Ways of Thinking and Looking at the Mediterranean City

Pace, Giuseppe

Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo

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Giuseppe Pace
Institute of Studies on Mediterranean Societies (ISSM-CNR), Naples

Abstract

It's almost a decade that the social science attitude has changed in evaluating the history and reality of the Mediterranean basin geographic area. The decadence of capitalistic modernisation has created a void in social and cultural relationships. A process of cultural legitimisation has been started, focussed on the Mediterranean image and identity, which is pointing out the problem of local cultures' knowledge and preservation as fundamental elements for planning and management. Searching for a definition of Mediterranean city, not only through geographical or morphological schemes, the paper considers also social, economic and cultural elements, like the borders' permeability, the supremacy of the "family" on the State and the pervasiveness of the informal economy. Most of these urban realities reveal a "culture of the derogation" and a great rural immigration that give still significance to a classification of resident population, instead of those based on the service users. Moreover, the large Mediterranean urban areas are usually based on a unique centre, rich of economic and human resources, connected to a hinterland poor and degraded, without any kind of identity. On the economic side, the need of entering in the global market leads most of these cities facing the international scale and finding a strong characterisation. On the social side, it could increase the social exclusions with the danger of conflicts. Anyway, every solution must start from the regional scale with public policies, which aim to promote the consensus, exceeding the urban/rural distinctions and stimulating the local community participation.

KEYWORDS: Mediterranean city, urban theory, models, urban statistics, planning,

1. *Introduction*

Over the last two decades, the planning discipline and the science of the city have changed greatly their approach to territorial, social and economic phenomena of the Mediterranean urbanisation. A cause could be found in a lost adhesion to reality of the traditional planning apparatus, based on a urban organisation largely transformed for the decadence of the "industrial city" model, as a result of the capitalistic modernization failure. Another cause could be the subsequent transformation of the society, emphasized by social systems characterised by family ties, local associations, culture, social status, that has opened the way to new/traditional models and increased the interest on local cultures. These changes have pointed out both an ineffectiveness of planning theory and a need to define new and more operative mechanisms to design and govern urban development.

On the whole, the very concept of "city" in planning has changed significantly, because of "pluralistic" and "multi-ethnic" transformations of metropolis. Many scholars have considered it "…vanished sometime during the twentieth century"[1], a sort of metaphor; some others have emphasised its transformation from a planning object to an unitary and autonomous subject, and, above all, its being space of intersection between global and local dynamics. In fact, as the death of the traditional city has created different local societies and relationships, the dissolution of territorial ties, distinctive of the "Global Market", has weakened the nation-states and modified the roles in the production of wealth, giving more value to the local heritage in its environmental, cultural, and identity components.

The metropolis, considered by traditional theories as the culminating expression of the urban life, becomes exemplary to describe the false global/local dualism. For the continuous mutation of economic interactions, the real limits of metropolis exceed administrative ones, incorporating new areas, people and activities, sometimes not physically linked. At the same time the metropolis develops processes of endogenous economic growth[2], becoming a "quasi city-state" that must manage its wealth-creating resources[3], generating enterprise and innovation[4], and developing a stronger social and cultural cohesion and a reinforcement of the "community meaning"[5].

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[1] Cf. FRIEDMANN J., *The Prospect of Cities*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2002, p. XI.

[2] See: ROMER P.M. (1986), *Increasing Returns and Long-Run Growth*, in "Journal of Political Economy", vol. 94, n. 5; LUCAS R.E. JR. (1988), *On the Mechanics of Economic Development*, in "Journal of Monetary Economics", vol. 22, n. 1; AGHION P., HOWITT P., *Endogenous Growth Theory*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998.

[3] Cf. FRIEDMANN J., *Cit.*, p. 32.

[4] See MAILLAT D., *Interactions Between Urban Systems and Localized Productive Systems: An Approach to Endogenous Regional Development in Terms of Innovative Milieu,* in "European Planning Studies", vol. 6, n. 2, 1998; PACE G., *Policies for Industrial Districts Location in Italy and Israel: a Comparative Perspective*, IREM, Napoli, 2001.

[5] Cf. BAGNASCO A., *Tracce di comunità*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1999.

As put in the foreground by new territorial theories focused on the concept of self-sustainability[6], local components have become primary elements for an enduring production of wealth. In particular, considering "territorial production"[7] in terms of aggregation and relations and "territory" as a historical outcome of a long term co-evolution between human settlement and nature, nature and culture[8], these theories recall to an evolutionary approach – the ecological region[9] – which has been for a long time in Lewis Mumford's mind[10]. However he re-imagined "production" in relation to place, both civic and ecological, and reminded us that it is possible to create a finer relation to our environment, he neither developed a social theory nor new planning tools. In his thoughts planning become a way to package expertise, a way to address the public debate and choice, built on a shared sense of responsibility and a capacity to create a public sphere, a commons, and a sense of place associated with commonality and community[11]. The rebirth of regionalism and localism in planning has inherited Mumford's utopia and weakness. In particular, interactions among local system, territorial entity and political-institutional organisation continue to be undervalued in abstract terms and regulated by unclear and unshared planning mechanisms.

These approaches refer partially themselves to modern/post-modern debate in urban theory[12]. During the Eighties, post-modern theory criticized the evolutionary perspective of progress, typical of the *urban life-cycle* and the *political economy* approaches[13], trying to demonstrate the need of many local theories rather than only a general theory. In that framework, generalisations were dethroned whereas local narratives became legitimate. Lila Leontidou suggested that distinctive evidence can be achieved through the study of cities of semi-peripheral regions, that is "…geographical, socio-economic and cultural *in-between spaces* that cannot be conceptualised within the core/periphery, development/underdevelopment dichotomies of political economy or the urban/rural, modern/traditional, modern/post-modern bipolarities of urban theory"[14].

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[6] Cf. MAGNAGHI A. (ed.), *Il territorio degli abitanti*, Dunod, Milano, 1998.

[7] We mean "territorial production" as production of environmental and housing quality, as development of typical production in typical landscapes, of territorial and urban identities, of new municipalities, and finally as growth of local societies able to produce original development "styles".

[8] Cf. DEMATTEIS G., *Le metafore della terra*, Einaudi, Torino, 1985; VALLEGA A., *La regione, sistema territoriale sostenibile,* Mursia, Milano, 1995; MAGNAGHI A., *Il progetto locale*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2000.

[9] Cf. LUCCARELLI M., *Lewis Mumford and the Ecological Region. The Politics of Planning*, The Guilford Press, New York-London, 1995.

[10] Cf. MUMFORD L., *The Culture of Cities*, Harvest/HBJ Book, San Diego, 1966.

[11] Cf. LUCCARELLI M., *Cit.,* pp. 189-190.

[12] See LYOTARD J-F, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis,1984; HARVEY D., *The Urban Experience*, Blackwell, Malden, Mass., 1989; HARVEY D., *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Blackwell, Malden, Mass., 1990; HARVEY D., *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, Blackwell, Malden, Mass., 1996.

[13] See LEONTIDOU L., *Alternative to Modernism in (Southern) Urban Theory: Exploring In-Between Spaces*, in "International Journal of Urban and Regional Research", vol. 20, n. 2, 1996, for a complete analysis.

[14] LEONTIDOU L., *Cit.*, p. 180.

Planning, differently by sciences, is a normative action and not a descriptive one, and it doesn't aim at describing or explaining the world as it is, but rather to suggest actions in order to change it to the wished look. Traditional planning considers theory in order to define a standard of reference, a model of the process, subjects, stakeholders, and context. In short terms, normative actions need to be sustained by descriptive actions and by theory in order to be justified and to obtain a social legitimation[15].

In front of traditional planning crisis, many public-serving planners and designers, practitioners and academics lost their usual descriptive background, rigid and hierarchical; they began to come out of traditional apparatus and to reflect on urban systems built on a platform of experiences tied to the specificity of local situations[16]. By the way, this means knowledge of local patterns, deconstruction of urban theories and the existence of more flexible planning tools. This means to refuse stereotypes and to consider experience both on a historical perspective and in a multidisciplinary framework. But above all, this means to re-construct new models.

In this sense, the "Mediterranean city" gained interest and recovered also a symbolic centrality. But this centrality conceals the risk to create an ideal model of Mediterranean settlement, unreal and too much abstract to be useful. Nevertheless, the theme is so wide that the same significances of "Mediterranean" and "city" concepts are not completely definite. Working on these definitions could be an important result.

