

LIVES AND LEGENDS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA: ORAL HISTORY

A project that will catalyse studies and initiatives in coastal cultures around the world.

WHY AN ORAL HISTORY EXPEDITION?

Experiences of those who are culturally grounded in the Mediterranean maritime life is the focus of interviews. Information and stories are gathered from members of the communities with a special emphasis on fisheries. There have been many oral histories studies in the



Mediterranean but the Heraclitus project is the first to specifically study representative port communities, region-wide. This is of particular importance because the Med has undergone tremendous changes in fishing technology, marine habitat, and biological abundances. Traditional wisdom and technologies relating to life on the oceans and rivers are dying out with successive generations. Accelerating climate change brings additional stresses and challenges to the system.

(photo Jedrek)

Most of the studies that have been done have looked at the history of fishing in terms of changing gear and the impact of the gear on abundance and species diversity, such as bottom trawls raking the sea floor.

Few studies look at the impact on the people and communities that depend on those resources and the way those cultures interact with the maritime environment. That kind of more comprehensive study is harder to do. Gathering the human stories is a crucial component in developing an accurate understanding of the region. That understanding can also help shape and maintain a sustainable course for the future.

What would Mediterranean culture be without vibrant economic and social communities connected with the sea itself? What values have predominated that impoverish biological and cultural life of the region, and how can business and planning evolve to honour, respect and promote patrimony and cultural birthright of Mediterranean citizens? How can communities retain and promote local livelihoods, social networks, cuisine, music, stories, values, varieties of customs and language in order to develop one of the most compelling arenas of cultural complexity in the world? *(photo Jedrek)*



Where there is an ecological crisis there is also a cultural one.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS - Film, still and sound recordings.

A summary of each interview is written, and the filmed interviews, summaries, and any photographs or additional documents are archived on the *Dedalo* web site in Valencia. The complete collection of the expedition will ultimately be archived at the Institute of Ecotechnics base, and other major libraries and institutions. The knowledge base generated by this expedition will become a valuable resource for scholars and researchers well into the future. By involving local collaborators, the project is expected to create the beginning of an archive that can continue to grow long after the immediate project is over, and help create a catalyst for educational and experiential initiatives worldwide.

A museum exhibition based on this work will tour beginning 2014, and a web film and recordings will be further results that inform and engage the public.

Already, the Academia Biosferica in Buenos Aires is in preparation to launch a partner oral history initiative, studying coastal communities in Argentina and Brasil.

Dedalo is a company created by an innovative IT team in collaboration with the Museu Valencia d'Etnologia. Their platform allows curators and scholars to access video material by content. Once transcribed in the system, any user can search it much the way one searches a text document. This approach also allows researchers to go directly to the material one is interested in, instead of listening to the whole interview. *Dedalo* has donated its software and services to the Heraclitus expedition.



Expedition Chief Christine Handte with Dedalo software creators Alejandro Peña Carbonell and Juan Francisco Onielfa Veneros, onboard. www.fmomo.org