



# CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval  
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean  
*Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova*



UNIVERSITÉ DE LAUSANNE  
• ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF  
THE CZECH REPUBLIC • MASARYK  
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## CONVIVIUM X/1/2023

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval  
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean

*Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova*

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X/1

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**GRATIAS VOBIS MAXIMAS AGIMUS!**



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# Navigating between Port Cities Past and Present

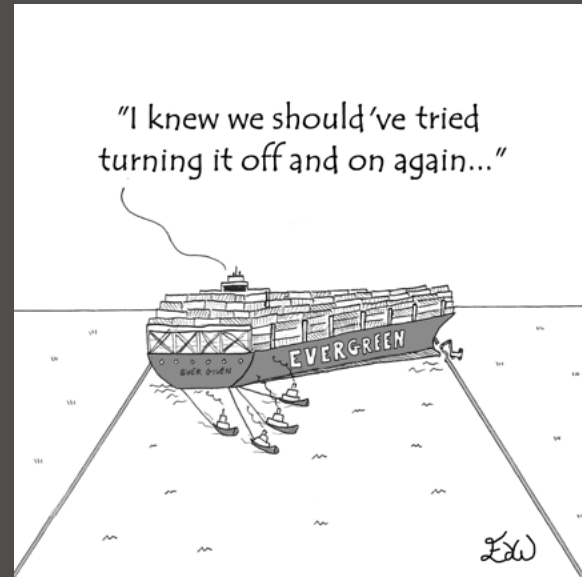
Sarah K. Kozlowski & Kristen Strehle

In late March 2021, much of the world watched in bemusement as the ultra-large container vessel, *Ever Given*, created an enormous traffic jam in the Suez Canal [Fig. 1]. Built between 1859 and 1869 to connect the Mediterranean and Red Seas, the thoroughfare facilitates about ten percent of today's global shipping traffic. On the windy morning of March 23, the bow and stern of the 400-meter-long ship became lodged in the banks of the canal and remained there for six days<sup>1</sup>. Financial losses mounted by billions of dollars daily<sup>2</sup>. Social media and digital platforms exploded with cartoons and memes as workers attempted to free the vessel by hand, machine, and tugboat [Figs 2–3]<sup>3</sup>. The debacle threw into relief the crucial role of contemporary maritime transit routes by exposing their very fragility, not to mention the effects of their disruption as ports around the world awaited

1 John Gambrell and Samy Magdy, "Massive cargo ship becomes wedged, blocks Egypt's Suez Canal", *AP News*, 24 March 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/cargo-ship-blocks-egypt-suez-canal-5957543bb555ab31c14d56ad09f98810>.

2 Justin Harper, "Suez blockage is holding up \$9.6bn of goods a day", *BBC News*, 26 March 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56533250>; James Baker, Eric Watkins, David Osler, "Suez Canal remains blocked despite efforts to refloat grounded Ever Given", *Lloyd's List*, 24 March 2021, <https://lloydslist.maritimeintelligence.informa.com/LL1136229/Suez-Canal-remains-blocked-despite-efforts-to-refloat-grounded-Ever-Given>.

3 Emily Rauhala, "The best memes about the big, stuck ship", *The Washington Post*, 29 March 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/03/26/suez-canal-stuck-ship-memes/>.



1/ A section of the front page of *Corriere della Sera* on 30 March 2021 with headlines noting the release of *Ever Given* in the Suez Canal, the availability of Covid-19 vaccinations in Italian pharmacies, and the impact of closed school canteens on children

2/ Cartoon showing the *Ever Given* ship stuck in the Suez Canal, with the caption “We should’ve tried turning it off and on again...”, Cartoon by Edw – @EdwCartoons, 29 March 2021

long-delayed cargo including car parts, Ikea furniture, garden gnomes, lemons, French oak timber, and tea leaves<sup>4</sup>. “Name a product”, ventured one reporter, “and it’s probably on the *Ever Given*”<sup>5</sup>. The stunning breakdown of this system in the Suez Canal captured imaginations at a time of global upheaval – the Covid-19 pandemic had begun the year before – and crystallized public awareness of the friability of supply chains, logistics, and infrastructure usually hidden behind the scenes.