This text does not pretend to answer to all open questions, but aims to initiate a further analysis on urban settlements in/of the Mediterranean region. In this sense, what follows is not about how cities develop and change, but an invitation to change paradigms carefully, to look at local urban narratives in several dimensions: the architecture of the built form, political-administrative structure, social relations, cultural meanings, and the economy. We look to the past with decidedly contemporary eyes, and with the primary goal of enhancing our practical and theoretical understanding of the most recent episode in the social production in the Mediterranean urban spaces[17].

Therefore, after a short analysis of theoretical approaches to urban spaces, the definitions of "Mediterranean city" - from a macro and a micro point of view – are the focus of subsequent chapters. This fragmentary and incomplete rethinking of the ways scholars have written "Mediterranean" develops in an analysis of Mediterranean phenomena, aiming to put in foreground the importance of specific indicators in order to define a Mediterranean urban codex, characterised by specific phenomena like permanence of historical centres, irregular settlements, and informal economy.

Limiting our analysis to metropolitan areas and considering the planning "regulating" nature, this essay neither deepen Mediterranean urban history, however

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[15] Cf. ALEXANDER E. R., *Approaches to Planning. Introducing Current Planning Theories, Concepts and Issues*, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, Lausanne, 1992.

[16] Cf. FORESTER J., *Planning in the Face of Power*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989; FORESTER J., *The Deliberative Practitioner. Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1999.

[17] Cf. LEFEBVRE H., *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris, 1974.

relevant, nor put to the test a classification of urban typologies, nor attempt a statistical cataloguing of the main urban areas. Our basic aim is to promote deeper analysis on Mediterranean metropolis, giving the necessary tools to planning practice in order to find the most suitable ways to make Mediterranean cities growth more compatible with an acceptable quality of life.

2. *Approaches to the study of Mediterranean cities*

A diffuse unawareness about urban patterns in the Mediterranean region has induced planners to consider them as residual, culturally specific, even traditional or *precapitalist*, destined to converge, sooner or later, with western patterns. This view has produced a fracture between planning rules and local practices that has further confused and de-structured many Mediterranean cities. In the last times, post-modernism and regionalism raised new interest for those urban patterns, alternative to modernism, that celebrates difference and diversity[18]. Thus, a process of cultural legitimisation of regional and local identities has started, focusing on the Mediterranean image and identity and emphasising the knowledge and preservation of local cultures as fundamental elements for the socio-economic development.

At the same time, planning discipline, for long far from those "… cultural intersections that occur on both sides of the Mediterranean"[19], has been stimulated and sustained by other disciplines like history, geography, economy, and sociology characterised by an already long tradition of studies about the Mediterranean Region.

Academic discourse about Mediterranean cities picked up on the diversity. However traditionally characterised by different concepts and methodologies[20], in the last years geographers, historians, economists and sociologists have modified their approaches, enlarging to other disciplines' ones, in order to face the blurring concept of "city" that, in the language of statisticians, has become an agglomeration without clear boundaries[21]. Thus, scholars have written about cities, mixing different approaches - ecological, evolutionary[22], morphological, political, cultural, economic, anthropological and sociological – in very variable fashions.

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[18] Cf. LEONTIDOU L., *Cit.*

[19] ÇELIK, Z., *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontation. Algiers under French Rule*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997.

[20] The famous Chicago School's essay on the city prospected different disciplinary approaches for geographers - an ecological approach that considers the city as the most significant human change of the natural environment and as part of the result of man/ecosystem relationship; historians – a political one that consider city as a political and analyses its structure and formal organisation; economists – that consider it as an economic unit; and sociologists - consider the city as an human group and analyse it in terms of psycho-physical mechanisms: the city is a cluster of practices, common behaviours, sentiments and traditions developed through many generations and characteristics of a typical cultural unity. Cf. PARK R.E., BURGESS E.W., MCKENZIE R.D., *The City*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1938, p. 152.

[21] Cf. FRIEDMANN J., *Cit.*, 2002, p. XII.

[22] Cf. HORDEN P., PURCELL N., *The Corrupting Sea. A Study on Mediterranean History*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000.

The historical perspective, for example, however relevant to interpret permanence and transformations in the urban tissues, fails to clarify last years' transformations and the crisis of "urban" concept. However in many Mediterranean cities the modernity is still represented by late nineteen century large road axes that cross near-tortuous road, results of "permanence" phenomena, big towns' later enlargements have spread out further their traditional limits, absorbing confining small and medium municipalities and forcing the central area to a metropolitan dimension without government, dominated by a fluid social structure caused by the informal sector, the migration and the social polyvalence. These phenomena have completely changed urban Mediterranean contexts in sizes, meanings and organisation more further that historical analysis could describe.

Therefore, in a region like the Mediterranean historically characterized by an enduring vitality of its cities[23], the enormous urban growth, occurred during the last forty years, has rendered obsolete many classifications, as the usual city-countryside division, highlighting, instead, the formation of "metropolitan" areas and the development of new economic activities reinforced by a new city-suburbs dualism. This expansion out of any administrative confines has made necessary to take into account not only the so called urban areas, exposed to the usual boundaries, but the whole territory, considering also its environmental impact. Finally, history, used without its spatial qualifier, squanders the critical insights of the geographical or spatial imagination, merely adding geographical facts and a few maps in their place[24].

The spatial dimension is also stressed, forgotten and submerged by sociological approach. Citing E. Soja, "…the specific geography of *cityspace* has frequently been relegated to an unproblematic background in the intellectual practices of critical historiography and insistently social and/or socialist science"[25].

In the sociological literature, cities have often been characterised by *trait complexes*[26], closely related to a comparative evolutionary study of civilisations. This type of study postulates a continuous development of the city from a simple community to more advanced societies. The search for the specifically urban *trait complex* has been connected with the study of internal urban ecology and of the social and moral quality of modern urban life. The "city" is a spatial cluster of practices, common behaviours, sentiments and traditions developed through many generations and characteristics of a typical cultural unity, product of ecological, economic and cultural processes[27]. These

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[23] Cf. HORDEN P., PURCELL N., *Cit.*, p. 31, with reference to Mikhail Rostovtzeff's studies.

[24] Cf. SOJA E. W., *Postmetropolis. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, p. 8.

[25] Cf. *Idem*. The specific geography of cityspace is synonymous of the spatial specificity of urbanism, that is related to a particular configuration of social relations, built forms, and human activity in a city and its geographical sphere of influence. It has both formal or morphological as well as processual or dynamic aspects.

[26] Cf. WHEATLEY P., "The concept of urbanism", in UCKO P.J., TRINGHAM R., DIMBLEBY G.W.(eds.), *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, Duckworth, London, 1972; EISENSTADT S. N., SHACHAR A., *Society, Culture and Urbanisation*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1987.

[27] Cf. PARK R.E., BURGESS E.W., MCKENZIE R.D., *The City*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1938, p. 152.

processes are seen as shaping cities but very rarely are these events recognised as being significantly shaped by the intrinsic nature of city-ness itself[28].

However the importance given to social and cultural aspects in the decisional process makes the sociological approach very attractive, its tendency to create a "…archetypal city as base for the classification of urban typologies and social processes, independently by space and time"[29] could be very dangerous to planning, on the contrary dependent by space and time.

The spatial specificity of urbanism, even when it is the focus of inquiring, as in the urban studies, "…has tended to be viewed primarily as an architecturally built environment, a physical container for human activities, shaped or reshaped over time by professional or vernacular city builders…"[30]. The *cityspace* is seen as "…a constructed stage-set for dynamic social and historical processes that are not themselves inherently urban"[31]; on the contrary, the historical and social specificity of urbanism are seen as "…vibrantly alive, complexly dialectical, the primary field and focus of human action, collective consciousness, social will and critical interpretation"[32].

As Charles Taylor asserted, "…in order to have the sense of our being, we must have an idea of both how we became it and where we are going"[33], that is to have a more comprehensive perception of spatial-temporal narratives, in order to link the dynamic production and reproduction of *cityspace* to "…configurations of social life such as the family, the cultural community, the structure of social classes, the market economy, and the governmental state and polity"[34]. These linkages can help us to understand that "…the production of *cityspace* generates additional local, urban, and regional forms of social organisation and identity that are worthy of study in themselves"[35].

