholic population on the one side and the Islamic population of Algeria on the other, data that are ultimately of economic-geographical relevance. He is obviously influenced by MAX WEBER, even if he never cites him. RÜHL's discourses are based on the one hand on the careful evaluation of literature from the broad field of social and economic sciences, and on the other on his personal experiences in Spain. These ideas met with strong resonance among the economists of the day; however, they had no effect in the geographic field, not least because RÜHL was marginalized in the Nazi era. In the two named studies (and a corresponding book published in America in 1927), concepts are already preshaped regarding the connection between cultural values on the one hand and economic and political development on the other; attention has been focussed on these ideas again only since the 1990s, now especially by INGLEHART using mass statistics in worldwide comparisons.

The second author here is BUSCH-ZANTNER (1938), who demanded a strong-

er consideration of sociology. His studies into agrarian structures, society, and settlement in southeastern Europe (1938) and in particular his work on Albania (1939) already show promising approaches to future forms of social and settlement geography, considerably more than did P.H. SCHMIDT, who aroused exceedingly high expectations with the title of his study on northern Calabria in 1937.

Far greater interest was stimulated by Hans SPETHMANN, who in his work "Dynamische Länderkunde" (Dynamic Geography) (1928) makes mention of factors to which only little attention had hitherto been paid, for instance financial, technical, political "forces", which in his opinion deserved consideration as mediators between "nature" and the human-geographic structures and that could be used as a basis for further study. He was attacked for this view *inter alia* by the renowned specialist for the Mediterranean PHILIPPSON, who vehemently advocated the primacy of physico-geographic principles for geographic studies.

The (at that time) Marxist August WITTFOGEL went considerably further than SPETHMANN; equally WITTFOGEL's train of thought ran contrary to the more idealistic one of RÜHL. As early as 1929 he pointed out the erroneous conclusions of bourgeois "geographic materialism" and hence triggered fundamental criticism of the reduced natural-deterministic view that dominated the fields of geography and geopolitics of the day. His approach was also rejected without mentioning his name, only by using the indicative term. The book on China published by this sociologist and geographer in 1931 has no bearing on the Mediterranean region; all the same, his views regarding the "hydraulic cultures" may be applied at least to the "oriental" regions of the Mediterranean. According to his approach, the cultural and political superstructure in a (national) territory can be explained by the historic-social form of the exploitation of natural resources.

After 1948: rediscovery by West Germans, swing to issues of human geography

Following a marked interruption, ever since the late 1950s the number of magazine articles and doctoral theses of West German geographers on issues connected with the Mediterranean has grown rapidly. This reflects the opportunity opened by the Currency Reform in 1948

to work scientifically in those places that also offered the first chances for traveling abroad, an opportunity, however, that remained inaccessible for the citizens of the GDR. As the range of buses, trains, and cars increased, Italy, southern France, the Spanish Mediterranean coast, and Croatia were successively “conquered”; since the onset of tourist flight these destinations have been followed by the Mediterranean islands, Portugal, Turkey, and the countries of the Maghreb.

At that time, most regions in southern Europe still possessed the charm of the exotic. Books by Ernest Hemingway with Spanish locations (*The Sun also Rises/A Farewell to Arms/For Whom the Bell Tolls*), the Italian and French film genres, and also the paintings of classic modern art all contributed to the attractiveness of the reaccessible “south”.

The studies in *Physical Geography* are now carried out with particular emphasis on the aspect of climate morphology (BÜDEL 1951; HEMPEL 1959; MENSCHING 1964). This applies both to the major forms (inselbergs, foothill areas, glacis, uvalas, dolines) as well as to the minor forms (karren, tafonis).

Since due to karstification an edaphic aridity remains on limestone rock even in areas with a high annual precipitation, these generally vegetation-poor formations, which appear to be particularly bright in sunlight, have an especially “Mediterranean” appeal. It is no mean chance, then, that these have been the object of comparatively many research projects (MENSCHING 1955; LOUIS 1956; LIEDTKE 1962; PFEFFER 1967; FEY & GERSTENHAUER 1977). Studies of the climate morphology of igneous (KLAER 1956; cf. also WILHELMY 1974) and loose rock formations (FREGIEN 1971), by contrast, are far less frequently found.

Attractive contrast of dynamic and stagnating agrarian regions

One aspect that deserves particular attention, however, is that now a very strong swing of the pendulum away from physical geography towards human geography takes place in which numerous issues are investigated. The scientific fields of agrarian geography and rural space, industrial geography, tourism, and guest-workers are given particular attention in this regard.

After some early publications by LAUER 1954, BEUERMANN 1956 and HÜTTER-

OTH 1959 on traditional agrarian regions, from the mid-1960s on a conspicuously large number of doctoral theses dealt with *state-induced measures in rural regions*, in other words with land and agrarian reform, melioration measures and major irrigation projects, in some cases in combination with neosettlement by means of domestic colonization. The territorially clearly defined structural changes were implemented in all market economy-oriented countries of southern Europe including France, and furthermore also in countries in northern Africa. It makes hardly any sense to adopt all the relevant studies in the bibliography; without making any claim to completeness, one must mention here – again in chronological order – the works of DONIGUS 1962, 1970; FÜLDNER 1967; SAUERWEIN 1968; KNÖDLER 1970; ACHENBACH, GÖTZ, ROTHER 1971; PLETSCH 1976; LADWIG 1978; POPP 1983; TYRAKOWSKI 1987; BARTH et al. 1990-1992; POPP & ROTHER (eds.) 1993.

