

Looking into the Machinery Room (Düsseldorf, 8–10 May 25)

Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, May 8–10, 2025

Eva-Maria Troelenberg

Looking into the Machinery Room: Images and Visual Archives of Movement and Acceleration across the Mediterranean.

Conference at Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 8-10 May 2025 organized by Eva-Maria Troelenberg, Anna Sophia Messner and Shraddha Bhatawadekar

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In this conference, we aim to seize the epistemic potential that arises when the production, circulation and storage of images and visual practices are interwoven with infrastructural histories. Taking the globally connected Mediterranean after 1800 as our geographical anchor, we look at visual histories around infrastructures and machineries which envision, enable, or also inhibit, interrupt or destroy processes of mobility and acceleration.

This approach addresses the need to write a timely history of the Mediterranean, reaching beyond national or cultural borders and essentialisms. We focus on the period starting from the 19th century which is increasingly characterized by fossil-driven acceleration and marked by an ever-increasing connectivity and movement, but also by profound alterations through nation-building and human interventions into nature. The same technical progress which triggered these processes also meant that these histories have been more systematically documented, narrated and broadly circulated through images and visual practices than ever before.

Against this background, a main query of the conference is about the places where knowledge is kept in this context. By interrelating the geographical space and the spaces of knowledge storage and production, we aim to map out institutions and archives whose holdings and practices are relevant for the unearthing and understanding of visual histories of movement after 1800. Thereby, we understand the notion of the archive not as metaphorical; rather, it is always bound to the material and technical reality of tangible and legible visual practices in a concrete historical context. At the same time, the archive is also to be understood in a dynamic epistemic sense, which includes the loss of, disinterest in, or resistance against image- and archive practices. This latter aspect is crucial to avoid privileging the normativity of official archives and the state or corporal power over the histories of nomadic, diasporic or marginalized agents and communities. This type of archival thinking emphasizes the relation of human agents to the material remains and to the ecosphere of the Mediterranean. It asks how individuals or communities engage with visual sources of knowledge on a local, regional and global scale.

We are particularly interested in case studies that examine the role of vehicles, vessels, train stations, port facilities, airports, bridges, water dams, channels, border structures and other infrastructural elements within the visual fabric of diverse sites around or connected to the Mediterranean. The visual practices surrounding these sites can range from touristic imagery to scientific documentation, from utopian planning to the creation of memorials, including the curatorial reinterpretation and re-use of infrastructural sites.

Program

Thursday 8 May

5:00 PM Welcome

Eva-Maria Troelenberg, Anna Sophia Messner and Shraddha Bhatawadekar, MEDMACH, HHU Düsseldorf

5:15 PM Keynote Lecture Chair: Eva-Maria Troelenberg

Naor H. Ben-Yehoyada, Columbia University, New York

Scenes from a Relationship

7:00 PM Dinner (for speakers)

Schloss Mickeln

Friday 9 May

9:00 AM Welcome / Coffee

9:30 AM Introduction

Eva-Maria Troelenberg and Anna Sophia Messner

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Panel I: Technologies and Temporalities

Chair: Stefanie Michels, HHU Düsseldorf

Alexander Gall, Deutsches Museum, München

The Mediterranean as a Powerhouse: Herman Soergel's Atlantropa Project

Aimée Plukker, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Travel Temporalities: Stazione Roma Termini and the Trans Europ Express

Carmen Belmonte, University of Padua

From Addis Ababa to Syracuse. A monument to Fascist Imperial War Technologies and Infrastructure across the Mediterranean

12:00 - 1:30 PM Lunch

1:30 – 3:30 PM Panel II: Machineries of Empire

Chair: Shraddha Bhatawadekar

Malte Fuhrmann, Center of Advanced Studies, Sofia

Locomotion and Power. Inserting the Leader into Images of Steam-Powered Transport

Jonathan Stafford, Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, Berlin

Sail, Steam and Speed? Representing steamship mobilities in the nineteenth-century Mediterranean

Turgut Saner, Istanbul Technical University – BTU-Cottbus

The Journey of Haydarpaşa Terminus (Istanbul) from Imperial Glamour to Republican Sentiments

3:30 - 4:00 PM Coffee Break

4:00- 5:30 PM Keynote Lecture

Chair: Erin H. Nolan, Bates College, Maine

Hannah Baader, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

Engineering Botany in and of the Mediterranean

7:00 PM Dinner in Town (for speakers)

Saturday 10 May

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM Panel III: Migration and Mobilities in Crisis

Chair: Argyrios Sakorafas, MEDMACH, HHU Düsseldorf

Giorgia Mirto, Columbia University, New York

Lampedusa's Cross to Bear: the transformation of migrant's boat fragments into relics

Iro Katsaridou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Towards a situated history of migration in contemporary Mediterranean: Forensic Architecture's Pylos Shipwreck project (2023)

Coffee Break

Andrea Matošević, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

Riveted steel (dis)connections. The case of Galeb Ship in the Mediterranean and Beyond

Erin H. Nolan, Bates College, Maine

Imagined landscapes and Istanbul's Modern Machine Rooms

12:00 - 1:30 PM Lunch

1:30 – 3:30 PM Panel IV: Connectivities and Visual Representation

Chair: Anna Sophia Messner

Hanni Geiger, Global Dis:connect/Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

The Adriatic highway. Liminal tourism infrastructure between connections and disconnections

Franziska Weinmann, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Differentiation from Jaffa: visual representations of Tel Aviv's port as a symbol of a new Jewish maritime approach

David Motzafi-Haller, Université de Neuchâtel

The "Land of Israel" from the Birds' Eye View: aerial photography and the Zionist colonization of Palestine, 1920-1945

3:30 - 4:00 PM Coffee Break

4:00- 5:00 PM Final Discussion

Chair: Shraddha Bhatawadekar

For details on the research project see: <https://medmach.hypotheses.org/>

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Reference:

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