The most complete conceptualisation of the relation between spatiality, society, and history can be found in the work of Henry Lefebvre. He considered all social relations abstract and ungrounded until they are specifically *spatialised*, that is made into material and symbolic spatial relations[36]. Moreover, he was the first to consider that urban problematic derives from the complex interaction between macro- and micro-geographical configurations of urban space. On the one hand macro-configurations describe the overall condition and conditioning of urban reality in general terms, on the other hand micro-configurations are more grounded in localised spatial practices and the particular experiences of everyday life. Tensions and contradictions between these different scales are resolved in a third process, which Lefebvre described as the

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[28] Cf. SOJA E.W., *Cit.*, p.9.
[29] PARK R.E., BURGESS E.W., MCKENZIE R.D., *Cit.*, p. 153.
[30] SOJA E.W., *Cit.*, p.9.
[31] *Idem.*
[32] *Idem.*
[33] TAYLOR C., *Sources of the Self*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.
[34] SOJA E.W., *Cit.*, p.9.
[35] *Idem.*
[36] Cf. LEFEBVRE H., *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris, 1974.

production of space[37]. This alternative way of looking at the city, combining both macro and micro perspectives without privileging one over the other, has been much less frequently explored in the literature on urbanism. More often they have been defined as "…separate and competitive empirical and interpretive domains, rather than interactive and complementary moments in our understanding of urbanism and its spatial specificities"[38].

3. *The Mediterranean city between past and future*

However this wide variety of approaches, urban studies have been considered under two main perspectives: the past and the future. On the one hand, urban history is already a flourishing discipline and many studies have portrayed the historical evolution of Mediterranean cities. On the other hand, it is not yet clear in which way planning could be conceived and practised in the Mediterranean area. This is strictly linked to the planning capability in descriptive activities, that is the existence of planning instruments to interpret local contests, to adapt models, and to modify procedures.

At the end of the XIX century, the town planning discipline, or *urbanisme*, as "science and theory of the human settlement", aimed to a scientific universality[39], demanding "*le point de vue vrai*"[40]. During the XX century, the growing complexity of urban phenomena led the planning to move from a rational/comprehensive concept toward a process of social learning and the sciences of the city to move from a structural and functionalist paradigm toward an evolutionary paradigm[41].

Complexity changed also planning knowledge and its capability to pursue actions in the public domain, generating discontinuous and chaotic space-time dynamics characterised by a growing number of non-linear interactions between numerous urban variables and actors. In this way, putting aside traditional planning hypothesis, theories and models, knowledge loses its "objective" and "universal" character and its construction become an "intense social process"[42] with its own dynamics structured both politically and theoretically. Once more, the knowledge process become necessary to reflect at the same time subjective "passions" – of planners, decision-makers, and other public and private stakeholders – and social, economic, and cultural needs, always in progress and open to the future, however powerful preconceptions, like personal ideas, ideologies, or cultural stereotypes, can influence it, modifying decision-making process and, finally, actions.

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[37] SOJA E.W., *Cit.*, p.10.
[38] *Idem.*
[39] Cf. CHOAY F., *L'urbanisme, utopies et réalités. Une anthologie*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1965, p.9.
[40] Cf. *Idem.*
[41] Cf. BERTUGLIA C.S., BIANCHI G., MELA A. (eds), *The City and its Sciences*, Physica-Verlag, Heidelberg, 1998, p.1.
[42] Cf. FRIEDMANN, J., *Planning in the Public Domain: from Knowledge to Action*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, p. 82.

On this basis, theoretical approaches that aim at explaining exclusively the city as a spatial phenomenon appear to be ineffective. A first approach, the so-called "planning theory", describes the modes in which complex public decisions for the urban development are or should be taken in order to solve specific problems, but reveals a little about the problems themselves; the second one, named "functional theory", aspires to explain meanings of urban form and the functioning of that form, remaining at an ideal-type level; finally, the third one, named by J. Friedmann "normative theory"[43], is a simply sketched tendency and it deals in general terms with the relations between human values and urban forms[44]. However the first two theories find their substance in clarifying spatial urban forms, they make reference to unclear and undefined values, retaining static features and dealing with small changes, balance or external transformations. They don't deal with themes as the continuous modifications or the progressive actions that bring to new trends of growth. Lastly, they don't deal with the relationship between city form and significance, meaning the urban space in so abstract term as to reduce it in a neutral container[45]. The 'planning theory', particularly, investigates the nature of decisional processes and how they are or should be managed, however it is necessary to know to what situation their use is appropriate in order to carry out better cities.

Differently, social scientists and historians developed the study of urban structures and forms as a specialisation within their respective disciplines. Several approaches can be recognised. In the previous paragraph, we have considered both ideal-typical and evolutionary ones. They originated and stimulated other approaches, as the studies on urban autonomy, the internal structure of cities, urban systems and many new sociological approaches[46]. These approaches attempt to investigate the interactions among cultural orientations and political institutions and conflicts, international political, and ecological patterns as they influence the shaping of both cities and urban hierarchies.

4. In search of the" Mediterranean city"

"Barmi is a fictional city…. Its name does not appear in the pages of almanacs or history books. It could exist, however, almost anywhere in the Mediterranean coastal zone that stretches from the mouth of Spain's Ebro River to that of Italy's Tiber River. …. A shared cultural history binds all these cities. In them, Latin influences are as pronounced as Western European ones. Their histories include phases of tribal settlement, Roman colonisation, feudalism, and, more recently, massive industrialisation. The wealth of their cultural and artistic achievements is in part a reflection of the Mediterranean region's mild, nurturing climate… Their buildings and squares are the ancient stages on which great events were played

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[43] Cf. FRIEDMANN, J., *Cit.*
[44] Cf. LYNCH, K., *Theory of good city form*, Mit Press, Cambridge, Ma, 1981.
[45] Cf. *idem.*
[46] For a complete analysis on the argument, see EISENSTADT S. N., SHACHAR A., *Cit.*, pp. 24-60.

out. Their streets – the scene of centuries of political struggle and social upheavals – still echo with the clamour of those long-ago, and not so long-ago, events"[47].

As a mixture of southern European cities, Barmi represents an ideal-type of the Mediterranean city in an evolutionary perspective, strongly rooted in the Mediterranean myth. But is it acceptable to reduce the Mediterranean urban variety to an unique pattern? Both foreign and indigenous observers have made broad claims for the existence of a common Mediterranean culture, often explicitly opposed to the values and experience of northern Europe.

Figure 1 – *Barmi, a Mediterranean city*
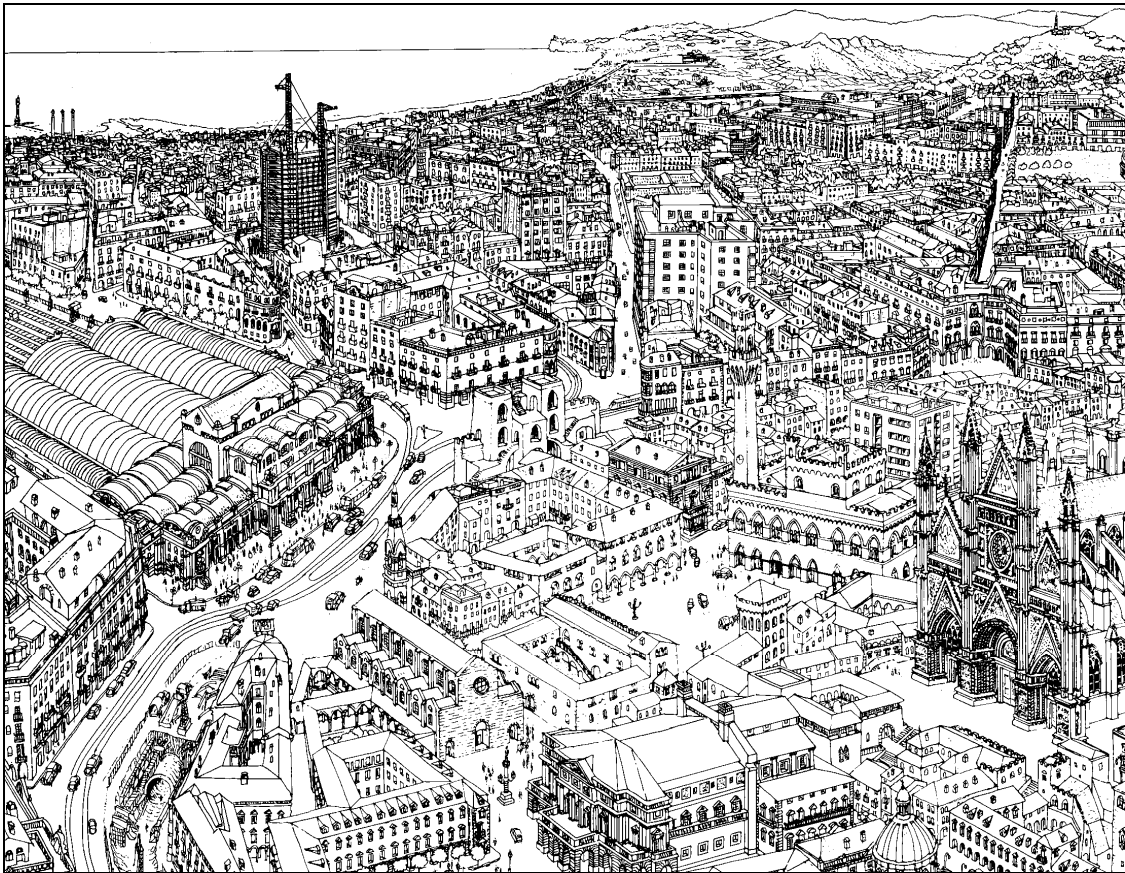
Source: HERNANDEZ X., COMES P., 1990.

