

CONCLUSION

The Story of Ibrahim (Part II): How a Syrian Refugee Became an Intercultural Guide in Turin

Thanks also to the help of my former tourists, I was able to obtain refugee status in Italy, but my family was still in Lebanon. It was then that another very difficult period began, because due to a really absurd rule we could get the reunion of my wife and our two youngest children, but not of the two older sisters. So there was no other solution but to send them to Turkey, to Istanbul, and from there pay smugglers to let them enter Europe. One of my two older daughters had a really terrible experience at that point. They took her to Bodrum, on the coast, and from there she would have to get on a dinghy to cross the sea and land on the Greek island of Kos. She was very afraid and when she was on the beach she did not want to get on board. But among the other people who had to make the same crossing was a woman, with two children. Eventually this woman calmed her down and they all got on the boat together. Things went badly though . . . while they were in the middle of the sea, the Greek coast guard sailed around the dinghy with their large vessel making such a large wave that they caused the dinghy to overturn. All the people ended up in the sea, three or four kilometres from the coast. That woman's children did not make it, my daughter was saved, but for a year after she arrived here in Turin she was not herself. She was not well because of the nightmares she had inside her head. Luckily, she is better now and our whole family is happily reunited here in Turin, apart from my parents who are very old and never wanted to leave Syria. They are still in our house in Damascus.

So, in Turin, when I was fifty years old, my second life began. It wasn't easy at first, but then tourism came back into my life. I remember it as if it

were yesterday. In 2017 I was there at the computer looking for work and by chance I found a training course announcement for the Migrantour project. I immediately thought: I am a migrant and I have always worked with tourism, so this project is for me! To be honest, at first I didn't really understand what it was about and what the real purpose of the project was. When I did the first walking trial at Porta Palazzo I thought I should behave like when I was guiding in Syria, be very precise with all the historical and architectural information, and so on. But then, slowly, I found my way. I remember two pivotal moments. The first is when I saw an important building here in Turin through a new perspective, the church of the Great Mother of God. Observing it I realized that it was very similar to the Pantheon of Rome, one of the most famous buildings built by the great architect Apollodorus of Damascus. In this way I managed to establish a connection between my old city in Syria and the one in which I now lived in Italy, and I realized that I could find other connections. The second moment was when I saw that there was Aleppo soap for sale in the window of a shop in Porta Palazzo. Do you understand? In the midst of the war and all the difficulties, a small object like that soap had come all the way to Turin. Since then, the objects have been of great importance to me. During the walks of Migrantour I always use them to anchor my stories when presenting them to the participants and one very exciting thing for me is that I can again use objects I thought had been taken away when I escaped from Damascus. Today, I can once again use the small antenna with the flag that I used to use to guide tourists in Syria, to accompany people to Turin. Speaking of objects and memories that can stimulate us . . . I am now also working on this theme for another initiative that I am carrying out for the Egyptian Museum. Yes, because this is now my main job and again it all started with a former tourist. This lady has a daughter who works at the Egyptian Museum of Turin, which is the largest museum of Egyptian antiquities in the world after Cairo, a testimony of the historical link that Turin has with the Mediterranean. One day she called me and told me that the director of the museum was rearranging the collections and wanted to add all the captions and explanations in Arabic as well, to make the museum more accessible to the many immigrant communities that speak Arabic in Turin and Italy. So I started to collaborate with the museum as a translator and from that moment other possibilities of collaboration emerged because the Egyptian Museum is very interested in working with the territory and on the subject of immigration. I worked with them for a series of meetings and conferences entitled 'Musei e Migranti' (Museums and Migrants) and by 2018 they hired me. Now at the museum I mainly deal with the library, the archive and social programmes. I am doing interesting workshops in different neighbourhoods of the city with groups of citizens. We start by collecting personal stories around objects that the

participants have chosen because they are linked to their daily life or to an episode of their past, and then we pay a visit to the collections of the Egyptian Museum doing the same thing of telling the stories behind the objects exhibited.

In short, today after so many journeys and so many difficulties I have gone back to doing the work that gives me as much satisfaction as it did before the war. In 2020 I applied for Italian citizenship and if everything goes well, in a couple of years I should become an Italian citizen. It's true, the war at one point destroyed everything and took everything away from me. But fate wanted me to finally recover. And speaking of fate, I'll tell you one last episode that touched me a few months ago. In the spring of this year, while I was in the museum archive, the director sent for me urgently. I joined him in the exhibition halls and saw that he was talking to a woman and a boy. As soon as I got close I recognized them: they were the daughter and grandson of the great Syrian archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad, who for forty years was responsible for the site of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2015 he was captured and killed, beheaded by Isis. We knew each other and were friends because every time I went to Palmyra with the tourists we met and talked. I also knew his family well. In the halls of the Egyptian Museum there is a plaque that recalls Khaled al-Asaad and so that day, on that afternoon, after a long time I was able to hug his daughter and his nephew and we cried together. This is fate.

(Interview with Ibrahim, carried out by the author in Turin on
9 September 2022)

Local Identities and Global Changes in the Mediterranean

We are coming to the end of our long journey. In this Conclusion I would like to recall some of the analysis and reflections presented in this book, thus continuing to cultivate that comparative look with which I have always tried to observe the different ethnographic contexts and the different educational and applicative experiences that in the past fifteen years have allowed me to move across and around the Mediterranean.

This last section of the book opened with the second part of Ibrahim's testimony. The Introduction contained his memories of work experience as a tour guide in Syria from the 1980s to the early 2000s until the dramatic outbreak of the war, along with his flight to Lebanon before the arduous path to refugee status in Italy. Now we have seen what further difficulties his family had to go through in order to reach him in Italy. The tragedy experienced by his daughter off the coast of Kos has brought us back to the context of the Greek Aegean islands that we explored in Part II, as well

as the new professional life of Ibrahim in Turin as an intercultural guide, which has added another piece to the portrait of the urban tourism project that we outlined in Part III. Ibrahim's testimony ends with the touching meeting with two people dear to him, whom he had met years before in Syria and who found themselves visiting the Egyptian Museum in Turin. In some ways, the thread broken by the war has been reconstructed, but Ibrahim still cannot return home to Syria, unlike Albanians who can return to Albania every summer, as discussed in Part I. 'I'll be back when it's meant to be,' Ibrahim might tell us. Yes, but who knows what city, what country he and his children, and the children of his children will then be able to call 'home'. The *roots* can easily become *routes*, and our identities are beyond us in the future, in as much as they are behind us in the past. In the six chapters of (un)expected encounters between migrants, tourists and locals across the Mediterranean, we have seen this many times and have now understood it well.

