

# MIGRATIONS AND DIASPORAS

**T**he Mediterranean is an area of regional and international migration movements. It has been projected throughout the world through emigration that began in antiquity and continued over the centuries. Some diasporas are today obvious patches of the Mediterranean on remote continents. This migration has continued incessantly from one shore to the other – from North to South during the colonisation period, but nowadays generally in the opposite direction.

## THE MEDITERRANEAN AS A WITNESS OF HISTORY

Diasporas (from the Greek *spiro*, dispersion) originated in age-old and worldwide migratory movements and are often characterised by the strong links that bind emigrants to their countries of origin. These migratory flows are generally accompanied by a migration chain phenomenon, where emigrant population groups act as hosts to newcomer compatriots. The Armenian, Jewish, Palestinian, Syro-Lebanese, Greek and Italian diasporas are amongst the largest originating in the Mediterranean.

Transnational communities became established mainly after the second world war (as was the case with the Maghreb peoples) on more confined host lands or even in one single region, essentially in Europe (as was the case with the Turkish and Maghreb populations). Although emigration on this continent began at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was boosted by the “30 glorious years” (the 30-year boom period following World War II), when industrial needs provided opportunities for population groups from the least developed regions: the largest waves of emigration originated in the mountains of Kabylia in Algeria, southern Tunisia, and in the Anti-Atlas and Rif Mountains in Morocco, but with time the phenomenon spread throughout these three

countries due to economic constraints. The same phenomenon was observed with the Turks of Anatolia, who came mainly to Germany. The two countries signed an agreement in 1961 allowing Germany to recruit Turkish labour.

These transnational communities, which spread through several European countries and even throughout the world, are also referred to as quasi diasporas; as is the case with the some 3 million Moroccans in Europe and 160,000 Moroccans in the United States, but also with the Turks, who likewise emigrated to these two regions. Immigration from the southern Mediterranean to the European countries is tending to decrease, however, as the result of several factors: legislation in Europe has been tightened up due to unemployment and the recent arrival of migrants from Eastern Europe, and rising growth in the countries of origin is curbing the emigration trend. In the Gulf countries, migratory flows are more erratic due to the vicissitudes of the oil economy.

**These migratory flows have political and/or economic causes:** development disparities between the North and the South of the Mediterranean region explain the flows from the Maghreb to Europe, whereas it is the South-South gap that prompts the migrations of population groups from the near East – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine – to the Gulf countries, whose oil industry makes them an eldorado. At the geopolitical level, the Israeli-Arab conflict has prompted the largest population movements in the east of the basin. Many Palestinian refugees from 1948 and their descendants have settled in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan or elsewhere in the world. They have been joined by other waves of emigrants leaving the Palestinian Territories, particularly after 1967. On the other hand, many Jews living in Mediterranean countries moved to Israel from 1948 onwards, Moroccan

