

## [Rethinking Imperial Space: Trans-Mediterranean Perspectives \(13-14 July 2022\), University of Konstanz](#)

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Type:

Workshop

Date:

July 13, 2022 to July 14, 2022

Location:

Germany

Subject Fields:

Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Maritime History / Studies, World History / Studies, Ancient History, Early Modern History and Period Studies

The Mediterranean Platform, the Dr. K.H. Eberle Research Center "Cultures of Europe in a Multipolar World", and the Center for Cultural Studies of the University of Konstanz are hosting a two-day international workshop entitled "Rethinking Imperial Space: Trans-Mediterranean Perspectives". The workshop is taking place between 13-14 July 2022 at the University of Konstanz Campus.

A great deal of world history is imperial history. The Mediterranean in particular was strongly affected by empires across the ages. Some of them, like the Roman, remained "long-lasting reference points for later empire-builders" worldwide (Burbank and Cooper 2010, p. 4), while others, such as the Umayyad caliphate or Habsburg Spain, had a global impact as well. Thus the region seems to be a good starting point to rethink imperial space. Although the Roman empire has been researched extensively, the 'new Mediterranean studies' have neglected the topic of an empire so far (see Horden and Purcell 2000, 2006; Horden and Kinoshita 2014), and the post-Roman Mediterranean has been no privileged area of investigation for imperial history. Against this background, our workshop compares trans-Mediterranean empires that had a firm basis in the region but also transcended it. Since empires are large political bodies, they are fundamentally challenged by spatial distance (Braudel 1949, p. 541). Therefore, we will focus on the imaginary geographies and spatial practices of trans-Mediterranean empires in order to understand how imperial space within and beyond the region was conceptualized, shaped and remembered. We will do this with a threefold aim: (1) By contrasting the distinction between 'cores and peripheries' or 'metropolises and colonies' that were well established in theories of empire, with alternative forms of political organization such as the 'municipality,' the 'commonwealth,' or the 'nation-state,' we wish to sharpen our understanding of imperial space (See Howe 2002, pp. 13-22; Freitag and Lafi, 2014; Lafi 2018). (2) By comparing pre-modern with *modern* empires (Osterhammel 2014, pp. 392-468; Leonhard and Hirschhausen 2011), we try to overcome the narrow time range of the 'new Mediterranean studies' that often exclude the modern age or relegate responsibility to anthropologists when the latter is concerned (Horden and Kinoshita 2014). (3) By focusing on empires that all transcended the region, we wish to intensify the dialogue between the Mediterranean and *global* history (Abulafia 2011; Watkins

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2013; Purcell 2016).

### The Program

*Day One: Wednesday 13 July:* the University of Konstanz, Y311, 78462 Konstanz

#### **Rethinking Imperial Space**

17.15 Keynote Lecture by Jane Burbank & Frederick Cooper (New York) [Abstract Below]:  
***Rethinking Imperial Space***

19.00 Reception

20.30 Dinner

*Day Two: Thursday 14 July:* University of Konstanz, K7, 78462 Konstanz

#### **Trans-Mediterranean Perspectives**

09.00 Manuel Borutta (Konstanz), ***Introduction***

09.15 Ulrich Gotter (Konstanz), ***Communities, the Imperial Framework, and the Sea: The Mediterranean Dimension of the Roman Empire***

10.15 Coffee Break

10.45 Daniel G. König (Konstanz), ***From Caliphate to Commonwealth: Political Fragmentation and the Resilience of Imperial Standards***

11.45 Kirsten Mahlke (Konstanz), ***Imperial Counternarrative(s) in 16th Century South American Chronicles***

12.45 Lunch Break

14.15 Nora Lafi (Berlin), ***Rethinking Ottoman Imperiality: An Urban and Mediterranean Perspective***

15.15 Manuel Borutta (Konstanz), ***Rethinking Modern France: Algeria, Corsica, and the Midi***

16.15 Coffee Break

16.45 Malte Fuhmann (Berlin), ***Germany's Mediterranean Empire: Colonial Fantasies and***

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***Bloody Consequences***

17.45 Andreas Guidi (Konstanz), ***Fascist Colonialism as Post-Ottoman History: Imperial Continuities in a changing Mediterranean Space viewed from Rhodes***

19.00 Final Discussion

20.30 Dinner

[Abstract of the Key Lecture]

The essence of empire is the extension of power across space and cultural differences. Empires make connections over long distances and among unlike societies. But they also break and prevent connections, as imperial leaders try to organize economic and political life along vertical relations to their centers of power and impede horizontal relations among incorporated territories. Imperial connections are asymmetric, often conflictual. Extending power meant coming to grips with space as it actually existed, in a geographical sense but also a political one, as configured by earlier and ongoing politics. Subordinated people may evade or oppose imperial power or they may twist the empire's intervention and innovations to their own benefit. Rival empires with their own lines of connection and networks of many types - trade, religious, communal - crisscross the empire's claimed space. Empires attempted to maintain control over densely and lightly populated agrarian regions, deserts, seas, oceans, rivers, islands, mountains, and valleys, each of which posed particular limitations and possibilities for incorporation, resistance, or reconfiguration of imperial power. Historians' recent focus on the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, or Mediterranean worlds can be augmented by the new interest in terrestrial connections (Saharan or Eurasian) and riverine or literal routes. These perspectives are not alternatives; they complement each other. A major question is the relationship of different kinds of space to others within, across, or against imperial formations. Our introductory talk is intended, through examples and analysis, to open up a discussion of these relationships.

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