In this journey we have travelled far and wide through the Mediterranean region. We started from Albania, which in the nineteenth century was the subject of the first tourist fantasies inspired by orientalist images that painted the Balkans as a 'bridge' between the West and the East. By the end of the twentieth century, after the mass emigration following the Cold War, a new season of mobility had begun in the Mediterranean. We have therefore followed the second generations of Italian-Albanians through the different stages of a 'roots tour' in the country of their parents, alternating the historical sites of Albania with moments dedicated to leisure and socialization that allow young people of the diaspora to reshape their identities. The *xhiro*, an Albanian term that describes evening walks taken with the desire to see and be seen, acts as a significant metaphor to reflect on the more general meaning of the summer holidays of emigrants and their children. We then focused on the town of Ksamil, in southern Albania, which over a few decades has transformed from a model cooperative under the communist regime to a centre of attraction for internal and international migration in the post-socialist period. The proximity to the Greek border and the beauty of its coast have also made it a destination for seaside tourism, giving rise to a peculiar form of complementarity between migration and tourism. The houses of Ksamil, built from money earned by migrant workers in Greece during the year, become holiday homes in summer for internal and international tourists, including a large number of young people and families from the diaspora. But just as the paths of researching the cultural roots of the second-generation emigrants are ambivalent and changeable, the foundations of the houses in which the inhabitants of Ksamil live are equally unstable, as the controversial campaign of demolition against building abuses has clearly highlighted.

Following this, we left the mainland to navigate towards islands and archipelagos that were simultaneously the destination of migratory and tourist flows. We have therefore become aware of the historical and contemporary importance of the different forms of mobility through the waters of the Mediterranean, recognizing the complexity of the condition of islandness. Invariably described as ‘paradises’ in the tourist imagination, islands are actually complex social, cultural, economic and political environments, where the issue of sustainability is central and a good dose of creativity and experimentation skills are required to address it. Even in the case of small and apparently remote islands, the connections between these small patches of land have built up over time to make them critical hubs for all the different forms of contact and exchange in the Mediterranean region. The analysis of European policies to control immigration and the externalization of borders has led us to observe what is happening on the islands that are part of the EU border in the Mediterranean. On Lesbos, in the northern Aegean Sea, residents, migrants, tourists, soldiers and volunteers move in an environment marked by practices of exclusion and invisibility to create what has been defined as a *departheid* regime. Migrants are reduced to a state of ‘deportability’ which generates inhuman living conditions in the Moria refugee camp. However, there are also attempts to challenge and transgress these internal boundaries by trying to build spaces for encounter and dialogue. The creators of these initiatives could be defined as ‘voluntourists’, a neologism that expresses the experience of those who go to the island by combining the dimensions of solidarity and volunteering with those of tourism and leisure. In Lampedusa, a small Italian island that has become known around the world as the ‘gateway’ to the central Mediterranean migrations, we have seen how the themes of reception and hospitality have been incorporated into the local religious tradition of the cult of the Madonna of Porto Salvo. The patron saint of the island accompanied the social and economic transformations of Lampedusa between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from the time of its colonization to that of deep-sea fishing and the emigration of young people to the continent. The pastoral visit of Pope Francis in 2013 gave rise to a new phase in the history of popular devotion to the Madonna of Porto Salvo, who became the protector of migrants and a symbol of the ‘Gospel of welcome’ outlined by Jorge Bergoglio. Lesbos’s ‘voluntourism’ and the solidarity practices developed in Lampedusa around the idea of the island-refuge allow us to outline a possible moral history of migrations in the contemporary Mediterranean, tracing the new sacred topography of the twenty-first century.

Finally, we have reached a location far from the sea, but which we have investigated for its Mediterranean character, which has seen it described as a ‘port of call’ for internal and international migration flows from southern

Italy and North Africa. The Porta Palazzo district in Turin actually developed around a large Mediterranean market despite being at the foot of the Alps. Different generations of immigrants live and work in the neighbourhood, experiencing forms of 'daily multiculturalism' characterized by different levels of interaction, exchange, negotiations, frictions, representations, alliances and conflicts. Observed in the microcosm of life within a neighbourhood condominium, these dynamics suggest the importance of finding 'spaces of transversality' to cultivate practices of conviviality and to strengthen the experience of being able to live 'through differences'. These initiatives focusing on active citizenship and commitment to intercultural dialogue have, finally, led us to consider a project of responsible tourism born in the Turin district of Porta Palazzo and then replicated at the European level. Today in several cities in Mediterranean Europe, 'Migrantour Intercultural Urban Routes' offers guided walks designed and led by first- and second-generation migrant citizens to enhance the role that migration plays in enriching the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of our cities. The project, despite all the weaknesses and limitations that we have extensively discussed, shows the real possibility of imagining initiatives that aim to 'mobilize hospitality' and involve tourists and residents so that they can fight alongside migrants to achieve greater 'mobility justice' locally and globally.

These have been the main stages of our journey. Returning to the discussion initiated in the Introduction, I would like to recall the links outlined at the beginning of the journey and use the tools that guided us in our navigation one last time. As you will remember, the starting point was to build a kind of theoretical sextant: *Panoramas/Connections, Gazes/Hos(t)ipitality, Regimes/Borders* have allowed us to triangulate the position of *spaces, images, objects* and *bodies* and to outline various areas of encounter. It is now time to find out where this orientation exercise has led us and to drop anchor in the ports along the route. In the following pages, I will define these territories of new knowledge through three assertions that we have learnt. I know already that, like many of the people we have met along the way, the landing place is not final and can always lead elsewhere.

Every Encounter Has Its History

The first conclusion I have drawn from comparing the case studies is this: migrants, tourists and locals who meet today in the Mediterranean have their own stories and mobility biographies, which rarely allow them to be classified, and very often reflect multiple, fluid, hybrid and ambivalent identities. Italian-Albanian young people perceive themselves and behave like their Italian peers when they are at school during the year, although many do

not have Italian citizenship and are considered immigrants by Italian institutions and counted as 'foreigners' in research and statistics. When they go on holiday in their parents' country of origin, they are perceived and treated by local hoteliers and restaurateurs as tourists, although during visits to friends and relatives they are told that they have returned 'home' and therefore should behave 'like Albanians'. In Lesvos and Lampedusa, associations and groups of residents who carry out solidarity initiatives with migrants are formed by former tourists who have settled on the islands and have become inhabitants yet are still perceived in part as 'outsiders' by islanders who have lived there longer. Tourists and students who visit Turin and the other cities of the Migrantour network are accompanied by people who have lived personal or family experiences of migration and who claim their role as citizens and experts of the local cultural heritage.

