

## ARCO2023

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### The Mediterranean: A Round Sea

Approaching the subject of the 'Mediterranean' within the context of *ARCOmadrid* seems like a complex endeavor. How can we open up a discussion/ on this uncontrollable, bittersweet creature? How can we instigate a reunion focusing on this contested sea, which has been (and continues to be) shaped by succeeding conquests and imperial rules, as well as by a unique sort of '*convivencia*': a set of transformative South–South alliances that have impacted societies all over the world?

The Mediterranean sea is round; so is the skirt of a whirling dervish, the repeated turning gesture of a flamenco dancer's whist, the shape of a traditional Greek dance, a lifeboat in the middle of the sea (the flip side of '*convivencia*'). So are the sun and the moon.

In fact, everything that exists in the cosmos operates in circular motions and patterns. A circle has no baseline. It has no right or left, bottom or top. It rolls. What goes around, comes around. Maybe, then, a more spherical awareness is urgently needed again, towards this very particular region with its mobile and unstable geography and its gravitational pull. What does the 'Mediterranean' mean for people who inhabit its shores and islands and cross its surface?

Rather than searching – exclusively - for unity, maybe we should celebrate diversity and the ways that diversity enriches the 'location of culture' at large. Yet how can we escape the, subjective and sometimes dominating viewpoint of the 'author' that brings diverse constituencies together? '

Downside up and sideways networks are what this project is aiming to mobilize in an effort to instigate a meeting point for shared intensities. Drawing perspectives from the Mediterranean's southern shores, the hope is to stimulate a temporary space where participants will perform time, history and contemporaneity, in whichever ways they wish - beyond imposed restrictions and cultural assumptions. The site of the marketplace - the souk, the bazaar, the agora - seems to be the best context to host our idealized Mediterranean, a multilayered laboratory for cross– fertilization. After all, merchants were historically the main intermediaries between cultures across the region.

Our recent isolation promoted a new sort of alienation, vaster than even before. Opening up a space where people can meet (again), and imagine the possibility of other ways of being in the world, seems to be a good remedy for re-addressing a creative -bodily- togetherness