



Review

Kiko Mora, ed. *Mediterranean Musicscapes in Contemporary Spain. Form Mosaic to Net*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.

FRANCISCO JAVIER ALBO
Georgia State University, Atlanta

¿A qué suena el Mediterráneo español de ahora? What does the Spanish Mediterranean sound like today? How has the music associated to the vast coastline that runs along the territories of Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia, Catalonia, and the Balearic Islands evolved in recent decades? Have recent political events (such as the failed attempt at independence from the Spanish State that took place in Catalonia in 2017) had an impact on the ways Mediterranean music is being created, performed, and perceived? What do we currently understand as Mediterranean Spain, beyond its geographical and political boundaries? This book provides answers to these and other questions. To that end, it transcends the expected musicological examination of the soundscapes of the regions bathed by the Mediterranean, offering a critique of the concept (or myth) of *Mediterraneidad* (“Mediterraneaness”) in present-day Spain which aims at contextualizing the social, political, and cultural categories that have evolved since the end of the Francoist regime. As Mora explains in the brilliant introduction to the book, the Mediterranean in contemporary Spain no longer corresponds to a geographically, culturally and sociologically unified category. Instead, it is shaped by transcultural flows, gender dynamics, immigration, urbanization, and the rise of tourism, among other forces.

Mediterranean sounds proceed through paths that are no longer under the control of state or the regional (autonomous) governments. “Foreign” elements are being integrated, not always without some struggle. Migration movements (only in the past few decades has Spain become a recipient of immigrants), changes in urban and rural demographics, the result of the staggering rise of tourism, as well as politically induced cultural actions, often at the expense (if not against) government-sponsored dynamics, have subverted the idea and the image of the harmonious, carefree, peaceful space that the regions along the coast once seemed to project. Patriarchal powers are being questioned and supplanted by genderized dynamics, and social conflicts have yielded a cultural fluidity that did not really exist before the 2000s.

Mediterranean Musicscapes critiques the assumption that all of Spain belongs to Mediterranean culture, reminding that regions like Basque Country, Castile, or Asturias fall outside this identity. Within the Mediterranean regions, it proposes that there is indeed an element of homogeneity in the music of the Mediterranean—the result, paradoxically, of its own diversity. A recurring trope in postmodern thought, hybridity can be seen as a marker of authenticity or purity. With that in mind, the book challenges romanticized, Eurocentric notions of a homogeneous Mediterranean culture. Overall, the book redefines Mediterranean music as a diverse, politicized, and evolving cultural field rather than a fixed or unified tradition. More so, the Mediterranean is treated not just as a geographic space, but as a cultural and political concept, deeply shaped by gender, migration, nationalism, and neoliberalism, a place and a concept that resists and dismantles Eurocentric master narratives that have created an idea of the Mediterranean suited to their own powered purposes, in an attempt to shed light on what has been (intentionally?) overlooked.

Structured in four parts with two chapters each, the book balances academic rigor with accessibility. The four key themes are:

1. **Tourism**—Focuses on the rise of music festivals (primarily of techno music but also alternative rock and folk) and their economic and environmental impact. The chapters question tourism-driven stereotypes that present the region as carefree and harmonious, ignoring issues like unemployment, crime, and social inequality.
2. **Nationalism**—Examines Catalan identity and how it influences music. Great part of the Mediterranean coast of Spain speaks Catalan (Community of Valencia, Balearic Islands, and Catalonia). Since the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, nationalistic sentiments have propitiated some serious political episodes, crystalizing in the attempt at declaring Catalan independence from Spain in 2017. The consequences of that critical historical event (including elements of political repression) may seem to be “dormant” these days, but are far from being resolved. This situation has allowed certain politically driven musical practices to thrive in recent years. Beyond Catalonia, music has both reflected and driven nationalist and identity-based movements in Valencia, the Balearics, and Andalusia.
3. **Migration**—This section highlights musical contributions from immigrant communities, which have increased exponentially in recent years along the Mediterranean coast, particularly groups from North Africa, Sub-Saharan regions, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.
4. **Gender**—Female musical expression, particularly in the *Nova Cançó* movement from the 1960s and 70s, has been traditionally examined through masculine points of view. This section exposes that injustice.