Today at considerable temporal distance, it can be stated that examples describing considerable changes of current interest at the time dealt with the age-old issue of the “man and land” relationship. At a critical distance it may be added that the demonstrated technocracy resulted in the emergence of public awareness, an intentional effect – especially under authoritarian regimes –, which is why it was rather easy to obtain documents from the responsible offices. In the concrete cases of the Mediterranean region in question, therefore, these studies constituted a combination of the German tradition of landscape geography and explorative foreign research, with the phenomenon of technocratic state measures as the modern-day echo of ruralistic ideology. A solution of social or even macroeconomic problems could not be anticipated as a result of the measures acclaimed as “agrarian reform”, since in the agrarian sector of the economy – which was already shrinking at the time – only a very small section of the (agrarian) population actually “profited” from such measures, and then only over the short term (cf. also FREUND 1993).

Under an entirely different sign, namely in the guise of socialistic agrarian reform, around 1975 there was the (temporary) expropriation of large estates and the establishment of production cooperatives in southern Portugal. This exerted a fascination on large parts of

the West German youth, coming as it did just a few years after the 1968 student revolts. The concept that social problems in a European country might be solved by the common cultivation of jointly owned land was attractive among young academics brought up in an affluent society. In post-industrial Europe of today this idea seems like an atavistic reflex.

The academic fall-out in agrarian-geographic publications remained sparse, especially since the changes were only short-lived (FREUND 1977; JÜNGST & JÜLICH 1982; SCHACHT 1988).

Besides this, one should not omit to mention that numerous studies were published regarding traditional irrigation regions in coastal areas (FRÖHLING 1965; BAHR 1969; SCHACHT 1971; TESCHENDORF 1978) and in relatively weak regions (from the agrarian-economic viewpoint) in the arid inlands and the mountains (FIEDLER, FREUND 1970; GROHMANN-KEROUACH, MONHEIM, SPRENGEL 1971; KLUG 1973; KÜHNE 1974; SABELBERG 1975; LIENAU, LÜCKE 1976; BRÜSER 1977; G. MEYER, STRUCK 1984; BREUER 1985, A. MÜLLER 1987; KNUTH 1989). In general it can be stated that agrarian geography played a very large role until well into the 1980s.

Industrial development poles – fascination and disappointment

Studies into issues of *industrial geography* were far more scarce, even though interest here was in many cases awakened by processes that exhibited similarities with the major projects made in the agrarian sector. In this sector, too, many governments undertook interventionist measures in an attempt to promote production, to achieve self-sufficiency and to mitigate regional economic disparities. The concept postulated by François PERROUX, according to which modern branches of industry act as driving forces (*unités motrices*) in an intensive interaction with upstream and downstream business and so give impulses for an all-encompassing economic development, was developed from a sectoral perspective into a spatial concept of growth poles.

In the multi-year plans for national economic development that were standard practice in the Mediterranean countries in the 1950s and 1960s, this concept won considerable relevance. Economic polarization was in particular projected for underdeveloped regions. With its

specific development poles (*polos de desarrollo*), Spain provides the best example in this connection, but also Italy has made a name for itself with many spectacular projects, even if the parallel installation of development zones (*aree de sviluppo*) has resulted in the sponsorship of areas with a low local concentration. In the smaller countries of Portugal and Greece, it was rather more industrial zones without any central dominating major enterprises that were erected.

In many places it soon became apparent that the hoped-for self-dynamic processes would never materialize; the reasons for this are manifold: overestimation of the future chances of capital-intensive “industrializing” industries (iron-smelting plants, oil refineries, heavy chemicals industry), underestimation of the relevance of regional qualification and mentality, unpredicted developments of the global economy. The geographic studies in this context thus generally did not turn out to be stories of success (SCHILLING-KALETSCHEK 1976; ARNOLD 1978; HERING 1981; HOPFINGER 1982; MIKUS 1984). Follow-up studies after the complete or partial close-down of major, formerly state-sponsored industries would be a matter of interest as a measure to sound out future development possibilities. With a lesser focus on development poles, and to a certain extent involving handicraft trades, are the studies by STEWIG 1970, 1972; IBRAHIM 1975; ARNOLD 1979; RIDDER 1985; ESCHER 1986 and BREY 1989.

Starting at the end of the 1970s there was another small wave of industrial-geographic studies, this time with a highly specific focus on the so-called “Third Italy” (*la Terza Italia*), in other words the regions between the long since highly developed areas of Lombardy and Liguria at the one end and the “Second Italy” south of Rome. Now attention was focussed on the sector of medium-sized businesses, the favourable development of which could be explained by the combination of familial cohesion, trust among local and regional partners, and innovations in the realm of design. And this in a broad spectrum of industrial production (POHL 1995; BATHELT 1998). Apparently this approach has not been pursued in other Mediterranean regions strongly oriented to industrie whose social histories also show a basic small-holder structure with a high population density, such as, for example, Catalonia

and northwestern Portugal. Since the late 1990s, the commercial production in all these regions has had to face strong competition from markets in Asia, especially in China.

The largest tourism region in the world is tempting – also for geographers

In a bibliography of 33 studies regarding “tourism settlements” in 1962, Gabriele SCHWARZ was not able to include one single German-language publication on a Mediterranean country. It was only then – i.e. with a very slight time delay compared with the studies on agrarian-structural interventionism, but with at least a similar intensity – that a productive phase of studies into *tourism* in Mediterranean destinations started. Regarding this topic, again in chronological order of publications and without any claim to completeness, mention is made here of a large number of authors, namely FÜCKNER 1963; W. RITTER 1966; SCHLITZER 1968; P. WEBER 1970; RIEDEL 1971; 1972; HEINRITZ, H.-D. MAY 1972; KLEEMANN, MATHEY, SCHOTT, STÄBLEIN, ZAHN 1973; E. MAYER 1976; DÖPP 1978; PFITZER 1977; JASCHKE 1985; MÖLLER 1992. In the further course of tourism-related studies the aspect was investigated how travel guides affect perception (POPP 1994), what tourists “spontaneously” perceive, and which impression tourists make on the local population – in other words the course that cultural contacts take.