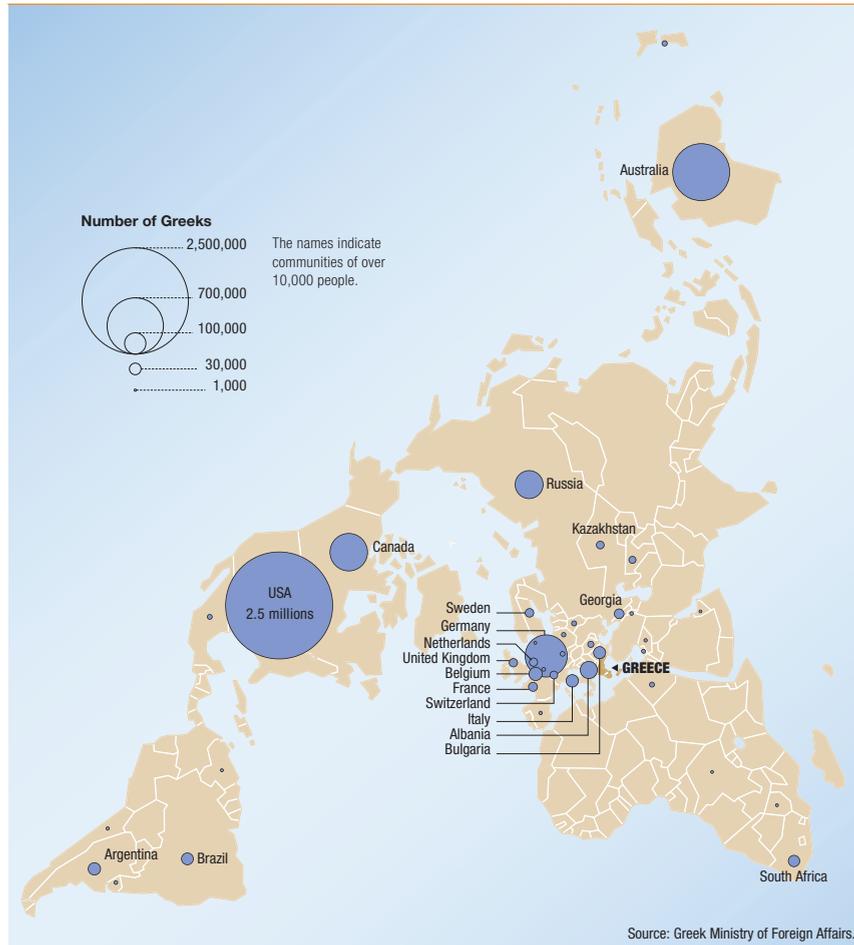
## LEBANON AND ITS DIASPORA

The Lebanese diaspora has been formed through several waves of emigration: the incidents in the mountains between 1840 and 1860 and then the Ottoman embargo against the same mountain area in Lebanon during the first world war prompted many Maronite and Drusian peasant farmers to leave, and many of them went to South or North America. Although this movement waned after the country gained independence, it still continued. During the civil war (1975-1990), the wave of emigration intensified again, turning to North America, since the instability in South America made the continent less attractive. Since that war, Australia has become a new destination, while Canada is replacing the United States as the host country for Lebanese migrants. Europe, which plays a more marginal role as a destination, continues to host migrants who are relatively well-off, and in Africa the Lebanese are taking over many branches of industry. Emigration is more temporary in this case, and also in the Gulf countries, since many Lebanese return after working for several years abroad. It is impossible to assess exactly how many Lebanese are living abroad, particularly after several generations in a foreign country. This diaspora obviously provides a great opportunity for Lebanon – both in terms of local investment or direct aid to the families who have stayed at home and as regards promoting Lebanese cuisine or economic links between Lebanon and the countries hosting the immigrants, etc.

