

BELOW THE SURFACE:

A NEW WAVE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Call for Papers
Deadline: April 20, 2018

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Below the Surface: A New Wave of Interdisciplinary Mediterranean Studies and Environmental Changes

Workshop, 18-20 October 2018
Sciences Po – Menton Campus
1 Place Saint-Julien, 06500 Menton, France

Convenors : Giacomo Parrinello (Sciences Po Paris), Davide Orsini (Mississippi State University), Ibrahim Boubekri (LabexMed, Aix-Marseille Université).

“Below the Surface: A New Wave of Interdisciplinary Mediterranean Studies and Environmental Changes” is an international research initiative aiming at creating an interdisciplinary dialogue on the environmental history of the Modern Mediterranean with a focus on its coastal and marine ecosystems. This first workshop wants to explore future research directions and new collaborative efforts across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. We invite therefore contributions that explore historical, socio-technical, and socio-ecological interactions in the Mediterranean coasts and sea in the urban-industrial era (19th-21st Century).

The Mediterranean Sea has experienced massive transformations over the last two centuries. Substantive demographic growth and urbanization along its coasts, alarming increase of marine pollution, loss of habitats, and the increasingly visible effects of climate change are putting at strain the environmental conditions of the middle Sea. Despite the increasing attention paid to the environmental transformations of the Mediterranean basin and their deep linkages with the social, economic, and political life of the people around the sea, these dimensions remain little explored in modern environmental histories.

Since the 1950s social and cultural anthropologists have sought to find the common denominator of a “Mediterranean identity” in the persistence of traditional cultural forms, particularly moral codes, such as “familism,” “honor,” and “shame.” In the early 1980s, however, the underlying assumptions of these scholars have been sharply criticized, up to the point of denying the very possibility of using the “Mediterranean” as a unit of analysis for understanding the “unity-in-diversity” of societies across the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand, Mediterranean histories that have taken into account the environment, from the classic work of Fernand Braudel (1949) to the more recent analysis of Horden and Purcell (2000), have stopped at the threshold of urban-industrial modernity. The few contributions that have addressed the large scale environmental changes linked to urban-industrial development have done so either by devoting little attention to coastal and marine ecosystems (McNeill 1992) or within the framework of wide diachronic perspectives (Hughes 2005), which offer only a broad-brush synthesis of complex and differentiated processes.

We believe it is time to go back to the Mediterranean environment and shed light on the interlocked ecological and social processes that have reshaped it in the urban-industrial era, from the nineteenth century to the present. To be effective, this analysis must consider the ecological and geomorphological interdependencies that connect the Mediterranean coastal and marine environments in conjunction with other political, social, and cultural dimensions. A long-term perspective sensitive to cultural and social dimensions can help us understand the trajectories and drivers of the environmental challenges of the present.

To avoid any essentialist assumption on the region’s unity, we think it is necessary to start from an empirical perspective based on multi-scalar, regional analyses. This workshop aims to start a conversation across Mediterranean regions, emphasizing the importance of their cultural, historical, and economic specificities. We welcome contributions from a variety of disciplines, including history, anthropology, oceanography, marine biology, environmental studies, and environmental humanities. We especially welcome proposals from research institutions located in underrepresented areas of the Mediterranean area, including the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkan region. Topics may include:

- Coastal life and urbanization
- Maritime cultures and labor
- Coastal ecosystems
- Oceanography and environmental monitoring
- Marine biology and ecosystems
- History of maritime stations (history of marine biology)
- Industrialization and anthropogenic pollution
- Climate change
- Toxic dumping and littering
- Environmental preservation and maritime parks
- International cooperation in environmental preservation programs
- Sustainable tourism and ecotourism
- Military bases and industrial districts

Sponsored by the USPC Chair in Environmental History of the Center for History at Sciences Po, the Strategic Research Initiative of the Mississippi State University, and the LabexMed of Aix-Marseille Université, the international workshop will take place on October 18-20, 2018 at the Menton Campus of Science Po Paris. Your proposal should consist of an abstract (ca. 300 words) and a brief biographical note (ca. 150 words). Draft papers (preferably in English) will be pre-circulated to maximize the discussion time during the workshop. Travel and accommodation costs for participants will be covered by the organizers.

Please submit proposals to belowthesurface.workshop@gmail.com by April 20, 2018.

