

EDITORIAL

Mediterranean Imaginaries

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Introduction

The Mediterranean Sea has consistently served as a space for trade and migration, facilitating the cultural exchange among Europe, Africa and the Middle East. This fluid space, loosely defined by the sea and its coastlines, has undergone continual reinterpretation, redefinition, negotiation, and challenges. Writers, scholars, and politicians have acknowledged the Mediterranean as a distinctive realm that has served as the cradle of numerous ancient civilizations, such as that of the Greeks and Romans, but also as a border between Europe and Africa. For centuries, the Mediterranean was a major epicenter. The discovery of the Americas in 1492, however, led to an eclipse that only ended with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and its role as infrastructural link between Europe and its colonies. Historian Fernand Braudel positioned the Mediterranean at the core of his analysis and exploration of the concept of temporality. His spatial

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comprehension of the long-durée temporal concept has significantly influenced historical and geographical methodologies for several decades.¹ During this time, the Mediterranean Sea and its surroundings have also changed, in terms of geography, planning, militarization and securitization, as well as narratives and perceptions.

Today, the Mediterranean Sea is home to a wide spectrum of activities and the focus of diverse interests, including logistics, energy production, tourism, and heritage preservation. It is also a space of migration and death. A growing number of scholars are focusing on the Mediterranean² and exploring its character as a newly contested space.³ Simultaneously, some associations are pushing forward visions and strategies for the Mediterranean. MedCruise, MedPorts and MedCities are regional cooperative organizations that acknowledge the challenges of shared waters, coasts and hinterlands. Political initiatives also aim to connect the different shores of the Mediterranean. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership led, in 2008, to the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an intergovernmental organization that brings together 42 countries. The UfM shaped the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040 to provide an adaptive framework for sustainable development as a response to climate change.⁴ Such collaborations around the Mediterranean require new critical modes of inquiry to fully analyze their historical path dependencies, underlying core discourses, power hierarchies and actual contributions for achieving a more just, inclusive and sustainable Mediterranean.⁵

Building upon the themes explored in special issues of CPCL 2019 and 2020, respectively on water and on port-city cultures, values, or maritime

1 Fernand Braudel, *Il Mediterraneo. Lo spazio, la storia, gli uomini, le tradizioni*, trans. by E. D. Angeli (Bompiani, 2017).

2 See: Michael Herzfeld, "Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating," in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. William Vernon Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). And: Peregrine Horden, "Mediterranean Excuses: Historical Writing on the Mediterranean since Braudel," *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2005): 25–30.

3 Maurizio Molinari, *Mediterraneo conteso. Perché l'Occidente e i suoi rivali ne hanno bisogno* (Rizzoli editore, 2023).

4 Roberto Rocco, Carola Hein, and Remon Rooij, *The UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040: For Sustainable, Resilient, and Inclusive Cities and Communities in the Mediterranean* (Barcelona: Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), 2021).

5 See: Federica Bicchi, "The Mediterranean, between Unity and Fault Line," *Global Affairs* 4, no. 2–3 (2018): 329–39. And: Amro Ali, "Re-Envisioning Civil Society and Social Movements in the Mediterranean in an Era of Techno-Fundamentalism," *PapersIEMed*, no. 25 (2020). And: Theo Notteboom, Peter De Langen, and Wouter Jacobs, "Institutional Plasticity and Path Dependence in Seaports: Interactions between Institutions, Port Governance Reforms and Port Authority Routines," *Journal of Transport Geography* 27 (2013): 26–35. And: Andre Sorensen, "Taking Path Dependence Seriously: An Historic Institutional Research Agenda in Planning History," *Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 1 (2015): 17–38.

mindsets,⁶ this special issue on Mediterranean Imaginaries aims to expand the analysis. The response to the call yielded responses mostly from European authors, highlighting, once more, the need for African and Middle Eastern perspectives that can help question long-standing colonial relationships and contemporary asymmetries. The lack of such contributions underscores what has been constantly argued by Eastern- and Southern-Mediterranean scholars that such asymmetries are also reflected in uneven allocation of time and financial resources which are essential components for knowledge production within the existing academic culture.⁷

