

TEACHING INSULARITY:

Archaeological and Historical Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to provide readers with content suggestions for teaching classes on insularity from archaeological and historical perspectives. The authors base this overview on two courses they taught at the University of Tübingen in 2019 ('Insularity and Identity in the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity' and 'Mediterranean Island History and Archaeology, Long-Term Perspectives') for Bachelor and Masters level students. As both authors have conducted extensive fieldwork on Mediterranean islands, these courses were their attempt to engage students critically with their research findings, considering the larger frame of Island Studies. In addition, both courses were interdisciplinary, and this article reflects on the challenges and opportunities such methods present. As the authors' research focuses on Crete and the Aegean (Kouremenos), and the Canarian and Balearic archipelagos (Dierksmeier), this article reflects primarily those research experiences and is by no means a comprehensive guide. Nonetheless, this survey may assist individuals considering teaching similar subjects. We also hope to encourage dialogue between Island Studies colleagues regarding their experiences teaching insularity.

KEYWORDS: Insularity, archaeology, history, Island Studies

Introduction

On the 7th June, 2014 the Italian photographer Massimo Sestini was flying over the Mediterranean (Figure 1) in a navy helicopter when he captured a stunning image of an inflatable boat packed with 500 migrants off the coast of Libya (Figure 2). The boat was headed toward the island of Lampedusa, a gateway to the European Union for scores of migrants from Africa hoping for a better life on the continent. In the middle of the sea, the boat itself looks like an island, while the colourful clothing of the people in it gives it the appearance of a mosaic, an artwork in the middle of the blue Mediterranean.

In an age of mass migrations, islands in Greece, Italy, and Spain have served as entry points for migrants from Africa and Asia, a topic which continues to dominate newspaper headlines. Also receiving substantial media coverage is the over-use of scarce resources on islands with mass tourism, such as Santorini, Corfu, Mallorca, and Ibiza, which have to cope with the unwelcome consequences of water scarcity and changes to insular landscapes

and lifestyles. Due to its relevance and the significance of islands during eras of seafaring, the topic of insularity is an ideal subject for the university classroom.



Figure 1. Map of the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic (Courtesy of Getty Images).



Figure 2 - Migrants on a boat in the Mediterranean (Courtesy of Massimo Sestini, 2014)

This article provides methodological and content-specific recommendations for the interdisciplinary teaching of insularity from archaeological and historical perspectives. Although we are coming from different fields, and our research focuses on different time periods and areas of southern Europe, there are many topics specific to Island Studies that we both address in our research and teaching. The authors taught two different courses at the University of Tübingen during the Spring/Summer semester of 2019. Kouremenos, an archaeologist with historical and anthropological training, taught 'Insularity and Identity in the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity' ('IIMBLA') to a group of undergraduate and graduate students in the Institute of Classical Archaeology. Dierksmeier, a historian, co-taught 'Mediterranean Island History and Archaeology, Long-Term Perspectives' ('MIHA') with an archaeologist for undergraduate students from the History and Archaeology departments. Since both authors have conducted extensive fieldwork on islands, this article reflects their respective research backgrounds and

fieldwork experiences and is meant to serve as a brief reference point for individuals who are considering to teach the subject to university-level students.

Teaching Insularity: Materials and Methods

IIMBLA was taught by Kouremenos to seven students over a period of twelve weeks and involved thirty-six items of reading, mostly in the form of articles or book chapters. Wherever possible, primary sources from Greek and Roman authors were also employed and discussed extensively in class. The instructor felt that it would be pertinent to limit the amount of reading to seventy pages per week in order to allow the students to concentrate more thoroughly on the given topics and to prepare PowerPoint presentations where they would present their reviews and assessments of the assigned articles. The latter was particularly significant not only for dissecting material about islands that was previously unfamiliar to students but also as an opportunity to boost their presentation skills.

