

2019-2020 Humanities Center Brown Bag Series

Questioning Abandonment: Landscape Ethnoarchaeology in Highland Valencia Spain

Living in Detroit, “abandonment” becomes a familiar, if not tiresome trope, particularly to residents who question using the term at all! The sensational interpretation of changing landscapes as abandoned obscures temporal and spatial scales and explication of culture and environment as components of long-term interactive processes.

Our work in Valencia, inspired by dispersal from Detroit, examines mass migration from rural Spain in the 20th century. Questioning abandonment has evolved to an assessment of sustainability featuring stories of people who walked away from highly productive village life just as the “golden age” of agriculture and terracing reached a zenith at the end of World War II. We focus on the unraveling of the complex system in the highlands by examining the ruined irrigated gardens that once provided vegetables for villagers and fodder for animals to tumbled-down terrace fields that climbed to the mountain tops providing olives, wine and bread for the table and a surplus for export. Narratives of abandonment are compelling historical background to the appearance of green shoots of resurgence today as the landscape filled with wind turbines, solar farms, hiking and biking trails, new country homes for the refugees of the sweltering summer heat on the coast, and a host of alternative approaches to farming, preserve heritage and carry on the millennia-long tradition of life in the highlands of the western Mediterranean.

FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY



Wednesday, March 4, 2020

12:30PM—1:30PM

Rm. 2339



Thomas W. Killion
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Anthropology

Associate Professor Killion has been at Wayne State since 2001 when he came from a decade of work at the Smithsonian to teach, research and chair Anthropology (2001-2006; 2012-2015). He has conducted archaeological fieldwork in Spain, Cyprus, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Peru, New Mexico, New England, and Detroit. Killion publishes in *Current Anthropology*, *the Journal of Anthropological Research*, *Latin American Antiquity*, *the Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, *the Journal of Field Archaeology* and, most recently, *Michigan Archaeology*. He is the author of numerous book chapters and is presently, if endlessly, working on a book entitled, *Agency of the Dead: the Smithsonian Institution and the Mummies of Cave Valley, Chihuahua, Mexico*.