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Understanding and Planning Systems of Cities: Dilemmas of
European Policies for Urban Regeneration in the
Mediterranean Area

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Introduction

- Urban regeneration is a normal historical process of cities, which always is – and needs to be – performed according to local ways, keeping the different local assets and values that usually make that *ogni città è diversa dall'altra*, as it is said in the Italian phrasing of the commonsense dictum from the European Middle Age
- In the Mediterranean system of cities this process refers to a huge series of local organizations and structures which is particularly rich in historical stratification of social and physical remains, from communities to architectures and spaces, so that globalization with its destructive power of homogeneization is still challenged by the local realities: from this a particular urgency of specific awarenesses and intelligent policies and of a constructive criticism of the stereotyped market-based EU sectoral policies started in the 2000s for promoting urban regeneration in Europe
- Current EU policies for urban regeneration apparently comes from historical models not suitable for the Mediterranean area, in particular for cities in that area that are built in terms of massive multiculturalism and historical stratification and that still keep alive their regional (and bioregional) relationships

Introduction

- There is plenty of evidence that market-based financial approaches to urban regeneration, targeting acritical onvergence, cohesion, and community building of the applicants to funding can be create - instead of solving – problems, can create destructive homogeneity of precious sociophysical environments, and in the end can create dependency instead of favouring selfreliance and activism
- In the following slides: first, I sketchy present some features of the Mediterranean system of cities, second, I raise some short and crude criticism of the cultural and technical bases that inspire the current EU policies for urban regeneration, third, before conclusion, I present some dilemmas of strategic thinking and planning on the terrain of urban and regional regeneration; I could unfortunately approach this complex and controversial argument only in a descriptive and narrative way, in the meanwhile hoping to have a follow up of more consistent analyses of case-studies and figures
- Far from relying on a normative theory, this presentation should be intendend as an invitation to a more problematic approach to city systems in contexts of particular complexity and fragility

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- A big system of historical cities, impressive even when considering its internal differences
- Megacities (more than 10 million of inhabitants) like Istanbul or Cairo coexist with big metropolitan cities like Athens or Izmir, or Rome, a relevant number of middle size cities, and a huge number of historical small cities and villages
- Still relevant demographic growth rates, 5% per year or even more, pushed by traditional factors of urban growth like immigration from rural areas or political conflicts, in the southern part of the Mediterranean (North Africa, Egypt, and the Middle East, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey) coexist with demographic stagnation or decline in the northern part (France, and Germanic-Slavic countries and cultures)

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Different interregional and local cultures are in the backstage of this impressive system of cities, obviously mainly because of the unprecedented interaction of people promoted by a favourable sea basin during a very long course of history
- Different interregional and local economies are in the backstage of this impressive system of cities: from still agriculture-based to industrial economies, to service and postindustrial economies, in a mix which can help this system of cities to cope with the challenge of the future and the globalization of urban systems and to find a way towards a sustainable development based on a new dialogue between tradition and innovation
- A peculiar organization and structure which keeps eloquent trace of the grand sociopolitical systems which have started interacting and finding their own ways of individualization and identity making since an age of empires and of merge of faiths (Cassano, Zolo, 2007, Salvatore, 2007 a, 2007b); a peculiar organization and structure which could be controversially seen as radically different from others (Schmitt, 1954)

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- An extraordinary long history and integration of local cultures and identities from which comes a typical sense – a sort of typical taste – of life, tradition, and in particular architecture and landscape, where life can still keep a rhythm distant from mainstream, the local try to resist to global production, old technology sometimes survive offering hints to rediscover a sustainable terrain for life, and knowledge can be still able to develop in terms of integrated, augmented (mind plus heart) rationality
- Stereotypes is always at the door in a era of global change and of fragility of systems which in some sense are marginal and want to be marginal to the mainstream
- In most cases frequent poverties have preserved the historical cores within this system of cities: even powerful and destructive changes have not been able to completely erase this deeply rooted grandiosity
- A mix of memorable cores and terrible peripheries and suburbs presents a dualism of aspects and structures without destroying a unicity of spirit, in these cities