The following spring, the West Coast of the United States was riveted by the possibility that 22 000 dock workers at the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Portland, and Seattle might strike after their contract with the Pacific Maritime Association expired without a new agreement [Fig. 4]<sup>6</sup>. Forty percent of imports to the U.S. by sea arrive at ports on the West Coast, with those of Los Angeles and Long Beach forming the largest port complex in the country. Represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, dock workers seek increased wages and benefits, better working conditions, and protections against automation at terminals<sup>7</sup>. “At stake”, wrote one reporter, “is the continuing flow of goods into the country, after two years of disruptions to the supply chain from pandemic lockdowns, material shortages, soaring fuel prices and the occasional giant ship getting stuck in the Suez Canal”<sup>8</sup>. While “the big, stuck ship” initially injected some levity into public debate, the threat of continued slow-downs and potential closures at West Coast ports brought into focus the significance of healthy port infrastructures as gateways (or barriers) between sea and land. As of March 2023, dock workers continue their work as bargaining sides have reached an impasse, but the uncertainty has dramatically reshaped port capacity in the U.S.: record volumes of cargo have been diverted to the East Coast ports of New Jersey and New York, now the busiest in the country, as well as through the ports of Savannah, Georgia, and New Orleans, LA.

Even as we have become newly attuned to the intricacies and vulnerabilities of global maritime routes and ports, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the development of the war over the past year has drawn our attention to the human cost of war as well as the goods that travel through these routes and ports<sup>9</sup>. Since antiquity, the region’s fertile steppes and Black Sea ports have made it one of the world’s breadbaskets<sup>10</sup>. Along with military operations, political negotiations, and Ukrainians’ experiences on





## Workers want raises. Shippers want robots. The supply chain hinges on reaching a deal



The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach handle more than 30% of containerized imports entering the U.S. The expiration of a deal between dockworkers and shippers could snarl that pipeline. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

the ground and in diaspora, we have followed efforts to secure key ports and the flow of Ukrainian grain to markets around the world. In southeastern Ukraine, between March and May 2022, Russian troops sought control of Mariupol, a port city on the Sea of Azov with a thriving trade in grain as well as steel and iron. The resulting siege resulted in the deaths of between 10 000 and 25 000 people, a number difficult to determine given the ongoing occupation of the city<sup>11</sup>. In the months that followed, the United Nations brokered a deal between the Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine called the Black Sea Grain Initiative, to facilitate the distribution of grain and sunflower products through the ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Yuzhny/Pivdennyi in southwestern Ukraine [Fig. 5]<sup>12</sup>. Although the agreement is fragile – Russia launched missiles at Odesa just one day after

3/ A meme created by Twitter user @KimBhasin that juxtaposes the phrase, “me just trying my best,” with a photograph of a small excavator moving earth near the enormous hull of the ultra-large container ship *Ever Given*

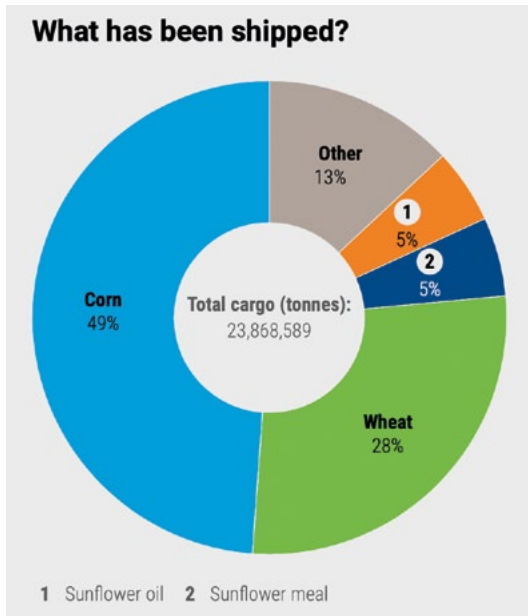
4/ Sam Dean, “Workers want raises. Shippers want robots. The supply chain hinges on reaching a deal”, *Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 2022