Similar to the agrarian economy, it was possible to closely link tourism to the Mediterranean climate, even when one considers that the climate had undergone considerable social revaluation since the previous century. While from the mid-19th century until the time following the First World War the winter was the more important season, because the rich were drawn from moist, sombre and cold regions into the bright and relatively warm south, in the interwar period there was a swing towards the summer half-year (SCHOTT 1973). This was due, on the one hand, to the dwindling flow of members of the aristocracy and the rich, for example travellers from the Tsarist Empire who in the wake of the October Revolution were no longer available as guests, as well as the drastic reduction in the number of guests from Germany who due to the economic situation could no longer afford such holidays (forfeited war bonds, inflation, taxes for reparations).

On the other hand, due to the changes in the social structure (with fewer workers in open-air occupations) and ideologies, the aristocratic and grand-bourgeois concept of “distinguished paleness” was no longer an ideal, and instead office workers strived ever more for an assumedly healthy tan. With this change in demand, there was tendentially a spatial shift away from strolls along picturesque cliffs (Côte d’Azur, Riviera di Ponente) to flat stretches of coast with extensive beaches for mass tourism.

The guestworker cycle: over, but with aftereffects

On the basis of agreements with Italy (1955) and other Mediterranean countries (1960-1968), until the end of 1973 *guestworkers* from Mediterranean countries came to what was then West Germany. All recruitment then came to an abrupt halt, because after the Yom Kippur war the Arabian oil-producing countries drastically hoisted the price for crude oil and thus amplified a recession that was already in progress. The presence of a considerable proportion of the population from Mediterranean countries (1973 = 6.4 %, almost four million people in the old republic) also aroused the interest in the places of their origin and in a consideration from the local perspective (SCHRETTENBRUNNER 1970; LIENAU 1976). This also included the investigation of the decision pattern according to ethnic or social affiliation as well as the analysis of the diffusion making process (BARTELS 1968; P. WEBER 1973).

Later on, the scientific focus shifted towards the effects of money transfers, the immigrants’ investments in the regions of their origin, and their return to their native countries (DICKEL 1970; ADRIKOPOULOU & HERMANN, MERTINS, STRUCK 1984; LIENAU 1987; KAGERMEIER & POPP 1995, BENCHERIFA et al. 1996). The years in which these studies were published make it clear that they also involve a past wave of research work. At the same time, further studies would be appropriate today, since the binational relations that have evolved are still today of great importance. For some countries of origin, the money transfers are still of great value for the international balance of payments (Morocco, the Lebanon, Algeria). Cheaper travel and communication opportunities have facilitated the emergence of transnational societies (e.g. Germany-Turkey, France-Algeria). A fi-

nal issue deserving investigation concerns which effects the money transfers unfold in the economy-peripheral regions and whether the early investments in the regions of origin have been appropriate over the long term.

Regional geography is dead (1969), long live regional geography

After isolated separate publications (H. SCHAMP/Egypt 1961; HARTKE/France 1963; LAUTENSACH/Iberian peninsula 1964), since 1968 regional geographies regarding Mediterranean countries have been issued in two separate series (cf. Fig. 1), the first of which was started by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt) and is still today published there in greater density and better design, and since 1978 also in the Stuttgart-based Klett-Verlag (Länderprofile, i.e. country profiles), since 1993 continued in the Verlag Klett-Perthes (Gotha). The fact that all authors are West Germans is not surprising for the starting period, since firstly regional geography was rejected in the GDR as being a component of bourgeois ideology (SANKE 1958), and secondly geographers in East Germany – even in times of good relations with Arabian countries such as Syria and Algeria – had hardly any opportunity to make numerous travels and engage in local research projects.

The astounding aspect here is that regional geographies resurged in the old Federal Republic after having been declared dead at the Kieler Geography Congress in 1969. This notwithstanding, the authors took more or less good care to ensure that studies did not become encyclopaedic in character. For this reason, in many cases they programmatically used subtitles to indicate their specific problem orientation. In this connection terms such as developing country, threshold country, dependence, southern periphery (in allusion to the “peripheral capitalism” postulated by SENGHAAS 1974 and LEGGEWIE 1975) were used to indicate a subaltern position. A further conspicuous aspect is that, of the twenty-four regional geographies of the two series, only two were written by physical geographers, both on Tunisia (MENSCHING 1968; FRANKENBERG 1979). In the extreme case, the swing towards the human-geographic approach is expressed in the fact that no longer is a separate chapter devoted to the natural phenomena, but instead that these are dealt with in the corresponding