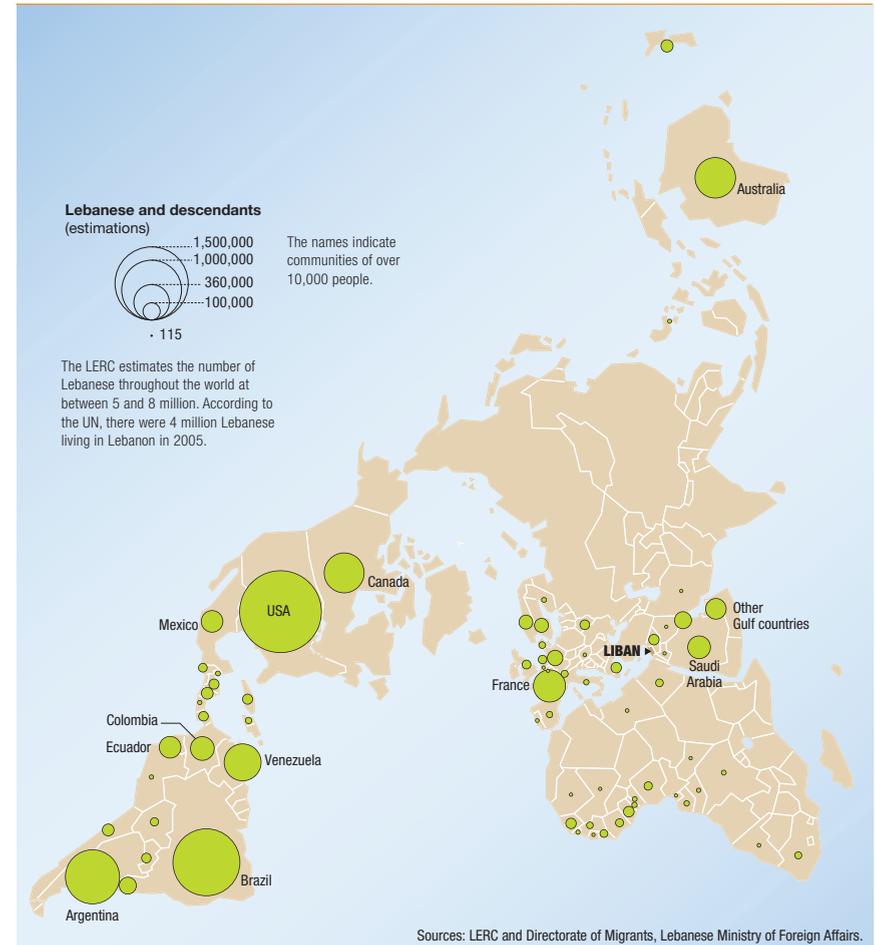
Jews forming the largest group of these immigrants (250,000 in the period between 1948 and 1975).

It is interesting to note that some emigration countries have in turn become immigration regions. This is of course the case with Spain, Italy and Portugal but also, to a lesser extent

### GREEK DIASPORA



### LEBANESE DIASPORA



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and, in particular, more recently, with the Maghreb countries, which are becoming host countries for sub-Saharan migrants. The Near East countries are another similar example, hosting migrants who are fleeing the civil war in Iraq. Syria is hosting between 1.2 and 1.5 million Iraqi refugees, for instance, Jordan is hosting between 500,000 and 750,000, Lebanon some 20,000 and Egypt over 80,000.

**MIGRATION AND RURAL AREAS**

Intraregional and extraregional migration have beneficial trade-offs, particularly for rural areas, which supply a very large proportion of the migrants: economic opportunities for the regions of origin are also opportunities for the host countries, where they compensate for the lack or shortage of labour in certain sectors, particularly in agriculture. This agricultural labour displacement trend is nothing new – Spanish labour was already recruited in the fruit and vegetable farms of the Languedoc-Roussillon region in the south of France in the 1960s. Today the regions of Valencia, Murcia and Andalusia are in turn hosting seasonal migrants for work on labour-intensive farms. Italy undertook to increase the number of immigrants by 33% in 2008. These labour needs partly explain the massive regularisation procedures carried out in 1985 and 2005 in Spain, Portugal and Greece. Spain and Morocco are planning a sustainable partnership for the recruitment of seasonal agricultural labourers. Morocco already supplied agricultural labourers for 3 to 6 months in 2007. And the northern Mediterranean is not the only region concerned by this agricultural migration – Lebanon and Jordan host Syrian and Egyptian workers, for example, to offset domestic labour shortages.

These migrants are a source of considerable cash flows for some countries. Since 1990 the total volume of funds

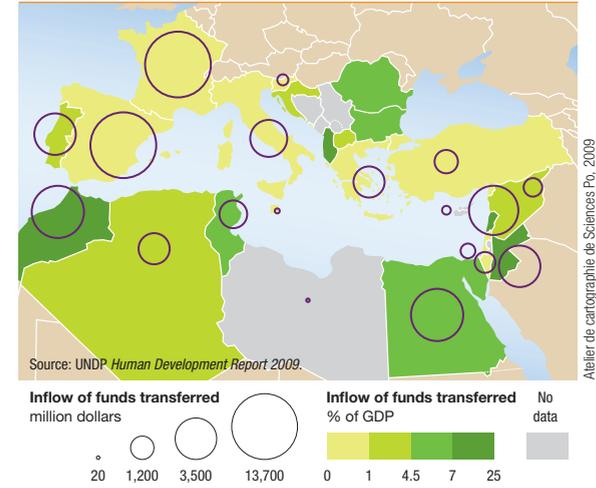
transferred by emigrants has exceeded the public development aid or foreign direct investments effected in the southern Mediterranean countries. The sums remitted by the diasporas or transnational communities of these countries account for a very large proportion of GDP (over 10% in some cases) – particularly in Lebanon, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories and Morocco.