In “‘Mediterráneamente’”: Music Festivals as Industry, Utopia, and Experience of Place,” Eduard Viñuela analyzes the boom of music festivals along the Spanish Levante coast, especially in Ibiza and Valencia, as both cultural and capitalist enterprises. While these festivals benefit local economies, they also generate an unsustainable “festival bubble” and contribute to the construction of a *Mediterranean imaginary*—a stylized identity often detached from authentic local music traditions. Amadeu Corbera, in “Against Neoliberalism. Anti-Tourism and Musical Practices in a Mediterranean Paradise” focuses on the Majorcan band *Antònia Font* as a symbol of resistance against the commodification of Mediterranean identity, linking their Catalan-language music to anti-tourism and independence sentiments. Corbera also explores the phenomenon of *Neofiestas*—temporary, subversive musical spaces that challenge the tourism-driven homogenization of local life in the Balearic Islands.

The chapter by Lluís Català Oltra and Clemente Penalva Verdú, “Music as Political Activism in the Comarques Centrals del País Valencià” explores the Valencian rock scene as a grassroots movement rooted in protest against globalization, economic disparity, and cultural erosion. Using parody and solemnity, the region’s musicians articulate a sense of Valencian identity, using music both as a form of resistance and as a way of reimagining political belonging.

In “‘We Will Find a Way Out’: Catalan World Music, Mestizaje, and Political Engagement,” Rubén Gómez Muns analyzes Barcelona’s *Sonido Mestizo* and its fusion of global and local sounds as a musical metaphor for the Catalan truncated path to independence, colloquially known as the *Procés*. Through world music aesthetics, Catalan artists frame their region as open, intercultural, and distinct from a homogenizing Spanish state, offering a sonic narrative of self-determination.

In the introduction to the third section, Mora, who has worked extensively on new currents in Flamenco studies, outlines competing theories about flamenco's origins, challenging essentialist views and framing it instead as a hybrid form shaped by migration, orientalism, and colonial imagination, setting the stage for thinking about Mediterranean musical identity as more imagined than inherited.

Diego García-Peinazo and Pedro Ordóñez Eslava's chapter, "How Mediterranean is Andalusian Popular Music?" explore how Andalusian popular music (particularly flamenco-rock fusions) constructs symbolic and artistic expressions of Mediterranean identity, emphasizing Andalusia's complex relationship with Mediterraneanness, and arguing that musical forms here blend nostalgia, modernity, and migration-driven hybridity. Meanwhile, Alicia González and Isabel Llano, in the chapter "An Overview of Music from the Maghreb and Maghrebi Musicians in the Spanish Mediterranean Arc," focuses on Maghrebi musicians in cities like Granada. The chapter compiles valuable ethnographic data on artists, festivals, and institutions fostering musical fusion between North Africa and Spain, showing how Maghrebi musicians have actively reshaped the Mediterranean music scene, contributing to a two-way process of cultural exchange.

Gianni Ginesim is the author of "'Proud of Me': The New Catalan Cantautoras Singing Belonging Beyond the Mediterranean." His chapter questions traditional notions of the female singer-songwriter by examining how artists like Rosalía redefine authenticity, genre, and identity. Ginesim suggests that younger Catalan artists are moving away from Mediterranean tropes, instead embracing global influences and using their music to express feminist and individualistic themes. In "Bridging Gaps in the Mediterranean Music Scene. Celebrating the Women Singer-Songwriters of the Cançó," Pepa Novell interprets the 2013 album *Dones i Cançons* as a feminist and nationalist project rooted in the Catalan independence movement. Through this lens, she presents Catalan female musicians as agents of cultural and political transformation, advocating both for women's empowerment and for the sovereignty of the *Països Catalans*.

Mediterranean Musicscapes in Contemporary Spain is a significant and timely contribution that will surely resonate with scholars and aficionados of Spanish music, precisely because it is not about Spanish music in the conventional sense. Rather than focusing on the well-worn genres of flamenco, zarzuela, or other traditionally celebrated genres, this work redirects attention to the rich and diverse musical cultures found along Spain's Mediterranean coast, challenging dominant narratives by foregrounding regional soundscapes and musical practices that have historically been marginalized or overlooked in broader discourses on Spanish music. The editor, Kiko Mora, deserves special recognition for bringing together such a wide-ranging and insightful set of contributions. His vision for the volume reflects not only a deep understanding of Mediterranean musical cultures, but also a commitment to expanding the scholarly conversation on Spanish music beyond traditional and often exclusionary frameworks. Mora's work here continues his broader trajectory as a leading voice in ethnomusicological and cultural studies, offering a model for how music scholarship can remain critically attuned to questions of politics, identity, and change.

Albo, Francisco Javier. "Review: Kiko Mora, ed. *Mediterranean Musicscapes in Contemporary Spain*. Form Mosaic to Net. Bloomsbury Academic, 2024." *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* 10, no. 2 (2025): 102–104.