- 4 “Ikea furniture, tea and French oak: goods held up by Suez canal blockage”, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/29/ikea-furniture-tea-and-french-oak-goods-held-up-by-suez-canal-blockage>; “Gnome shortage: Lockdown and Suez canal blockage blamed”, *BBC News*, 15 April 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-56748561>.
- 5 Alex Christian, “The untold story of the big boat that broke the world”, *Wired*, 22 June 2021, <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/ever-given-global-supply-chain>.
- 6 Augusta Saraiva, Ngai Yeung, “West Coast dockworkers to keep working, and talking, as contract expires”, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2022-07-01/west-coast-dockworkers-extend-talks-beyond-july-1-without-contract>.
- 7 Alex N. Press, “West Coast Dockworkers Are Preparing to Negotiate a New Contract”, *Jacobin*, 7 December 2021, <https://jacobin.com/2021/12/west-coast-dockworkers-longshoremen-ilwu-contract-negotiations>; Augusta Saraiva, “West Coast dockworkers decline contract extension, setting stage for heated talks”, *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-11-23/west-coast-dockworkers-decline-contract-extension-seek-talks>.
- 8 Sam Dean, “Workers Want Raises. Shippers want Robots. The Supply Chain Hinges on Reaching a Deal”, *Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2022-06-05/workers-want-raises-shippers-want-robots-the-supply-chain-hinges-on-reaching-a-deal>.
- 9 We extend many thanks to Dr. Sandra Russell for generously sharing her time and expertise on Ukrainian history with us.
- 10 See Serhii Plokhyy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, New York 2015; and Caroline Humphrey, Vera Skvirskaja, “Introduction: The Black Sea as Region and Horizon”, *Black Sea Currents, Focaal*, LXX (2014), pp. 3–11.
- 11 Hilary Andersson, “The agony of not knowing, as Mariupol mass burial sites grow”, 7 November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63536564>; Yuras Karmanau, Adam Schreck, and Cara Anna, “Mariupol mayor says siege has killed more than 10K civilians”, 11 April 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-state-of-the-union-address-zelenskyy-biden-kyiv-7cc069b80178629a60f4fd166348d45>.
- 12 See the website of the Black Sea Grain Initiative at <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative>.

Vessel movement – Outbound voyages							
Departure	Inspection	Departure port	Destination	Metric tons	Commodity	IMO number	Vessel name
10 Mar 23		Chornomorsk	Libya	15,500	Barley	9354040	LADY LAGUNA
10 Mar 23		Odesa	The Netherlands	29,800	Corn	9512355	LAAX
10 Mar 23		Odesa	The Netherlands	6,800	Rapeseed	9512355	LAAX
10 Mar 23		Odesa	The Netherlands	30,400	Soya beans	9512355	LAAX
10 Mar 23		Chornomorsk	United Kingdom	15,100	Sunflower seeds	8914726	DAYTONA DYNAMIC
09 Mar 23		Odesa	Italy	28,200	Corn	9311311	LADY MERAL
09 Mar 23		Yuzhny/Pivdennyi	Portugal	70,530	Corn	9617351	CAPTAIN V. MADIAS
09 Mar 23		Chornomorsk	Italy	33,000	Corn	9595371	BELLA JUDI
09 Mar 23		Yuzhny/Pivdennyi	China	44,072	Sunflower oil	9288849	ANDREA VICTORY
08 Mar 23		Chornomorsk	Spain	30,000	Corn	9303431	LADY ZEHMA
08 Mar 23		Yuzhny/Pivdennyi	Spain	28,300	Wheat	9467615	GAT FEELING
08 Mar 23		Yuzhny/Pivdennyi	Spain	4,400	Corn	9467615	GAT FEELING
07 Mar 23		Chornomorsk	Spain	44,000	Wheat	9393618	SANTORINI ISLAND
07 Mar 23		Yuzhny/Pivdennyi	Turkiye	44,000	Soya beans	9236092	KARTERIA
07 Mar 23		Odesa	Spain	26,750	Corn	9312327	AG VALOR