The second level of reflection is: today's intersections of migration and tourism must be included in a long-term analysis of Mediterranean mobility. From this point of view, it is necessary to adopt a longitudinal approach that allows us to reconstruct and interpret the history of the encounters that each context has experienced over time. We have seen this in the case of the condominium of Turin, where the arrival of international migrants and tourists in recent years takes place in the same apartments and courtyard where fifty years earlier internal migrants from southern Italy landed, and a century ago farmers and traders who rested at the Porta Palazzo market. In Ksamil, today's mobility is seen on the lands that during communism became the destination of a centralized and regulated migration by the state that led young people and 'activists' from all over the country to establish an agricultural cooperative in a region with a strong Greek minority. This can be seen again in Lesvos, where the elderly are descendants of the refugees of the 1920s who arrived on the island from Asia Minor following the forced exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. In Lampedusa, those who identify themselves as 'locals' are actually the sons and daughters from when the island was colonized in the middle of the nineteenth century, when inhabitants from other islands and lands of the Bourbon Kingdom arrived on ships to inhabit the new colony. These events are not separate from contemporary ones, but must be understood as a continuity with current dynamics. The present-day scenarios need to be seen as living repertoires of sense and meaning that people constantly draw on to interpret their lives and the experiences of their encounter with others.

The interweaving of the 'biographies of mobility' of migrants with longer-term histories of community and place mobilities highlights the mutual gazes and forms of hos(ti)pitality that are generated and that we have identified as one of the fundamental criteria to interpret the encounters examined in the various ethnographic contexts. These are exchanges that, as we have

seen, develop along a continuum that extends between the poles of intimacy and otherness.

When we consider the (un)expected encounters between migrants, tourists and locals in the Mediterranean, we have to remember that these categories cannot be taken for granted or viewed as 'natural'. They need to be discussed, deconstructed and always considered in relational and transient terms. Subjects may wish to enter or leave these groups and to be included or excluded from them occasionally. To paraphrase the well-known processual understanding of the concepts of ethnic groups and boundaries that the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth proposed for the Baluchi (1969), we could therefore say: the point is not *to be* locals, migrants or tourists; the important thing is to study how people *become* locals, migrants and tourists.

Mobility Is a Key Element in Heritage-Making

So let us move on to the second conclusion. I believe that the various case studies show clearly how migration and tourism are forces that produce, transform and reshape tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Both of these forms of mobility have this power individually, but the impact is significantly increased when they work together and in a complementary way in a given context. We have seen many examples in this book. In Albania we have seen how the Venetian masks purchased by tourists in Italy are made in a workshop created by an Albanian migrant from Shkodër who has thus revitalized the tradition of the Venetian Carnival in his city. In the Krujë bazaar we have met a merchant who for twenty years has recovered everyday objects from rural and mountain areas abandoned by emigrants to sell them as antiques to tourists. Even the bunkers, legacies of the communist regime, which still emerge everywhere like mushrooms of reinforced concrete in the Albanian landscape, have become part of the local heritage. They are transformed into museums of the Cold War, painted with bright colours by writers and street artists, or miniaturized and reduced to souvenirs in alabaster. In Lesvos and Lampedusa, on the other hand, objects that once belonged to migrants become heritage. Life jackets become artistic installations to denounce the cruelty of European migration policies in the works of Ai Weiwei, or are transformed into backpacks and bags to sell to support the activities of non-governmental organizations supporting migrants. The wood of the shipwrecked boats is used to create the altar and the staff for Pope Francis's visit to the island, and then to forge thousands of crosses of all sizes to be sent to parishes around the world, to be sold to tourists and to be exhibited in churches and museums. The ancient 'Legend of the Anfossi', linked to the Madonna of Porto Salvo, is rewritten and reinterpreted by the activist Giacomo Sferlazzo in the form of a *cantata* to reflect on contemporary

migrations and on the forms of struggle for the liberation of those oppressed by the dominant political and economic systems of today. And through the 'Migrantour' project, first- and second-generation migrants in every part of Europe become 'heritage communities' to claim the right to access the existing heritage and to identify and transmit to the new generations further expressions and interpretations of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The mosques hidden in the courtyards and the denied memories of colonialism and decolonization thus become a heritage capable of 'opening the city' and of enhancing 'the richness of the meanings, rather than the clarity of the meaning'.

Among the coordinates that allow us to analyse the encounters between locals, migrants and tourists in the Mediterranean are *Scapes* and *Connections*, flows that extend between local and global scales relating people, places, stories, objects and meanings. The case studies in this book show us the importance of 'heritage flows' in building an area of comparison, exchange and negotiation between subjects who, although arranged according to different hierarchies of power, claim the right to self-representation. Among the landscapes of 'modernity at large' described by Appadurai (1996), in which the local and global interact continuously, we can therefore add what I would call '*heritagescapes*'.

Anthropologist and archaeologist Michael Galaty (2014), starting from his field research in Albania, Kosovo and Greece, proposed a model for the study of heritage-making processes and policies that highlight the interactions between different factors: agency, imagination, memory, history, nationalism, ethnicity. It is from the intersection of these dimensions that what Galaty defines as 'heritage structures' are generated and inscribed in the landscape. By reworking the model proposed by Galaty, I therefore propose to take into consideration a further constituent element of the *heritagescapes* of the contemporary Mediterranean: mobility.

There Is Life beyond 'Dark Anthropology'

In our journey through the Mediterranean, we have often encountered suffering and injustice. In Lesbos and Lampedusa, in particular, the border regime has shown us the violence of immigration control and rejection policies implemented by the European Union and its member states, in an attempt to fortify European borders and block migrants. The number of victims of Mediterranean crossings grows day by day and under the misleading definition of 'missing migrants' which encompass thousands of women, men, elderly and children every year.