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Because of the evident prevalence of the social structures (communities) on the physical ones in human settlements, even decayed or informal settlements are strongly attractive: a recent city like Ramallah, informally designed and built, apparently because of its extraordinary vitality and the incredible number of events that every day happen, in a creative artist's perception can be more vibrant and attractive (Barenboim, 2010) than Jerusalem, just in its Western suburbs, where an array of grandiose multicultural monuments tells the story of an important part of human civilization,

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- To cope with physical decay these cities adopt a variety of strategies, apparently inspired by localisms: while the peripheries or suburbs are built and transformed according to trivial mainstream plans inspired by globalization of cultures, the cores are kept and transformed according to a sort of social control and design which takes distance from global models
- Well defined strategies coexist everywhere with incremental and informal transformation driven by localism and contingent choices and action, well structured piecemeal governance coexists with informal or conflictual government, apparently without any detriment in the intellectual and moral attraction that comes from this sociophysical complexity (Bar Yam, 2012)

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- The risk of being fascinated by the East and the Other (Said, 1978), on which a Western scholar can be dependent in such a way to miss the rational road of science, is a risk that should be taken if this complexity of ambient and variance of systems of cities has to be understood and modelled
- But we have to admit that there is still lack of consistent studies on the historical sociophysical structures of the intriguing system of cities that is offered by the surroundings of the Mediterranean shore lines: this even if recently sectoral studies began to look at these cities in a way which merges tradition and innovation (for a case in architecture and urbanism see Petruccioli, 2007), and is inspired in some sense by historicistim and idealism in conceiving the urban phenomenon and its sociophysical forms (for a variant and antecedent of the Petruccioli's approach see Rossi, 1968)

- This system of cities – that we could probably define better in terms of a system of settlements – has of course a regional base of cultures and economies, and landscapes and natural environments, that should be properly analyzed, abandoning stereotyped modelling: recent knowledge-based regional studies seem to offer a good hint for penetrating into this intriguing city-territory interaction and for exploring the variance of the formation of human capitals and socioeconomic development in these spaces in which history and merging of cultures have created surprising counterfactual evidences (see Sechi and Skilters for a Latvian case in which the city-countryside dialogue could show, for instance, cities less open to future, hopes, and truths than their rural surroundings) (Sechi, Skilters, 2013)

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Socioeconomic and socioenvironmental regions stay always behind this system of cities: as usual, understanding those regions is worthwhile for understanding the respective systems of settlements, in their layered hierarchy, from villages to cities; but the complexity and dynamics of the regional societies and economies (that as in the whole Mediterranean are evolving, still keeping a mix of tradition and innovation) seem not to prevent settlements and cities and metropolitan areas in particular from keeping their own dialogue with the greater world and its story
- If the one hundred kms of coastal region between Casa and Rabat merge agriculture, industry, and tourism, the two big cities of Morocco keep their own tradition

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Three strategic sectorial plans, promoted in the late 1990s by a EU funded Framework Program for research, for the areas of Casa-Rabat (introduction at 2010 of the free market Mediterranean area: effects on agriculture, Tunis (land use conflicts and loss of fertile land from urban growth) and Izmir (coastal zone management for tourism and industry) adopted a participatory and futures research oriented approach to investigate the 2030 perspective (Camarda, Grassini, 1999, 2001, 2003)
- Khakee et alii discussed the outcomes of this complex research activity which involved university researchers (Rabat University Dept. of Economics, Ege University, Dept. of Ecology) and institutions (Ministry of Agriculture of Tunisia) (Khakee, Barbanente, Camarda, 2000)
- The fact that local databases are weak prevents us from conventional statistical analyses and socioeconomic models but not from getting a vivid sense of the what is changing or not in life and landscapes in those environments

