

Introduction

# Mediterranean Social Sciences Network

The end of science is knowledge: the discovery of what concerns man and his world. The object of social sciences is the shared world of man, man's relationships and the product of these relationships. "Order" is the focal point of research in this area of science, order in social relationship which should serve for the benefit of all mankind.

Discoveries in the social sciences must therefore necessarily contribute to the creation and maintenance of social order. The practical relevance of research in this field of knowledge is not limited to that area which happens to come under the scientist's analytical eye. What a social scientist finds in the area of this observation is relatively applicable to any other area with the same properties and conditions. This would be more expedient if the areas concerned were somehow synonymous, sharing common elements and characteristics.

The Mediterranean basin presents one of these cases. It encompasses different peoples with their respective beliefs, traditions and customs and folkways resulting in a variety of civilizations. These peoples, however, have something in common. There is some shared element in the Mediterranean which makes possible the encounters and relationship of its components, which element should prove a unifying factor of this region.

The Mediterranean is made up of various civilizations mainly: Greco-Roman, Christian, Byzantine and Islam, civilizations which were mutually hostile. This did not present a distinctive way of living proper to the region of the Inland Sea (*mare internum*) or *mare nostrum* as the Romans used to call it. In both the physical and its human setting all the Mediterranean varieties leave a coherent image in the mind as a system in which everything mingles and then is recast to form a new, original unity.\*

The goal of the Mediterranean Social Network should therefore be the discovery of that common element or elements, characteristic or characteristics, which are the point of encounter of the peoples of the Inland Sea and which should be the basis of their relationship and unity.

\* Cfr. Fernand Braudel, "The Mediterranean: Land, Sea History", UNESCO, *The Courier*, December 1985

It implies the existence of a Mediterranean Culture, taking culture in the strictest sense of the term, based on the fact that the peoples of this region have a common genius or spirit which supercedes the diversity of civilizations and nationalities within the inland sea. It implies also the need for collaboration and cooperation between these peoples for the benefit of all.

The planning group agreed that the aims and objectives of the Network should be the following :-

**Aims**

- to discover and determine elements and characteristics constituting a Mediterranean Culture;
- to create a sense of unity and cooperation with an end result of concrete common action;
- to give prominence to the various institutes of research within the Mediterranean;
- to diffuse information about research being carried out by the various institutes and provide the necessary connections to share information;
- to promote the coordination of research and related action.

**Objectives**

- the distribution of a newsletter to the various institutes about the research in progress;
- to make a cross-analysis of the contributions and results of the varied research on a particular theme;
- to make possible for institutes collaboration on common research;
- to organize workshops on special themes as requested by the institutes, the latter hopefully providing the necessary sponsorship;
- the creation of a Data Bank for the Mediterranean region.

For the time being, the majority of the aims and objectives of the Network should be met by the publication of the Newsletter. It will be the principal organ of the Network for the distribution of information. However, as stated in the objective, we do not have in mind to limit ourselves to this. Eventually all the aims and objectives should be fulfilled.

The first issue of the Newsletter gives information about the social sciences research institutes in the Mediterranean region. Such information is indispensable as a start, as it serves to come to know each other better. It is also our intention to update the list of institutes as and when it

becomes necessary.

We suggest that a thematic approach be adopted in the layout of the Newsletter. A particular theme will be proposed with every Newsletter to be treated in the following issue. Each and every research institute will be expected to contribute a fair share of research material relevant to the theme in question. Suggestions about themes to be dealt with in future Newsletters would be most welcome. There will also be space allocated in the Newsletter for observations, comments and further analysis on themes already treated. In this way we would meet our aim of cross-analysis. We would also welcome articles as well as information about activities organised and services provided by Institutes which will be included in the Newsletter.

Finally I am pleased to say that the idea of creating such a network was very well received by all those concerned. This can be attested by the many letters of encouragement accompanying the responses to the call for information about the various research institutes. Full cooperation and collaboration was also guaranteed. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who willingly gave their encouragement and help. I am sure that with their collaboration this work will serve to promote the unity and well being of our people, the Mediterranean people.

**Carmel Tabone O.P.**

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