The question is inevitably linked to an identification of the concept of 'Mediterranean' that wavers between myth and reality. On one hand, it is based on a mythological, romantic or vernacular heritage that gave birth to a "Mediterranean Myth" in the European culture, influencing the artistic, literary, and architectural debate. On the other hand, the image of 'Mediterranean' is not purely virtual. Its reality is certificated by geographic maps and by means of different parameters. Nevertheless, as Matvejević wrote in his famous "Mediterranean breviary", its borders are not inscribed

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[47] HERNANDEZ X., COMES P., *Barmi. A Mediterranean City Through the Ages¸* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1990.

in space and time, and we do not know how to determine them. "They are irreducible to the sovereignty or to the history, there are neither state or national borders: they look like to a circle of chalk that continues to be sketched and deleted, that waves and winds, enterprises and inspirations enlarge or reduce"[48].

The concept of Mediterranean has always hold a special charm in the eyes of people who lived in the inner regions of the Continent. They were able to see the Mediterranean as an unitary region, where the differences were less important than similarities, primarily proving how the Myth is deep-rooted in them[49]. If we look back to Barmi, its 'Mediterranean' specifically concerns southern Europe, excluding 'oriental' world of North Africa and the Levant. Substantially, describing that model, the authors do not consider the Muslim culture and architecture that also has produced a wide impact on many cities of Spain and Italy. On the contrary, avoiding to simplify a wide variety of patterns of experience into a single holistic model, also the seductive power of the Myth, emphasising the special nature of social relations within this area, can be seen in positive terms. In fact much of the today debate on 'Mediterraneity' has focused on the existence of "Mediterranean modes of thought"[50]. These characters come out from a shared social experience, that binds the Mediterranean people and can be seen as the foundation of this culture.

In this way, aside of geographical, political, and historical 'macro' definitions, a promising area of research focuses on 'micro' definitions, that considers patterns of formal institutions, local societies, and personal relations. Obviously, an excessive variety and fragmentation of the characters makes impossible to determine a Mediterranean archetype. Therefore, it could be better to abandon the search for a single model in favour of a series of typologies, such as geographic, morphologic, economic, social, political and cultural, renouncing once and for all the easy illusions of only one "Mediterranean City". In this perspective, we can begin a code with few constants and many particular elements.

4.1 'Macro' definitions

From a geographical point of view, if we examine the Mediterranean water basin or the cultivation boundaries of the olive tree, we can find similar environmental factors at distances of up to 100 to 200 km from the coast. So, 'true' Mediterranean, spread

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[48] MATVEJEVIĆ P., *Mediteranski Brevijar*, GZH, Zagreb, 1987.
[49] See HORDEN P., PURCELL N., *Cit.,* for a complete study of the four most influential figures in the twentieth-century historiography of the Mediterranean, as Rostovzeff, Pirenne, Goiten, and Braudel. pp.31-43.
[50] Cf. AMELANG J., "The Myth of the Mediterranean City. Perception of Sociability", in COWAN A. (ed.), *Mediterranean Urban Culture. 1400-1700*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 2000, pp. 19-21.

"…from the northern limit of the olive tree to the northern limit of the palm tree"[51], consists also of countries as Jordan and Portugal, strictly no-Mediterranean.

Figure 2 – *Caravan paths in the Sahara (XV-XVI Century)*
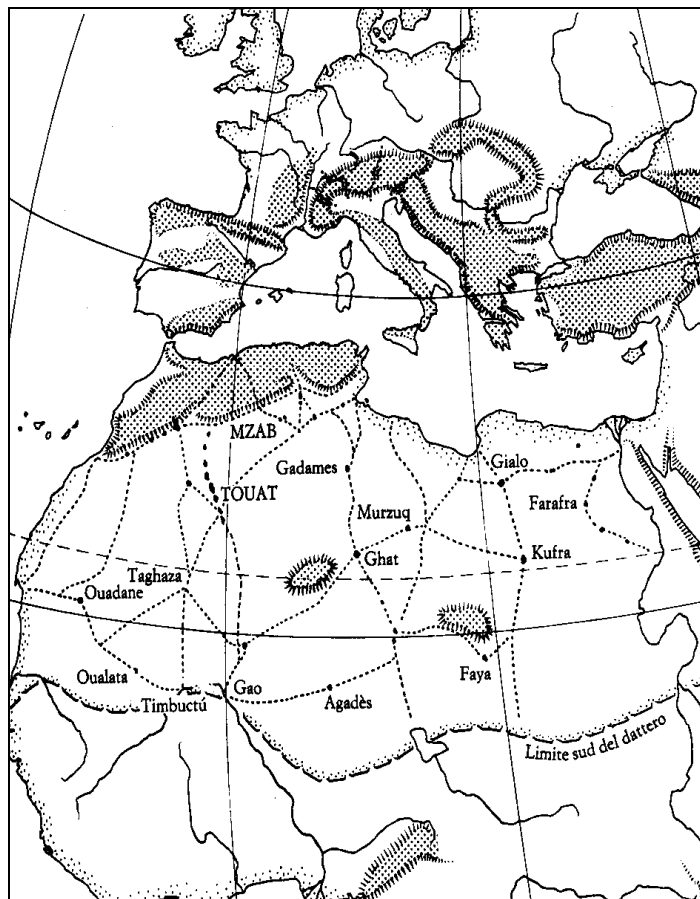
Source: BRAUDEL, F., 1966

Particularly, despite their different historical backgrounds until the late nineteenth century, the countries of Southern Europe have shared certain geopolitical and socioeconomic characteristics and a level of economic development after the wars, which render them comparable. Italy (especially its Southern region), Spain, Portugal and Greece can be set against the rest of Europe as a *group* – Mediterranean or Southern Europe[52]. In the Southern Mediterranean Basin, as part of 'Maghreb' region, the Morocco has always been directed to European countries, and in the Eastern side the Jordan, since ancient ages has been part of Syrian and Palestinian regions as a frontier region between the Mediterranean Arabs and the people of the desert. Obviously, these

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[51] BRAUDEL F., *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1966, translated by S. Reynolds, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Harper Collins, London, 1992, p. 123.
[52] Cf. LEONTIDOU L., *The Mediterranean city in transition: social change and urban development,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.3.

choices aren't completely shared; some scholars consider too much Atlantic Moroccan and Portuguese large towns, as Casablanca-Rabat and Lisbon[53].

Several studies tried to understand similarities and differences through macro-approaches, constructing morphological, environmental, functional or historical sub-regions. A significant example is the report *Europe 2000+* elaborated by the European Commission that, based principally on geomorphologic factors, distinguishes six environmental tables in the Mediterranean area – Latin arc (Q1); Adriatic valley (Q2); North African front (Q3); Libyan-Egyptian bend (Q4); Middle Eastern facade (Q5); Anatolian-Balkan bridge (Q6)[54].