the deal was signed<sup>13</sup> – it makes possible shipments of more than five million metric tons of grain each month to destinations around the world, including to regions with serious food insecurity [Fig. 6]. In January 2023, acknowledging increased pressure on Black Sea shipping routes, Adolfo Urso, the Italian minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy, proposed to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to strengthen Trans-European Transport Corridor 5 so that Ukraine could use Italian seaports as their own<sup>14</sup>. Running from Venice to Trieste/Koper and through Slovenia, Hungary, and Slovakia to the Ukrainian cities of Uzhhorod, L'viv, and Kyiv, Corridor 5 “connects Central Europe to the Mediterranean, following trade routes from the times of the Roman Empire”<sup>15</sup>. Although this proposal has yet to be enacted, the potential translation of Ukraine’s ports from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean speaks to a larger effort to envelope the country within the European Union and to Italy’s investment in “preparing the industrial and commercial part of the reconstruction [of Ukraine] to come”<sup>16</sup>.

We could not have anticipated, when we first developed the idea that would become this special issue of *Convivium* dedicated to the architecture of port cities in medieval Italy and the Mediterranean, that disruptions to contemporary ports, the routes that connect them, and the movement of goods through and between them would assume such importance on the world stage. The project emerged in the two years before the Covid-19 pandemic in another constellation of port cities: New Orleans, Naples, Palermo, Seattle, and Tacoma. We met in early spring 2018 at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, held that year in New Orleans, one of the most important port cities in the early history of the United States. We connected through our common research interests in southern Italy and its Mediterranean worlds, Sarah focusing primarily on Naples and Kristen on Palermo. That fall, Sarah led the opening of the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia” in Naples. Founded as a collaboration between the Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History and the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, the center at La Capraia takes Naples and southern Italy as a laboratory for new research in the cultural histories of port cities and the mobilities of artworks, people, and knowledge<sup>17</sup>. When Kristen visited the center to present her work on medieval Palermo, we decided



5/ Detail of a spreadsheet displaying movement between 7 March 2023 and 10 March 2023 of fifteen outbound vessels under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Public information includes the departure ports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, or Yuzhny/Pivdennyi, the destination country, and the onboard commodity.

6/ A pie chart showing the breakdown of 23,868,589 tonnes of cargo shipped under the Black Sea Grain Initiative with color-coded commodities as shown in the spreadsheet made available to the public on the United Nations Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Centre website.

to propose a session dedicated to the architecture of port cities for the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, slated for spring 2020 in Seattle.

In 2019–2020, Kristen was Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA. There, she taught a seminar on medieval port cities in the Mediterranean, and included a module on the Puget Sound, situated at the southern limit of the inland Salish Sea. The ports of Tacoma and Seattle, which together comprise the Northwest Seaport Alliance, are embedded in a uniquely diverse and sensitive ecosystem in which cargo ships share space with orca whales, humpback whales, sea lions, and other marine life [Figs 7–8]. The region presented a unique case through which to explore the cultural, social, commercial, and profound environmental impacts of port development, as well as the representation of port cities and the construction of identity of place. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the conference in Seattle – now recognized as one of the virus’s ports of entry to the United States – moved online, and we found ourselves navigating disruption to our own mobilities as art historians<sup>18</sup>.

These experiences and events have inspired us, as individuals and as collaborators, to reconsider the architectural, natural, cultural, and social dynamics that shape port cities,

13 Ellen Francis, Kareem Fahim, Claire Parker, “Russia attacks Odessa port a day after signing grain deal, Ukraine says”, *The Washington Post*, 23 July 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/23/russian-strike-odessa-port-ukraine-grain/>. See also Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*, Boston 2019; Charles King, *Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams*, New York 2011; and Tanya Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine*, Toronto 2008.

14 Marco Ventura, “Urso: ‘Così ricostruiremo l’Ucraina, Trieste e Venezia saranno i nuovi porti di Kiev’”, *Il Messaggero*, 13 January 2023, [https://www.ilmessaggero.it/mondo/trieste\\_venezia\\_porti\\_ucraina Ricostruzione\\_urso\\_cosa\\_ha\\_detto-7164374.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/mondo/trieste_venezia_porti_ucraina Ricostruzione_urso_cosa_ha_detto-7164374.html).