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- A countertendency reflexion, on the persistent and promising vitality and orientation to sustainable life in the near future of this Mediterranean system of cities
- Of course, the case of the Mediterranean stays here for a whole series of other grand cases of systems of cities throughout the planet: from Asia to Africa, and America; the not dissimulated message is that differences are enormous and are a value and that where stratification of stories and cultures, and economies, and political regimes, is evident and often even impressive a correct cognitive, political, and technical approach for coping with these complex systems should be the one that takes distance from globalism for adopting localism, a localism which do not mean detachment from ideas and facts, from the strong wind of history and development, means active and original participation to a wider story starting from individual position and memory of rootedness (that means tradition)
- Cosmopolitarism has the same root of cosmology: unicity, but unicity that comes from the many that become one and from one that becomes many (Shakun, 1999)

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Recent seminal studies on global dynamics and the past and future of cities (Friedmann, 2002), instead of focusing on the transient and marginal aspects of a unified change, look at the essence, the ontology, of cities, in terms of spirits (even spiritual powers) more than markets, of living beings more than architectures (or Euclidean orthogonal grids) and institutional governments, to knowledge or fears-and-hopes more than functions, coming back to the most visionary stream of the planning pioneerism: an approach that gives room to a wider conception of the urban and regional spatial phenomenon throughout the planet and its history, linking together the Mediterranean and the oceans, small and big spaces, and abandoning in the end the dualistic visions of the XIX and XX century, from Marx or Schmitt with their binary theses on dualism between Europe and Asia or the Mediterranean and the oceans

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- Friedmann, in particular, discusses the formation of the transnational communities of the diaspora in the richest cities of the world, the role of financial remittances in the economy and finance of the countries of origin of these immigrants, the double loss of identity in the country of arrival and in the country of origin, (Friedmann, 2002), while the country of origin does not lose its powerful attraction on the emigrants
- Rodwin (1981) has proposed a concept of 'subjective city' for dealing with the special multiculturalism and these cities and special position of their communities towards mainstream city culture
- Kubursi (1983) in a well known political economics-based report for the UN discussed the impoverishment caused by the Arab diaspora phenomenon induced by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

Fundamentals of Mediterranean Cities

- In the end, going to transformation, adaptation, conservation and innovation of the huge number of historical cities that structure the territories around the Mediterranean basin, what can be said is that there is a plurality of paths, from historical idealism to pragmatism in keeping cities alive, from rigid to flexible conservation, from top down to bottom up governances
- But having said this, the whole system of the Mediterranean cities still proudly exhibits its community spirit, its stratification of people and cultures, its culture of diversity and acceptance of the Other, an acceptance that is so familiar to the local gents that is under risk of ignoring the basic needs of the immigrants
- In the end, the Mediterranean systems of cities still has assets (communities, sense of place, multicultural identities, landscapes, local economies based on the surrounding territories, way of life, merge of tradition and innovation, etc.) unsuccessfully invoked by other cities in Europe or the world and unsuccessfully targeted by a lot of political and economic efforts

European Union Policies for Urban Regeneration

- For long time the European Union has ignored its territory and cities in favour of a political approach oriented to the national and regional economic markets and their gradual unification
- Only recently, starting in the 2000s, the EU has started targeting some aspects of the life of its cities and territories: if we look at cities, promoting urban regeneration through the selective allocation of funding in favour of applicants that comply with a series of goals and criteria stated by the EU, substantially based on community building, convergence, and cohesion, and on a performative model of local policies (see the Urban programs); but there is some evidence that in particular in some Southern Mediterranean cities the results of these policies by the EU were poor or even harmful for the local communities and contexts (Doria, Fedeli, Tedesco, 2006), if Bari for instance had severe shortage of basic resources (see water), gentrification, and alteration of the traditional economic base (handcrafting and fishing) from the implementation of Urban in the old *medina* built by a succession of Arab, French and Scandinavian, German, and Spanish dominators from IX to XVIII century and still animated by an active local community, and Lisbon had problems of fairness and communication among its different parts because of the political and administrative manoeuvres that took place for succeeding in getting money from EU presenting a situation not correspondent to reality (Silva, 2006)

European Union Policies for Urban Regeneration

- But in the end still now cities are out of the mainstream horizon of EU which is unification of the European economic market, regional economies and financial mechanisms: organization, structure, and dynamics of territories and cities can hardly be analyzed through the lenses of the economic market and its traditional statistical figures, new analytical regional models, not oblivious of places and localisms, are needed for introducing human (social and individual) and environmental capitals (De Lucia, 2011) into the policy arena and promoting sustainable life and development