The teaching method for IIMBLA involved a weekly one-hour PowerPoint lecture by the instructor on a specific topic followed by three student presentations and group discussions on assigned readings pertinent to the topic. The classes followed a conversational method and, while a variety of archaeological theories were introduced ranging from antiquarianism and processualism, the instructor favoured a post-processual perspective, allowing students to bring in their experiences and objections to the topics that were covered but also understand the limitations of the various theories presented as well as how their own opinions and biases can shape their understandings of ancient insularities. The use of digital resources (images, online news articles, video interviews) was crucial in every class and allowed students to visualise better the topics covered and ponder questions such as: what does it mean to be an islander today versus an islander in antiquity? How did islanders use marine and land resources in antiquity, and what types were available on specific islands or archipelagos? What role did insularity play in shaping distinctive identities in ancient populations? Where do you see Island Studies going in the near future?

Extensive interdisciplinary methods were employed in IIMBLA. Although the discipline of archaeology has traditionally been concerned with the material remains of past societies, many contemporary archaeologists approach the subject from a more holistic perspective. It is difficult to draw concrete conclusions about ancient societies from their material remains alone. Written sources, where available, significantly augment our understanding of island cultures and environments, as do ethnoarchaeology, landscape studies, and, in some cases, volcanology and archaeoseismology. For this reason, Kouremenos emphasised holism in the study of islands in antiquity, presenting evidence from disparate sources and highlighting the role of archaeologists as catalysts for understanding aspects of insularity in antiquity.

MIHA was taught by Dierksmeier together with Dr. Frerich Schön, who specialises in Mediterranean island archaeology. The class was composed of seventeen bachelor students and taught over sixteen weeks with twenty-one texts assigned, of which five were primary literature, and the rest were secondary literature. The course began with island terminology and attributes, as well as a discussion about the Mediterranean as a geographical unit. We then discussed interdisciplinary methodologies for studying the Mediterranean, followed by thematic clusters, such as migration and resource management, ending with a discussion on the future of Island Studies. The instructors of MIHA provided forty-five

minutes of content input via lectures with PowerPoint slides, followed by two student presentations on a topic that fitted into the class discussion for that week. MIHA was also improved by the contributions of two guest speakers specialised in Island Studies, one by Kouremenos, who presented her work on Cretan insularity and another by archaeologist Helen Dawson who discussed Mediterranean islands from the Neolithic era (see Dawson, 2014, 2019).

Interdisciplinary methods were employed each week. For example, when resource management on islands was covered, Frerich Schön presented his fieldwork on Linosa island, where his team traced historical water scarcity, excavating more than 150 cisterns on the 5 km² island (see Schön, 2014). Dierksmeier complimented this archaeological perspective with historical sources about island water scarcity on the volcanic Canary Islands (Dierksmeier, 2020). In both instances, the instructors highlighted religious traditions stemming from limited hydraulic resources, where water-giving sources and locations became holy. For example, on the Canary Islands, the horizontal rain collecting pine trees prompted the Virgin of the Pine Tree (Virgen del Pino) to become the patron saint of Gran Canaria (Schön and Dierksmeier, forthcoming). The instructors likewise addressed the digital resources used in their work (eg GIS software) and how the disciplines of archaeology and history complement one another to provide a more complete understanding of the past (Mehler, 2012). This discussion was augmented by two student presentations, one on island agriculture during the Roman Empire and another on water scarcity on Djerba (Tunisia). This example serves as *pars pro toto* for the methodology employed in this course.

Archaeological Perspectives

Islands have long been the sites of archaeological interest, and Mediterranean islands, in particular, are among the most thoroughly explored landmasses in the world in terms of material culture. The purpose of IIMBLA was to discern how specific islands or island groups functioned in the interconnected world of the ancient Mediterranean. The focus was diachronic, from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity (c3000 BC - AD 500), and wide-ranging in space and place. Large Island Studies were balanced by studies of smaller islands and archipelagos in order to understand how island size and proximity to other islands and the mainland influenced the nature of connectivity – and of insularity – in antiquity. Some of the islands that the course focused on included the large islands of Cyprus, Crete, Sardinia, and Sicily, which, due to their size, produced different types of material cultures and micro-identities but were largely self-sufficient; in contrast, in smaller island groups like the Balearics, Cyclades, Northern Sporades, Ionian islands, and Dalmatian islands, connections with both the mainland and other islands was often imperative for the survival of their inhabitants in antiquity.