15 See the section 5.5 (pp. 78–100) of the “Final Report” of the PAN-EUROSTAR (*Pan-European Transport Corridors and Areas Status Report*), commissioned by the European Commission Directorate-General for Energy & Transport and issued by Jaakko Pöyry Infra and VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland on 24 November 2005, [https://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/documentation/doc/2005\\_11\\_24/\\_report\\_paneurostar.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/documentation/doc/2005_11_24/_report_paneurostar.pdf).

16 Ventura, “Urso” (n. 14), our translation.

17 Visit the website of the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia” at <https://arthistory.utdallas.edu/port-cities/>.

18 “Architecture and Mediation in Medieval Mediterranean Port Cities”, session co-chaired by Sarah K. Kozlowski and Kristen Strehle, annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, slated for Seattle but held online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 30 April – 1 May 2020.

relationships between them, and artistic production that emerges from them. We have been pressed to consider ports as places where cultural exchange but also phenomena like migration (including forced migration and enslavement), disease, social and political conflict, and environmental crisis are concentrated and intensified. We have come to understand that port cities are sites of both the natural and the made, arrival and departure, convergence and dispersal, openness and closure, movement and obstruction, connection and rupture. And we have recognized that ports are physical places but also sets of cultural ideas about place; moreover, they are places that must define themselves in relation to other places within larger geographies both real and imagined.

For the Society of Architectural Historians session and then for this issue of *Convivium*, we invited art and architectural historians, archeologists, and historians to consider the physical forms and cultural dynamics of port cities in medieval Italy and its Mediterranean world in order to pursue two lines of inquiry. First, how did the built and natural environments of port cities configure and even thematize relationships between land, sea, and the world beyond? Second, how did the spatial, cultural, socio-political, and economic conditions of port cities shape artistic production, exchange, and transformation? These questions point to even more fundamental questions: what distinguishes port cities from other kinds of medieval centers in terms of their natural and built forms,

7/ A container ship coming into the Port of Tacoma on 9 March 2020



8/ A panorama of the Port of Tacoma and the city with snow-capped Mount Rainier in the center background, 9 March 2020



their construction of ideas of place in relation to wider worlds, and their roles as sites of artistic production?

These questions emerge at the confluence of methodological currents that have shaped art history in recent decades, especially the field of Mediterranean Studies, which has become a haven for subjects and regions traditionally excluded from canonical geographic frameworks<sup>19</sup>. For historian Fernand Braudel, the lands surrounding the Mediterranean – “the sum of many seas” – provided a bucolic entry point for studying pre-modern history:

“Its life is linked to the land, its poetry more than half-rural, its sailors may turn peasant with the seasons; it is the sea of vineyards and olive trees just as much as the sea of the long-oared galleys and the round-ships of merchants, and its history can no more be separated from that of the lands surrounding it than the clay can be separated from the hands of the potter who shapes it”<sup>20</sup>.

Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell have pushed against Braudel’s idyllic vision and the environmental determinism woven through his history of tides and currents, searing desert winds, and harsher winters. Horden and Purcell introduce us to the abundant microclimates and microhistories that range across that vast space, arguing that the boundaries of the Mediterranean basin are not easily defined by the geographic limits of date palms and olive groves<sup>21</sup>. David Abulafia, on the other hand, has left the mainland behind in *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, offering an expansive investigation of human dynamics on the sea and cultural movements across it. Abulafia visualizes the Mediterranean as a bridge, one of “several Mediterraneans, or Middle Seas, areas of the world where land masses are separated by intervening water across which commodities, ideas and people regularly cross”<sup>22</sup>.