European Union Policies for Urban Regeneration

- The Urban program, the first consistent effort for urban regeneration made until now by the EU, in some sense and for some evidence, has a cultural and operational basis which derives – *absit iniuria verbis* – from the ruins and remains of the industrial cities of the Northern Europe (definitely non-Mediterranean ...) of the XIX century, that is from the cokedowns of the Engels' England of the 1840s, where everywhere an invented industrial community of poor workers had suddenly boosted the grouping of a series of close rural villages into a city and found hospitality in amorphous by-law suburbs
- The philosophy of urban regeneration that is in the backstage of Urban comes from an old almost forgotten season of planning and urbanism of the XIX-XX century (do you remember the criticism for the 'new towns blues' of the 1940s and 1950s? It was that criticism that in the end, rapidly, caused the abandonment of that ambitious political program of functional urbanism aimed at the the building of new suburbs all around the British regional capitals and the creation of a series of well functioning and economically and socially competitive metropolitan areas ...) (Hall, 1992)

European Union Policies for Urban Regeneration

- The absence of any local well rooted social community and of any local well stratified architecture – what substantially creates any vibrant village or city – seems what gave origin to the Urban program: more, behind Urban you perceive the misleading idea that economic and financial assistance and aid from outside, oriented to diligent applicants well aware of goals that have been predefined somewhere so to be able to comply with them and to get the carrot instead than the stick, is what creates cities, instead of active localism, independency, diversity, freedom etc. all the armament of the successful European and Mediterranean city of the Gold Ages, the Middle Age or the Age of a benevolent Empire

European Union Policies for Urban Regeneration

- With this rhetorical argumentation – admittedly, a real provocation if we accept the mainstream rhetoric of European construction – on the cultural bases and the operational compelling mechanisms of the EU policies for city regeneration, think to the many cases in which these policies (in particular through the Urban program) were implemented in parts of the Mediterranean system of cities, full (not empty, well different from the coker towns that are the archetypes of the cities to be regenerated in the new Europe) of history, community, culture, architecture, diversity, local identity built on stratification of identities: it is easy to understand the negative performances and outcomes that were frequently registered

Dilemmas and Strategies

Preservation for the future of the Mediterranean system of cities, granting them socioeconomic tradition and respect of fragile environments while global facts happen and global goals are posed, is a real challenge

Human and social impoverishment from emigration, in a large part of this extraordinary system of cities and of urban regions, continues while the 'campaign of the history' (Rodwin, 1981) caused many injuries to these precious fabrics

The regional economies have become increasingly weak under the pressure of globalization and the marginalization of a large part of agriculture activities and other traditional activities throughout the territories

The environmental systems of which this system of cities is part are increasingly deteriorating under the push of improper and illegal activities (see waste management or building overconstruction spreading everywhere) and of industrial pollution

Dilemmas and Strategies

- A huge effort of knowledge, mainly local knowledge, in a vigorous bottom up effort, has to be made for analyzing what remains of this extraordinary system and for devising strategies for its regeneration
- From this knowledge, oriented to physical and socioeconomic environments and based on new local and regional databases able to include the intangible assets of the system, new long term strategies have to be devised
- Tendencies to unified models of socioeconomic development and of physical regeneration for this system of cities have to be contrasted

Dilemmas and Strategies

- Facing complexity of the sociophysical structures in the Mediterranean system of cities with their territorial surroundings means adopting a sophisticated, integrated, non-reductive, multifaceted approach: thinking to urban regeneration and development policies, unfortunately just the opposite of what the EU is targeting with its convergence, cohesion, and community building models which postulate a need of starting from scratch
- In the spatial planning terms evocated by the urban regeneration programs, understanding complex historical system of cities means adopting in-depth analyses, of both desk and field types, which look at physical environments and urban architectures, cultures, and social activities, avoiding any shortcut, that is means a style of analysis – I mentioned the historical idealism of some interesting ongoing experiences (Petruccioli, 2010) – inspired by a sort of sociophysical listening and visioning, implemented in historical city cores and in general in tradition-based urban neighborhood, by an anthropology of the everyday life of people under the umbrella process of an extraordinarily long history