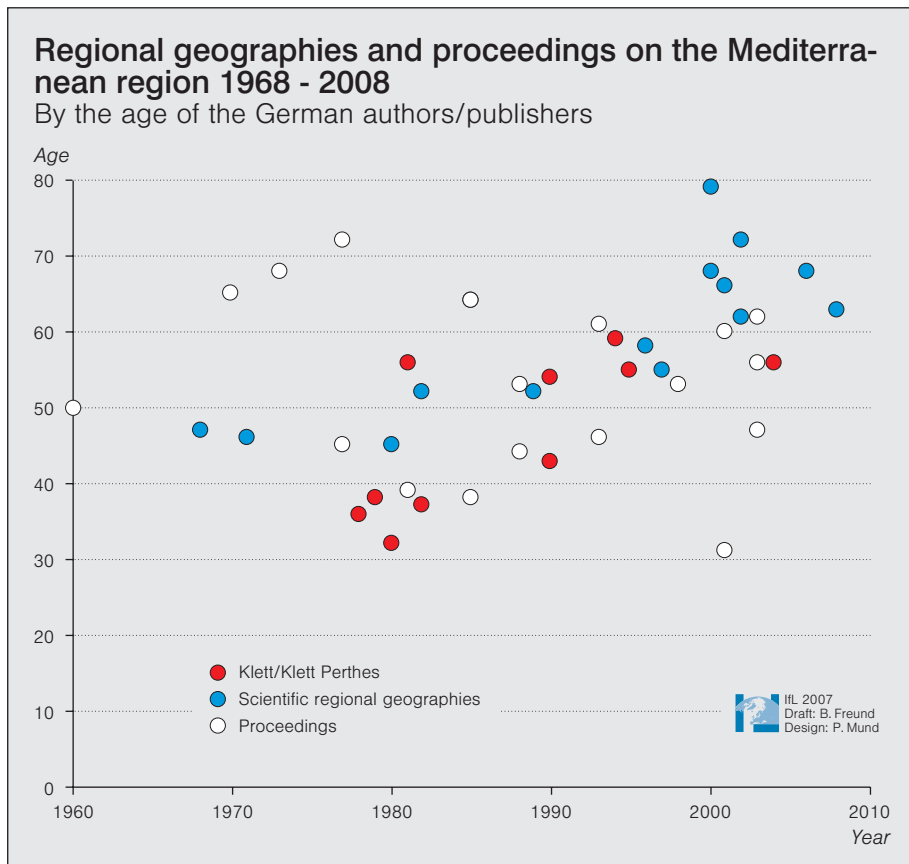


Fig. 1: Regional geographies and proceedings on the Mediterranean region, 1968-2008 by the age of the German authors/publishers
Source: own design

contexts in terms of their relevance for the economy and social valuation (FREUND 1979).

A final aspect that deserves mention here is that the first authors were relatively young as university teachers when they wrote their studies, indicating an early, thematically broad, and at the same time intensive involvement with the country in question (cf. Fig. 1/Regional geographies and congress reports on the Mediterranean region). In the course of time, however, there has been a shift in the age structure, which permits two unrelated conclusions to be drawn: geographies are increasingly becoming the “*summa*” of long experience, almost “late works”, or else that younger university teachers no longer have country-specific expertise at their disposal, possibly a side-effect of changes in the education system and qualification requirements. One factor may also be the decline in the relevance of regional-geographic tutorials in the various university curricula since 1970.

The books by ROTHER (1993) and WAGNER (2001) relate to the Mediterranean region in general. Klaus ROTHER, who started his scientific career as a physical geographer and in a previous

book on the Mediterranean subtropics (1984) worldwide followed the ecological definition, also retains the “natural context” as the first and largest capital in his book on the Mediterranean (33.2 % of the text). This is followed by the chapters on population (15.2 %), settlements (17.5 %), agriculture (19.8 %), and finally industry (8.8 %). These proportions are evidence of a tradition-bound approach.

H.-G. WAGNER, by profession an economic geographer, by contrast gives preference to access to the issue via three historically oriented chapters (19.2 %), starting with the former political unity of the entire region in the Roman era. Via population dynamics and social change (17.4 %) he subsequently arrives at urbanization and the manufacturing sector (19.2 %). Only after a human-geographically oriented excursion into natural-spatial aspects (10.2 %) does he turn his attention to agriculture and the rural spaces (19.3 %) as well as – albeit to an extremely brief extent – tourism (3.6 %). The end section is devoted to spatial disparities and state-regulated area planning as well as regional conflicts and development perspectives (11.4 %). His work hence shows itself to be decidedly

human-geographic and problem-oriented in its structure.

Even at the publishers, it is unclear who the actual purchasers of the regional geographies are. From specific resonance it can be concluded that these are to a very strong extent representatives of other disciplines (politics, sociology, history, urban planning). The fact that there is interest in thematically varied reports on other countries is also borne out by the many other regional studies that have been written and published by nongeographers.

In the Beck series "Aktuelle Länderkunden" (Topical regional geographies), the volume "Maghreb" published in 1990 was the first one to deal with a Mediterranean region; in the meantime, the series has been expanded to cover over one dozen countries in this general area. In the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, the Romanistic directorship (GROSSE) has led to the publication of the books "Frankreich verstehen" (Understanding France) (1987) and "Italien verstehen" (Understanding Italy). In these books, two or more authors deal with the aspects of state organization, the political party system, economy, society, education, media, and relations with Germany. The Bibliotheca Ibero-Americana has published books on Spain (BERNECKER & DIRSCHER 1991, 4/2004) and Portugal (BRIESEMEISTER & SCHÖNBERGER 1997).

The engagement of innumerable German companies in foreign countries is an important reason why there is also interest in getting up-to-date reports on economic and political events in other countries, an interest that is covered by special publications (Bundeszentrale für Außenhandelsinformation, Länderanalysen des FAZ-Informationsdienstes). Besides these there are also institutes and courses designed to impart intercultural competence. It will never be possible to satisfy the demand for absolutely up-to-date information in the form of a regional geography; the general trend should, however, be taken into account in future.

What path has geographic research taken in the past ten years?

The following summary of publications from the period 1998 to 2007 essentially covers the doctoral theses and research reports in the narrow sense of the word; it does not include brief descriptions that are identifiably by-products of more ma-

ior studies or else are report-like in character.