This special issue contends that an analysis of the Mediterranean Sea needs to start with water, taking into account the impact of shipping on the coasts, beyond national borders. It also posits that a focus on the sea includes a closer exploration of water as a system, from oceans to rivers, from groundwater to rain. Addressing the sea, and water systems, involves grappling with various challenges. It necessitates fighting climate change and adapting to shifting water conditions.⁸ Engaging with the sea entails navigating global economies, considering that 90% of world trade crosses its waters. It delves into cultures and history, recognizing the sea and ports as crucibles for numerous civilizations, religions, languages and the water systems on which they thrived. Additionally, it requires addressing energy and climate challenges notably in (post-) industrial landscapes that are often linked to port city territories. Examining the sea means confronting migration, wars, and the geopolitical maneuvers of influential entities seeking control over the sea to dominate the world.

Such an approach requires theoretical and methodological innovation. It calls for a rethinking of water and land as porous spaces in order to generate adaptive and resilient strategies.⁹ The special issue explores innovative experimentation in the urban disciplines, utilizing the sea as a framework to reconsider traditional models and interpretations of the territory alongside their socio-economic relationships, including concepts such as

6 See: Carola Hein, Tino Mager, and Roberto Rocco, "Water Resilience: Creative Practices—Past, Present and Future," *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 2, no. 1 (2019): 1-10. And: Carola Hein, Sabine Luning, and Paul van de Laar, "Port City Cultures, Values, and Maritime Mindsets: Defining What Makes Port Cities Special," *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 4, no. 1 (2021): 7–20. And: Carola Hein, Sabine Luning, and Paul van de Laar, "Innovative Methods for Studying and Shaping Cultures in Port City Territories," *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 4, no. 2 (2021): 7–15.

7 John Hanna, "Prospects: Towards an Enhanced Practice of International Design Studio Collaborations - John Hanna Interviewing Mona Harb," in *Design Pedagogies in Times of Crisis: Six Universities - Six Studios on Post-Blast Beirut Reconstruction*, eds. Carola Hein and John Hanna, CPCL Book Series (Rotterdam: SOAP | Stichting OpenAccess Platforms, 2023).

8 AIVP. "How to Adapt Port Cities to Climate Change: Challenges and Solutions." Accessed May 11, 2024. <https://www.aivp.org/en/events/how-to-adapt-port-cities-to-climate-change-challenges-and-solutions/>

9 Hein, Carola. "Port City Porosity: Boundaries, Flows, and Territories." *Urban Planning* 6, no. 3 (2021): 1-9.

planetary urbanization and urbanization of the sea.¹⁰ With its 46000 kilometers of coastline and 450 million inhabitants, the Mediterranean Sea is a water basin shared by 24 countries that is currently facing numerous environmental, social and political challenges. The aim of this special issue is therefore to reexamine the Mediterranean from the seaside, focusing on diverse methodologies (such as archival, mapping/counter-mapping, visual tools, storytelling) while also inviting reflections on design proposals for new porous development and adaptive strategies.

This issue asks: How can a reconceptualization of the Mediterranean from the sea and through a maritime lens inspire novel theoretical and methodological approaches? How can this approach help in re-comprehending, re-considering, and re-envisioning the Mediterranean Sea, its islands, and the adjacent coastlines in response to the growing challenges posed by climate change, energy transition, supply chains, migration, and mobility?

In answering these questions, the special issue proposed six interconnected themes, environment and resilience, infrastructures and flows, digital history and heritage, education and capacity building, temporalities and porosities, and integrated governance. These themes do not claim to exhaust all possible topics and discourse, but we believe they are significant for better understanding the different layers related to water and its many representations. The theme of resilience requires us to look at the past and draw inspiration from established water-related practices, especially in relation to climate change. This pushes us to think in extremes. Similarly, Infrastructure today cuts across territories without a physical separation between land and water. Understanding the logic of flows in relation to water can tell us a lot about how territories have developed over time and how they will develop in the future. In the digital age, the preservation of historical and cultural water-related heritage takes on added importance. By digitizing and documenting this heritage, we not only preserve valuable knowledge and traditions but also gain insights into sustainable water management practices that have stood the test of time. Education plays a key role as a means to create more awareness, empowering communities to become stewards of their water resources. Education can activate research, and this is essential for generating new knowledge. Understanding the different temporalities of water and its multiple users is an important step to identifying porosities, and therefore opportunities for a more holistic approach to water. Finally, this leads us to governance. Water, and the Mediterranean in a particular way, is a space subject to pressures exerted by many stakeholders. We need therefore a shift in the way we understand, perceive and plan our coexistence with water and to create spaces where different actors can come together

10 See: Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "Planetary Urbanization," in *Implosions/Explosions* ed. Neil Brenner (Berlin, Boston: JOVIS Verlag GmbH, 2013), 160-163. And: Nancy Couling and Carola Hein, *The Urbanisation of the Sea. From Concepts and Analysis to Design* (Rotterdam: nai010 publisher, 2020).

to co-design (multiple) futures.