Researchers and activists have over the years denounced these forms of violence and oppression suffered by migrants, who have become a symbol of



FIGURE 7.1. Museum of the Memory of the Sea, Zarzis, Tunis, 2018.
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the global inequalities produced in recent decades by the neoliberal model both politically and economically. According to the acute reflection of Sherry Ortner (2016), from the 1980s the development of what Ortner called ‘dark anthropology’ focused on the study of ‘harsh and brutal dimensions of human experience, and the structural and historical conditions that produce them’ (Ortner 2016: 49). Alongside this critical dimension of neoliberal governance, Ortner suggested that researchers should further refine their ability to explore an ‘anthropology of the good’. Ethnographies and theories aimed at investigating the dimensions of happiness, the search for justice, conviviality, friendship and solidarity should interact with the strands of research that analyse the ‘dark side’ of power and its derivatives, in order to revive an ‘anthropology of resistance’. This field of anthropological research, already established in the second half of the twentieth century as a study of social movements, should, according to Ortner, be enriched with ethnographic research that highlights ‘the extraordinary range of creative ways in which challenges to the existing order can be constructed, but also for understanding the alternative visions of the future embedded in such movements’ (ibid.: 66). To use the categories that Arjun Appadurai proposed in his analysis of the future as a cultural fact (2013), anthropology has the potential to strengthen not only the ‘ethic of probability’ but also an ‘ethic of possibility’ in which the researcher, alongside activists and their informants in the field,

is personally interested in exploring and pursuing alternative possibilities to build desirable futures. Natalia Bloch (2021), with her recent and accurate study of the encounters ‘across difference’ between subordinate groups of the local population and tourists in India, has shown how fruitful it can be to follow this perspective for studies on tourism, exploring how the dimensions of hope, empathy and emancipation emerge from these relationships.

This is, I believe, the third conclusion that inspires us through the encounters analysed in this book. The third fundamental coordinate that we used to orient ourselves, that of the power expressed by the *Regimes/Borders*, suggests the possibility and the need to work to move from the pole of inequalities towards that of justice.

Throughout the book we have seen some practices and examples of initiatives that try to go in this direction, but many others can be a source of inspiration and analysis. I would like to mention here some which are particularly relevant for the Mediterranean context: the international campaign ‘Abolition Borders 2021’, which brought together researchers and activists to abolish border control and militarization policies and to imagine what consequences this choice would have and what forms of collaboration and community ideas of a world without borders would lead us to; ‘Ermenautica’ (a play on words, mixing the Italian words for ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘navitics’), a training and research project that, since 2019, has led students and researchers from La Sapienza University in Rome to sail through the Mediterranean on a sailboat, allowing for encounters capable of reaching and connecting initiatives and ‘resistant communities’ in the Mediterranean; and then, the many forms of ‘unconditional hospitality’ invented and practised by individual citizens or small communities to welcome and support migrants on the move that, according to Michel Agier (2018), have produced a clear manifestation of dissent towards the xenophobic policies of states today and a realization of the idea of the city-refuge, in which ‘the stranger who comes’ finds protection.

In difficult times and times of great uncertainty such as today, all these initiatives remind us of the importance for anthropologists not only to study the future, but to assume, together with their informants, the role of active participants in the collective processes of building possible futures (Salazar et al. 2017; Pandian 2019). Faced with the doubts, errors and ambivalences that we will certainly have to confront by questioning the ethical and political horizons of our experimental practices of research, teaching and application, we will be comforted by what Erve Chambers, a tourism anthropologist, wrote:

Even the most ‘value free’ stance finds its appeal ultimately in a belief that it is better for our world to have the knowledge of anthropology than not, and even the most

empirically minded among us generally imply that a world enlightened by anthropology will somehow be a better world. This is not necessarily true; it is at least possible to imagine that it is not at all true. But our assumptions of value are necessary. Without them, we cannot sustain a discipline acceptable to us. (Chambers 1987: 329)

Present and Future (Im)Mobilities

We have now opened up a reflection on our ability to imagine and build possible and desirable futures. The category of the 'future' is certainly closely linked to that of mobility, since every movement in space is also inevitably a movement over time. Getting on the road, moving forward necessarily means looking to tomorrow. As we have seen throughout the book, migration and tourism are not only processes with spatial dimensions, but also with temporalities. Space and time often overlap and intertwine. Being stuck in a refugee camp means being bound to a space from which it seems impossible to escape to resume the journey, but also to live with the feeling of remaining in a temporal limbo, crushed by an eternal present in which the perspective of the future seems to vanish.

The research and the educational and applied experiences on which this volume is based were almost all carried out by the end of 2019. Since then, two major (and largely unforeseen) events have occurred: the Covid-19 pandemic that was recognized globally in the spring of 2020 and the war in Ukraine that broke out two years later in February 2022.

For different reasons, both events have had and will continue to have an enormous impact on the issues I have discussed so far and, in general, on the issue of (im)mobility in the contemporary world. For the reasons outlined above, the consequences of the pandemic and war on people's ability to move are also translated in terms of the possibility for subjects to think about the present and the future.

As we know, in the history of anthropology the definition of 'salvage ethnography' is essentially connected to the temporal dimension of the past and to the desire to save the traces of authenticity from the transformational and destructive effects caused by colonial power, modernity and economic and technological development. However, as Capello, Karampampas and Lauth Bacas (2021: 14) have noted, introducing a collection of essays on the future(s) of the Mediterranean, the series of crises and uncertainties that have affected the planet since the 2000s have led anthropologists to redirect their rescue work towards the future. The anxiety and confusion resulting from the end of the great narratives on progress, infinite economic growth and social stability have inhibited our ability to anticipate, both on a personal and collective level. To put it in terms of the analytical categories proposed in

the mid-twentieth century by the Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino ([1977] 2019), we are facing a 'crisis of presence' connected to the feeling of being in the middle of the 'end of the world', or at least of our world.

Both migration and tourism are two forms of mobility for which the link between 'future' and 'risk' is crucial.

Those who emigrate do so precisely because of their orientation towards the future, for which they harbour fears and hopes. We leave because we are afraid of not having a future in the country where we are, and with the aim of building a happy future, or at least better than the present, for ourselves and our loved ones. We leave despite the risks that will be encountered during the journey, even putting our very lives at risk. Often the perspective of the desired change goes beyond that of one's own life and extends to future generations. Even for countries that see their inhabitants leaving or for those that receive them, migration is linked with the future of society, from a demographic, economic and cultural point of view, with the risks of depopulation and social conflict.