From the *country-specific viewpoint* it is apparent that – in decreasing order – most reports have been published on Spain, Turkey, Italy, and Greece. There is virtually nothing more on Mediterranean France; publications on all countries in North Africa are scarce. Measured against the dimension of the country, by contrast, there is plenty that has been published on Albania, which already as a relatively isolated country attracted the attention of geographers and following its opening was discovered by them (in particular by BECKER and HELLER) as a field of research. Relatively many research projects have also been carried out in the small country of the Lebanon. In both cases there is a predominance of aspects of urban geography. One remarkable aspect is that following the disintegration of Yugoslavia – a process that was followed by many reports – the interest in the successor states with access to the Mediterranean – i.e. Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro – has remained limited. For all that, there is still the geography on Croatia published by J. WEBER in 2002.

As far as the *thematic orientation* is involved, there is still a strong predominance, at 70 %, of human-geographic publications and their broader dissemination to be found, without including the roughly 10 % share of regional-geographic titles among them. Besides this, there has also been a pronounced shift in the thematic approach compared with the 1960s to 1980s.

Studies concerning *agrarian economy and cultivated landscape* play hardly any role any more. Since, however, the rural spaces of southern Europe can be seen to suffering major problems due to overageing, depopulation, and vacant buildings, then analogous to the "shrinking towns" in Germany it may be appropriate to thematise the "shrinking villages" of extensive regions here.

Papers on the topic of *tourism* have also become more sparse, and furthermore have undergone a thematic shift. It is no longer issues of regional economy and urban development that are of interest now, but instead rather ones of ecological effects and sustainability (LIENAU 1998; SCHMITT 2002; SCHÜRGES 2005) as well as of the forms of transition of places of residence for retirees (BREUER 1998, 2002; KAISER & FRIEDRICH 2002).

The third of the areas that once enjoyed greater scientific interest, *industry*, is given virtually no academic attention any more, at least not on the European side. Positive exceptions are, on the one hand, studies into foreign investments in Portugal and Spain (PUDEMAT 1996; HARSCH 2001), and on the other, detailed studies of Egypt, Syria and Palestine with a special focus on the connection with cultural affiliation (LINDNER 1998, 1999; IBRAHIM & IBRAHIM 2003; BOECKLER 2005; AMANN 2007).

In first place are research projects regarding *urban geography*, which first experienced greater attention in the 1980s (SABELBERG 1984; KERN 1986; PRICKING 1988; DIRSCHERL 1989; K. MEYER 2001; BECKER et al. 2005). Here, culture-specific phenomena such as the shaping of business centres (PRICKING 1988; SCHRÖDER 1999; MEINI & MONHEIM 2002) or of gated communities (GLASZE, WEHRHAHN 2003; SCHMID 2006) were the subject of interest, complexes that have emerged in the countries of the Mediterranean region including France since the 1990s. The "oriental city" is no longer the object of study as a culture-historical typus, but instead in terms of its current development (ESCHER & WIRTH 1992; KLINGSHIRN 1993; SCHMID 2002; BRUNDIERS & ODERMATT 2004; F. MEYER 2004, 2005). In regions with a deficient documentation status, urban-geographic studies are increasingly being supplemented by remote-sensing (RADBERGER 2003; RICHTER 2007).

One aspect that is being intensively discussed in the countries of the Mediterranean region themselves is that of *migrations* in their various manifestations. Primarily, it is now the immigration from highly varied source regions in northern Africa, eastern Europe, and on other continents, also taking the form of transmigration. The last volume of proceedings of the "Geographic Mediterranean Research" working group, published by Rolf MONHEIM in 2004, imparts an impression of this trend. Inland migration and emigration are investigated primarily using Albania as an example (HELLER 2003; HELLER et al. 2004). In the highly special case of the Spanish enclaves on the North African coast, the issues of ethnicity and religion play a major role (F. MEYER 2004, 2005); these aspects are otherwise the domain of representatives of other disciplines, in the case of Albania and Greece covered in particular in

the periodical "Südosteuropa". Articles on population geography rather have the character of reports.

The case regarding publications on regional development is similar. An outstanding exception here is the work by JAHNKE (2005) on the Mezzogiorno region, since this innovatively draws a link to a geography of knowledge and of decision patterns. In view of the fact that the distribution of promotion funds of the EU is also of relevance for regions in Germany, further investigations into regional development exceeding far beyond the mere evaluation of official statistics seems appropriate.

As regards *political geography*, there are several articles by STRUCK on Turkey (2002, 2003, 2005, 2007); Cyprus (HAHN 2002, 2006; STRUCK 2007) has also received attention. In extremely stark contrast not only to media reporting, but also to publications from the field of political geography, is the minimal degree of scientific attention paid to Israel and the Palestinian autonomy regions (LINDNER 1998, 1999). If it was not for the apolitical studies on water-supply chemistry (SIEBERT 2006) and regional and archaeological history (ZWICKEL 2002), one might justifiably conclude that the most frequently discussed part of the region has been completely neglected by geographers.

