

MSCA-IF Project 2019 – WeCanIt

Online Conference Call for Papers

MERMAIDS

(En)Gendering Maritime Labour and Business Histories

University of Ljubljana (virtual)

10-11 February 2022 (via Zoom)

CfP deadline: 30 September 2021

The aim of the conference is to highlight the modalities through which gender norms shaped or influenced labour market participation, and business and labour cultures in the maritime sector and wider industries and services in European port/emporium cities and maritime communities in Modern times (the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).

While gender approaches have begun to penetrate maritime history in the last few decades in an increasingly significant way (cfr: Stanley, 2000 and 2003; Creighton & Norling, 1996; Colville, Jones & Parker, 2015), further work must be done in order to create a more gender inclusive, composite and fruitful history of labour and business in the maritime industry.

As for women's labour market participation and business activities in the maritime sector, we know that one does not need to go to the sea to be part of maritime workforce. For women, work, career and entrepreneurial opportunities in the maritime industry included roles such as moneylender, ship-owner, fisherwomen, fishmongers and workers in the fish processing factories, journey[wo]man at the port or ship yards and, last but not least, sex workers.

It is also important to consider aspects relating to domesticity, and to the variations in the distribution of power between genders – within the family and in other socio-economic contexts – in maritime environments. In Mediterranean port/emporium cities, as in Early Modern and Modern times, women were entrusted with weaving the socio, economic, cultural – and even political – relational fabric that their men would “wear” to act in the public arena.

We welcome proposals for 20-minute presentations for each of the three conference sessions:

1. On the Waterfront. Women, ports and (sea) connections

Port/emporium cities are very “dense” social and economic environments. Here connections, genders, social class and inclusion/exclusion from one of the “insider clubs” was of pivotal importance. Moreover, in this type of context (with a few exceptions), women hardly played a prominent socio-economic role in the public arena. This session is dedicated to an exploration of the multifaceted nature of labour and/or business or – even in more general terms – the socio-economic activities of women in such a complex environment. Papers that deal with women's socio-economic activities under a transoceanic/transcontinental light, and/or in a class/caste-cross perspective are particularly welcome.

2.Undines. Women, fisheries and maritime communities

Women in fishery have been defined as “peripheral” (Porter, 1987) in several respects. Yet, it is in fishing that “the roots of power between the sexes” can be tracked down (Thompson, 1985). The purpose of this session is to highlight the multiple contributions, positions, and roles played by women in fishing, the fish processing industry and maritime communities.

3. “Call me Ishmael[a]”. Exploring the “interspaces”

The last session will be dedicated to an investigation of the intersectional (e.g.: gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religious affiliation, race etc.) “interspaces” of wo/men’s labour market participation and/or business activities in the maritime sector. In other words, we are interested in papers that challenge the traditional and mainstream assumptions on gender affiliation (masculinity vs. femininity), class/caste membership, ethnical/national belonging, sexual orientations, centre vs. periphery and, last but not least, the sexual division of work and power related to the labour and/or business experiences of wo/men with the sea/waters.

We will particularly welcome:

- proposals from scholars belonging to disciplines other than history;
- proposals that deal with the topics of the present Call according to a **transitional economy** (i.e. from planned to market economy and vice-versa) approach.

Please send proposals to Dr Erica Mezzoli at mermaids.wecanit@gmail.com by 30 September 2021, containing:

- max 300-word abstract;
- max 250-word bio profile with affiliation, position and contact information.

The conference is realised in the framework of the MSCA-IF Project 2019 “We Can Do It! Women’s labour market participation in the maritime sector in the Upper Adriatic after the World Wars in an intersectional perspective” (acronym: WeCanIt; grant agreement no. 894257).