Moreover, tourism has these same dimensions. Hundreds of millions of people, every year, in every part of the world, dream, wait and plan their holidays, projecting desires and frustrations. Yet, as simple and organized as it is, the tourist journey does not exclude risk. In fact, it often contemplates and searches for it. Tourists often put themselves at risk, knowingly or unknowingly, as victims of kidnappings and terrorist acts have shown over the decades. In Tunisia and Egypt, on the Ramblas of Barcelona and on the Promenade des Angles in Nice, many of the worst terrorist attacks of the twenty-first century hit places frequented by tourists, with the specific aim of hitting everything that tourist mobility means economically, politically and symbolically for the countries affected. But tourism also risks the sustainability of societies and territories that have invested their hopes for the future in tourism, but are faced with unforeseen risks. The tourism sector may collapse, jeopardizing jobs and causing new emigration flows, or it can quickly consume local resources and change the territory to benefit them, polluting the air and water. As a whole, tourism is an extremely energy-intensive sector, based on the massive consumption of fossil fuels, on airplanes which are extremely harmful to the environment and which cause the waste of huge quantities of food resources.

Already in 2011, John Urry and Jonas Larsen concluded their *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* by outlining three possible scenarios for global (im)mobility in the year 2050. The first possible future could be marked by hyper-mobility, with a continuous increase in both land and space tourism and migration for work that will become the preferred choice of most of the planet's inhabitants. A second scenario, according to the two authors, would be characterized by 'local sustainability'. In this future, which we could define as environmen-

talist, society and the global economy are restructured in order to minimize the consumption of available natural resources. Every aspect of daily life is locally focused and concentrated to limit long-distance travel and its pollution as much as possible. The third scenario is post-apocalyptic. Lack of energy supplies, environmental and social crises, wars and epidemics lead to the collapse of the current political and economic system, with billions of individuals forced into forms of chaotic mobility to escape conflicts and disasters, while others are subjected to forms of control and confinement by states or groups that hold power and apply the use of force and violence (Urry and Larsen 2011: 233–35).

Significantly, Urry and Larsen conclude their description of possible futures by evoking the dystopian scenario of the movie *Mad Max*. This is a good example of the connection I briefly mentioned in the Introduction: social sciences and science fiction can usefully develop a dialogue on the link between (im)mobility and the future, each with its own tools of investigation and its own languages, thus jointly exercising its critical capacity towards the present.

Several recent science fiction novels have described a future with a radical reversal of roles compared to the present, in which European and North American citizens, until recently accustomed to travelling as wealthy tourists, are forced to emigrate south or east due to wars and poverty (Zardi 2015; Kalfus 2022). This dystopian future allows us to visualize through literary invention what anthropology shows through ethnography. The role of ‘migrants’ and ‘tourists’ is changing and can also change suddenly due to unpredictable political upheavals, as in Ibrahim’s story.

I would now like to take a final step towards the conclusion of this book, focusing on the two dimensions of crisis that we are going through today and that have profoundly marked the intersection between migration and tourism in recent years in sudden and unpredictable ways, while at the same time showing the risks and opportunities related to these two forms of mobility in the near future. In the last two sections of this Conclusion I will therefore briefly discuss the further (un)expected encounters between locals, migrants and tourists in the Mediterranean in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current war in Ukraine, while proposing them as possible avenues for future developments of the research presented in this volume.

‘Stay at Home’: Migration and Tourism during and after the Covid-19 Pandemic

As we have briefly seen in the Introduction, and from our own experiences, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic from early 2020 has caused an unprecedented contraction in global mobility and the articulation of a series of policies

aimed at promoting isolation and social distancing as fundamental tools in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus. The long months of substantial immobility that followed brought out a new phenomenon later that year: a wave of migrations caused by the collapse of international tourism.

The first testimonies about this process came to me from friends in Lampedusa, and in particular from the groups of local volunteers who had access to the pier where immigrants disembark. They had in fact noticed an increase in the arrivals of people from Tunisia who said they had been workers in the tourism sector, in particular as staff of hotels and restaurants, and that they had decided to leave because they had suddenly become unemployed. In Tunisia, like many other countries of the Mediterranean and around the world, tourists were no longer arriving.

A similar situation has been documented by a series of interesting reports from the Spanish newspaper *El País* about the Canary Islands. Gala Sow, who landed in Tenerife with sixty-six other Senegalese migrants, told the journalist that ‘all tourism workers, such as hoteliers, professional guides and shopkeepers, have nothing left to live on’. They had travelled for ten days by boat along one of the most dangerous routes of maritime emigration to Europe to reach the Canary Islands. Before the outbreak, Gala ran a souvenir shop in Saint Louis, where she sold bracelets, necklaces, shoes and clothes, and gave djembe classes and concerts. During the tourist season, from December to July, he could earn up to three million CFA francs, about 4,500 euros. But overnight the flow of Italian, French and Spanish tourists stopped. And so in autumn 2020, Gala became one of the new profiles of African migrants arriving in the Canaries, eleven thousand of whom landed within ten months (Martín 2020). Here they were welcomed by another locality in the midst of a full tourist crisis. The first year of the pandemic caused the collapse of international tourist arrivals in the Spanish Atlantic archipelago. The deserted hotels and tourist villages of Gran Canaria in October 2020 reopened their terraces overlooking the sea to accommodate about four thousand newly arrived migrants, waiting to be transferred elsewhere (Vega 2020). This has once again created a peculiar intersection between migration and tourism with regard to the use of mobility facilities. Hotels built to accommodate tourists, which had remained empty due to their absence, were transformed into reception facilities for migrants who had to leave their country after losing their previous employment in the tourism sector.

What happened on the ‘Atlantic route’ between Senegal, Morocco and Spain is a fragment of what happened globally, especially in the first year of the pandemic. In 2019, tourism provided 10.3 percent of all jobs worldwide, directly and indirectly employing as many as 330 million people. Workers were mostly part of medium to small companies, with 30 percent of the

total employed in companies with fewer than ten employees (ILO 2020). In the pre-Covid era, the sector had reached the threshold of 9 trillion dollars in turnover (i.e. over 10 percent of global GDP), contributing to high shares of national gross domestic product in many countries, with peaks of over 50 percent in the so-called Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as the Maldives, Cape Verde and so on (WTTC 2019). The year 2020 saw a drop in international tourist arrivals that had never been seen since surveys were established in this area in the 1950s. According to data from the World Tourism Organization, 1.5 billion tourists had crossed a border in 2019, whereas in 2020 the number of arrivals fell by 70 percent compared to the previous year (with a 79 percent decline in Asia, 69 percent in Africa and the Middle East, 68 percent in Europe and 67 percent in the Americas). The sector lost approximately \$730 billion in revenue in twelve months, eight times more damage than that caused by the 2008–2009 financial crisis (UNWTO 2020).