Dilemmas and Strategies

- Decentralization and localism, return to regional spaces and models of economic activities, rediscovery of the dilemmas of technological change and selective return to tradition, are some elements of the new recipe
- But when impressive historical and environmental remains, in cities and territories, are involved, decentralization and localisms cannot solve or set all problems, indeed can create problems because of the everyday cultural proximity of people to these impressive remains, the unproper patrimonialization of these heritage goods by the local community and powers, so that integrated top down vs bottom up government is needed: a difficult dialogue which creates strong organization and political problems

A sketchy consideration of two case studies: Italy and Palestine

- The strategic plan for the Metropolitan Area of Bari (2000-2030) (30 municipalities, 1,000,000 people, 2,500 sq km, approached by a backward chaining futures research technique):
 - - conservation of historical cores granted by a national-regional level of laws and norms stated in the 1960s and 1970s but under risk under the unifying pressures coming from the EU
 - - relevant illegal control of the city by mafia organizations
 - - historical landscapes protected not by laws and norms but by the persistence of traditional economic (agricultural) activities, that is not protected in the coastal zone because of the disappearance in this zone of the traditional activities and the appearance in them of leisure and tourism activities
 - - strong economic crisis (exacerbated by EU strict financial regulations and by its outcomes in terms of expenditure control on public activities and increasing taxation of the private sector) involving massive unemployment, especially for the young, challenged by some isolated SME activities (which, incidentally, seems to confirm the Italian neo-Marshallian Industrial District Theory, territory-based) that can be also innovative advanced activities linked to a history of agricultural activities and of university research

A sketchy consideration of two case studies: Italy and Palestine

- The case of Nablus, 250,000, where An-Najah National University (with a School of Engineering I use to visit), with its 30,000 students and its big staff of teachers and employees apparently grants an important part of employment (the same can be said for the hospital and for the other municipal institutions), where an intelligent private system of urban and regional transport provides employment to a big number of persons, where remittances and solidarity contributions by foreign institutions and actors strongly influence in a positive way the local budgets, where a mayor who comes from a florid trade of cars apparently succeeded in being a key person in negotiating with the Israeli occupation force the end of a terrible iron curtain

Conclusion

- Cognition of complexity: this seems to be the challenge and fascination of analyzing and modelling systems of cities in the Mediterranean area
- An impressive array of cities and villages that - as in other parts of the planet characterized by strong community life and bioregional linkages but at the same time more than in other parts of the planet because of the huge amount of historical human interaction that is the main feature of the Mediterranean – seem to be able in many cases to keep up with the pace of the history and its changing power, by using the simple recipe of not permitting that innovation can destroy tradition
- Fears and hopes are immediately behind this scenery: fears that this system could not resist in the end to the terrible cultural and economic forces of globalization, fears that this system could consolidate beyond any imagination its currently more and more evident role of dirty backstage of the wastes (cultural and physical) of the richest parts of the planet; hopes that this unique and fragile system of cities and of surrounding regions and bioregions can survive with its precious features and figures, hopes that the Mediterranean could continue with its being an extraordinary land und meer of social and individual encounters in relative closeness and friendship

Conclusion

- Current EU policies of urban regeneration are creating – instead than solving – a number of problems in many historical cities, are concurring to the spreading of market based policies and also to gentrification and with it the radical change of structures and stories of the local communities, are concurring to the destruction of historical sites through the implementation of stereotyped models of interventions tailored for different stories and uses, are creating financial dependency instead than favouring social activism and selfreliance, are weakening multiculturalism in cities where strong traditions of encounters of different people existed
- New place-based strategies are needed for solving these policy dilemmas and
- New regional analyses have to be done, using innovative figures for human capitals and in general for intangible assets and looking for new databases that can be managed at local levels and provide intelligent forecasting and foreseeing, and simulation of futures, for this systems of cities

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