In the field of *physical geography*, while publications on Mediterranean subregions are more scarce, they are indeed of substantial interest for representatives of other research disciplines. Whereas there are virtually no publications whatsoever any more in the classic field of geomorphology, there is intensive research-driven activity in the areas of *environmental history* and *recent landscape development*. More than in the past, the studies here are interlaced with human geography by two special areas of interest. Firstly there is the reconstruction of landscapes and in particular of coastlines of relevance for the ancient populations by means of sedimentology and geoarchaeology (KELLETAT & SCHELLMANN 2002; FOUACHE, MÜLLENHOFF, SCHÜTT 2005; M. FUCHS, VÖTH & BRÜCKNER 2006). Secondly, they deal with modern-day changes as a consequence of anthropogenic interventions, including forest fires and abandonment (Th. MAY 1990; NEFF 1995; MARZOLFF et al., RIES et al. 2003). There is naturally no clear line of distinction here separating these activities from vegetation geo-

graphy (PFÄFFLIN et al. 2003; HOCHHUT 2005; BRANDES 2007). One conspicuous aspect is the frequent use of methods for remote-sensing (SIEGMUND & NEUMANN 2004; HOCHHUT 2005; HILL & RÖDER, SIART 2006). It is further striking that joint research efforts are frequent among scientifically oriented geographers. It can only be hoped that in future there will also be cooperation programmes with human geographers who are interested in the development of rural areas and of regions in various protection categories.

After almost thirty years, a proposal put forward by ROTHER in 1981 for more *cooperation with colleagues in the respective host countries* must be reiterated. This would result in qualitative improvements in foreign research, since not only would the different perspectives and expertise of the external researchers provide further impulses on the one hand, but on the other the unwritten background knowledge of the local partners would serve as a corrective. This might enhance the transfer of knowledge in both directions and would also mean that publications on topical aspects would not be at risk of coming too close to resembling unreflected (foreign) reports.

The few cooperations that have been made so far (HELLER and ASCHE/Albania; R. HENKEL/Croatia, LIENAU/Greece; R. MONHEIM/Italy; W. POPP/Morocco; RIES/Spain) should be complemented by the establishment of contacts between younger researchers. The quality of German foreign research has so far only rarely seen confirmation by publications in the countries in question themselves (FREUND, R. HENKEL, JAHNKE, KAGERMEIER, R. MONHEIM, POPP).

The organization of German Mediterranean research

The first colloquia of researchers on Mediterranean topics are the result of the initiative of Carl Schott. As the editor of three issues of the *Marburger Geographische Schriften* (40/1970, 59/1973, 73/1977), he succeeded in establishing minor focuses on tourism and Italy after the first publication.

A symposium held in Düsseldorf in 1976 saw the foundation of the "Geographische Mittelmeerländer-Forschung" (Geographic Mediterranean Research) working group. Without formulating its aims too specifically, many participants held the hope that – in analogy to the results regarding climate, vegetation,

and climate morphology – the shaping of further research projects through all areas of human geography would make it possible to elaborate something genuinely, typically and sustainably "Mediterranean". The initiator, Klaus ROTHER, made proposals for the concentration on topics that had been given only scant attention so far. These included the broad variety of consequences in areas from which people had migrated, the special aspect of "spaces of inertia" generally found in the inland regions, the aspect of connecting characteristics of the European-Mediterranean city as opposed to the frequently investigated and typified "oriental city", and, last but by no means least, trade and centrality. Studies have been made into all these aspects over the decades and even right up to the present day. However, this did not come about in the hoped-for way – namely by making many detailed studies and thus arriving at a virtually all-conclusive result regarding a specifically "Mediterranean" distinction. In view of the evident temporal constraints on human-geographic research results in particular, this aim proved to be illusory.

The intended direction towards a thematic concentration incidentally proved to be difficult, as later proceedings of the studies on the Mediterranean region show (edited by GERSTENHAUER & ROTHER 1980; FREUND & JAHNKE 2001). This notwithstanding, most organizers of the symposia that followed succeeded in shaping them around a central aspect. Evidence for this is given by the proceedings for coastal strips (POPP & TICHY 1985), conurbation processes (ANTE & WAGNER 1988), irrigation areas (POPP & ROTHER 1993), tourism regions (BREUER 1998), and transcontinental migration (R. MONHEIM 2003).

These data give the impression that the working group convenes at long intervals, under changing organizers, and at different locations, in other words that it is a loosely formed organization held together by a relatively small circle of university teachers. There are several factors that speak against a greater frequency of the meetings and a sharper profile.

The *divergence of interests of the researchers* results in a limited extent of overlap. One group of the speakers has always processed its topics in the Mediterranean region, without, however, being fixated on this region constantly. The

research activities into the same disciplinary area are either pursued in another region, or else they form only a stepping stone in the scientific careers. This does nothing to enhance coherence and communication. This is a feature typical of many projects involving remote-sensing, but also for studies on tourism and urban geography. While others research for many decades in the Mediterranean region, this research is essentially focussed on a special area (e.g. coastline morphology) or a specific country, in connection with which they achieve internationally acclaimed competence.

Secondly, the *region in its entirety is highly heterogeneous*. This region counts twenty-two states and eleven to twelve national languages. Keeping up with the literature in German, English and French is an exhausting effort in itself – reading in other languages is beyond question in most cases. Most of the scientists attending congresses are specialists for a given country and possess the corresponding linguistic skills. On the other hand, it is hard to find geographers who out of professional interest (and with a high investment of their own funds) have travelled in other countries over the years without taking an active research stand there.

Thirdly, the *institutional organization* does nothing to promote German geography. There are a large number of small institutes, and even at larger institutes usually steps are taken to ensure the coverage of a broad spectrum of special areas, rather than promoting topic-related or regional specialization. Specialists for the Mediterranean region can hardly make their mark at a given location, especially when it is borne in mind that the new occupation of a position that becomes vacant generally does not enhance continuity. This is (somewhat) better in other countries, for example in France (Aix-en-Provence, Bordeaux; Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe). There is no analogue to the Ibero-Amerikanische Institut/Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin), to the interdisciplinary Southeastern Europe Institute or the former North America Institute of the Free University of Berlin for the Mediterranean region. In the German-speaking countries there is a general paucity of specialized geographic periodicals and series. The attempt launched in 1989 to issue a specialized series in the guise of the “Passauer Mittelmeerstudien” (Passau Mediterranean Studies) ended with issue 6 in 1994.

