

global dis:connect summer school 2023

Concept and organisation by Hanni Geiger and Tom Menger, Käte Hamburger Research Centre *global dis:connect*, LMU, Munich.

Sea of absence? Globalisation, the Mediterranean and beyond

Munich, 24-27 July 2023

The *global dis:connect* Research Centre invites **MA, doctoral students and creative professionals in all stages of their careers** to meet in Munich for a summer school on the absences produced by globalisation processes, focusing on **the Mediterranean**, particularly on the aspects of **migration, tourism and (post)coloniality**, in the past, present and future.

Like globalisation research generally, some of the most famous scholarship on the Mediterranean Sea has focused on the different connections that bind the 'Middle Sea' together (Braudel, 1949; Horden & Purcell, 2000). Its connections, however, have also created and obfuscated many absences: of people, of cultural belonging, of institutions, of personal and collective memories, of regions, of (art) objects, in archives, epistemologies, discourses, in stories and representations of and about the Mediterranean, and finally in our scholarship.

The summer school aims to combine subjects such as art history, history, social sciences, media and film studies, theatre studies, literary and cultural studies with artistic approaches. It will allow the participants to present their own projects and will feature several master classes by renowned scholars, as well as art and film presentations. All sessions will be held in English.

global dis:connect promotes **dialogue between scholarship and art** as equal means to approach dis:connective phenomena of globalisation. Such phenomena leave few traces in archives and defy direct observation, but artistic practice can reveal them. Recent years have seen increased attention to the global Mediterranean and its absences, particularly in art, film, theatre, design and architecture.

Dissertation projects, grant proposals, exhibition projects and artistic interventions are all welcome. Participants can propose whatever format best suits their work, be it a traditional presentation, a film screening, an artistic intervention, a moderated discussion or a slide show. The **deadline** for applications is **15 May 2023**.

There are no participation fees. The Centre **will cover accommodation and travel costs** for all participants.

Absences, globalisation and the Mediterranean

Starting from the concept of absences, including voids, erasures, exclusions and disappearances, the summer school will focus mainly on three distinct manifestations of absences in the Mediterranean: migration, tourism and (post-)coloniality.

Absences are not simply 'absent' and therefore invisible. Rather, as Derrida noted, they leave 'traces'. Recent work has expanded on this notion and has even argued that absences can have spatiality, materiality and agency (M. Meyer & Woodthorpe, 2008). They are objects of research in addition to a perspective; they necessitate their own methodologies, combining different disciplines, theories and practices. The arts have proven particularly fruitful in illuminating absences, finding ways to visualise

the repressed and the excluded, drawing attention to individual destinies and disappearances and addressing cultural belonging in connection with absences.

Many of the absences of today's Mediterranean are inextricably linked to globalising processes. This is more than evident in the fact that many migrants crossing the sea (or dying in the attempt) are not from those shores, but from Sub-Saharan Africa, Iran, Bangladesh and further afield. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Mediterranean absences have been addressed in the context of **migration** recently (CRISALIDE, 2017). This research has re-emphasised Abdelmalek Sayad's notion of 'double absence' in the Mediterranean migrant experience (particularly of migrant labourers from Algeria). As conditions have changed in recent decades, this notion has been largely superseded by a 'double presence' (Saada, 2000). However, as Constance de Gourcy has shown, absence continues to be relevant and even constitutive of relations between origins and destinations (Gourcy, 2018a, 2018b). Of particular interest are Mediterranean borders, border regimes and the absences they create, like those that become visible in the Lampedusian project *Porto-M*, a project collecting the objects lost, washed ashore or abandoned by those migrating across the sea (Askavusa, 2009).

Migration in the Mediterranean has always been entangled with **tourism** since the 19th century — a second lens through which to view absences in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean as an idyllic vacation destination, where tourists can contemplate the origins of Western civilisation as reified in its archaeological ruins, swim in the turquoise sea and enjoy the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, has overwritten other conceptions of the region and marginalised many groups and areas (Terranova & Chambers, 2021).

Apart from migration and tourism, **(post)coloniality** would provide a third lens to think through Mediterranean absences. Colonialism in the Mediterranean basin generated many absences for scholarship and art to address, such as settler-colonial processes of erasure (for instance, in colonial Algeria) and the dominance of colonial epistemologies that privilege the Mediterranean's northern, European shore (Chambers & Cariello, 2019). Modern artists, such as Alessandra Cianelli and Beatrice Ferrara, have responded to these absences by opening a (post)colonial archive of Italy with subtle, personal works (Ferrara et al., 2014). Furthermore, links have also been drawn between the Mediterranean and the 'Black Atlantic', both as seas of dispossession and unbelonging, with biopolitical power over black and brown bodies today being replicated on the Mediterranean frontiers of the European Union (Terranova & Chambers, 2021).

The notion of 'absences' has always played a prominent role in postcolonial thought. Léopold Senghor, for instance, mused on absence and global Black (in)visibility in his poem *L'absente*, while for Édouard Glissant and Frantz Fanon, the Mediterranean was either a reference point or a lived historical experience (Glissant, 1997, p. 33; Proglino et al., 2021). The summer school is an opportunity to consider the conceptual links among postcolonial thought, absence and the Mediterranean.

Absences have also affected cultural belonging throughout the region, either forming a basis of group identity (as for the Sephardi Jews) or as the result of nation-states' attempts to conceal more cosmopolitan social realities, such as that of Levantinism in the eastern Mediterranean (Yehoshúa, n.d.; E. Meyer & Schaerf, 2022). The various invisibilities induced by advancing nationalism in the region are made manifest, for example, through digital techniques of erasure in film by Kamal Aljafari (Grunebaum, 2021).

Beyond Mediterranean absences in past and present, the summer school is equally interested in exploring Mediterranean **futures**. What futures can be (re)imagined for a region affected by ongoing financial crises, mass migration and climate change?

We would like to stress that we conceive of the Mediterranean as broadly as possible and welcome proposals that go beyond the sea itself. Starting from the perspective of absences, possible topics for the summer school include:

- absent regions, agents, artefacts, institutions, discourses, theories and perspectives in/on the Mediterranean
- Mediterranean epistemologies/narratives, histories and the 'unlearning' of the Mediterranean (Chambers) through the lens of absences
- methodologies (artistic or scholarly) to explore Mediterranean absences
- the agencies, spatialities and materialities of absences
- invisible or hidden routes of migrations or borders
- lost, abolished or vanished objects and actors
- (mass) tourism and what it hides or removes
- colonial erasures
- postcolonial thinking on absences and their (im)possible overcoming
- absences and personal/collective affects and memories
- the (hegemonically curated) construction and concealment/disappearance/exclusion of Mediterranean cultural belongings and groups
- imagining Mediterranean futures through an engagement with absences (materially and ideologically/theoretically)

Global dis:connect is a research centre dedicated to exploring historical and contemporary globalisation processes. We've conceived the summer school to overcome disciplinary disconnections and bring together different subjects, approaches and geographies.

To apply, please send the following documents by 15 May:

- A CV (max. one page).
- A cover letter of no more than one page explaining your motivation.
- A description of what you intend to present at the summer school (0.5-2 pages). Proposals for artistic presentations can include images, links to videos, film stills and other media.

Please send us your application as a single PDF file by email to: Hanni.Geiger[at]lmu.de and T.Menger[at]lmu.de.