Crucially, Mediterranean and related geographic frameworks cut across the national boundaries that have long defined the discipline of art history, allowing us instead to trace phenomena such as artistic and cultural exchange, the rise of large-scale maritime trade, the growing power of the merchant class, and the development of social mobilities. For example, Eva Hoffman has located the meanings of medieval Mediterranean objects and forms not in their places of origin but in their very movements across space, and in the ways in which they point beyond themselves to create connections with multiple centers in a larger, shared culture – a shared culture that is not monolithic, however, but whose multiple iterations negotiate between the global and the local<sup>23</sup>. For another example, Jill Caskey has approached the thirteenth-century Amalfi coast through the lens of *mercantantia*, the art and lifestyle of mercantilism across and beyond the Mediterranean<sup>24</sup>. Such an outlook acknowledges that the medieval art and architecture of southern Italy, as a confluence of Byzantine, Islamic, and European currents, does not sit neatly within traditional geographies of Italian art, and moreover, resists defining spheres of influence in terms of centers of power such as Palermo, Naples, Île-de-France, Cairo, or Constantinople. In turn, we might consider the Mediterranean and other “Middle Seas” such as the

19 See, for example, the recent publication of two textbooks designed for college students studying the history and art of the greater Mediterranean basin: Jill Caskey, Adam S. Cohen, Linda Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages: Exploring a Connected World*, Ithaca 2023; Thomas E. Burman, Brian A. Catlos, Mark D. Meyerson, *The Sea in the Middle: The Mediterranean World, 650–1650*, Oakland 2022.

20 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I, transl. by Siân Reynolds, New York 1972, p. 17.

21 Peregrine Horden, Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Maldon/Oxford 2000.

22 David Abulafia, “Introduction: What is the Mediterranean”, in *The Mediterranean in History*, *Idem* ed., London 2003, p. 17; see also *Idem*, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford 2011.

23 Eva R. Hoffman, “Pathways of Portability: Islamic and Christian Interchange from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century”, *Art History*, xxiv/1 (2001), pp. 17–50.

24 Jill Caskey, *Art and Patronage in the Medieval Mediterranean: Merchant Culture in the Region of Amalfi*, Cambridge 2004.

Black Sea, as well as fluvial systems, as smaller units of inquiry within broader “global” histories of art and culture<sup>25</sup>.

The questions that animate this issue have also been shaped by recent work on art’s mobilities: the actual and imagined movements of artworks, forms, materials, technologies, and people across places and times, and the ways in which these mobilities create (and recreate) meaning<sup>26</sup>. Several important publications in the past ten years have focused on art’s mobilities within and through port cities in particular, as well as the representational constructions of port cities<sup>27</sup>. Here, we propose to shift focus from artworks and people in motion to the places through which they traveled. Port cities allow us to move between the local and the global: to excavate deep stories of a place over time, and to position that place within a network of interrelated places. Therefore, even as the contributors to this volume take a range of methodological approaches, their work draws on the unique and complex historiographic traditions of the places on which they work.

The essays presented here are intended not as a systematic study of medieval port cities, but rather as a constellation of essays that relate to and converse with each other thematically, geographically, chronologically, and methodologically. Together, they reveal port cities in medieval Italy and the Mediterranean as both physical realities and cultural ideas, sites where dynamics between built and natural environments configure (and continuously reconfigure) relationships between land, sea, and wider worlds, and where these relationships shape the form and identity – as well as the representation – of place.

It is on that last front in particular that the following essays open new avenues for future research. How do the forms of port cities participate in and create relationships with other port cities near and far, and what forms, material practices, and technologies constitute those relationships? Moreover, how do the forms of port cities thematize relationships between places? And how can our art and architectural histories of port cities take into account the darker undersides of these webs, from piracy and smuggling, to forced migration and enslavement, to environmental crisis? Finally, from the position of a single port city, how can we draw together art and architectural histories both local and global? After all, our “local” is a set of given conditions interwoven with our imagination of the world and our place in it, and our “global” is a constellation of interconnected locals and the patterns we trace between and among them. We offer this special issue of *Convivium* as a point of departure from which to explore these and other lines of inquiry that will move the field forward.