The division of the Mediterranean into at least *two major cultural regions* is also not without consequences. Since by far the greater part of the investigations are performed by human geographers, the tradition-rich and productive “oriental studies” of German researchers, a direction promoted especially by WIRTH, seem to deserve special mention. A richly designed volume published by G. MEYER in 2004 on the Arabian world as reflected by cultural geography makes mention of most of these studies. One minor criticism that must be made here is that this region of the Mediterranean is dealt with an excessively strong emphasis on aspects of tourism.

The future of Mediterranean research

Since research cannot be pursued in complete separation from pragmatic demands and the “spirit of the times”, first the question must be posed as to whether there is a public interest in the Mediterranean region and which form any such interest may take. To answer this question, a quantitative analysis of the *reporting in the media*, over a relatively long period of time and best in leading supraregional newspapers, is deemed particularly appropriate. This rapidly shows that the interest that is present moves in many different directions.

Regarding the political aspect, it is indeed true that in Germany there is interest “by tradition” in events east of the national borders. A remarkable aspect here is that this was equally true for both western Germany (Frankfurter Allgemeine) and in eastern Germany (Neues Deutschland) prior to 1989 and has remained true up to the present day – which is not the case in the United Kingdom and France. At the same time, events in the Mediterranean region are also intensively reported on.

This firstly has to do with the tensions of global relevance, i.e. the “Middle East conflict”. This starts with the Balfour declaration of 1917, or at the latest ten years later in connection with the reinforced Arabian resistance to the Jewish infiltration of Palestine (BOVERI 1936; STEININGER 2008). On top of this comes the unresolved question of the relations between the EU and Turkey, which country has been associated since 1963, applied for full membership in 1987 and was made an entry candidate in 1999. In Germany, where the presence of roughly 2.2 million inhabit-

ants of Turkish origin is generally perceived as a problematic social substratification, this is an issue that is the subject of particularly controversial debate. Besides this topic, with alternating intensity there are also internal tensions (Turkey, Algeria, Cyprus, Spain, Italy) and a number of conflicts between neighbouring countries (Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Algeria-Morocco) that play a role. In Germany the perception is lacking that, on account of the country’s membership in the European Union and the EU’s ever-increasing importance, also the political developments in the southern European countries have come to be of major, almost “domestic” political relevance (political fields of regional promotion, migration, environment, competition, security). One should not forget that since the abolishment of border controls for the southern European EU countries (Schengen II, 1995) and the completion of the Internal Market (3rd stage of the Economic and Currency Union, 1999) Germany’s southern border in a way is formed by the Mediterranean coastline.

The daily economic sections of the newspapers aperiodically contain country-specific reports, but also many news items concerning company takeovers and foreign investments in all directions. In the weekly travel sections, the Mediterranean region is always as a central pillar, well documenting the diversification of the activities and the destinations for guests striving for individuality in the process. The travel section is in some cases also linked to the aspect of real estate business (second homes, retirement homes) that is otherwise dealt with in other special sections.

Imaginations of a potential threat from southern neighbouring countries arose in Italy as early as the 1980s, with the result that the country, together with Spain and France, planned a joint initiative within the European Community. For several Arabian states, the end of the east/west confrontation marked the loss of their (potential) protective power. On the other hand, in 1993 HUNTINGTON initiated the idea of the “The Clash of Civilizations”, embarrassingly recalling the title of a book written by the (physical) geographer SCHMITTHENNER (1938) that was reprinted in 1951. HUNTINGTON prognoses that of the conflicts of the 21st century it will be the one between the “Islamic” and the “Western” civilizations that will play a particularly major role. This thesis may