Authors in this special issue have contributed their own interpretation through ten articles, organized here along the lines of the call. Through diverse case studies, mostly from the Northern Mediterranean, the authors demonstrate the relevance of sea and water-based exploration, new methodologies, narratives and imaginaries for the reimagination of the Mediterranean.

When it comes to water, the short- and long-term impacts of climate change on Mediterranean coastal areas and port cities are particularly urgent and require new methodological and adaptive design approaches. **Environment and climate resilience** are key aspects in confronting the escalating challenges posed by climate change and sea level rise. Building resilience involves fortifying ecosystems, communities, and infrastructure to adapt to and rebound from environmental shocks. It necessitates sustainable practices, conservation efforts, and adaptive strategies that enhance a system's capacity to withstand disruptions. Climate resilience extends beyond natural systems to encompass social, economic, and technological dimensions. Effective climate resilience involves proactive measures, such as sustainable resource management, robust infrastructure planning, and community engagement. Building such resilience calls for a holistic approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of environmental and human systems, fostering a sustainable and adaptable coexistence in the face of evolving climate realities. **Rosa Grasso's** article emphasizes the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change and resilience, especially concerning shifting water dynamics. Focusing on the floodplain between Romagna and Lower Ferrara, which has been historically shaped by traditional reclamation methods, Grasso advocates for an exploration of hybrid land and water territories. These areas showcase a remarkable ability to adapt to changing water conditions while also meeting the future demands of the region. By investigating these territories, Grasso considers how communities can effectively respond to the challenges posed by climate change, highlighting the importance of resilience-building strategies in safeguarding against its impacts.

Different regimes of infrastructure have shaped the Mediterranean and regulated the flows of goods and people on and around the Mediterranean, its coasts and hinterlands for centuries. **Infrastructures and flows** are the lifeblood of interconnected societies, facilitating the movement of goods, services, and information. Physical infrastructures, such as transportation networks and communication systems, form the backbone of modern societies, enabling efficient connectivity.¹¹ Beyond tangible structures, digital infrastructures play a pivotal role in the seamless transmission of data, ideas and cultures. The concept of flows extends to

11 Dennis Rodgers and Bruce O'Neill, "Infrastructural Violence: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Ethnography* 13, no. 4 (2012): 401–12.

the dynamic movement of people, capital, and cultural influences across borders. Understanding and optimizing these infrastructural networks and flows are paramount for fostering economic development, cultural exchange, and global cooperation in our rapidly evolving world. New methods for land-sea integration are needed. **Beatrice Moretti, Francesco Garofalo,** and **Davide Servente** remind readers of the Atlantropa project and propose a reimagination of the Mediterranean through the lens of its infrastructures and flows. Rather than a static entity, the Mediterranean is depicted here as a dynamic network—a “solid sea” populated by diverse stakeholders with different purposes and timelines. The article advocates for innovative visions and tools in land-sea integrated planning, contributing to a reconceptualization of the contemporary Mediterranean through exemplary design and representation.