It was important to begin the course with an introduction to the geography of the islands and their locations in the Mediterranean, as well as to discern how specific islands and island groups received their names. For the latter subject, Kopaka's (2008) article on insular etymologies was assigned and aided students in understanding how ancient islands were named but also how these names changed over time since several islands have not retained their ancient etymologies into the present. IIMBLA then segued into weekly topics and case studies, beginning with islands as literary and poetic spaces and introducing excerpts from ancient literary sources, the first of which was the quintessential island epic, Homer's *Odyssey*. The following classes focused on identity, which forms a significant component of

Island Studies and often differed in regard to island size and proximity to the mainland (Knapp, 2007; Constantakopoulou, 2012; Kouremenos, 2018). The large Mediterranean islands hosted significantly larger populations and multiple cultures and languages as opposed to smaller islands or archipelagos that were, with some exceptions, usually monocultural and monolingual. A similar dichotomy was noted for island landscapes (islandscapes) and climates, with large islands possessing a variety of microclimates, environmental characteristics, and flora/fauna; while smaller islands tended to be more uniform in these traits and often possessed specific natural resources (eg bitumen on Zakynthos, marble on Paros and Thasos, obsidian on the Aeoliae insulae and Melos) that sometimes produced substantial monetary gains for islanders.

Another topic that was stressed over multiple classes was that of island connectivity, concerning migration and mobility among islanders in the *longue durée* (defined as long-term conditions and gradual change rather than relatively brief political and military events). This led to stimulating discussions on what it meant to be a migrant and a native in antiquity and how islands served as stepping-stones for people and material cultures but also as parts of larger exchange networks and sometimes as originators of unique artistic and socio-political ideas. A recently published book on this topic that has already become a classic in Island Studies and is highly recommended for teaching is Cyprian Broodbank's *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (2013), which weaves together material from a wide range of sources and covers several millennia of human activity on islands.

Islands as locations for pleasure or vice was a topic also covered in class. Like today, a number of islands in antiquity served as leisure destinations (Chiai, 2014: 99-100), particularly in the Roman period for which we have the best material and literary evidence in the Villa Jovis, one of emperor Tiberius' villas on the island of Capri which, according to Suetonius, was the site of his wild debauchery (Suetonius, 121: 42-45). Finally, the students explored the concept of islands as prisons and places of exile in antiquity, for which literary sources such as Seneca's (42) Letter to Helvia (the Stoic philosopher and senator was exiled to Corsica by the emperor Claudius on a charge of adultery with the emperor's niece) and epigraphic documents from small Cycladic islands like Amorgos and Seriphos were included since most other types of material records would otherwise not convey this fact by themselves.

A running theme throughout the course was that of connectivity versus isolation and the limitations in the theoretical and methodological constructs for the study of ancient islands and their societies. Broodbank (2013), for example, noted that in antiquity the sea served as a boundary but also as a highway; indeed, in many cases sea travel outpaced land-based travel, especially in the mountainous areas of the Mediterranean, thus often making islands more connected than isolated (ibid). The instructor emphasised that much of what we think we know about ancient material culture derives from the subjective opinions of the excavators and historians and, rather unfortunately, often follows socio-political trends; it is increasingly common, for example, to apply theoretical models that are common to our time, such as globalisation theory, economic theories, and climate change, which would have been unlikely to have been discussed extensively in courses on the ancient world even two decades ago.