This collapse in tourist mobility has had two main consequences in terms of migration. The first, as we have seen, has triggered new flows of emigration involving those who have lost work and income. The second is the impact the crisis has had on the lives of immigrants employed in the tourism sector. It should be remembered that tourism is one of the sectors of the labour market in which the presence of immigrant workers is most pervasive, but inconspicuous: just think of the case of the *MV Grand Princess*, one of the largest cruise ships that was affected by the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic in February 2020. There was much discussion at the time about the health conditions of the three thousand tourists on board, blocked by a long quarantine in the port of San Francisco, but there was less interest in the fate of the 518 Filipino workers who were part of the crew, carrying out the most diverse tasks, and who were also victims of the contagion (Requejo 2020). Cruises are one segment of tourism that is based most heavily on migrant labour. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the months of the spring lockdown of 2020 there were about 100,000 cruise ship crew members blocked at sea or in ports far from their countries of origin. Migrant workers are particularly fragile and lack rights and are confined to very limited spaces, without the possibility of being repatriated, with wages arbitrarily cut or suspended by their employers (Demster and Zimmer 2020). The vulnerability of the *MV Grand Princess*'s Filipino crew reflects that of millions of other immigrants who allow the tourism industry to operate in every part of the world, often poorly protected by seasonal employment contracts, if not employed in an even more informal manner. It is a 'grey' or 'black' working condition that excluded immigrant workers in the tourism industry from most of the financial aid that many countries, especially in the European Union, distributed to workers affected by the crisis.

The most acute phase of the pandemic crisis occurred in 2020, but 2021 also carried the scars. Returning to Lampedusa in September 2021 for the summer school I spoke of in Part II, one of the first images that struck me when I arrived on the island was the silhouette of the ferry at anchor a short distance from the entrance to the port. The large white and blue ship normally used by Lampedusans and tourists to move between the island and Sicily had in fact been converted into a ‘quarantine ship’ for migrants since the beginning of the pandemic. The use of transport or cruise ships as confinement tools for migrants in quarantine has been repeatedly criticized as inadequate, but it has continued to be used despite the protests of migrants and the dramatic death which occurred on board the ferry anchored off Lampedusa of a young Somali migrant of just fourteen years of age (De Monte 2022).

The summer and autumn of 2021 marked a resumption of international mobility and socialization in contexts where social distancing measures had gradually disappeared. For the Lampedusa community, for example, this new phase made it possible to significantly restore the traditional procession of the Madonna di Porto Salvo through the streets of the town. In September of the previous year, for the first time, the procession had been suspended for public health reasons and the Madonna of Porto Salvo had been stuck in a sort of ‘symbolic quarantine’ inside the parish of San Gerlando, unable to return to its Sanctuary. Although she returned to move freely on the island in September 2021, the Madonna of Porto Salvo has nevertheless once again recorded the pandemic crisis in the variations of her cult practices. The virus has in fact put her role as ‘protector of migrants’ in the background and the inhabitants of Lampedusa have returned to pray to her essentially as a protector of the health of the local community, threatened by the risk of the virus coming from elsewhere and therefore associated with the arrival of migrants and tourists.

The other ethnographic contexts that we have analysed in the previous chapters have also reacted in some way to the difficulties posed by the pandemic. In the case of Albania, for example, diaspora associations played a significant role in supporting tourism operators in their home country, who had previously benefited from the strong growth of the tourist market in previous years, but had experienced a serious crisis in 2020–2021. The Albanian Cultural Centre of Turin, borne from the experience of the ‘Vatra’ association that had organized the ‘roots tour’ of 2008 described in Chapter 1, committed itself in these two years to an interesting project funded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which aims to transfer IT and marketing skills to artisanal producers of the agricultural and mountainous areas of northern-central Albania who want to develop proposals for food and wine tourism and agricultural hospitality. The Albanian emigrants

residing in Italy have thus created for the beneficiaries (small agricultural producers and artisans of the Zadrime and Malësi and Madhe regions) websites and a communication campaign on social media aimed mainly at Albanian domestic tourism. Considering the absence of international tourists, it was thought that it could be the Albanians residing in the country itself who would be interested in discovering new forms of proximity eco-tourism.

A similar process also took place in Italy concerning the Migrantour project, which we discussed in Chapter 6. Between 2020 and 2021, tourism operators quickly reoriented themselves, replacing the promotion of foreign destinations and international travel with the encouragement of 'local tourism', proposing itineraries to (re)discover the internal areas of the country, walking routes in the countryside and through the mountains and so on. In this context, the intercultural walks of Migrantour have found their own specific space, linked to the opportunity to show how large cities as well as small urban centres and rural areas have been transformed over time by migrations and are today characterized by increasing cultural diversity. Thus, while Ibrahim and the other intercultural guides continued with great tenacity (wearing masks and adopting all the necessary precautions) to propose walks in Turin and in the other cities of the network, the new Rural Migrantour itineraries were created among forests, rivers, islands, caves and small mountain villages, along and across the borders of Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Slovenia, in seemingly remote areas but in reality crossed throughout by flows of mobility.

As the writing of this book draws to a close, the Covid-19 pandemic seems to be almost over. In the summer of 2022, international tourism went back to registering a strong growth, inducing us to think that everything could quickly return to normality. In fact, as Mimi Sheller (2021) very explicitly suggested, what we have gone through should indicate the opportunity to radically rethink tourism in the post-pandemic era in order to pursue greater global 'mobility justice'. Sheller proposes the idea of 'commoning mobility', connecting the right to mobility and immobility to the values of equity and the collective good. A perspective made necessary by the fact that when the pandemic is over, we must become aware that other transformations of global (im)mobility regimes are already underway and will soon become more evident and dramatic with the worsening of the climate crisis:

From this perspective, then, the answer is not simply to reopen tourist economies and bounce back to normal. Instead, we need to think carefully about what tourism should look like under conditions of greater mobility justice. Of course, these concerns were already there prior to the pandemic, and must be related to wider issues around climate change and sustainability. Alternative visions for post-pandemic tourism are needed both to avoid the reinforcement of already existing extractive and ecologically damaging forms of tourism, and to prepare for climate change adaptation and future

survival in the face of ongoing climate-related disruptions, subsequent pandemics, as well as the ongoing tensions over rights to land, water, and unpolluted conditions of life, not to mention the rights of nature and non-human beings. (Sheller 2021: 4)

