The Mediterranean Medinas and Cities in the Middle Ages: Urban heritage, Jurisprudence, Traditions and Built form

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Paul Valéry[1] (Signorile, 2009, p.4) describes the Mediterranean as a true machine for producing civilization and as a representative of all periods of human history. It is a space that has its own peculiarities and at the same time its differences that make it a rich ground for scientific research. It has witnessed many forms of exchanges and encounters that have influenced architecture and urban planning, at the same time also affected by collective social values, codes, and practices. In this extremely heterogeneous Mediterranean area, especially today, some common matrices have had the ability to generate meetings and exchanges, to illustrate the centrality of collective values and to convey a fusion of codes and practices in an original synthesis. The history, and the history of architecture and urban planning, together with the analysis of construction and social traditions, may indicate the medieval origin of some cultural paths. This research is interested in the Tunisian Medinas (Tunis, Sousse, Sfax, Kairouan, Monastir...) and in a selection of historical centers of some regions in southern Italy (Sicily, Puglia, Sardinia), which can constitute a reference case study, particularly if re-examined in their medieval arrangements. This geographical area is described by (Deschamps et al., 2013) as a space where «*practices and collective memory have made it possible to define a differentiated "we" and a feeling of belonging that inscribes the existence of a community over time*».[2] The research itinerary conducted here is articulated around the development of cities between the Middle Ages and the modern era: the architecture of streets, public spaces and residential areas will be investigated in the light of urban planning regulations and cultural traditions. An analysis conducted on cities that share a rich common heritage and whose observation of their respective peculiarities or common rules of organization, as well as the relationships that bind the various spaces of their respective urban fabrics, require a broad and articulated study. According to Guidoni (1974, p.481), the medieval city can be analyzed, as well as in its institutions, in its buildings, in its economic function, also in its specific historical formation.[3]

The preliminary examination of some aerial views of Mediterranean urban contexts, shows a certain similarity in the anatomy of Mediterranean cities, above all the absence of the Roman orthogonal

[1] Signorile, P. (2009), 'Paul Valéry et la Méditerranée : de la genèse personnelle à « la machine à civilisation »'. In Association des professeurs de lettres ed., *La langue française et la Méditerranée,* SCÉRÉN-CNDP, p. 4. (hal-02084457)

[2] Deschamps J., Guédo S., Lepeltier A. *et al.* (2013), 'Identité et territoire : figures de l'appartenance', *Actuels* 2, 71-95, p. 73. DOI : 10.3917/lsdlc.hs02.0071. Available at https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-sujet-dans-la-cite-2013-1-page-71.htm

[3] Guidoni, E. (1974), «L'architettura delle città medievali Rapporto su une metodologia di ricerca (1964-74)», *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome* 86, 2, p. 481.

model and the presence of courtyard houses, layouts of curvilinear and narrow roads and the development of similar structures of protection and trade. This work aims to study through a multidisciplinary approach, the physical forms of urban space, its uses and the perception of its users, the characteristic morphologies, and typologies in a circumscribed geographical context.

<div align="center">a   b</div>

Fig. 1. The impasse a) In the medina of Tunis, Tunisia; b) In the city of Sardara, Sardinia (© Meriem Ben Ammar)

A multidisciplinary methodology, where the history of urbanism enriched by the study of regulations and design practices of architecture and cities, housing dynamics and social structures, will respond to the following hypothesis: The search for models of common organizations in the management of construction and public space and in some aspects in the governance of the entire city. Many levels are examined in the absence of a complete documentation, which indicate these organizational models: This type of model has a legal origin.

For this reason, a relevant part of the methodology consists in the critical reading of written sources and the analysis of plans and cadaster as well as field work between observation, survey and examination of social practices that have a certain influence on the city, above all the toponymies. It is the comparison of original Arab and European documents, analyzed in this PhD thesis with the eyes of architectural historians, that is central to the development of the theme. Among the main arguments that will be addressed are the regulations and rules advanced by Islamic law presented as a collection of various norms which structure the organization and govern the development of the city at different scales: private, semi-private, semi-public, and public and are generally known as the book of wall/walls. If for the European city, the municipal institutions have played an important role in the physical development of the city, the same cannot be said for the Islamic sphere, where this institution was absent. It is therefore interesting to investigate the alternatives and highlight the factors that have guided their development.

The technological part consists in the representation, processing, and analysis of territorial data, above all, of historical architectural elements characterizing the urban fabric. Beginning with experi-

menting on a scale of residential districts: the occupation of space and the interactions of its occupants with its different structures on different levels, accompanied by the exploitation of the toponymic approach by drawing up an inventory of the names of the impasses. Modeling software helped to understand the process of the organization of the impasse and its various configurations, as well as the order within the neighborhoods through 3D modeling of common wall conflicts with the different cases of appropriation. Another stage also depends on the use of GIS for investigating social and spatial relations within a city and presents a potential for a series of comparative studies. Using interactive maps for spatial analysis comparing old maps with actual state, comparing different cities with particular attention to certain urban elements: the impasse, the *Ṣābāṭ* [covered passageway] and the hydraulic infrastructure. It is an attempt to extract the concepts, mechanisms, and processes of the development of the city and its emergence in the Middle Ages (with the distinction between "new lands" and ancient cities).

Fig. 2. A residential block in the medina of Tunis, Space use and Road Network (© Meriem Ben Ammar)

The novelty of this work lies above all in the analysis tools (original Arabic and European documents, manuscripts and legal acts and the use of archives of architects who have worked on the cities and medinas) to answer some questions:

- With what process was the medieval city founded and what are the different factors and groups that contributed to this foundation?

- What relationships are established between spontaneous development processes and regulatory programs capable of influencing the shape and functions of houses, neighborhoods, and the city?

To achieve the following objectives:

- To explain the design, urban and architectural components belonging to common cultural roots.

- To produce reflections on the city that will help to grasp the relationships between the urban government structure, the form of legislation, programmatic choices, and social practices.

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