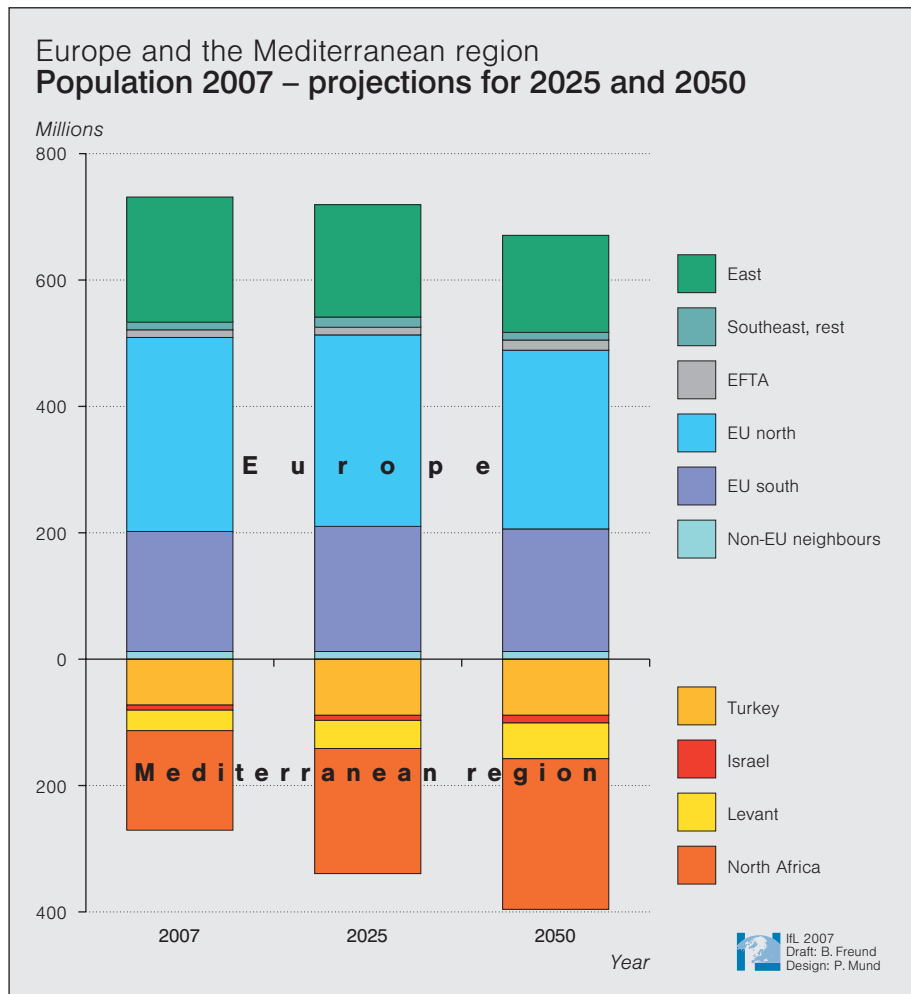


Fig. 2: Europe and the Mediterranean region Population 2007 – projections for 2025 and 2050 Source: own design

well turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy if the European Union does not succeed in arranging a modus vivendi together with the Mediterranean countries of Islamic character and Israel.

Whereas prior to 1914 the countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean exerted a charm in the form of “orientalistic” art and literature, from the EU perspective the conditions and developments are becoming increasingly threatening. The demographic trend of recent decades and the prognoses until 2050 are experienced with a feeling of oppression (cf. Fig. 2: Europe and the Mediterranean region/population), especially since the “migration pressure” of unwished-for populations is derived from these figures. Already in the late 1980s, measures were taken to make entry from these countries difficult, even for scientists and students, which has resulted in their feeling the bitter sensation of being shut out.

The Mediterranean policy of the EU in the past 35 (!) years is characterized by only slight progress. A first concept of a “global Mediterranean policy” was draft-

ed as early as 1972 – i.e. ten years after the end of the colonial epoch, marked by the independence of Algeria. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (1990/91) then gave rise to the concept that the previous West/East confrontation could be superseded by a North/South divide, with the separating line running through the Mediterranean Sea.

Approaches for a “new Mediterranean policy” (1990) led to the Conference of Barcelona (1995), in which the foreign ministers of the then fifteen EU member states and of twelve Mediterranean third countries (MTCs) participated, among them those of Israel and the Palestinian autonomy authority. The result was the formal establishment of a “Euro-Mediterranean partnership” with three central aims. Besides the intensification of the traditional economic ties, designed to lead to a free-trade zone in the year 2010, the political dimension was also made part of the partnership. The enhancement of the dialogue and the observation of human rights was aimed at creating a “security partnership”. Thirdly, a part-

nership in the cultural, social, and human sector was aimed for, with mutual understanding and respect for each other’s cultural and religious backgrounds.

The details of the foreign-trade concepts are not really advantageous for the countries in northern Africa and the Levant, also because southern European countries asserted special clauses for the protection of many of their branches. For Germany, with the exception of Turkey none of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries counts among the 25 most important foreign-trade partners, and also as destinations for foreign investment programmes these countries have remained relatively unimportant. Hardly any progress was made in the two other areas (security and culture), with the Israeli-Arabian conflict proving to be a major obstacle in this connection (JÜNNEMANN 2005; SCHÄFER 2005). The relationship between the EU member states and the MTCs is highly asymmetric from the economic, military, and also the media viewpoints, in connection with which the prevalent, yet dubious representation as a source of manifold dangers (terrorism, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, criminality) is particularly evident.

Issues of peace, stability by democratisation, the affluence divide, migration, education and technological qualification, Europe’s supply of energy, and technical cooperation (water engineering, agriculture, forestry, marine economics) shall not lose their topical relevance, not even in the long term. This may be a further incentive for geographers to devote themselves to pursuing relevant research issues. This includes endeavours to foster – in the narrow sense of the definition – cultural-geographic and institution-economic insights, such as those elaborated over the long term in Italy by F. SCHRÖDER 1999 and JAHNKE 2005 and in the Arabian countries in numerous studies by ESCHER und G. MEYER that have seen valuable additions in recent years (LINDNER 1998, 1999; BOECKLER, F. MEYER 2004, 2005; AMANN 2006). These efforts may contribute to viewing the Mediterranean less as a “fracture zone”.

At the start of 2008, President Sarkozy declared a special Mediterranean union as the most important project for the French EU presidency starting on 1 July, expressly describing it a means *against* a “clash of civilizations” and designed to improve relations with

the Arabian world. The German government, which – in particular connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of many years' standing – under indication of historic guilt essentially follows the dubious American policy (MEARSHEIMER & WALT 2006), has displayed considerable irritation. Chancellor Merkel has rightfully challenged Sarkozy on this and has succeeded in having not only the nine EU member states bordering the Mediterranean, but all 27 member states participating in the project, now retitled the "Union for the Mediterranean". And so, after the scheduled summit meeting with the countries bordering the Mediterranean on 13 July 2008, it is justifiable to assume that this new name will basically be used to continue the frequently faltering "Barcelona process", with no guarantee that there will be any real new impulses. At the same time one can only wish that in Germany this will be taken as an opportunity to intensify research efforts and scientific cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean region.

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1982 BREUER, T.: Spanien
1990 MÜLLER-HOHENSTEIN, K. & H. POPP: Marokko
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