Rafael Sousa Santos uses a **digital history and heritage** perspective, to address the delicate balance between preserving urban heritage and adapting to external demands. Digital History and heritage can play a role in documenting and (re)defining Mediterranean architectural and cultural heritage. Digital history and heritage bring together technology and cultural preservation, revolutionizing how we explore and safeguard our past. The digitization of historical artifacts, documents, and monuments facilitates widespread access, breaking down geographical barriers. It allows for immersive experiences, interactive exhibits, and virtual reconstructions that breathe new life into heritage sites. Moreover, digital platforms empower collaborative storytelling and the democratization of historical narratives, ensuring diverse perspectives are acknowledged. While preserving traditional forms of heritage, digital history opens innovative avenues for education, research, and public engagement, shaping a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of our collective heritage in the digital age. The article by Santos holds significance for digital history and heritage as it pioneers an integrative approach that leverages digital tools and methodologies to explore the rich heritage of Mediterranean port cities. By incorporating digital references from humanities disciplines such as history, anthropology, and sociology, the article offers a multifaceted understanding of the digital heritage landscape. This approach not only enriches our understanding of the historical and cultural dimensions of these cities but also showcases the potential of digital technologies in preserving and disseminating heritage. Furthermore, by bridging traditional scholarship with digital methods, the article contributes to the evolving field of digital humanities and underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in uncovering and interpreting the past.

Education and capacity building go hand in hand with developing new concepts for understanding and (re)thinking Mediterranean connections as well as (re)designing its port cities and sea spaces. Capacity building goes beyond the transmission of information to nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong skills. Effective pedagogy adapts to diverse learn-

ing styles, fostering a dynamic and inclusive educational environment. It recognizes the individuality of learners and emphasizes active engagement, collaboration, and experiential learning. Rooted in research, pedagogy evolves with advancements in education technology and cognitive sciences to empower students not just with knowledge but also the ability to analyze, synthesize, and apply information in a constantly changing world. A focus on narratives and imaginary practices can promote critical (re)considerations of the Mediterranean in relation both to colonial histories and contemporary urgencies. Architectural education can help raise awareness among students about the unique needs of the Mediterranean, which is one of the goals of the course Adaptive Strategies [AR0110] at Delft University of Technology, explored in an article by **Paolo De Martino, John Hanna, and Carola Hein**. This article explores students' investigations of Beirut and Naples, two port cities of the Mediterranean Sea. **Isabella Traeger's** article challenges the Eurocentric perspective historically dominant in narratives about Mediterranean life. By scrutinizing the Euro-Mediterranean Western region through the lens of six remote micro-islands and enclaves—Ceuta, Melilla, Gibraltar, Lampedusa, Linosa, and Pantelleria—Traeger provides a fresh analytical framework that encourages students and researchers to question conventional narratives. This shift in focus promotes a more inclusive and diverse understanding of Mediterranean cultures and histories, fostering critical thinking and cultural sensitivity among students and scholars.

Similarly, **Lynn Abdouni's** article highlights the transformative power of narratives in reshaping perceptions of the Lebanese Beqaa Valley. Abdouni argues that while infrastructural and geopolitical developments in Beirut have often influenced the development of Beqaa, the built environment of the cities of Beqaa merits context-sensitive analytical models that capture its specificity, in disconnection from the dominant perceptions of order and chaos often produced in connection to Beirut. She offers a new approach to understanding overlooked cities in Beqaa.

When it comes to water and port cities, various temporal rhythms exist within the city and they have shaped the experiences and perceptions of spaces in and around the Mediterranean. Understanding **temporalities and porosities** is crucial in capturing evolving socio-cultural, economic, and environmental water landscapes, fostering resilience and responsiveness to change, while acknowledging the intricate relationships between time, space, and human experiences. The term temporalities refers to the diverse ways in which time is experienced and understood, acknowledging the multi-layered dimensions of past, present, and future.¹² Porosities, on the other hand, signify the degree of openness and materiality or per-

12 See: Carola Hein, "Temporalities of the Port, Waterfront, and the City." In *City on Water*, ed. G. Warsewa (Association of European Schools of Planning, 2016), 1-14. And: Robert N. Levine, *A Geography Of Time: On Tempo, Culture, And The Pace Of Life* (Basic Books, 2008).

meability within systems and/or boundaries.¹³ Together, these concepts emphasize the fluid nature of time and spaces, emphasizing adaptability and interconnectedness. **Maria Pina Usai, Juan López Cano, and Avital Barak** engage in a philosophical exploration of temporalities and porosities, urging for a deeper examination of the ocean to unravel the complexities within our territory and address environmental challenges. The authors propose dynamic tools capable of evolving alongside reality, recognizing that our understanding of transformational phenomena must adapt as the intricate relationships between land, water, and human life unfold over time.

