



REPORT
SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING
Laboratoire d'Excellence
Objectif Terre Bassin Méditerranéen

Report written by Katarzyna Tarnowska and Sophie Bonifay

Date of the meeting: 18 December 2012 (8.30-13.00)

Number of participants: 23 (3 by videoconference)

Director of OT-Med: Joël Guiot

WP1: France van Wambeke

WP2: Wolfgang Cramer, Alexander Ereskovsky

WP3: Sylvie Thoron

TWP1: (Patrick Raimbault and Thomas Curt were excused)

TWP2: François Carlotti (Alberte Bondeau was excused)

International sector: Edouard Bard, Alan Kirman

Executive committee: Bruno Hamelin, Wolfgang Cramer, Alan Kirman, France Van Wambeke

Administrative manager of OT-Med: Sophie Bonifay

Scientific manager of OT-Med: Katarzyna Tarnowska

Scientific Council: Hamed Ben Dhia, Roger Guesnerie (by videoconference), Sander van der Leeuw (by videoconference), Louis Legendre, Philippe Le Prestre, Georgina Mace (by videoconference), Peter de Menocal, Nathalie de Noblet-Ducoudré, Daniela Pantosti, Ricardo Trigo, Peter Verburg, Montserrat Vilà



CONTENTS

SUMMARY OF THE POINTS MENTIONED DURING THE DISCUSSION	2
1. What OT-Med has done so far	2
2. Research	3
2.1. Interdisciplinarity.....	3
2.2. Overall scientific strategy and objectives.....	4
2.3. Procedure for selecting postdoctoral fellows	4
2.4. International cooperation, southern Mediterranean countries	4
3. Training.....	5
4. Transfer of knowledge to society, communication.....	5
5. The role of the Scientific Council.....	6
6. Points to be clarified concerning the organization.	6
6.1. Preparing projects for external calls.....	6
6.2. Membership in OT-Med	6
7. OT-Med Scientific Council leadership and recommendations	6

SUMMARY OF THE POINTS MENTIONED DURING THE DISCUSSION

1. What OT-Med has done so far

It has created the OT-Med website, where all the past, present and planned actions are presented (<http://www.otmed.fr>).

In July 2012 the OT-Med kick-off meeting took place in the presence of representatives of the universities, research institutes, directors of laboratories, local stakeholders etc.

Four PhD thesis scholarships have been attributed so far, permitting a start of some of OT-Med's priority research activities. A first call for postdoctoral projects has been launched (deadline 15th December 2012). In addition, a first call for joint projects, scientific events and mobility fellowships has been launched (deadline 31st January 2013). Two OT-Med managers (administrative and scientific) have been employed. The computer scientist has been selected. All work packages teams have started their work. Since the beginning of the project many administrative issues have been resolved.



2. Research

2.1. Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity is a crucial feature of the OT-Med project. However, it is difficult to address it in an efficient way. People from different specialties working in the same place do not automatically develop successful scientific cooperation. Efforts must be made to induce scientists to "step away" from their own activity and develop the interdisciplinary approach. It is hard, especially for a young scientist with a lot of pressure concerning his/her career, to take the risk to perform unusual and interdisciplinary research. Additional encouraging actions are therefore necessary to provide the incentives to undertake this sort of activity.

Several actions have already been undertaken by OT-Med in order to develop the interdisciplinary approach:

- the call for joint projects, scientific events and mobility fellowships has been launched - these are intended to be of an interdisciplinary nature,
- the call for postdoctoral projects has been launched (deadline 15th December 2012); one of the stated evaluation criteria is the interdisciplinarity of the project,
- several projects including not only economics, but also natural and social sciences have been started by one of the OT-Med partners: GREQAM (Groupement de Recherche en Economie Quantitative d'Aix-Marseille) (WP3).

Other actions were suggested:

- meetings and workshops focused on tackling interdisciplinary questions; this kind of meetings should have a clearly stated objective (e.g. to make data syntheses, to develop integrated modeling, to write joint publications) in order to encourage and motivate scientists from different disciplines to work together,
- monthly seminars, where scientists from different fields present their research, providing the opportunity to discuss and understand what type of analysis and what kind of data we may expect from people of different specialties,
- creating maps of the network of scientists, showing who works with whom,
- it has been proposed to keep a part of the available funding for a call for original, interdisciplinary, comprehensive projects, with proposals including Ph.D. thesis, post-doc, and/or functioning ... (according to the needs) and not just separate calls where interdisciplinarity is more difficult to be emphasized.



2.2. Overall scientific strategy and objectives

One way to achieve the objectives of the OT-Med project is to integrate the data and models developed by the different partners into a consistent whole. Such an approach would ideally provide a coherent framework within which to link climate, ecosystems and society. For 2013, the "bottom-up" approach will prevail in the OT-Med strategy (mainly through calls for proposals). However, the need of an integrative "top-down" approach was suggested by the council (e.g., by creating groups working on the same topic or defining scientific questions and objectives for each year).