Figure 3 – *Mediterranean Systems and European Union Environmental tables*
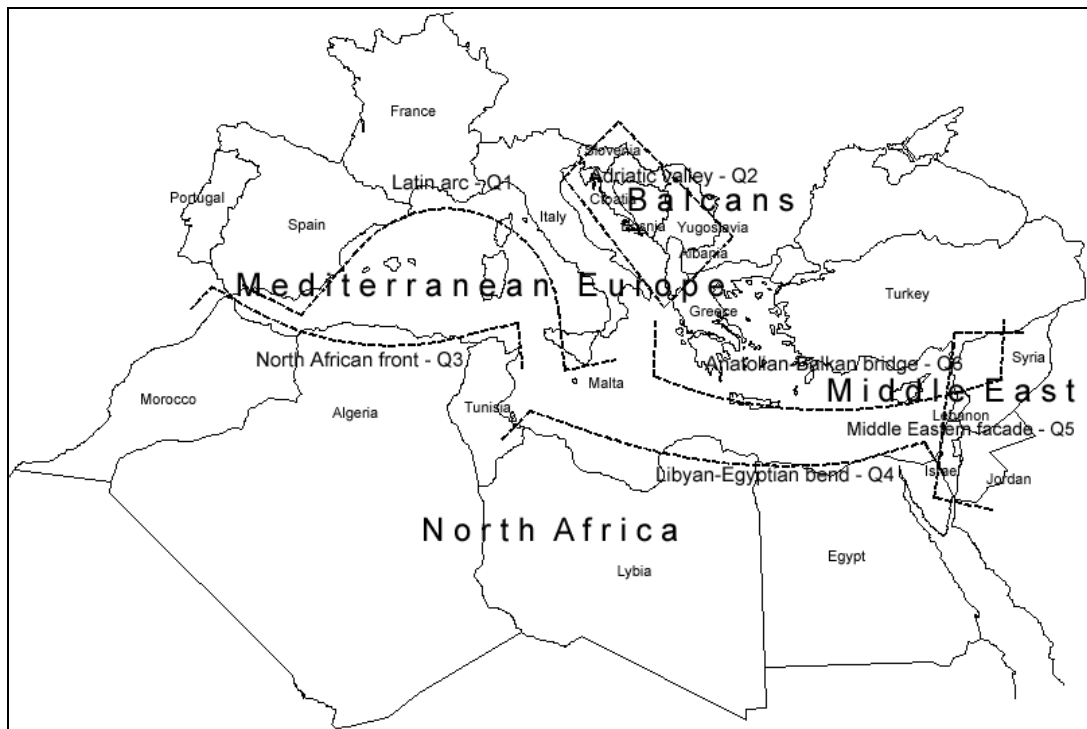
Source: PACE, G.*, 1998.*

Another paradigmatic classification, proposed by Urbano Cardarelli, has divided the Mediterranean in four main systems: 1) The city-ports system, expression of a new Euromediterranean centrality, positioned along East-West basin axe, from Barcelona to Livorno and, through the Padana plain, up to Trieste; 2) The insular-peninsular system, formed by the lager isles and the Spanish and Italian peninsulas, in the balance between centrality and peripherality; 3) The North African system, from Morocco to Egypt, with heavy problems of overuse of coastal zones and internal regions desertification; 4) The Balkan-Middle East system, characterized by a situation of political, cultural and ethnic

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[53] Cf. TROIN J.-F., *Le metropoli del Mediterraneo*, Jaca Book, Milano, 1997, pp.17-19.
[54] Cf. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Europe 2000+. Co-operation for the European space development*, UE, Luxemburg, 1995.

struggle that blocks its potentiality of link toward Asiatic countries[55]. These classifications (Fig.3) are not very dissimilar. If they offer a view of the Mediterranean geographical fragmentation on one hand, they risk to appear hardly representative on the other one, showing only a perception of physical "metropolitan" contiguity, partially derived from Gottmann's 'urban nebula', that doesn't succeed to eventually materialize socio-economic connections or regional transformations of urban settlements.

Table 1 – *UNCHS Global Urban Indicators database*

CITY	*Country*	*UN Region*	*Sub-region*	*Development stage*
Algiers	Algeria	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Amman	Jordan	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Athens	Greece	Highly industrialized	Europe	Industrialized
Cairo	Egypt	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Casablanca	Morocco	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Damascus	Syrian Arab Rep.	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Gaza	Palestine	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Marseilles	France	Highly industrialized	Europe	Industrialized
Rabat	Morocco	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Tirana	Albania	Transitional	Eastern Europe	Developing
Tripoli	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Arab States	Arab States	Developing
Tunis	Tunisia	Arab States	Arab States	Developing

Source: *UNCHS Urban Indicators Programme, 1998*

At macro level, the Northern Shore-industrialized countries/Southern Shore-developing countries could be a simpler and more effective schematization[56], with the advantage of an immediate historical lecture highlighting undeniable differences between Euromediterranean urban contexts – belonging to advanced socio-economic and political realities and characterized by similar urban issues – and North African and Middle Eastern cities – pained by continuous economic and political crises, but is it true? In reality, we can find many intermediate situations, with common problems among urban societies of the two shores. We could be fascinated by Braudel's vision of a "Great Mediterranean" determined not by climate but by men, with "… people not closed by any limit, overcoming every barrier"[57]. The circulation of men, goods, and services is an ever expanding series of circles allowing us to speak not only of one but of one hundred Mediterranean boundaries, opening the window to many other different delimitations.

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[55] Cf. CARDARELLI U. ET AL., *La Città Mediterranea. Primo rapporto di ricerca*, Istituto per la Pianificazione e la Gestione del Territorio, Napoli, 1987.
[56] As confirmed by the *UNCHS Urban Indicators Programme*: see Table 1.
[57] BRAUDEL F., *La Méditerranée, l'Espace et l'Histoire*, Flammarion, Paris,1985, p. 8.

4.2 'Micro' definitions

The environmental characteristics, the richness of resources, the continuous evolution of closely connected civilizations, have led to a changeable network of economic and political relations and have strongly influenced urban development expanding to the inner regions in a continuous hybridization of building techniques and architectonic styles, giving life to what Cardarelli calls "the global view of the Mediterranean town"[58], relating as much to the physical as to the economic and social realms. The concept of 'permanence of the urban fabric' can help us to define the typical elements of many Mediterranean cities, as the recognizability of urban spaces, the superimposition of roads and buildings, the subdivision of neighborhoods and the continuous mix of architectural typologies. Articulations so peculiar of the urban fabric, " … in part distinct, juxtaposed and pretty often closed, one respect to the other"[59], can not be mended exclusively by factors of morphological stratification. The presence, in the same context of functions, of ethnicities or of different cultures that encounter each other, confront each other and finally live together, preserving jealously their individual identities, draws origin and justification from social and cultural elements, common to different Mediterranean contexts.

Figure 4 - *Aerial view of the Medina of Fez*

Source: BIANCA, S., 2000

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[58] Cf. CARDARELLI U., *Cit*., 1987, p. 84.
[59] *Idem.*

These elements, influential for a common Mediterranean code, can be deducted from field analysis in comparative perspective, as many author did[60], or from relevant cultural approaches. Two theories have had remarkable success in interpreting the Mediterranean cultures: Albert Camus' "meridian thought"[61] and Antonio Gramsci's "cultural materialism"[62], as confirmed by the studies of Franco Cassano on Camus[63] and of Lila Leontidou on Gramsci[64]. Obviously, analyzing these two thoughts, rose from the observation of unrelated Mediterranean realities and elaborated in particular historical contexts, Algeria at the end of French colonial rule for Camus, and Southern Italy under fascist dictatorship for Gramsci, we cannot aspire to explain Mediterranean urban forms but only to individuate elements of a common lexicon, something that supercedes urbanism and the economy, something that has to be related to the Mediterranean philosophical, ideological or political writings, as these, have given significance to the local narratives, making more understandable "… cities which have seldom or never encountered functional differentiation, zoning, or which combine very few areas of Corbusier-like multi-storey estates"[65], and where the plan is obliged to follow rather than lead the urban settlement.

For Camus, the peculiarities of the Mediterranean sea (small spatial extension, the mildness of climate, ease of navigation) have allowed over time exchange and competition between peoples. Here one can see the existence of frontiers that unite "as much as divide"[66]. In border zones contacts can give rise to complicity and connivance, weakening the sense of enclosure. The growth of smuggling, often tied to the local population, serves only to weaken the sanctity of borders by making them permeable. As a rule, this is typical of the Mediterranean populations where there is a mentality of "derogation"[67]. But, Cassano adds, the life of derogation is only possible within a tradition of honor and moderation, producing a more flexible behavior that contributes to the harmony with the surroundings much more than the rules dictated by the "ethical power of the State"[68]. Unfortunately, Cassano's conclusions appear apathetic, attributing Mediterranean crisis to the trend of denying the tradition based upon honor in exchange for ephemeral wealth, breaking the harmony with the nature and turning this region into a "mistaken copy of the north". If it's true that Mediterranean towns are

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[60] Cf. BETHEMONT J., *Géographie de la Méditerranée. Du mythe unitaire à l'espace fragmenté*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2000; TROIN J.-F., *Cit.*; SIGNOLES P., "Attori pubblici e attori privati nello sviluppo delle città del mondo arabo", in AA.VV., *Città e società nel mondo arabo contemporaneo. Dinamiche urbane e cambiamento sociale*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, 1997.

[61] Cf. CAMUS A., *L'homme révolté*, Edition Gallimard, Paris, 1951.

[62] Cf. GRAMSCI A., *Lettere dal carcere,* Einaudi, Torino, 1947, English translation: *Letters from Prison*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1975.