Another common theme that was emphasised throughout was the lacunose archaeological record and the uneven availability of published material from different islands, thus making it difficult to form a general picture of the entire Mediterranean in antiquity. This

is significant since islands like Crete, Cyprus, and Delos have produced ample archaeological material and a vast publication output, while the Dalmatian islands and Corsica have a relatively low percentage of excavations and subsequent publications and are partly closed to scholars who do not read the languages of the countries these islands are a part of. Indeed, in the case of Corsica, while its insularity has much potential for research, there is very little written in languages other than French and the only article that contained a synthetic study of the island in antiquity dealing with the topic of insularity that the instructor could assign to the class was in this language (Mary, 2018). Bringing awareness to the limitations posed by the archaeological and publication record, as well as the difficulty in accessing and reading material in multiple foreign languages helps students understand how archaeologists deal with the subject of insularity in general and what topics within Island Studies are best suited for further research.

Historical Perspectives

At first glance, few historical sources appear to deal exclusively with islands. Even fewer seem appropriate to assign students at the Bachelor level and some of the most instructive sources have not been translated into English. This section provides some suggestions for primary source texts assigned and found to be effective for class discussions. Printed translations and transcriptions are included in the bibliography at the end of this article. The recommended historical sources can be broken down into three main categories (1) *islarios*, (2) cartography, and (3) island archive sources. As a disclaimer, these recommendations are concentrated on Spanish and Italian sources due to a research focus on islands under the jurisdiction of the Crown of Aragon and the Spanish Empire.

The first category, *islarios* (a Spanish term, also known as *isolarios* in Italian and *isolari* in plural) refers to descriptions of multiple islands in the same text. These island-specific sources, often penned by one author, boomed between the 14th to 16th centuries. Before recommending specific sources for teaching, we include a few sentences of information, which may be helpful for anyone aiming to integrate these sources into their teaching. To many, Homer's *Odyssey* (c 8th Century BC), is the first *islario*. For medieval and early modern historians, this genre of island-specific travel writing was prompted by Marco Polo's *Book of the Marvels of the World* (1271-1295), creating a fashion for *romanticismo insulare* (island romanticism). The more distant, exotic, and odd the reported island customs were, the more fascinating readers found them. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (14th Century) captivated a large audience and increased the market for exotic island tales, ranging from utopias to reports of savage cannibals. Christopher Columbus' letters about the 'New World' built on this enthusiasm for tales of distant lands, including man-eating monsters in the Caribbean (Columbus and Major, 1847). Domenico Silvestri (1385-1410) wrote what some consider to be the real start of the *islario* genre, with his book *De insulis et earum proprietatibus* ('On islands and their properties'). Whereas the tales of islands had originally focused on captivating the imagination of the reader in the typical travel writing style, later *islarios* aimed, in part, to be more sober, compiling geographical descriptions from authorities from antiquity (eg Homer – 8th Century BC, Pliny – AD 23-79, Ptolemy – AD 100-170), in addition to reporting detailed observations of their own, together with self-drawn island maps.

Islarios are an engaging genre for teaching, especially if one first gives students ample time to brainstorm what they would expect to find in these texts. Assigning short passages was enough in MIHA for students to quickly grasp a feeling for the detail and richness of these

sources. It is advantageous to make a list of the attributes depicted (eg exotic, barbaric, dangerous, strange, magical, prisons, monastic retreats and religious tolerance) as students work through the sources together. Highly recommended for teaching insularity are the following three *islarios*: (1) Bartolommeo Dalli *Sonetti's Isolario* (1972), with maps and more than seventy sonnets about islands in the Aegean Sea (Italian 15th Century) (Montesdeoca, 2003); (2) Alonso de Santa Cruz's *Islario general de todas las islas del mundo* ('General Atlas of all the Islands in the World' [1918]) with over 100 maps of the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, Africa, Indian Ocean, and the Americas, (Spanish, 16th Century); and (3) *Periplo Arabe Medieval, Islario Maravilloso*, with vivid descriptions of 88 islands, including some hand-drawn images, (Arabic, 16th Century [Arioli and Rodriguez, 1992]).

