

EASA Mediterraneanist Network (MedNet)

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Report on network activities in 2014

MedNet is a network bringing together anthropologists doing research in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. In 2014, the network was able to celebrate ten years of successful teamwork and cooperation. MedNet was present at the 13th EASA Biennial Conference in Tallinn, organizing a panel with the title: *Networking, collaboration and intimacy in the Mediterranean*. Young and advanced scholars presented their research on social practices of networking, cooperation and resistance in cases like the Italian feminist movement, Greek's resistance to water privatization in the aftermath of the economic crisis and the 'Open Theatre' as political action in Athens.

During the 13th EASA Biennial Conference, MedNet also organized a Network Meeting, which was dedicated to the memory of its co-convenor, the late William Kavanagh (CEU University Madrid). After the unexpected passing of William Kavanagh on 29th of April 2014, an acknowledgement of his work and academic commitment was presented in Tallinn. William Kavanagh was a leading figure in the network since its very beginning, to which he contributed with his knowledge, humour and personal warmth. His death is a great loss for the Mediterraneanist Network of EASA and for the discipline as a whole.

Academic editing and publishing is always an important aspect of MedNet activities. In 2013, Berghahn Books presented a collected volume on the complex transformations at Europe's borders, which was based on a MedNet panel at a previous EASA conference (Jutta Lauth Bacas, William Kavanagh (eds.) 2013: *BORDER ENCOUNTERS*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn). In 2014, the Journal of Mediterranean Studies (University of Malta), presented a Special Issue (Volume 22, No. 2) with the title *Reflecting Anthropology in the Mediterranean*, which was edited by William Kavanagh, Jutta Lauth Bacas, and Paul Clough. Based on papers presented at a former MedNet workshop at the Ca' Foscari University in Venice, contributions to the special issue draw on major categories and discourse in the anthropology of the Mediterranean and expand on their relevance for future anthropological endeavours.

The reflections presented in this new issue of the Journal of Mediterranean Studies (Vol. 22, No. 2) reveal an unexpected continuity in the discursive field of Mediterranean anthropology. The concepts of honour, patronage, familism (or family networks) and connectivity (or border crossings), to name a few, have been understood as central to the discipline since its very beginning. After a critical turn in the anthropology of the Mediterranean in the 1980s and 1990s, when some of these basic concepts had been criticized as biased and reproducing cultural essentialism, Mediterraneanists working in the area today reconsider and re-evaluate these earlier criticisms anew. The result is of course not a turn back to culturalism, but a new contextualization of those basic categories as useful instruments for better understanding changing conditions and circumstances in specific field sites. And as the contributors to this new issue of JMS (Vol. 22, 2) show, concepts of honour, patronage, familism (or family networks) turn out not to have lost their explanatory power. Having undergone a critical reflection, re-evaluation and contextualization, they still function as analytically relevant tools for studying what we understand as the multiple and fractured realities of the Mediterranean today. In times of turmoil in many countries surrounding the blue

'corrupting sea', this close understanding of complex realities based on meticulous and extended fieldwork seems to be more needed than ever.