To improve the organization of the project, a hierarchical approach is needed. One way to achieve this could be by asking which driver influences which environmental service. For this, the links between biodiversity, ecosystem functioning and ecosystem service assessment should be established. Rather than the traditional forward-looking approach, services could be first identified from the user point of view, asking for functional aspects primarily where important services have been identified. A separate issue is the need to specify more clearly which research activities truly influence decision making for sustainable environmental management.

2.3. Procedure for selecting postdoctoral fellows

OT-Med has received 22 eligible candidatures for postdoctoral fellowships. A meeting of the executive committee + WP leaders took place January 9th 2013 to define the criteria and the strategy for selecting the postdoctoral fellows. Eligible proposals were then sent for advice to the Scientific Council members according to their specialization (about 2-3 applications for each of the Scientific Council members). Each proposal was also evaluated by an expert from a research group within OT-Med (by a scientist with no link with the proposed project). On the base of this reports a shortlist of 11 candidates for interviews was produced during the meeting on January 28th 2013. The interviews will take place on 19th February 2013.

2.4. International cooperation, southern Mediterranean countries

The southern Mediterranean countries play a very important role in the OT-Med project. In order to enhance their cooperation, the research projects need to address problems and questions which are of real interest for these countries. Currently, it is not yet clear how best to achieve this.



Another vital issue for OT-Med is to develop scientific cooperation with similar institutes elsewhere. Special attention will be given to the intended cooperation with Imperial College, London and the Earth Institute of the Columbia University.

Both in the case of the southern Mediterranean countries and that of the scientific institutes all over the world, PhD students and postdoctoral fellow exchanges (joint research projects, workshops or summer schools) should be very helpful. Moreover, inviting scientists from other countries to give lectures should reinforce international cooperation.

3. Training

The objective of the training actions of OT-Med is to provide interdisciplinary skills to students, particularly those related to current environmental issues and problems, including their socio-economic context. This criterion is very important for the selection of PhD research topics. It is also crucial that the training activities of OT-Med enable students to find employment easily. In general, new ways of teaching at the master level are needed in order to prepare students to work on interdisciplinary issues. However, it is difficult to teach the range of specific skills needed for high-quality interdisciplinary research and innovative approaches need to be developed to deal with this. Another challenge is to recruit highly competent students interested in the proposed training programme.

Since creating a new Master program is a very resource-consuming and risky task, it was suggested that OT-Med create "teaching modules" such as summer schools, workshops and field training sessions for PhD students in existing programmes,. Another solution could be the creation/development of a national master on global environmental changes in cooperation with other LabEx'es (IPSL, BASC ...) and/or existing masters on similar questions. So the problem of decreasing number of good students in the local masters could be solved by developing a more attractive master program involving the best teachers at the national level.

4. Transfer of knowledge to society, communication

Transfer of knowledge from OT-Med is envisaged to be achieved mainly through the web site, conferences for large public, a data-oriented information portal and joint projects established with regional stakeholders (pôles de compétitivité), associations and private enterprises. The development of this aspect of OT-Med's work will occupy an important part



of the OT-Med staff in the very near future (early 2013). In addition, from the beginning of 2013 the OT-Med Newsletter will be published on a regular basis.

5. The role of the Scientific Council

- to give scientific and conceptual advice on ongoing issues,
- to participate in annual meetings in order to make recommendations on past achievements as well as the objectives for the coming year,
- to help (when requested) with the evaluation of proposals on an individual basis (see 1c),
- to share their scientific knowledge by giving lectures.

It has been suggested that during next year's Scientific Council meeting the PhD students and the postdoctoral fellows present their work.

6. Points to be clarified concerning the organization.

6.1. Preparing projects for external calls

One of the important criteria for OT-Med's evaluation will be the ability to attract external funds to finance OT-Med research. In the ongoing call for projects, cooperative projects with co-funding will be strongly encouraged.

6.2. Membership in OT-Med

It is not entirely clear whether all scientists in all participating labs should be considered as "OT-Med members". OT-Med staff will encourage the broadest possible participation, and statistics of scientists participating in funded OT-Med projects and publications where OT-Med is acknowledged will be collected for later review.

7. OT-Med Scientific Council leadership and recommendations

Nathalie de Noblet was elected President of the Scientific Council during a session restricted to the members of the Scientific Council. The Scientific Council made the following recommendations for 2013:

- the OT-Med project should be better structured with a better definition of the scientific questions;
- the schedule and the deliverables for each year should be defined; every year OT-Med should prepare a report on past activities for comment and advice from the Scientific Council,



- as the project has no official deliverables, it is important that the OT-Med executive committee specifies its strategy and goals,
- Indicators must be defined to auto-evaluate the results of OT-Med.