



Mediterranean Cities: The Same but Different

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Cities around the world are everywhere the same, yet everywhere different. They share not only generic features that make them cities in the first place but also striking differences. Mediterranean cities have their fair share of both aspects. Like cities anywhere they perform routine functions as markets and commercial centres, as locations for industry and housing, and few have escaped the universal imprint of modernity. Globalization draws cities into common networks and, wherever they are, makes them more alike. At the same time, regional and local factors pull in a different direction, creating important variations that, in this case, it is argued, enables one to speak of 'Mediterranean cities'. Compared with cities in other parts of the world, these have all been fired in the same kiln; they share a similar geography, a connected history and a unique location between continents. For these reasons one looks for what it is that makes them more like each other than cities elsewhere.

Amongst the forces that bind them together, creating a distinctive typology, are:

- the unique location of Mediterranean cities between three continents and the multi-cultural impact that all have experienced (and still do);
- their extraordinarily long (though not always continuous) histories, sometimes measured in millennia and contrasting with cities in other parts of the world;
- the shared geopolitics of a region that has at times been focal and at other times marginal to the global centre of power;
- their place in a long history of warfare (and, more recently, terrorism) in which most have been occupied or affected by one regional conflict or another;
- the mixed experience of colonial and post-colonial developments;
- the economic context which saw the Industrial Revolution largely pass them by (at least in direct terms), and where one can now see various stages of modern development;
- their shared physical characteristics, in spite of obvious local differences between one and another.

The paper will be based on a largely-completed study of fifteen cities across the Mediterranean that is the subject of a book to be published in 2011.

KEY WORDS: Mediterranean cities; multi-cultural; modernity.