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# Europe and the Mediterranean seen from the World: media discourses and geographical visions

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## Abstract

The media are powerful vectors of geographical representations: they reflect collective images of spaces and contribute to shaping them by focusing on different spaces or themes. Mass media are involved in the production of popular geopolitics that shape visions of the World and spatial behaviors. In the information press, the reference is the national level focusing on inter- or infra-national news, whereas current dynamics of functional as well as institutional regionalization of the World reinforces wide regional scale spatial organizations. In Europe, the regional dynamic associates eastern and south-Mediterranean countries to the core European region (according to flows and various indicators) whereas the visions of Europe are mostly continental, forged along the ages. Europe is a very steady part of the World, particularly regarding the division between North and South that considers the Mediterranean as a limit. There is also a hiatus between the geography of functional Europe and the geography of political Europe (the European Union). What about popular Europe? That is Europe in minds, collective images of Europe seen by non-geographers neither politicians. This communication wonders about visions of Europe in collective discourses as the press delivers them. It also focuses on the Mediterranean: as a border of the EU and a front of European regional integration, it is a space where visions are determinant to explain the spatial dynamics of Europe.

The analysis is based on a wide data base collected by the ANR project "Corpus Geomedia" (2012-2016 – [geomedia.hypotheses.org](http://geomedia.hypotheses.org)) of international press news built thanks to RSS feeds from daily information newspapers located around the World, in four languages (French, English, Spanish, Italian) for a time period of two years (2014-2016). It emphasizes the huge quantity of short news (title of article and short summary). The corpus has been composed according to both media and geographical characteristics: it covers 23 countries and 36 newspapers.

Which geography of Europe do the media deliver?

Are the media a conservative source of visions of Europe or do they reflect ongoing spatial dynamics?

Is Europe a consensus or a dissent among the media and countries?

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To answer that, two main directions are explored:

- A territorial approach that aims at mapping the limits of Europe. It engages in an examination of the underlying geography of toponyms like "Europe" and "Mediterranean".

Spatial clues have been extracted from news quoting these toponyms and mapped to mark out media bounds of regions. Europe is a regional object that is shown in its continental limits. The press renews a classical vision of Europe with some fuzzy points as Russia and Turkey. It is a consensus for the press. The Mediterranean covers a wide Europe from Scandinavia to sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting current migratory dynamics. Nevertheless, it is a controversial space where national-typed representations are projected. Focusing on thematic aspects by analyzing the Mediterranean as a regional object of ongoing debate through countries in a context of migratory crisis shows that, in a larger time period, the Mediterranean is a minor but constant topic in media agenda that has known recent ruptures with the Union for the Mediterranean creation in 2008, the Arab spring in 2011 and with migrants news stories since 2014. Analyses of news contents draw some perspectives to identify with press data territorial integration dynamics.

- A network approach that aims for mapping international relations of EU countries. It constitutes in an examination of Europe's connection with neighbor countries and regional distribution of media flows.

This country based perspective analyzes the associations of EU members with World countries in a same piece of news as a way of quantifying international relations as they are narrated by the press; it works as a synthetic indicator of international spatial interactions. EU countries are deeply interconnected and connected with neighbor countries. This Euro-Mediterranean media community is extended to the Middle East. Nevertheless, some countries are both regional and global powers and are connected with far-off centers of the global geopolitical theater. This is a way to disaggregate European connections within the World-system.

**Keywords:** media, information flows, geographical visions, borders, Mediterranean