[63] Cf. CASSANO F., *Il pensiero meridiano*, Laterza, Bari-Roma, 1996

[64] Cf. LEONTIDOU L., *Cit.*, 1990; LEONTIDOU L., *Postmodernism and the city: Mediterranean versions*, in "Urban Studies", vol. 30 n. 6, pp. 920-965; LEONTIDOU L., *Alternatives to Modernism in (Southern) Urban Theory: Exploring In-Between Spaces*, in "International Journal of Urban and Regional Research", vol. 20, n. 2, 1996.

[65] LEONTIDOU L., *Cit.*, 1996, p. 189.

[66] Cf. CASSANO F., *Cit.* .

[67] Cf. *idem*.

[68] Cf. HEGEL G.W.F., *Lezioni sulla filosofia della storia*, vol. 1, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1981.

seen to be poor and corrupt, afflicted by similar problems such as intensive housing, few green areas, lack of infrastructures and services, exploitation of soil to its limits, uninhabitable conditions of some areas, we cannot agree with Cassano charging above all with the absence of regulations and moral rules[69]. Certainly, his cultural approach should be checked through a deeply knowledge of Mediterranean urban contexts, which could point out a larger complexity of causes and effects. Nevertheless, Cassano adds to our Mediterranean lexicon, even if fragmentary and incomplete, terms as 'border', 'tradition' and 'derogation' which partially explain the variety of races, religions, and cultures which make the Mediterranean cities "…much more heterogeneous, combining traditional, modern and post-modern elements"[70].

Gramsci's analysis of Southern Italy offers another interpretation: the 'family' as a primary element of the Mediterranean. Not necessarily in opposition with the preceding one, it can equally explain the difficulty of planning in these regions, where welfare is weak or absent. The planning appears, in fact, overwhelmed by a 'familiar spontaneity' which, supported by informality and sometimes by illegality, maintains and reinforces the cohesion of a society that seems on the point of breaking down. In these realities, the rule was the informal economy rather the factory; a rule that did not allow the success of a strong bourgeois and that produced "informal" workers rather than proletariat. In the Mediterranean cities, the late industrialization and the rare Fordism put in evidence the absence of a 'bourgeois hegemony', and the presence of elements like heterogeneity, polyvalence and diversity[71].

The fact that both authors consider the Mediterranean as an intermediate space from a geographic, socio-economic and cultural point of view, cannot be attributed to dichotomies as development/underdevelopment, city/suburbs or urban/rural, modern/traditional or modern/post-modern[72], and it does not make relevant the planning/market bipolarity in such settlements without a plan, where the formal and informal economies must co-exist[73]. In this sense, the nature of the social relations has become a fundamental component, up to turn itself into a part of the Mediterranean Myth[74]. So, 'family', 'tradition', 'derogation', and 'border' are among those primary elements which characterize the Mediterranean urban society, giving origin to common behaviours that distinguish it clearly from other places' civic life. Derived factors as the *patronage*'s importance, or the vital role of kinship in private and public arenas, or the instrumental nature of friendship, or the intense neighbourhood life and highly theatrical quality of social interactions, can be easily found in the large metropolis of both Mediterranean shores, but they say nothing of Mediterranean inhabitants and if they have had or still have joined by a shared culture.

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[69] For a more complete analysis of "Meridian thought" see: PACE G., *Modi di pensare e vedere la città mediterranea*, Working paper 2/1998, Irem, Napoli, 1998.

[70] LEONTIDOU L., *Cit*., 1996, p. 187.

[71] Cf. LEONTIDOU L., *Cit*., 1996

[72] Cf. LEONTIDOU L., *Cit*., 1996, pp. 180-181.

[73] Cf. *idem*.

[74] Cf. AMELANG J., "Città: punto d'incontro di due miti dello spazio", in DUBY G. (ed.), *Los ideales del Mediterraneo*, Generalitat de Catalunya, Bercellona, 1997.

Their analysis, however, outlined the city as a *social entity*, emphasizing a long-lasting strangeness of social science approach to urban problems compared to historical, political, and technical ones. Their approach's success has been reinforced by the "dissolution of the concept of city"[75], generating new theoretical courses, suspicious behind general theories, but interested in understanding different urban contexts' specificity. Consequently, those elements' existence in many Mediterranean locations isn't useful to define a single model or a common lexicon, but it can rid of analytical categories too much Eurocentric and short-sighted, and to suggest a new starting point for studying each case in a comparative perspective.

5. Urban phenomena and indicators in the Mediterranean cities

The proposed definitions, at macro and micro level, were born as local contexts' analysis and only later they were extended to all Mediterranean Region. After that, their legitimacy has to be confirmed continuously through single-city investigations and comparative studies, and their specific and common characters should be also filtered through urban "imageability"[76] that "... invests the value of all the environment, lived and built by the human kind"[77]. These investigations should explain details and diversities, letting to be visible aspects which "... can be viewed from a myriad of perspectives", in accordance with the historical periods and specific visions considered. Particularly, analyses of single urban development processes appear to be essential for clarifying complex interactions of social, economic, political, technical, cultural, and artistic powers "... that bring the form about and give dynamism to the city through time"[78].

These investigations, consequently, shouldn't only individuate general urban functions[79], as settlement structures - linear, monocentric, polycentric, etc. - or the specific role played by each metropolitan area in its territorial context – dual or primary –, but the predominant specific characters as they are recognized by their inhabitants, the perception of cultural and social tinges, the advancement trends of their activities, the development opportunities and handicaps, the image and reality of everyday life. Especially, the Mediterranean metropolitan areas, strongly characterized by a co-presence of both spatial aspects (i.e. build-up continuity) and no-spatial (economy, politics, society), show hardly equivalent features to global ones, recognized by more recent studies on this subject[80].

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[75] Cf. TOSI, A., "Verso un'analisi comparativa delle città", in ROSSI, P. (ed.), *Modelli di città*, Edizioni di Comunità, Torino, 1987, pp. 43-46.
[76] LYNCH, K., *cit.*
[77] ROSSI, A., *L'architettura della città*, Città studi edizioni, Milano, 1978.
[78] ÇELIK, Z., *Cit.*
[79] Typical of the geographic approach: see BETHEMONT, J., *cit.*
[80] In the last years, urban sociological works have had significant concern, i.e. MARTINOTTI, G., *Metropoli*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1993, indicates new co-ordinates for metropolitan contexts, emphasizing as principal factors of a metropolitan system: a) the physical continuity of the components, organized

Table 2 - *Definitions of 'urban'.*

Countries	Definition of urban	Principle
MOROCCO	Towns proclaimed by royal *dahil* (184)	Fixed
ALGERIA	All the settlements connected to a town (447)	Qualitative
TUNISIA	Population living in communes	Qualitative
LIBYA	Municipalities (Baladiyas)	Fixed
EGYPT	Govern orates of Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Ismailia, Suez, frontier govern orates and capitals of other governorates as well as district capitals	Fixed
ISRAEL	All settlements of more than 2000 inhabitants, except those where at least one third of households, participating in the civilian labor force, earn their living from agriculture.	Quantitative
JORDAN	Localities of 10.000 or more inhabitants and all sub-district capitals	Quantitative
SYRIA	Cities, Mohafaza centers and Mantika centers, and communities with 20.000 or more inhabitants	Quantitative
TURKEY	Population of the localities within the municipality limits of administrative centers of provinces and districts.	Qualitative
GREECE	Settlements with 10.000 or more inhabitants	Quantitative
CYPRUS	Six district capitals and the Nicosia periphery	Fixed
ALBANIA	Towns and other industrial centers of more than 400 inhabitants	Quantitative
CROATIA		
ITALY		
FRANCE	Communes containing an agglomeration of more than 2.000 inhabitants living in contiguous houses or with not more than 200 meters between houses, also communes of which the major portion of the population is part of a multi-communal agglomeration of this nature	Quantitative
SPAIN	Municipalities of 200 or more inhabitants	Quantitative
PORTUGAL	Agglomeration of 10.000 or more inhabitants	Quantitative

Source: *UN Demographic Yearbooks*

The importance of single-case studies become more evident in a context – as the Mediterranean - where there is a great diversity of statistical results. Particularly, many demographic and social aspects could be misunderstood in a general framework. For example, the urban population is hardly definable in perceptual values, as the term "urban" has not always the same meaning, rather following different principles, up to disappear in Italy and Croatia (Tab.2).

around a initial central nucleus, more or less old, that represents its historical dimension, together initial nucleus of secondary settlements, run into and absorbed by metropolitan development; b) the cultural innovation, for which the metropolis is the place where most important events of collective and individual behaviors' transformation happen; c) the marked slippage of productive activities toward tertiary sector that produces new metropolitan users: from the past industrial commuters, with the growth of wealth and the consequent development of new services offer in the central areas, to the making of new users of these services; moreover, the growth of advanced tertiary activity has convinced an always larger number of persons to live central areas for congresses, meetings, business, cultural events, etc.

