

Social Research Call

Title:

Counter-cartographies of Migrants to the Canary Islands



Acronym: COUNTERCARTO

Project leader: Víctor Cano-Ciborro

Host organisation: Fundación de la Universidad Europea

Main purpose of the project: In 2024, over 46,000 migrants arrived in the Canary Islands from West African countries, while nearly 10,000 died attempting the crossing, making the Canary Route the deadliest migration route today. This project develops Atlantic, Landing, and Corporeal counter-cartographies to visualize the spatiality of migrants’ lived experiences. Using multiscalar cartographic tools, it challenges dominant narratives and exposes invisible forms of violence.

Design/methodology/approach: The project combines quantitative data (e.g., GIS, satellite imagery, vessel tracking) with qualitative research (e.g., participatory mapping, ethnographic interviews, and forensic architectural reconstructions). These are integrated into digital and physical cartographic outputs, co-produced with migrants and local grassroots associations following an action-research framework.

Potential results: Expected results include an open-access ‘Trans-Scalar Migration Atlas’, a public exhibition, a micro-urban action, and a policy brief with recommendations to improve reception facilities, optimize resource allocation, and strengthen grassroots initiatives and local capacity for more humane and responsive spatial planning.

Social relevance of the research: The project addresses the urgent challenge of migrant reception in the Canary Islands, focusing especially on unaccompanied minors in precarious conditions. It gives visibility to their experiences, maps invisible forms of violence, and creates tools for orientation, expression, and belonging. By engaging civil society and institutions, it fosters empathy and informs more humane migration policies.

Originality/value of the project: This project offers a novel application of counter-cartographic methods to the Canary Route, addressing a research gap in understanding the architectural, urban, and territorial dimensions of migration. Its combination of spatial analysis, affective cartographies, and co-creation with migrants introduces a new paradigm for understanding and responding to migration as a lived, embodied, and spatial experience.