European Islands Between Isolated and Interconnected Life Worlds
Interdisciplinary Long-Term Perspectives

Conference and Edited Book
November 15-16, 2019
SFB1070 RESOURCECULTURES
University of Tuebingen, Germany

Islands make up 2% of the earth’s surface and are defined by their circumference with the sea (Ratter 2018, 2). Yet, since the emergence of seafaring, these seemingly marginal territories came into contact with countless trade partners and their respective languages, religions, migrants, information networks, and goods, bringing islands from the margins into the center of European cultural developments. The connection with the sea also presented reoccurring dangers, such as assaults by conquerors, pirates, privateers, smugglers, sailors with contagious diseases or revolutionaries with controversial ideas. Nevertheless, in direct contrast, some islands were isolated from the information of impeding attacks, assistance from allies, raw materials required to rebuild after storms, or the food and water needed in times of scarcity. Insularity at times prompted innovative solutions and disparate cultural customs not seen on the mainland.

The central question of this conference analyzes how islands in the waters around Europe were used and understood by past societies, considering the cultural practices, social norms, and solutions of island residents to the many opportunities and challenges they have faced from 3000 BC to 1800 AD. Island-specific factors will be examined to better understand the fragile equilibrium of island life between scarcity and excess, between local customs and global contracts, between dependence and independence, between security and insecurity, between control and power, and between physical, political, or social isolation and cross-regional or global maritime networks.

The conference takes place within the academic context of the collaborative research center SFB1070 RESOURCECULTURES and the University of Tuebingen work group “Insularitäten / Insularities.” In various projects, islands are used as units of analysis to understand dynamics related to resources, defined as “tangible and intangible means by which actors create, sustain or alter social relations, units and identities” (Scholz et al. 2017, 7). Concepts related to insularity phenomena, such as insular long-term developments, connectivity and isolation, or perceptions of islanders are examined within an interdisciplinary, diachronic, and cross-cultural framework.

Possible thematic questions include:
- Are island residents more attuned to climate change because of their dependence on its control?
- How are islands different from other isolated locations (e.g. desert communities)?
- Which social and societal practices are unique to small islands (<10,000 km²) vs. larger islands?
- What is the role of islands in processes of globalization?
- How do islands cope with adversity through their religious beliefs, technological outlays, regulations, and social norms? Can these practices be seen as a (cultural) resource for the islanders?
- How do we distinguish different types of identities between archipelagos and islands?
- Does the distance to the mainland play a role in island historical development? Can differences be traced between geographical regions?

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Submission: Archaeologists, historians, geographers, art historians, and anthropologists are cordially invited to submit an abstract of 250 words in English with a narrative C.V. of 100 words to Britta Kobus (kobus.insularityworkshop@gmail.com) for a presentation (in English) of 20 minutes. Researchers living and working on islands are especially encouraged to submit abstracts and share their personal insight with the group.

Edited Book: This conference will produce an edited book published both in print and electronically through the University of Tuebingen Press. In order to expedite the publication, participants in this conference are required to submit finished chapters (6,000-8,000 words) by the date of the conference. The chapters will be peer reviewed and authors will have 3 months to edit before final submission.

Submission Deadline: May 15, 2019

Notification Deadline: June 15, 2019*

Conference Dates: November 15 – 16, 2019

Location: Castle Hohentuebingen in the medieval town of Tuebingen, Germany
Closest airport: Stuttgart (33 km / 20 miles); Trains from Frankfurt am Main airport (221 km / 137 miles / 2-hour high speed train) and Munich airport (249 km / 154 miles / 4 hours) also possible.

Included: Conference fees and catering will be covered for all accepted participants through the funding of the German Research Council (DFG) and the research group: SFB1070 RESOURCULTURES.

*Publication guidelines from the University of Tuebingen Press will be sent with the acceptance email.