Rural areas benefit from this manna – both directly through the social safety net it provides for the receiving families but also through the development programmes that are financed through the funds transferred. More generally, agricultural and rural areas can also benefit from emigration, which relieves the population pressure on land. Diaspora populations can import so-called ethnic products from their countries of origin (aromatic plants, wines, cheeses, etc.). And finally, both the Italian and Lebanese diasporas and the Turkish and Moroccan quasi diasporas act as the ambassadors of very typical cuisines. ■

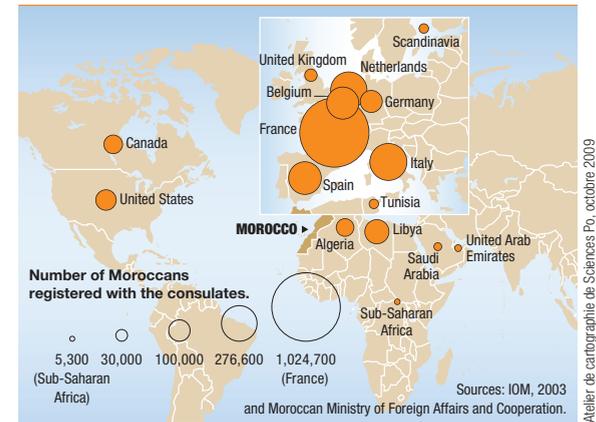
**THE CASE OF MOROCCO**

The French association *Migration et développement*, which many migrants join, runs a number of development projects. Thanks to its efforts, eight villages in Taroudant, a mountainous province with a semi-arid climate and very marginalised population in southern Morocco, now have electricity. In the same municipalities the association is helping to promote local agricultural resources through pilot workshops focusing on the production of olives, saffron, argan oil, dates and henna. It also runs rural tourism activities, establishing rural inns and bed & breakfast accommodation.