The second genre of historical sources recommended for teaching insularity are maps and charts, clustered under the heading of cartography. It is advantageous to begin with maps included in *islarios* and then transition to other forms of cartography, such as portolan charts (from the Italian, *portulano* – 'of harbors or ports' – and from *Portolano* – 'port books' – the main source of information for navigators, known in classical antiquity as *periplus* and later in English as *rutters*). Portolans, as highly accurate nautical charts, reveal the main production centres for island cartographic knowledge, such as Mallorca and Genoa. Using a 1339 portolan chart by Angelino Dulcert (Mallorca), a 1461 chart by Grazioso Benincasa (Genoa), a 1569 chart by Diogo Homen and Paolo Forlani (Portuguese and Venetian respectively), and Lucas Janszoon Waghanaer's 1583-4 nautical chart (Dutch), among others, offered students the chance to brainstorm about the geopolitical positions of islands (such as Sicily) over the centuries, as well as to deliberate when the size of an island had an effect on its historical development. (See Pflederer [2012] for an engaging introduction to Portolan charts.)

The in-class use of cartography led to fruitful discussions about sea navigation, trade, migration, agricultural imports and exports, and military strategies to conqueror mainland territories via islands. For example, students discussed in MIHA the military benefits of approximating the mainland clandestinely via islands, using islands as anchorage points, refueling with food and water, acquiring local knowledge, observing the mainland, as well as the ability to shelter from storms before approaching (such as was reportedly done in 1229 with the island of Sa Dragonera by Jaume I at the onset of the reconquest of Mallorca [Consell de Mallorca, nd]). Ultimately, cartography is an appealing source with which to teach Island Studies, easily segueing into methodological discussions on the seemingly objective (but often highly subjective) nature of maps and the ideologies of cartographers. If students are interested in sea navigation, it may be worth recommending also some maritime guides, such as: *Arte de navegar* (de Medina, 1545 - translated into French, Dutch, Italian, English, 1545), *Regimiento de navegación*, (de Medina, 1552), *Breve compendio de la sphere y de la arte de navegar* (Cortes de Albacar, 1530), *Tractado de la sphere* (Sacro Bosco, 1545), or *Compendio del arte de navegar* (Zamorano, 1581 - translated into Dutch and English).

Third, primary sources from specific island archives and published transcriptions of primary sources offered students a privileged view into the complexities of island life. For early modern Mediterranean island history, it is advantageous to have a command of Spanish, Italian, French, Arabic, or Greek in order to translate some source material for students. For example, Dierksmeier translated some short passages from early modern inquisition trials from Mallorca, and students were asked from the perspective of these sources to reflect on the interconnections of the Mediterranean, on religious toleration, and on islands as locations of exile or prisons. Additionally, the 50 questions in the

'Relaciones Geográficas' questionnaires circulated by the Spanish Empire in 1578-1586 proved to be a valuable historical resource for teaching. Students first brainstormed about the type of information the Spanish Crown might have wanted to collect from its distant territories before transitioning into an analysis of the historical questions in the 'Relaciones Geográficas' that pertained to beaches, ports, and islands.

Last, assigning Isidore of Seville's Etymologies about islands (*de insulis*) provided a short and effective reading to discuss island terminology and attributes. For secondary literature, the top five most useful sources in MIHA were: Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, first published in 1972 (1995); Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* (2000), Constantakopoulou's *The Dance of the Islands: Insularity, Networks, the Athenian Empire and the Aegean World* (2011), Abulafia's *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (2014), and Baldacchino's 'Islands' article (2006).

Results

Insularity evokes different images to different people. For some, it brings to mind isolation and scarcity, while for others, it denotes connectivity and abundance. When our students were asked to think of the first image that came to mind when they pondered about islands, some of the answers they offered were piracy, exile, exotic animals, and – not surprisingly – sunny vacations. The (2010) *Oxford Dictionary* provides the following definitions for insularity: a) ignorance of or lack of interest in cultures, ideas, or peoples outside one's own experience; and b) the state or condition of being an island. Clearly, our courses focused on the second definition, but the first definition also entered into our discussions, no less because many of our students equated insularity with isolation. For archaeologists and historians who study past societies, the role of human agency in the creation and manipulation of insularity is paramount in our understanding of the relationship between past peoples and their insular environments, themes at the forefront of teaching insularity (Broodbank, 2000).

