

EASA Mediterraneanist Network (MedNet)

MedNet Convenor: Jutta Lauth Bacas, Athens/Cologne

Email: jutta.lauth.bacas@gmail.com

Report on the 2017 MedNet workshop with title:

“Wind of Change: Politics, Economy, Ethnicity in the Mediterranean”.

University of Lisbon, 2nd – 4th November 2017

MedNet, an EASA network active since 2004, brings together social anthropologists doing research in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. In 2017, MedNet organized its biannual MedNet Workshop in cooperation with the Institute of Social Sciences at University of Lisbon from 2nd – 4th November 2017.

Following an open call by the workshop organiser Jutta Lauth Bacas (Convenor of the EASA MedNet network) and Murilo Guimarães (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon), participants met to discuss thirteen paper presentations stimulated by the general workshop theme: *“Wind of Change: Politics, Economy, Ethnicity in the Mediterranean”*. As professional observers of recent political and social changes in the Mediterranean region, social anthropologists see themselves confronted with growing economic inequality, with depth crisis and austerity, with migration movements and growing xenophobia.

A number of paper presenters at the 2017 MedNet Workshop in Lisbon focused on **politics** in a broad sense (inspired by the Greek term *politika*, "affairs of the cities"), studying changing political practices (f. e., patronage and political management in a Spanish Enclave in Northern Africa), shifting power relations (f. e. power relations in post-revolutionary Tunisia or the role of political parties in Egypt) as well as the role of media and TV news in producing images of the Other in the Mediterranean and beyond.

Ethnicity can be seen as another feature central to most societies bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The 2017 MedNet workshop therefor included contributions that studied changing group formations related to processes of migration, f. e. anti-migrant movements and xenophobia, which seems rising in the context of the economic crisis.

The keynote was given by Prof. José Manuel Sobral (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon), who presented aspects of the rapidly changing Portuguese society seen through the lens of African migrants in Portugal. The 2017 Lisbon workshop closed with another presentation related to Portugal by analysing aspects of the urban transformation on the south bank of the Tejo river, the former industrial region opposite of Lisbon. Workshop participants had the chance to gain some first hand impressions of this de-industrialized area during their excursion to other side of the Tejo river during the third day of the MedNet workshop. The excursion started with a ferry ride from Lisbon's Cais do Sodré to the opposite port city of Cacilhas and continued with a walk along the underdeveloped Cais do Ginjal and the old town of Almada, giving a vivid impression of how an engaged town community is trying to cope with Winds of Change.

