Boer, Claire (Aix-Marseille University), *Maritime labour and shared work experiences. The case of interactions between dockers and Provence’s merchant sailors during the 18th century*

The growth of economical and maritime exchanges during the 18th century leads to the multiplication of Provence’s merchant navigations. Travelling from the familiar coast of Mediterranean Sea and the Levantine world to the distant shores of America, 18th century Provence’s merchant seafarers were accustomed to navigating around the world. Their maritime journeys were also the moment of intense commercial exchanges as their ships carried various types of cargo.

Members of ship’s crews were first solicited to handle cargoes aboard and ashore. However in some occasions dock’s workers were mobilised by shipowners or ship captains to help them with this difficult and exhausting task. Hence, these workers who temporarily sold their workforce, were put in contact with the maritime world by their specific labour. In Marseille dock’s workers such as “portefaix” (porters) and ship’s crews were brought together during the times of quarantines and disarmaments, when the freight had to be removed from the ship. In the ports of call such as those of the Levantine world, captains or shipowner’s agents could hire local workers to help with the cargo. Shaped by the economic imperatives this work situation often appears as a moment of tensions between ship’s officers, their crews and the porters solicited to assist them. However, united by the maritime and commercial labour, porters and sailors shared common experiences that need to be interrogated.

Focusing on the skills, work conditions and labour relations between different groups of workers, this communication aims at examining their social, professional and cultural interactions. The situations of contacts among those groups, analysed in their different contexts, will allow us to question the insertion of these various types of workers in Provence’s maritime labour market. The question of connections between non-maritime and maritime workers will also permit us to observe how the links kept by porters with Provence’s maritime labour market and community leads to their progressive professionalization as dockers during the 18th century. To this effect, documents produced by the French maritime institution such as *registres matricules* (files listing the maritime workers registered in the Kingdom) provide the first element that allows us to reconstitute individual and collective trajectories. Justice procedures and notarial acts from the different port-town of Provence will complete the information on their lives ashore. State correspondence and proceedings issued by Marseille’s sanitary Intendancy as well as those produced by the consuls of the Levantines port’s (such as freighting contracts or commercial dispute procedures) will enable us to investigate the contacts between those men from a social, economic and cultural perspective.