Migrations today and in the near future will be increasingly closely linked to the environmental issue that millions of migrants will soon have to recognize, including legally, as ‘environmental refugees’. The Indian anthropologist and writer Amitav Ghosh, who was among the first to reflect on our ability to see and narrate the climate crisis, wrote in a recent essay entitled ‘The Great Uprooting: Migration and Displacement in an Age of Planetary Crisis’, in which he looked at the traces of migrants who travel from South Asia to Europe due to repeated floods and environmental catastrophes, reflecting on the intersection between migration and climate change:

It is no coincidence that this great uprooting of people is occurring at the same time that the impacts of climate change are intensifying. The relationship between the two is so close that to ask if contemporary migrations are a consequence of climate change is, I think, to ask the wrong question. Climate change and migration are, in fact, two cognate aspects of the same thing, in that both are effects of the ever-increasing growth and acceleration of processes of production, consumption, and circulation. In this sense the dynamic that is driving the other uprootings that we are now witnessing – of trees, animals, plants, glaciers, and so on – is no different from that which is driving the movements of humans. This is another respect in which human history has once again converged with the history of the Earth. (Ghosh 2021: 728)

This analysis is supported by the ethnographic explorations that have recently investigated how the forms of mobility and immobility are enacted in what is now known as the Anthropocene. This term, as we know, indicates how we have entered a geological era characterized by the evident ‘disturbing’ effect of human activity on the environment and climate of planet Earth (Haraway 2015). The anthropologist Anna Tsing (2015), with her enlightening research on the global circulation of matsutake mushrooms, showed us, for example, how the value chain that makes these mushrooms an extremely valuable product in Japan is connected to the precarious lives of migrants from Southeast Asia looking for them in the contaminated forests of Oregon. The (un)expected encounter between mushrooms that cannot be cultivated and their collectors, refugees from Laos and Cambodia who live in marginal conditions in the United States, is for Anna Tsing an emblematic case of ‘assembly’. This is a form of inter-species collaboration that imagines the possibilities of ‘collaborative survival’ among the ruins of capitalism. It is an exercise of imagination and a practice of collaboration that we are already and will be increasingly called upon to engage with.

Peace through Tourism: Hotel Owners Meet Ukrainian Refugees in Moldova

As we have seen in Ibrahim's testimony, war dramatically and suddenly strikes people's lives, destroying the projects they had imagined for the future and forcing them to rebuild new existential paths through the experience of migration. It happens in many forgotten war scenarios in every part of the world, and now in Europe with Ukraine. Since the 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia, as many as fifteen million Ukrainian citizens have left their country. This is a huge figure, the largest population movement in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The refugees crossed the borders of their own country to Poland (over 7.5 million), Russia (about 3 million), Hungary (almost 2 million), Romania (1.5 million), Slovakia (1 million) and Moldova (700,000). Some of the migrants returned to Ukraine when the situation appeared less dangerous in the regions furthest from the line of conflict, while others remained in the neighbouring countries or continued towards Western Europe, in many cases thanks to the solidarity networks of friends and relatives who had already emigrated.

It is not my intention to analyse the complex dynamics of this current conflict, but I would like to briefly dwell on the link between migration and tourism in the context of wars and to present some notes related to the field research I conducted in the summer of 2022 in Moldova and Ukraine. This was an experience that allowed me to reflect once again on how tourism can be a powerful tool for imagining and building peace (Vietti 2023c).

In the course of my past research, I had already seen the link between mobility and war in the case of Kosovo (Vietti 2017). As part of the study on Albanian diaspora tourism, in 2008–2010 I conducted several research expeditions in Kosovo at a particularly sensitive time for this small territory of the Western Balkans. In 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, severing its ties with Serbia, which led this region to become the centre of the last conflict of the Yugoslav wars which started in the 1990s. The bloody fighting of 1998–1999 led to the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees, most of them to central and northern Europe. For many years, hotels and other tourist facilities in Kosovo hosted journalists, humanitarian workers and officials from the many international institutions that visited or worked in the country. In addition to the so-called 'internationals', Kosovo in the early 2000s received a flow of other visitors: emigrants returning home for the holidays and a number of 'war tourism' enthusiasts, interested in traces that the recent conflict had left, which are still evident. This kind of tourism can be traced back to the broader field of *dark tourism* connected to the human propensity to want to witness places where disasters,

homicides, natural disasters and accidents have occurred (Lennon and Foley 2000; Sharpley and Stone 2009; White and Frew 2013). Just as the war in Kosovo, along with other Yugoslav conflicts, saw the emergence of forms of war tourism throughout the 1990s, we can now see this today in Ukraine, with hotels and hostels that continue to welcome tourists mainly from Western European countries who want to visit the country to witness the ongoing war.

The conflict in Ukraine and the subsequent migration have given rise to other peculiar practices of the tourism sector, particularly online platforms such as Airbnb and Booking.com, which have totally transformed how short-term rentals of houses, apartments and hotels are booked and used. It is interesting to note, for example, that several Ukrainian *hosts* who offered rooms and homes on Airbnb before the outbreak of the war continued to keep their profiles active for two new reasons: to provide hospitality to their fellow countrymen displaced from the most dangerous areas of the conflict, and to ask for financial help from people they had previously hosted as *guests*, or more generally from users of the platform. In this second case, the photographs that would normally show the apartment instead use images of the war's destruction in order to appeal for support and for sympathizers to make a 'solidarity booking', a booking that will never be used, or will be used after the end of the war, but whose cost can immediately be paid as a donation to the current account of the owner of the rented house. The same company that manages Airbnb has also launched its own communication campaign called 'Help us welcome 100,000 refugees fleeing Ukraine', urging hosts with homes in refugee-reached countries to rent their apartments for free. A similar initiative was also carried out by the Booking.com platform, where hotels and hostels offered special discounted rates or gratuities for Ukrainian refugees in the months following the invasion.

These initiatives carried out by large multinational players in tourism are undoubtedly ambivalent initiatives which, while useful, need to be viewed critically in their overt marketing dynamics and differential treatment, which mirror the more general reception policies of the countries of the European Union reserved for different groups of migrants. In the same months that generous free hospitality was offered to Ukrainian refugees, thousands of migrants fleeing from other contexts of war and poverty continued to be blocked at the gates of Europe, rejected and endangered in the waters of the Mediterranean. However, these international initiatives to rethink tourist accommodation facilities as refuges for Ukrainian migrants are a useful reference to analyse what I observed ethnographically in the Republic of Moldova. Between August and September 2022, I conducted a period of research moving along the borders of Ukraine, which was also an opportunity to return to a country that I had known well in the early 2000s when

I conducted my first research on transnational migration in post-socialist countries (Vietti 2010). Moldova is a small former Soviet republic located in a highly strategic geopolitical position between Romania (and therefore the European Union) and Ukraine, which has undergone a dramatic depopulation in the last twenty years due to a very high rate of emigration. Compared to about three million inhabitants, Moldovans abroad number over 700,000, with a high number of female migrants who have found work in the family care sector for the elderly in Italy and other European countries. I referred to the issue of Moldovan transnational families and 'European-style' restructuring practices in rural villages and home towns in Chapter 2.

