

Call for papers:

Insular weathers, global atmospheres: Exploring the aerial histories of islands

Atmospheric humanities conference II

1-3 November 2024

Historical and Popular Art museum of Aegina

City of Aegina, Greece

Small island countries in the Caribbean and the Pacific and Indian Ocean have always been exposed to extreme weather, but the last decades have made it clear that they are also the biggest future victims of climate change. However, islands are also key sites in the history of science. Much weather and climate knowledge derives from island sites. When European and North American countries started launching weather balloons around 1900 to measure the upper atmosphere, next to ships, islands formed key launching sites. Islands were ideal places to measure the interaction of the global atmosphere, the land and the ocean. The Keeling curve was the result of decades of accurate and continuous measurements at Mauna Loa observatory on Hawaii. Moreover, islands have also become important meteorological metaphors: think about 'heat islands' in urban cities, where microclimates create islands where before there were none.

Our conference explores a new terrain in this constellation of themes, asking questions related to the emerging field of the atmospheric humanities. We invite historians, STS and humanities scholars to rethink existing research, open up new fields and engage with new directions that the environmental humanities could take by more explicitly thinking with the atmospheric world. Islands form an ideal subject

where land-based and oceanic histories could benefit from engaging with a third domain: the aerial.

The conference general themes include, but are not limited to:

- Why do islands attract scientists, writers, explorers, entrepreneurs, soldiers and traders?
- How have islands emerged as unique socio-environmental ecosystems for new atmospheric epistemologies and became testing grounds for larger global weather and climate ideas and models?
- How did islands contribute to larger infrastructures, both scientific (observatories) and logistic (shipping, air routes) that more and more depended on weather and climate literacy?
- How have islands served as sites of research in extreme atmospheric events such as nuclear tests or volcanic events?
- How have they formed political frontiers for empires with maritime and aerial ambitions?
- Have islands been privileged sites for the scientific imagination, a kind of environmental and atmospheric Bensalems, to refer to Bacon's 'New Atlantis'? Have islands played the role of (scientific) bellwethers?
- To what extent do islands create their own 'atmospheres'; 'scientific', 'touristic', 'economic' or 'military atmospheres'. And how have they contributed to the scientific and public understanding of 'volcanic', 'oceanic', 'polar' or 'tropical atmospheres'.
- What role does the weather, real or imagined, play in the scientific economies of islands and their role of sites of knowledge and leisure?

- Who owns island knowledge? How do we analyze the tensions between 'visitors' and 'islanders' in the process of scientific commodification?

Conference fee: 70 euro

Organization Committee:

- **Robert-Jan Wille**, History and Philosophy of Science, Freudenthal Institute, Utrecht University
- **Vladimir Jankovic**, Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine (CHSTM), The University of Manchester
- **George N. Vlahakis**, Laboratory of Science, Technology and Medicine Communication, Hellenic Open University

With the support of:

- Commission on Science and Literature, DHST/IUHPST
- Descartes Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Sciences and Humanities, Utrecht University
- International Commission on the History of Meteorology
- Greek Physicists Association
- Municipality of Aegina

Please submit abstracts (300 words) and a brief biography (50 words) to Robert Jan Wille at r.b.wille@uu.nl

Deadline: 15 May 2024