Elizabeth Kassler-Taub (Dartmouth College) opens the issue in Palermo, with a history of the city’s urban waterscape between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. By weaving together maps and city views, local chronicles, and archival documents related to the city’s ill-fated project to construct a new artificial port in the sixteenth century, Kassler-Taub reveals the Palermitan interface between land and sea as porous, mutable, and contested. Shaped by forces at once social, political, and cultural, Palermo’s waterscape (a term drawn from ecological approaches to the humanities) became a site of collective memory and urban identity. Kassler-Taub’s essay introduces themes that run through the essays that follow: port cities as both physical environments and cultural ideas, as living confluences of the natural and the human made, and as sites of both connection and rupture.

Ali Asgar Hussamuddin Alibhai (Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History, University of Texas at Dallas) sets medieval Palermo in relation to the Fatimid city of al-Mahdiyya, bridging the Mediterranean Sea between Sicily and Tunisia. Drawing together primary texts, early maps and city views, and material evidence, Alibhai argues that in the tenth

century, al-Mahdiyya and Palermo formed a crucial logistical axis along which the Fatimid dynasty sourced and traded the timber that made possible the growth of their maritime power. He focuses in particular on Jūdhar, a chamberlain at the Fatimid court and a successful timber merchant, in order to trace the movement of a single commodity and a single person through Mediterranean networks that connected port cities in Italy and northern Africa.

Teresa Colletta (University of Naples “Federico II”) brings us to the Bay of Naples, and to the port city first settled by Greek seafarers in the ninth century BCE. Through close study of surviving evidence of the urban fabric of medieval Naples, Colletta sheds light on a central element of the city’s port infrastructure: its *arsenali* or shipyards. Focusing on the royal Angevin *arsenali* built in the thirteenth century, she brings together evidence of their locations, histories, and forms, and compares the Neapolitan shipyards with extant examples in Amalfi, Alanya, Candia, and Valencia. In turn, Colletta raises broader questions of morphological and functional relationships between port infrastructures in Naples and across the Mediterranean.

Renard Gluzman (Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art / Haifa Center for Mediterranean History) takes as his point of departure a single ship – or rather, the carcass of a wrecked ship lodged in the principal canal that connected the ports of Venice and Malamocco. The stranded vessel caused the canal’s sandbanks to erode and the passage to silt, obstructing movement in and out of Venice’s harbor. On the basis of archival documents and his own model of the hydraulics at play in the lagoon, Gluzman narrates in granular detail the harbormaster’s and magistracy’s engineering response to the disaster. In so doing, he tests the potential of a microhistorical approach to relate a chapter in the life of a port that encompasses built and unbuilt environments, natural forces, and human skill.

Aristea S. Gratsea (Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Foundation for Research & Technology Hellas) turns our attention to Crete: not to its principal port of Candia, however, but to the smaller haven of Frascia and its role in Venetian Crete’s port system and shipping activities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Archival documents reveal shifting patterns of use of Frascia bay depending on weather conditions, ongoing

25 For a reconfiguration of the artistic geography of Renaissance Italy see, for example, Stephen J. Campbell, *The Endless Periphery: Toward a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto’s Italy*, Chicago 2019. For a consideration of fourteenth-century art in Italy within a broader Eurasian context see, for example, Anne Dunlop, “Mongol Eurasia in the Trecento Veneto”, *Convivium*, VII/1 (2020), pp. 114–135; Anne Dunlop, “Ornament and Vice: The Foreign, the Mobile, and the Cocharelli Fragments”, in *Histories of Ornament from Global to Local*, Gülru Necipoğlu, Alina Payne eds, Princeton 2016, pp. 228–237; and Anne Dunlop, “On the Origins of European Painting Materials, Real and Imagined”, in *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250–1750*, Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop, Pamela H. Smith eds, Manchester 2015, pp. 68–96. For work that sets the Italian peninsula within the context of Eurasia and Africa see, for example, Vera-Simone Schulz, “Artistic Exchanges Across Afro-Eurasia: A Global Taste for Metal Artifacts from Mamluk Syria and Egypt in Italy, West Africa, and China in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries”, *Convivium*, VII/2 (2020), pp. 132–157.

