



Businesses and Cities of the Mediterranean

Engines of Innovation, Cohesion and Peace

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Housing strategies in mediterranean cities: innovation and urban regeneration

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The urban quality of Mediterranean cities

The urban quality of Mediterranean cities is defined by a dynamic and historically established balance between physical form, social life, cultural identity and relationship with the environment.

1. The Morphology of the "Compact City"

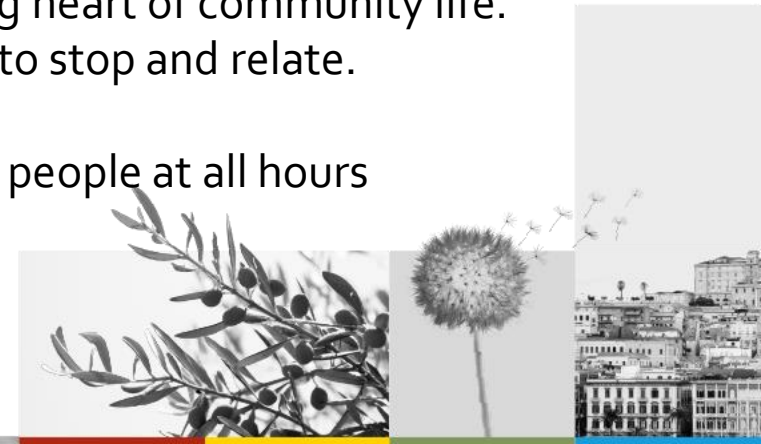
The basis of Mediterranean urban quality lies in its physical structure, inherited from centuries of development.

- **Human scale:** streets, squares and buildings are sized for the pedestrian, not the car.
- **Density and Proximity:** The city is dense . Shops, housing, workshops and services are mixed (functional mixité)
- **Building continuity:** Building curtain walls create well-defined street fronts that enclose and protect public space

2. Public Space as a Social Scene

In the Mediterranean, public space is not a void between buildings, but the beating heart of community life.

- **The Square as 'Urban Living Room':** It is not just a place of transit, but a place to stop and relate.
- **The Street as an Extension of the Home:** Private and public life merge.
- **Vitality and Diversified Uses:** Quality is measured by the constant presence of people at all hours



The urban quality of Mediterranean cities

3. Bioclimatic Adaptation

Mediterranean urbanism is a form of architecture without architects

- **Natural Shading:** Narrow alleys, arcades, shutters and vegetation are passive strategies to create shade
- **Ventilisation:** The urban structure and the presence of inner courtyards (patios, courtyards) are designed to favour natural ventilation
- **Local materials:** the use of stone, lime and terracotta guarantees a high thermal inertia, keeping buildings cool in summer and warm in winter

4. Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging

The quality of a Mediterranean city is intrinsically linked to its 'genius loci', i.e. the spirit of the place

- **Historical background:** the city is an open-air history book, where different eras coexist and are legible
- **Neighbourhood commerce:** The presence of artisan workshops, neighbourhood markets and small shops is not only a service, but a social stronghold
- **Sense of Community:** The physical conformation and vitality of public spaces favour the creation of strong social ties and a deep sense of belonging



The Mediterranean Urban Challenges

Most of our cities are clearly assets to be preserved and enhanced, but they face pressures that threaten their unique character

- **Demographic growth/decrease and Tourism growth:**

Population growth but also decrease and strong growth in tourism lead to a squeeze on available housing stock and stress on public infrastructure

- **High housing pressure:**

soaring prices and rents are driving out residents, creating cities where it is difficult to live.

- **Loss of community spaces:**

the privatisation and abandonment of squares, local markets and community centres are eroding the social fabric that characterises Mediterranean quality of life



The Mediterranean Urban Challenges

- **Gentrification and social exclusion:**

intense tourism pressure and real estate speculation in historic centres displaces local communities, replaces essential shops with souvenir shops and erases authentic urban culture

- **Access to affordable housing:**

a critical barrier for young people and young families, forcing them to leave the urban core and weakening the demographic future of the city.

- **Urban decay and loss of identity:**

abandoned housing stock in non-tourist areas leads to physical decline and loss of collective memory and heritage



Innovation in housing: beyond the traditional

we need modern solutions that prioritise people over profit

- **Co-housing and Cooperative Housing:**

these resident-led models promote strong communities, reduce costs through shared resources (gardens, kitchens, workspaces) and give people a direct stake in building and preserve their environment

- **High quality social housing:**

moving beyond outdated concepts to create well-designed, integrated and decent public housing that prevents social segregation

- **Smart Housing and digital tools:**

use technology to create energy efficient homes, improve the management of public services and provide residents with better data to manage the cost of living.



Urban regeneration: Reclaiming abandoned spaces

Regeneration is about bringing dead spaces back to life for the community

- **Rivitalisation of derelict spaces:**

transforming abandoned industrial sites, empty lots and buildings into valuable public assets such as parks, cultural centres, craft workshops or new affordable housing

- **Participatory and inclusive planning:**

Empowering residents to be co-designers of their neighbourhoods. True regeneration must be a bottom-up process, ensuring that projects meet real community needs and foster a sense of belonging.



Urban regeneration: Green and collaborative models

A 'holistic regeneration' strategy must be environmentally and financially sustainable

- **Green infrastructure and public spaces:**

the integration of nature is essential. Parks, green corridors and community gardens improve public health, increase climate resilience against heat waves and create beautiful and accessible spaces for all

- **Private sector involvement:**

public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be a powerful tool if structured correctly. They can harness private capital and expertise to realise mixed-use projects that guarantee a significant proportion of affordable housing and public services.



Strategic proposal: integrated policies

- **Closed processes do not work:**

Our problems are interconnected, so our solutions must be too. A successful strategy requires a complex framework that intertwines:

- **Urban policy:**

mixed-use zoning, promotion of sustainable density and protection of public spaces

- **Social policy:**

ensuring equitable access to housing, healthcare and education

- **Environmental policy:**

imposing green building standards and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure.



Strategic proposal: cities as laboratories of innovation

Mediterranean cities should exploit their potential as dynamic laboratories for urban solutions

- **Encourage pilot projects:**

test new housing models, regeneration techniques and participatory methods on a small scale to learn what works before city-wide implementation

- **Promote knowledge-sharing networks:**

create robust platforms for cities across the region to share data, best practices and policy lessons learned.

- **Adopt flexible regulations:**

use 'regulatory sandboxes' to temporarily relax some rules, allowing experimentation with new building materials, co-living arrangements or alternative financing models.



A vision for our future

A Mediterranean city that honours its past and builds a fair and sustainable future.

What is needed is a **vision** for cities that are:

- **Inclusive:**

where everyone, from students to families to the elderly, is entitled to decent and affordable housing in their community

- **Resilient:**

ready to adapt to climate crisis and economic change with green infrastructure and a diverse social fabric

- **Liveable:**

defined by a vibrant public life, strong communities and a high quality of life that puts residents' well-being first

"I am convinced that the speakers called to this table will tell us about practices and experiences that can suggest useful processes and ways to rethink the future of our cities according to these perspectives..."