Defining quantitative methods - from minimal settlements of almost 2.000 inhabitants (Israel) up to settlements of almost 10.000 inhabitants (Portugal) - qualitative (Algeria) or fixed (Morocco), widen scissors between the Israeli urban population (89,9%) and the Portuguese one (33,9%). Furthermore the deserts and mountainous regions' complete inhospitability makes difficult any statistical relevance of dweller density on national scale[81].

It neither seems to be comparable any evaluation of the metropolitan population. To the Mediterranean metropolis different boundary's principles, when they are present, problems of "illegal" population must be added. In the last thirty years, close to the recorded population, unrecorded newcomers live "spontaneous" cities, generating building processes out of the control of any authorities[82].

Even so many international research programs have tried to define "key urban indicators"[83], in terms of background data (land use, city population, annual population growth rate, income distribution, city product per person); socioeconomic development (poor household, informal employment, hospital beds, life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, school enrolment rates, school classrooms, crime rates); infrastructure (household connection levels, access to potable water, consumption of water, median price of water); transportation (modal split, mean travel time, expenditure in road infrastructure, automobile ownership); environmental management (wastewater treated, solid waste generated, disposal methods for solid waste, regular solid-waste collection, housing destroyed); local authorities (local government per-capita income, local government per-capita capital expenditure, debt service charge ratio, local government employees, personnel expenditure ratio, contracted recurrent expenditure ratio, government level providing services, control by higher levels of government); housing (house price to income ratio, house rent to income ratio, floor area per person, permanent structures, housing in compliance, land development multiplier, infrastructure expenditure, mortgage to credit ratio, housing production, housing investment)[84].

Similar indicators, rarely complete and trustworthy for every country, are subject to political distortions so much that becoming useless. But keywords, as 'familiar primacy', 'tradition', 'derogation', and 'border' should require a different selection of indicators, more qualitative, able to evaluate spontaneous, sometimes illegal, changes, and to compare with factors of the 'modernization theory'[85], as the transition of familiar

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[81] Cf. PACE, G., *The Mediterranean Metropolitan Cities in Transition Between Past and Future: New Strategies in Search of New Regional Roles*, in Acts of "37th European Congress of the Regional Science Association", Rome August 26th-29th,1997.

[82] Cf. *idem.*

[83] Cf. UNCHS Urban Indicators Program.

[84] For statistical examples see: tables 3-4-5.

[85] Since 1950s' a large school of thought flourished about Modernization, considered as an unidirectional and in stages process in which all the societies run in from a primitive stage (i.e. rural or enlarged family) to a final one (urban or closed family). It's a process of homogenisation (all the societies finish by looking like) and convergence toward the occidental model (European or American). It's a process irreversible (the rhythm can change in time and space, but never in direction) and gradual (slow, no-revolutionary).

composition, the employment in the informal sector, and moreover new public and private actors, determining the local dynamics and the so-called 'social regulation'.

On this last theme, a reflection about the decision-making process is crucial, a reflection not only related to institutional and organized powers, but related to the individual himself, to his goals, not always clear, coherent, and permanent, but still reasonable. In the Mediterranean context, this concern becomes more significant because of 1970s-80s changes in shape and modality of urban growth, mainly in the Arab towns. In the 1970s, close to statutory forms of urban expansion, corresponding to public/private parcellations, where planning and building rules are more or less respected, a new typology of building raised. Deriving from parcellations and constituting often large neighborhoods, this second form, called 'contested settlement' or 'irregular settlement', peripheral and populated by the poor and the middle class, is characterized by an indifference to legal and planning systems. Usually built on restricted lands or without conforming with parcellation and building rules, this typology represents a process completely unlike those that previously generated the so-called '*bidonvilles*', '*gourbivilles*', 'shanty-towns' and other under-integrated and unhealthy settlements. It doesn't represent an urbanization of the poverty, because it has a formal spatial organization, answering to specific rules owing to apportioners and buyers demands[86].

The parcels are purchased from landowners in a real parallel land market directed to those who haven't the means for entering in the official circuit. The tenant is an apartment owner and the building proceed in full view of urban institutions. This process, very dynamic and responsible of urban settlements' huge spatial distribution, has created a fast erosion of semi-urban areas, a development of peripheral social tissues, but also a sudden decrease of urban density with consequent extra urbanization costs for the collectivity[87]. The presence of 'irregular settlements' in numerous Mediterranean urban areas of both North and South shores – i.e. the famous Cairo's 'Zones of Spontaneous Urbanization' (Z.U.S.)[88], or the unplanned development of *Pianura* neighborhood in Naples – in addition to an enhancement of the metropolitan physical contiguity, shows analogous public policies, addressed to illegal neighborhoods' rehabilitation and consequent regularization, instead of restraining their growth. This powers' weakness could be considered surprising in authoritarian countries, centralized and very ambitious on the town planning field (i.e. Syria, Algeria), but many studies have demonstrated that property speculations and illegal buildings couldn't be suffocated by severe public policies, rather the contrary is true: the

These basic principles have been fundamental for social science between 1950-1970, particularly for Political sciences (the march toward democracy and political stability), for Economy (the famous theory of Rostow on conditions and phases of economic take-off), for Sociology of the family (changes in the familiar institutions), for Urban Sociology and Demography. Cf. TABUTIN D., *La ville et l'urbanisation dans les théories du changement démographique*, Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain, 2000.

[86] Cf. SIGNOLES P., *Cit.*, pp.104-105.

[87] Cf. *idem*.

[88] Cf. EL KADI, G., *L'urbanisation spontenée au Caire*, Urbama, Tours, 1987.

more planning actions were restrictive and forbade buildings, the more the phenomenon developed.

Figure 5 - *Cairo, City of the Dead*

Source: PACE, G.

The discrepancy of 1970s'-early 1980s' Mediterranean urban development forced urban researchers to abandon the idea of private actors' irrationality, and to focalize themselves on process and policy logics. To the extent that institutional bodies have been forced to recognize their connections with the population, the researchers have modified the perspective of analysis about the interface public/private actors[89], pulling away from "…a social relations' and urban spatial organization's view, pyramidal and hierarchized, which appeared in the terminology representing different forms of the dichotomy, that is modern population – traditional population, integrated population – marginal population, urban culture – subculture"[90].

In Cairo, for example, Chaline individuated a different urban consumption basin, largely resident, classified as: a) modern; b) traditional; c) rural[91]. So, a large part of the latter isn't officially recorded and live the 'metropolis' in an unauthorized way, saving inside the restricted of the neighborhood the familiar culture, and therefore of the native

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[89] Cf. SIGNOLES, P., *cit.*, p. 111.
[90] OSMONT, A., "Les Quartiers péripheriques d'une agglomération africaine, Dakar (Sénégal)", in IMBERT, M., CHOMBART DE LAWE, P.H. (eds), *La banlieu d'aujourd'hui*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1982.
[91] Cfr. CHALINE C., *Les villes du monde arabe*, Masson, Paris, 1990.

village[92]. As a consequence of this phenomenon, the countryside seems to 'consume' the Mediterranean Arab city, or rather the same city tends to ruralize[93]. But, the demographic explosion and the rural exodus intensity, successfully applied for explaining the *bidonvilles*, isn't enough to interpret 'irregular settlements' with a majority of non-rural population[94]. Alike, the town planning regulations' ignorance couldn't always be attributed to cultural and ethnic particularities of populations with a main aim of regularizing their condition.

Another attractive aspect is represented by the 'informal economy', that characterizes large part of the Mediterranean urban economic systems. Created for explaining the processes of rural migration absorption by urban labor markets, in the last fifteen years cultural and economic factors have raised this sector's effectives, adding citizens, victims of crisis, indebtedness or structural adjustment. But, the conventional definition of 'informal sector', adopted in 1993 at Geneva, does not include all informal activities, but only: a) familiar enterprises without stable workers; b) micro-enterprises with stable workers, but of very small size. This definition considered the difficulties of evaluating other unrecorded economic activities, analyzing only enterprises that do not aim to evade legal obligations. Obviously, there is an hidden or 'parallel economy' with unrecorded enterprises, enterprises that use 'black work', or enterprises with piece-work, but also there are unrecorded familiar workers, and many supplies take place through barter[95]. However, the illegal activities can't be considered at the same level of legal economic activities, this doesn't mean that in countries as Algeria or Morocco the parallel economy fulfils a leading role compared with the informal sector.