26 For just a few examples see the work of Eva Hoffman and Anne Dunlop cited above; *Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World*, Meredith Martin, Daniela Bleichmar eds, special issue of *Art History*, XXXVIII/4 (2015); *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, Caterina Arcangeli Schmidt, Gerhard Wolf eds, Venice 2010; *Trade in Artists’ Materials: Markets and Commerce in Europe to 1700*, Jo Kirby, Susie Nash, Joanna Cannon eds, London 2010; Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*, Cambridge 1997; and Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West*, Frankfurt / New York 1996.

27 See, for example, *A Hub of Art: In, Out, and Around Venice, 1177–1499*, Herbert Kessler, Serena Romano eds, *Convivium*, VII/1 (2020); Prita Meier, *Swahili Port Cities: The Architecture of Elsewhere*, Indianapolis 2016; *Mobility of Artists, Transfer of Forms, Functions, Works of Art and Ideas in Medieval Mediterranean Europe: The Role of the Ports*, special issue of *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, XXII (2016); *Littoral and Liminal Spaces: The Early Modern Mediterranean and Beyond*, Hannah Baader, Gerhard Wolf eds, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LXVI/1 (2014).

construction projects at Candia, and the needs of the military. Gratsea also shows that in some cases, use of Frascia disrupted or diverted maritime activities: the harbor served as a safe haven for ships attempting to avoid corsair attacks, and became a stopover point for trade in contraband.

Ana Marinković (University of Zagreb) and Petar Strunje (IUAV University of Venice) open the question of medieval port cities' infrastructural responses to infectious disease. Marinković and Strunje assemble material and documentary evidence to explore how, beginning in the fifteenth century, Dubrovnik (Ragusa) created a system of quarantine stations that leveraged natural topography and existing architectural forms (mercantile, military, and monastic) to prevent and contain outbreaks of contagious disease. Through control of movement in and out of the city, and through spatial confinement within quarantine stations, Dubrovnik's disease infrastructure could be adapted to various conditions and functions, and allowed the city's trade activities to continue while mediating the spread of infection.

Joseph C. Williams (University of Maryland), in his study of foreign master builders at Ragusa cathedral between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, expands our understanding of cultural mobilities to include not only the physical movement of forms, technologies, artworks, and people but also social movement within professional and legal systems. Williams's close examination of documentary evidence shows that even as the governor patrons of Ragusa cathedral made use of the physical and social mobility of Adriatic builders, they proscribed mobility through legislation related to professional security and citizenship. In turn, Williams reads the form of the cathedral itself in light of the patronage structure behind its construction.

Joseph M. Silva (Community College of Rhode Island) demonstrates the political and cultural significance of the island of Elba, with its fortified city of Portoferraio, within Cosimo I de' Medici's program to establish sixteenth-century Tuscany as a maritime state and ensure the security of the Tuscan coast. Silva analyzes three major artistic projects – a monumental fresco program, a portrait medal, and a civic festival – as exercises in statecraft through which Cosimo figured his acquisition and fortification of Elba and projected his power on a Mediterranean stage. In so doing, Silva shows that representations of port cities – and the circulation of these representations – are integral to the functions and identity-formation of port cities themselves.

Karen Rose Mathews (University of Miami) closes this issue of *Convivium* in Pisa, where she sets the city's built environment in relation to its hydrotopography. Mathews argues that Pisa's urban organization, key monuments, and their ornamental programs both shaped and represented the city's relationship to water. She shows that the physical form of Pisa, the confluence there of mobile objects like Islamic ceramics and Roman sarcophagi, and the transformation of these objects into architectural ornament, construct the medieval port city's cultural and mercantile identity. In Pisa – not a single natural port, it is worth noting, but a multifocal human-made port system – port city, artistic mobility, and representation of place converge to create meaning.

For their contributions and collaboration to bring this issue of *Convivium* to life, we are grateful to the authors whose work we are honored to present here, with special thanks to the speakers in the 2020 session at the annual meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians; Karolina Foletti, Ivan Foletti, and the *Convivium* team, with special thanks to Natália Gachallová and Johanna Zacharias; the editorial board of *Convivium*; and the colleagues who served as anonymous peer reviewers.