**SUMS REMITTED BY MIGRANTS, 2007**



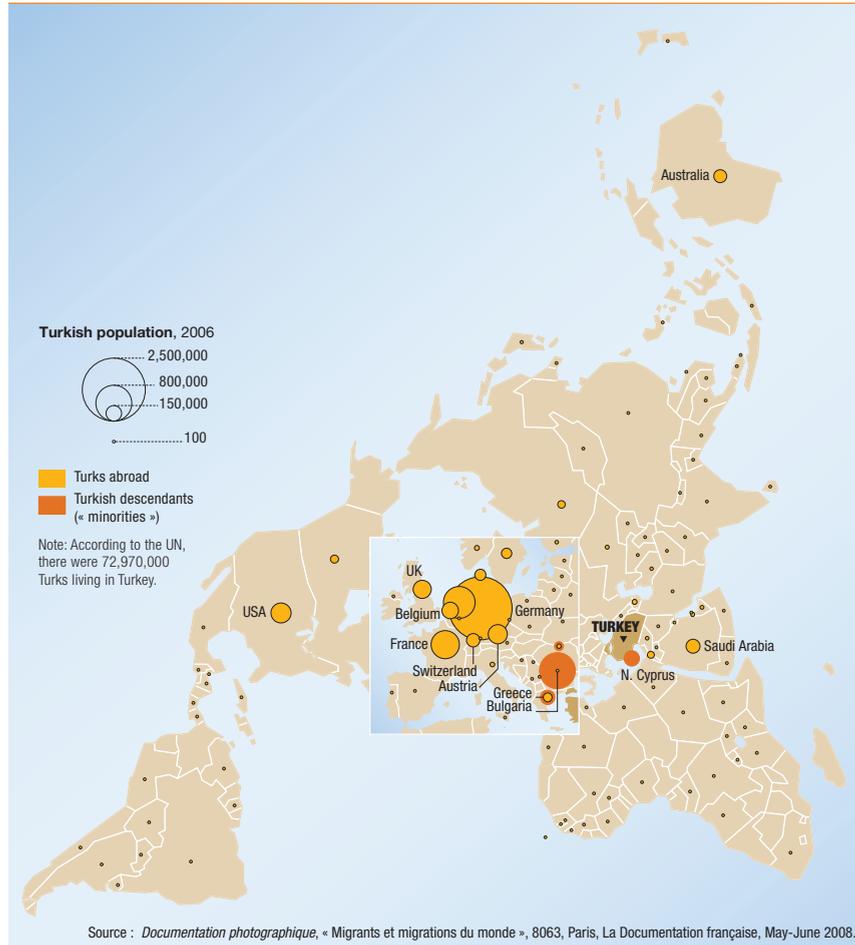
**MOROCCAN QUASI DIASPORA, 2002**



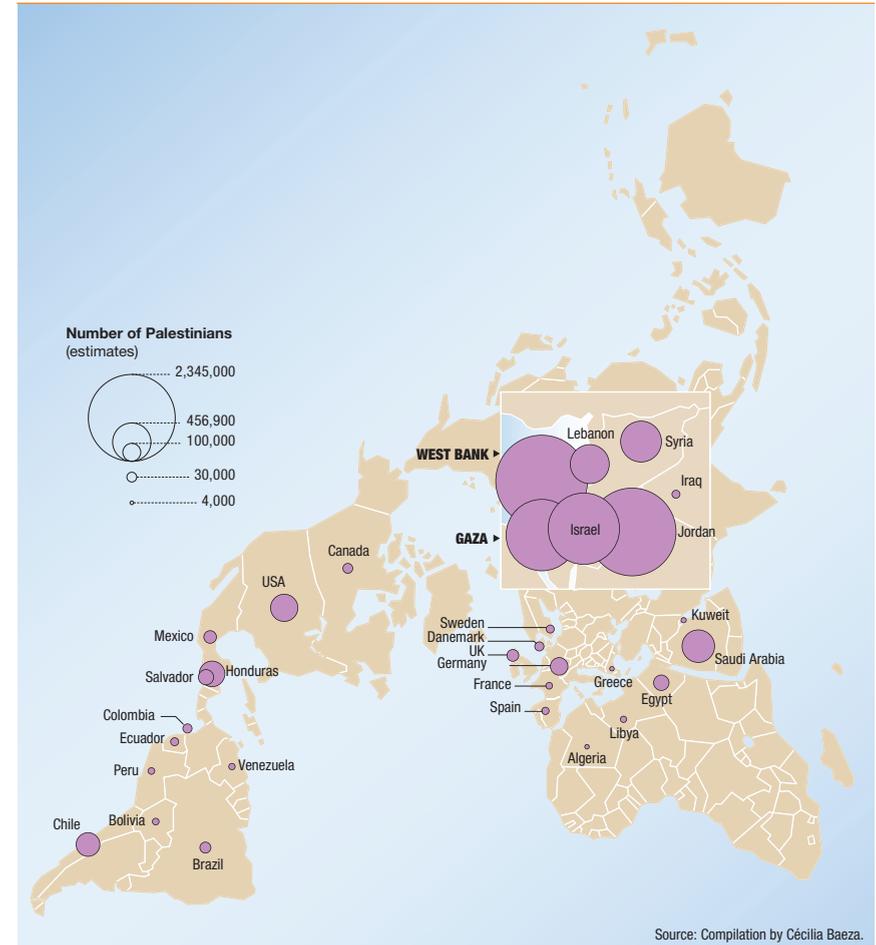
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### TURKISH QUASI DIASPORA



### PALESTINIAN DIASPORA



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