Various legal and governing regimes have shaped planning in Mediterranean port cities and regions. To overcome current governance systems that are based on separation, we need new approaches that promote transparency and shared responsibility. **Integrated governance** is needed that breaks down silos and fosters seamless communication to achieve common goals for the Mediterranean as a complex political terrain. **Roberto Rocco, Carola Hein, and Remon Rooij** speak to this topic as they introduce their work on the UfM Strategic Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Development, a transnational policy framework as an innovative strategy to transfer European Union policies to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The authors underscore the importance of collaboration across the Mediterranean Sea, emphasizing the need for new methodologies and shared visions to effectively address complex governance challenges in the region. By highlighting the necessity of coordinated efforts and inclusive approaches, the article contributes to advancing the principles of integrated governance in transnational policy development and implementation.

Alongside the eight articles featured in the main section, this special issue includes two additional sections. These sections, namely “Practices” and “Miscellanea”, will each contain one article.

Georgia Kountouri and **Noelia Rodríguez Rodríguez**, in the “Practices” section, present a distinctive approach termed as a “site vibration tool” for site analysis and engagement. Through their study, they critically assess Barcelona’s 1992 strategy using vibration analysis. Their findings reveal that despite the initial intention to maintain the city’s proximity to the water, the strategy ultimately led to Barcelona becoming disconnected from its maritime heritage, overlooking its rich historical significance. This underscores the importance of reevaluating urban planning strategies in light of historical context and community identity, offering valuable insights for practitioners seeking to develop holistic and culturally sensitive approaches to urban development. The article in the “Miscellanea” section provides additional depth to this special issue. **Nil Nadire Gelişkan**’s contribution

13 Hein, “Port City Porosity: Boundaries, Flows, and Territories.”

employs maps, drawings, and historical documents pertaining to railway and transportation advancements to narrate the significant milestones that have molded Izmir into the modern port city it is today. Through meticulous analysis, Gelişkan explores Izmir's historical evolution within the Ottoman framework, shedding light on its enduring influence throughout the centuries.

Paolo De Martino graduated in Architecture from the Department of Architecture of the University of Naples Federico II (DiARC). After graduating he worked as an architect in Naples, focusing mainly on the reuse of the existing architectural heritage and on urban regeneration. In 2014 he moved to Delft, the Netherlands, where he completed a PhD in a dual research program between Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) and University of Naples Federico II. His PhD research, entitled "Land in Limbo", investigates port cities from a spatial and governance perspective, analyzing the impact that actors have in shaping spatial development. The city of Naples is an emblematic case to question how to rethink the areas of land-sea interaction, at different scales, as opportunities for territorial regeneration. Since 2017 he has been teaching at the Department of Architecture of TU Delft where he is tutoring students in Design Studios such as "Architecture and Urbanism beyond oil", "Adaptive Strategies" and "Designing Public Spaces for Maritime Mindsets", coordinated by Carola Hein. Since 2021, in collaboration with TU Delft, he has been involved in teaching two MOOCs entitled: (Re) Imagining Port Cities: (Re)Imagining Port Cities: Understanding Space, Society and Culture and Water Works: Activating Heritage for Sustainable Development. Paolo De Martino is a member of the PortCityFutures research group and a member of the coordination group. Since 2022 he is a Post doc at the University IUAV of Venice, under the supervision of Prof. Francesco Musco, working on the theme of Maritime Spatial Planning.

John Hanna is an architect, lecturer and researcher. His research addresses the spatiality of urban conflicts with a focus on Paris and Beirut. John's wider research interests include Mediterranean and Red Sea port cities, quarantine spaces, architecture and literature, and urban histor(ies) of Africa and the Middle East, particularly in relation to colonialism and nationalism.

Carola Hein is Professor of the History of Architecture and Urban Planning at Delft University of Technology and director of the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus PortCityFutures Centre. She has published widely and received a Guggenheim and an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship as well as other major grants. Her books include Port City Atlas (2023), Oil Spaces (2020), The Urbanisation of the Sea (2020) Adaptive Strategies for Water Heritage (2019), The Routledge Planning History Handbook (2017), Uzō Nishiyama, Reflections on Urban, Regional and National Space (2017), Port Cities (2011), The Capital of Europe (2004), Rebuilding Urban Japan after 1945 (2003), and Cities, Autonomy and Decentralisation in Japan (2006), and Hauptstadt Berlin 1957-58 (1991).

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