The two authors found that student reactions to the teaching methods and the material assigned were, for the most part, rather similar. As already noted, neither instructor used a textbook for her class, preferring to assign articles on specific topics. This not only reflects the lack of a standard textbook for Island Studies from antiquity to the present, but also shows the great variety of topics that lend themselves to teaching insularity. Kouremenos, in particular, felt that her class would be better-suited as a graduate course or as a fourth-year undergraduate elective since students with minimal background on the topic, the time period, and theoretical literature found it more difficult to comprehend the assigned readings and the big picture scope of the course.

The students in IIMBLA consistently rated the use of digital resources in the classroom as one of the best parts of the course. The ability to access material online, such as through institutional subscriptions to academic journals and free access to platforms like academia.edu and researchgate.net allowed students to save money from having to purchase a textbook which might have also limited the breadth of the material covered. All of IIMBLA's students had either excavated, lived, or vacationed on islands and therefore had a first-hand perspective on insularity. Kouremenos wonders whether students grasped the concepts of insularity due to their first-hand experiences and if she would get the same reaction (and enthusiasm) from a group of students that have not had the 'island

experience.’ Furthermore, students that had conducted excavations on islands were better equipped to tackle the big questions about insularity and to offer their own perspectives and experiences from their time spent on islands.

In IIMBLA, the instructor’s interdisciplinary background (archaeology, anthropology, and history) took the theme of the course beyond material culture, which the students appreciated even if they were not used to being taught archaeology in this manner. They also responded well to the conversational method of the course, stating that they preferred it to an outright lecture given by the instructor and that this method felt both more engaging and more relaxing than the usual instruction offered by the department. One engaged student who was assigned to review an article on Cretan insularity in the Roman period (Kouremenos, 2018) even brought Cretan products (honey, *dictamus* [the Cretan dittany plant], murex shells, olive oil) to class and shared them with the other students in order to illustrate the economic output of the island in antiquity.

It was a particularly rewarding moment for the instructors of MIHA to see students from different backgrounds learn from one another. For example, a student studying ancient history explained subtle references to Greek mythology used in a 15th Century *islario* to students from the early modern history department. It was likewise exciting to see archaeology students share their first-hand experience excavating on islands with history students who had never had the chance to take part in archaeological fieldwork. Student observations on the combined nature of historical, geographical, and archaeological descriptions in many sources also led effectively into discussions on the benefits of interdisciplinary work today (see eg Schön, Dierksmeier, Kouremenos, Condit, and Palmowski forthcoming).

As in every course, there are always aspects that do not work as well as originally envisioned by the instructors. Both instructors noticed that sometimes they presented too much information in class and that they underestimated how much time would be needed to work on interdisciplinary questions. For example, when a history student in MIHA asked, “how do you know the date of a wall from the 3rd Century BC?” or “what materials still remain from the 2nd Century AD?” Likewise, archaeology students were curious to learn about methodological debates in history, ranging from the spatial turn to sensory history to subaltern perspectives. In both courses, interdisciplinary discussions thus took up more time than expected, although one could tell those moments were really important to the students. Thus, it would be advantageous to allow even more time than one might expect for such questions and interdisciplinary discussions to occur spontaneously.

At the conclusion of both IIMBLA and MIHA, students lauded the chance to be part of interdisciplinary courses, and all noted that these were the first courses of their type offered at the university. Students provided very positive teaching evaluations, reporting a comfortable classroom environment, effective learning materials, transparent and well-defined learning goals, and well-prepared instructors. In MIHA, several students reported that two instructors made the teaching more dynamic. Not surprisingly, a few students suggested improvements, requesting less reading or grading more leniently in IIMBLA while in MIHA a few students requested more games and in-class activities.