For the first time in its recent history, Moldova has now welcomed immigrants thanks to the Ukraine war. Within a few weeks, tens of thousands of Ukrainian citizens crossed the Moldovan borders, passing through the country to reach other destinations further west, but also sometimes stopping for longer periods in Moldova, waiting to be able to return to Ukraine. Moldova, in addition to hosting a large minority of the Ukrainian population, is also the first country that refugees can reach from the areas most devastated by the conflict, namely the southern regions bordering the Black Sea and extending between the cities of Odessa, Mykolaiv and Kherson. In the first nine months of the war, 700,000 Ukrainian citizens entered Moldova and about 100,000 remained in the country in different reception conditions (Sprinceană 2022; UNHCR 2022).

In view of the difficult economic situation in the country and the substantial lack of public facilities that could accommodate migrants, the Moldovan government, UNHCR, groups of Moldovan volunteers and civil society activists, along with many other international organizations, have launched humanitarian missions in Moldova to support the hospitality offered by private citizens. Moldovan families have opened their doors to refugees, receiving a financial contribution from international donors for their service.

In addition to domestic accommodation, a crucial role, especially in the first weeks of the crisis, has been played by guesthouses and hotels in the country that were the first and only facilities to have the space available for a large number of refugees as well as being able to provide hot meals. Among the many owners of tourist accommodation opened for Ukrainian migrants, I would like to dwell on the Gagauz people as their story is so evocative. During my ethnographic exploration, I was particularly struck by the autonomous region of Gagauzia, where the Gagauz live. They are a Turkish-speaking population of the Orthodox Christian religion living in several Eastern European countries. Gagauzia, with less than 2,000 square kilometres and about 150,000 inhabitants, is the cultural and political heart of this minority. When the Republic of Moldova became independent, the Gagauz obtained from the central government of Chisinau the recognition



FIGURE 7.2. Information point for Ukrainian refugees at the Romanian-Moldovan border, 2022. © Francesco Vietti

of autonomy for their territories, electing the town of Comrat, in the south, as their capital.

Despite its marginality, Gagauzia has recently tried to find its strategic position based on a precarious balance of economic and political relations between Moldova, Turkey and Russia. During the war in Ukraine, this position led the Gagauz rulers to explicitly declare ‘neutrality’. And it is precisely in neutral Gagauzia that many Ukrainian migrants have arrived since the conflict started. I would like to recall those moments through the voice of Ana, the owner of the guesthouse ‘Gagauz Sofrasi’ in the village of Congaz. Ana has operated a hotel-restaurant for many years with her family, built and furnished in the traditional Gagauz style, and which also offers to tourists a small ethnographic museum of local objects and crafts. Ana recounts:

Ours was a family of farmers, like everyone else in this area. In 2007 the drought spoiled the entire harvest and so we thought it was time to try to start a different business. There were no restaurants in this area where locals could organize parties and weddings, so we decided to open one. It was a great success and it allowed us to have the resources to renovate our house and open the first rooms of the hotel. Since then we have always pushed forward, more and more tourists have arrived and in 2019 the hotel became as you see it today. Then, unfortunately, there was Covid and everything

stopped. This year we thought that the worst had passed and that the tourists would soon return, and instead . . . the war came. I remember it very well, that night of the 24th of February. It was the middle of the night, my daughters woke me up and said: 'Mom, the square and the street are full of cars with people wanting a room for the night!' I couldn't figure out what was going on at first. How could all those people come to us in the middle of the night? Then I spoke to these people who came crying, with their children in their arms and a few suitcases of clothes, and began to realize that war had broken out and that those people were fleeing the bombs. So we decided to give everyone free hospitality, somewhere to sleep and food to eat, providing them with everything we had. We went on like this for two weeks. Those who could and wanted to pay did, the others we continued to host at our expense. Between February and March, we welcomed 2,000 people. Then finally, here in Congaz they opened a shelter in the old school and we just kept preparing meals. We did everything with love, to help, but also because we were the only ones here in the area who knew how to manage so many people; being professionals in the field of tourism helped us to understand how to organize everything, meals and rooms, to their best. I will never forget that February night, never.

The story of 'Gagauz Sofrasi' is certainly exceptional, but it was not an isolated case. Many other small guesthouses all over Moldova have distinguished themselves for their generosity and ability to organize the reception of Ukrainian migrants. These experiences have also been recognized as a good ethical and political practice by the Moldovan government itself which, through the Ministry of Tourism, has decided to put them at the centre of the communication campaign 'A Small Country with a Big Heart'. Although the proximity to the war has in fact caused a collapse of the fragile Moldovan tourism sector through the reception of refugees, Moldovan tour operators and in particular the owners of rural guesthouses have thus shown their ability to offer hospitality, even in times of crisis and with limited resources available.

After crossing the Mediterranean in every direction, the encounter between the Moldovan families who run the small guesthouses and the Ukrainian migrants fleeing the bombings along the coasts of the Black Sea seems to me a particularly significant experience with which to conclude our journey. It is an encounter that makes it even more appropriate to think of tourism in terms of a practice of peace. Lynda-Ann Blanchard and Freya Higgins-Desbiolles have highlighted how tourism can and must be a powerful tool for building relationships and encounters marked by the full recognition of human rights, nonviolence and justice:

Achieving peace is not just the responsibility of diplomats and politicians but a task for all citizens. . . . Tourism can play a significant role. Promoting a culture of peace through tourism exposes ideas of how to achieve 'dialogue' for peace and promote ideals of international citizenship. . . . Respect for difference lies in the process of cross-cultural communication. Underlying these processes is the language of nonviolence,

which implies knowledge and understanding of comparative and conflicting values as well as of political . . . systems and structures. (Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles 2013: 4)

As Higgins-Desbiolles, Blanchard and Urbain (2022) wrote in their recent contribution, the world today needs a ‘peace tourism agenda’ more than ever. With this book, through the reflections I have offered on the (un)expected encounters between locals, tourists and migrants in the Mediterranean, I hope to contribute to the collective effort that we must all make to move towards a future of mutual understanding, respect and peace.