Another type of hidden employment is the salaried double activity, especially in Egypt, where since 1970s for putting into effect a policy of full employment, the government hired redundant workers in the administrative sector and these officers, underoccupied and inadequately paid, were forced to absenteeism[96]. The double employment of civil servants exists in other Mediterranean countries, however more limited in size or more hidden and illegal. Estimations have been attempted in Egyptian case, but generally the results are partial and the evaluative systems are very complex, like that used by Italian Statistical Bureau (ISTAT). Moreover, the transition from the

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[92] In a lot of his novels, the Egyptian Nobel prize Naghib Mahfuz offered a wide description of this urban/rural society that, arrived in Cairo, restores the usage of the village and it remains extraneous to the great metropolis urban transformations.

[93] Cfr. AA.VV., *Enjeux urbains au Maghreb. Crises, pouvoirs et mouvements sociaux*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1985, p. 7.

[94] Cf. KHADER, B.*, La citta araba di ieri e di oggi: alcune riflessioni introduttive*, in AA.VV., *Città e società nel mondo arabo contemporaneo. Dinamiche urbane e cambiamento sociale*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, 1997, p. 4.

[95] For an exhaustive analysis of informal economy, see: PORTES, A., CASTELLS, M., BENTON, L.A. (eds.), *The Informal Economy. Studies ion Advanced and Less Developed Countries*, The John Hopkins University, Baltimore and London, 1989.

[96] Cf. CHARMES, J., "Visibile e invisibile: il settore informale nell'economia urbana del mondo arabo", in AA.VV., *Città e società nel mondo arabo contemporaneo. Dinamiche urbane e cambiamento sociale*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, 1997.

'interventionist State' to the market economy and the liberalism has developed new hidden forms of economic activity, just as that lack of restrictions should have brought to full light most of informal economy, also in consideration that the condition of semi-immersion doesn't allow completely to join the legal economic circuit, the credit and the SMEs incentives[97]. Problems of cottage industry, parallel economy and double employment are proof of the fragmentation of the main economic categories, of the return to old practices and of the generality of the income collection, that invades private and relational spaces and spreads the employment.

The urban quarters' ruralization, the economic and social strength of the informal sector and the concurrent worsening of rural sector crisis have completely transformed the traditional relationship between countryside and metropolis. The latter does not have any longer a parasitic position compared with the hinterland, from where at one time it obtained means of subsistence and manpower. With the rural and industrial sectors' reduced importance, but principally with the creation of new markets, even global, Mediterranean metropolis do not live on country's spending as was considered in the past, rather they are the driving force behind the national economy[98]. For example, Casablanca guarantees the 31% of the tax revenues with about 12% of Moroccan population; Tel Aviv Metropolitan area (46,5% of total employed persons, 41,3% of total population)[99] has become a 'tertiary global city' and the hub of Israeli financial and commercial activities; Istanbul gives hospitality to 55% of all enterprises in Turkey; in the 1990 Amman had a third of total Jordan population, with the 94% of no-rural enterprises with five or more workers and with 95% of total manpower; the 30,7% of Cairo metropolitan area is used for rural activity, but at the same time the capital hosts all international business companies and most of enterprises. After all, these large metropolitan areas, appointed to become a symbol for each State, must compete on the global market and distribute wealth to the hinterland.

Another cliché on the Mediterranean city is that its disorder and spontaneous character has been caused by the absence of planning or by its mismanagement. On the contrary, many plans have tried to control and to check the urban growth dynamics. Quoting Galila El Kadi about Cairo, we are faced with a paradox wherein the city seems to elude the public control, without ceasing to be the focus of public interest, particularly in the last fifty years[100].

Since 1950s' the large Mediterranean cities started to provide themselves of schemes of spatial management, but as a general rule, their realization sometimes changed suddenly, sometimes was restricted to some interventions with limited effects.

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[97] Cf. MELDOLESI, L., *Dalla parte del Sud*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1998.
[98] Cf. PACE G., *The Mediterranean Metropolitan Cities in Transition Between Past and Future: New Strategies in Search of New Regional Roles*, 37th European Congress of the Regional Science Association, Roma, 1997 (on CD).
[99] CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel, n.50, 1999*.
[100] Cf. EL KADI, G., "Urbanizzazione spontanea e politiche di pianificazione. Due processi che si annullano a vicenda: il Cairo", in AA.VV., *Città e società nel mondo arabo contemporaneo. Dinamiche urbane e cambiamento sociale*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, 1997.

A double constraint has never ceased to lie heavy on urban planning efforts. Firstly, there was an enormous disparity between the basic needs of a fast growing population and the public sector resources, especially in the southern Mediterranean cities. Secondly, the existence and interaction of important old urban centres and historical quarters has never been completely considered by the town planning schemes[101].

After all, the government and local administration impotence to enforce town planning schemes and rules can not be only imputed to technical causes, while the legal systems of urban control and organization have never ceased to strengthen and to get complicated; the less can not be imputed the unsuccessful repression by governments that, in many occasions, have radically suppressed entire neighborhoods. It is too easy to explain systematic irregularities in regard to urbanization and town planning rules attributing them to the corruption, without considering the functioning of both the 'political tangible' and 'social regulation'[102]. Particularly, the spontaneous urbanization tolerance means an implicit or explicit, voluntary or obliged political change, and one of the possible explanations should be searched in new power relations among public administrations, landed agents, apportioners, 'clandestine' estate agents and inhabitants.

6. *A perspective*

Despite the fragmentation of Mediterranean urban realities and their problematic economic and social state, this paper has tried to emphasize the existence of Mediterranean cities represented, in addition to their physical, morphological, and architectural elements, by their social and cultural characteristics, as the supremacy of the family over the State and the inexhaustible creativity of the local cultures. In the present process of transition, these characteristics, nevertheless, seem to produce situations of deprivation and illegality that show a loss of measures in the relationship with the nature and the absence of moral rules. But to link directly the values of these Mediterranean societies, culturally and spiritually, with these diseases is a mistake. To the contrary, the late industrialization destroyed many local societies and their values without replacing them with new forms of class co-operation[103]. So, the fast urban expansion of the metropolis has made them lose "their composite brightness" and turned them into shapeless conglomeration of houses. Services of a very low standard, lack of public facilities and transport infrastructures have turned the cities into a mirror of immigrants' poverty. The inability in finding local alternatives to face the growth of immigration and to satisfy the needs of the newly arrived, is further exacerbated by the increasing phenomenon of illegal house-building. Paradoxically, this last point (a manner of survival in an underdeveloped environment) is one of the main unifying factors of the Mediterranean metropolitan areas.

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[101] Cf. CHALINE, C., *cit.*, pp. 79-80.
[102] Cf. SIGNOLES, P., *cit.*, pp. 111-113.
[103] Cf. BEVILACQUA P. , "Introduzione", in ALCARO M., *Sull'identità meridionale*, Bollati, Torino, 1999, p.X-XI.

Notwithstanding that today we live in an immaterial and communicative age, the metropolis, to contain itself, should acquire an own characterization which appears, in the Mediterranean case, peripheral compared with the powerful centers of world trade. It also means to move towards specific sectors in the industrial, tourism, and service fields, that are sometimes far from the cultural vocation of these areas. This kind of policy could be very dangerous and unsustainable because it could also increase phenomena of social exclusion and economic isolation of inland areas[104].

The conflict between these realities can be summarized in some essential points: the social and cultural distance between planning policy and urban practice; the impossibility to relate these contexts to general models; the presence of common cultural, economic and political characteristics in a heterogeneous population; the structural distance between the urban systems of the north shores and those of the south-east shores; finally, the inability to reduce the attraction of the larger metropolitan areas over the internal regions and to promote the development of balanced urban systems.

How can we intervene, if rational planning seems to be useless in these contexts? And how can the traditional values of solidarity, the original Mediterranean anthropology, give birth to higher forms of public spirit, more positively integrated with the institutions? It is very difficult to give an answer to these questions. We could answer that we should "…place the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making process of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance, direct (participatory) democracy, and experiential social learning"[105]. But today it could be only wishful thinking or a hope, not really a scientific approach. More significant is a convergence of the planning discipline with the perspective of studies on Mediterranean urban societies, in order to promote a real awareness of the existence and the significance of the Mediterranean city.

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[104] Cf. DAL PIAZ A., *Ragionando di urbanistica*, Graffiti, Napoli, 1999.
[105] FRIEDMANN J., *Empowerment. The Politics of Alternative Development*, Blackwell, Cambridge, 1992, p. VII.

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