Benjamin Bloom’s six-level taxonomy of educational objectives (1984) provides an effective way to summarise our teaching methods. Students memorised and defined basic information needed for the rest of the semester (Level 1: Knowledge), through lectures (eg island terminology, long-term overview of historical events) and student activities (eg a

map quiz of Mediterranean islands). After rudimentary information had been mastered, students classified and clustered the different island-specific attributes (Level 2: Comprehension) from evidence acquired through reading primary and secondary sources and listening to videos presented by the instructors. In classroom discussions, students used the information they acquired from PowerPoint lectures to ask questions and reconcile what they had learned with their field-specific backgrounds, interpreting new knowledge related to insularity at large (Level 3: Application). Students drew connections from their evaluations of different island case studies, also highlighting diachronic comparisons (Level 4: Analysis). Students engaged critically with the knowledge they had acquired to combine, develop and present their own research acquired over several months (Level 5: Synthesis). Finally, students, especially those at the advanced Bachelor and Masters-level, were asked to appraise, judge, and critique the information they presented against the backdrop of scholarly debates and today's headlines, drawing their own conclusions independent from secondary literature (Level 6: Evaluation).

Future Directions

The topic of insularity has much to offer students, not only in terms of content material, but also for the potential of interdisciplinary teaching, in-class teamwork, comparative analyses, and critical thinking. Although it has been a subject of academic inquiry for several decades – if not longer – there is still much that can be gleaned from interdisciplinary dialogue, which would enhance future teaching about the subject. Below, we highlight some potential interdisciplinary topics that will likely feature in the field in the near future and which could be incorporated into class discussions and teaching methodologies.

First, the authors of this paper wonder whether insularity itself should be contrasted against peninsularity and continentality in order to understand its parameters and conceptual nature. A recurring theme in most classes – and one that was constantly questioned by the students – was why islands and their communities are special and how they differ from peninsular and continental communities. If, for example, insularity produced isolation in some cases, was this isolation different from that of remote mountain communities on the mainland? Despite the relative lack of literature on the two latter terms, we suggest that a comparative study between islands, peninsulas, and the mainland is imperative, would produce a more stimulating debate on insularity, and may just inform us that islands had and have more in common with coastal and even inland communities than one would expect and were (and are) not “laboratories” after all (Evans, 1973). In addition, comparing urban centres on islands with coastal cities may allow us to differentiate island-specific characteristics, a research area that has recently received more recognition, in no small part due to the establishment of the *Urban Island Studies* journal (2015-2017).

Second, the value of ethnoarchaeology with contemporary islanders has not been explored fully, although the subdiscipline of insularity would benefit greatly from it. The instructor of IIMBLA, for example, has conducted ethnoarchaeological fieldwork in remote villages on Crete in order to understand how populations gather, dry, and transport endemic plants like *dictamnus*, which aids us in understanding how ancient insular communities dealt with these issues (Kouremenos forthcoming). Islanders in rural and coastal areas tend to know their land well and certain aspects of agriculture, exploitation of marine resources, herding activities, and, in some cases, even settlement patterns, have not altered significantly since

antiquity and the middle ages. Therefore, contemporary islanders are often a valuable source of information on topics of insularity and usually very willing to share their knowledge, although their expertise is seldom consulted.

Third, virtual reality is another resource that can be utilised in future courses to aid students in exploring the space and place of specific islands or island groups and to witness and/or attempt to recreate virtually past island environments using archaeological and historical evidence. In addition, several current projects point to the rapid advancement of digital resources, including open access Island Studies journals, text-sharing mediums such as academia.edu, the live streaming of conferences, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and collaborative island mapping initiatives (eg maps of water scarcity), to name a few examples.

To conclude, the authors hope this short article will provide a few suggestions for those considering teaching insularity for the time. In addition, we would like to open a discussion platform for instructors teaching or interested in teaching insularity in the near future. Both authors would be thankful to learn about the experiences, recommended resources, digital tools, and suggestions of colleagues, so as to incorporate additional materials and improve their teaching methods for future classes on insularity.

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