

Report of the Conference Cultures, Hopes and Conflicts. The Mediterranean between Land and Sea

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Report of the Conference Cultures, Hopes and Conflicts. The Mediterranean between Land and Sea

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Abstract

Report of the Conference about the Mediterranean held at the University of Salerno in September 2017, involving scholars of several disciplines.

Keywords: ICSR Mediterranean Knowledge; Medworlds Network; Mediterranean; Social sciences.

On 26-28 September 2017, University of Salerno hosted the Conference "*Cultures, Hopes and Conflicts. The Mediterranean between Land and Sea*" jointly organized by the ICSR Mediterranean Knowledge and the International Conference of Mediterranean Worlds. Being the 8th of the MedWorlds conferences, the aim was to create a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to the issues surrounding the past, present and future of the Mediterranean.

The conference was opened by Emiliana Mangone, the director of ICSR Mediterranean Knowledge, and on behalf of the MedWorlds consortium, Prof. Thomas Dittelbach followed by Claudio Azzara, vice director of the Department of Human, Philosophical and Educational Sciences, of University of Salerno whom presented the keynote speaker, Pietro Corrao from the University of Palermo. His speech titled "The Mediterranean at the end of Middle Ages: conflicts, equilibria, hegemonies" focused on the approaches to the study of the Mediterranean from the 20th century, surveying the seminal works of Pirenne, Lopez, Abulafia, Bartlett and Braudel. Indeed, in the second part of his speech, these theories were examined through the example of the Crown of Aragon and its

contextualisation in the Mediterranean equilibrium. Overall, it was an enlightening speech, which framed the Mediterranean from different perspectives, contributing to the conference remarkably.

The parallel sessions gave the participants the opportunity to follow the speeches that were the most interesting to them. Often the first sessions focused on a historical perspective where the empires of the Mediterranean were under scrutiny; meanwhile the second ones were on contemporary challenges in the Mediterranean, such as religious conflict and refugee crisis. This contributed to the interdisciplinary aspect of the conference, as bringing out different perspectives and methodologies is one of the pillars of the MedWorlds conferences.

The first parallel sessions took place in the afternoon of the first day, Session A1 titled “From Rome to Byzantium” focused on the issues regarding Late Antiquity, bringing together different disciplines of archaeology, literature and history. The following panel explored the political issues concerning the Byzantines and the Normans, and investigated religion, urbanism and identity. The parallel session, Session A2 titled “Middle East and Islam” addressed the 20th century, focused on subjects, such as the Arab-Israeli Wars, utilising the analysis of media, literature and sounds. Panel II of the same session also approached contemporary issues regarding the Mediterranean basin and identity clashes, including the problems of migration.

The following parallel sessions took place on the next day, Session B1 questioned the “Long Middle Ages”, surveying the Mediterranean from the year 1000 to the 17th century, investigating intercultural elements in the Middle Ages, such as ambassadors, object exchange and accommodation of foreign merchants. The following panel also commented on the theoretical approaches to the history of the Mediterranean, as well as presenting works on literary sources, including Esiri Hasan Ağa’s “Advises to the Commanders and Soldiers”. The parallel session, B2 titled “Political and juridical strategies for the future of the Mediterranean” was opened with the first panel in which the participants dealt with the legal issues with an emphasis on refugees and borders, followed by another panel

focusing on similar issues supported by case studies, such as the Valetta Summit.

The following session, C1 commented on how the political developments between 18th and 20th centuries transformed the Mediterranean from the centre to the periphery. The speakers in the first panel presented their research on the transformations of the Mediterranean through the interaction between the Kingdom of Naples, the Ottomans and the Americans. The following panel included research focusing on more contemporary issues, investigating topics of conflict from WWI to the Cold War. The parallel session, however, was more migration oriented, a crucial issue especially for the contemporary Mediterranean. The legal challenges faced by both states and the migrants were voiced, as well as issues regarding border security. The following panel also focused on the refugee crisis as well, presenting its representation in the media and press.

The last parallel sessions of the conference were held on the 28th. The first panel encompassed the region diachronically while addressing both macro and micro histories of representation and cultural transmission. In the second panels, various elements of culture were discussed and contextualised within the Mediterranean's history, such as architecture and music. Overall, Session D1 focused on visual arts, music and architecture and how they represent the Mediterranean through their transformations, assimilations and preservations. The parallel session, D2, centred on challenges to migration, with the first session investigating the challenges that the migrants face, including legal, religious and cultural aspects, while the second panel specifically focused on issues minors and students face as refugees.