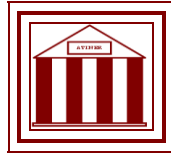


**Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER**



**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
PLA2016-2040**

**Water as Vehicle of Cultural Spread for
Mediterranean Identity**

**Francesca Guerrucci
Architect
Pescara University
Italy**

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. This paper has been peer reviewed by at least two academic members of ATINER.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Guerrucci, F. (2016). "Water as Vehicle of Cultural Spread for Mediterranean Identity", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: PLA2016-2040.

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
www.atiner.gr

URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research. All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the source is fully acknowledged.

ISSN: 2241-2891

07/11/2016

Water as Vehicle of Cultural Spread for Mediterranean Identity

Francesca Guerrucci

Abstract

In the Mediterranean, the barriers break down and the stories are mixed. Instead of the land where the journey, migration, the passage is prevented by continuous borders, the sea shows that the notion of identity is a concept that does not understand the boundaries, but lets the differences and allows the meeting. The Mediterranean has historical, cultural and economic identity resulted from the substantial and almost continuous contamination of all the countries bordering its shores. In this large lake, in more than three thousand years of history, knowledge and cultures, techniques and traditions, trades and political arrangements met and clashed so much that the comparative reading of the territories that surround it leads to constant references. Ports and harbors were, for centuries, the witnesses of the birth, proliferation and vitality that the people of this area have always shown. The ports have been the point of contact land-sea, as well as the common denominator between the protection of the essential differences and the promotion of identity factors unifying. Currently the tracks of the land have supplanted sea routes and the ports, places of exchange and contamination of mergers, were excluded from the fundamental role they had in the past. The earth and the water are removed. There should be a stable dialogue, constructive and planning among all countries bordering the Mediterranean and promote actions that call into play land and water, ports and cities of the Mediterranean to tackle the empty silence that currently imposes. The identity is not given once and for all, but is the subject of becoming: it builds in the meeting and may be able to exceed the purely economic logic of alliances. From the sea and with the sea you can build a new future.

Keywords: Contamination, Identity, Mediterranean, Water.

Introduction

A recent study on water in its complete dimension was made by Linton in 2010 and it was called “What Is Water?” (Linton, 2010). This simple question expresses the complexity of the answer. Water is the Earth’s blood and it governs the climate. Water is for people and for power. It is agriculture and civilization. It is destruction and thirst. It is fishing and culture. Water is also an important vehicle through which people communicate ideas, exchange products, compete and reconcile themselves. This aspect, usually obscured by the technical reductions of Modern Time, it is important for our cultural heritage and for the future of our communities. In the past, thanks to the feature to connect lands, to attract, to form and deform territories, seawater had an essential role for the human being. We can consider a precious body of water, the Mediterranean, and its’ amazing history. Mediterranean was a crossroads of cultures for centuries (Laureano, 2001). It was a space of meeting, of discoveries, of conquests and wars. It was a reserve of food and a source of commercial power. It was the space of technology and progress and during centuries sophisticated ships and particular construction techniques were improved and navigation and fishing strategies developed according with Nature. On the contrary of the land where the journey, the migration, the passage is prevented by continuous borders, natural and artificial, the Mediterranean has never conceived boundaries. "Mediterranean" is a free and flexible concept whose territorial extension varies according to the perspective used to define its environmental, cultural, economic, geopolitical aspects (Herwing and Thallemer, 2001). It’s the space of all. It’s the meeting point between North and South, between the richest civilizations and the less fortunate, between developed countries and developing ones, between West and East. Actually the Mediterranean is perceived as an empty space to cross with the airplane in a few hours. Land tracks have replaced sea routes, land barriers are multiplying and sea openings are reduced, fishing is more profitable elsewhere, Europe wants to waterproof the Schengen borders and all of this has led to a project lapse. The Mediterranean has to become a heritage to protect, defend and treat as such (Andriani, 2010). The Mediterranean had an important role in the past; it is essential to recover it for the future of Humanity.

The Mediterranean Region

The Mediterranean is a sea almost entirely circumscribed by land, closed by three of the largest continents in the world: Africa, Asia and Europe. Five million years ago the Mediterranean Sea did not exist. What is now a sea was a large dry basin. Thanks to the collision of two tectonic plates and thanks to its climate suitable for Life, the Mediterranean was the location of human ancient realities; it was the area of agriculture’s origin, of great empires and civilizations. The Mediterranean has a historical, cultural and economic identity that comes from continuous contaminations of all the countries involved. The story of the Mediterranean Sea has begun in the

Paleolithic. Until the 1000 b.C. the settlements were scattered and located to the East, in Egypt. Then the Mediterranean basin was the location of the Phoenician expansion, of the city- state in Greece, of the conflict between Athens and Sparta, of the Persian Empire and Alexander, of Carthage, of the rise and the fall of Rome, and of the Byzantine Empire, of the Arab expansion and the Carolingian Empire, of the Crusades, of the prosperity of Italian Municipality, the maritime Republics, of the rise of Venice, of the Black Plague and of the conflict between the two Empires of Spain and Turkey. With the discovery of the Ocean, the Mediterranean basin lost its importance. Today the Mediterranean is a sea marked by beep cuts; it's the sea of desperation of thousands of boats (Pellegrin and Anderson, 2015). Today the Mediterranean is the space where a lot of people lose their life. The Indifference is the essence of Inhumanity. Urban studies and Planning have to face this situation. Architecture has to recover its political dimension. The Great Sea, beyond the organization "Union for the Mediterranean", suffers from an empty project. We need to plan a new configuration of the Mediterranean basin. What is the role played by the Mediterranean today? Is the Mediterranean still the cradle of civilization or is it the grave of human being? Where's the Mediterranean Identity? Does the inclusiveness or division characterize it? Gibraltar, Spain, France, Monaco, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Egypt, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, State of Palestine, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, every country has to be part of a unique project.

Contaminations as Values

The Mediterranean identity was inclusiveness. From Greek philosophy to Roman Law, from Arab and Muslim world to Judaism and Christianity, the Mediterranean identity was contaminations of knowledge. It was also colonization. In the past, the Phoenician, Greek and Roman settlers brought their culture, their religion, their technical expertise in other lands and they established a relationship of coexistence in a peaceful form or in submission with the colonized people. At the same time, in the colonized environment, people were able to mature a new identity in a continuous transformation. Mediterranean identity was architecture and planning. The settlers relocated not only their cultural heritage but also transported the landscape of their homeland. The colonies were sites with a geographical shape like the motherland. Especially for Greek settlers, the site for a new colony had to have basic morphological features: an easily defensible relief for the Acropolis, an area around where for the town and the streets and a flat area for settlers adapt for cultivation and for grazing. The Mediterranean identity was represented by the Climate. Fernand Braudel, French Historian who has reserved to the Mediterranean an essay of great value, assigned to the Mediterranean Climate the role of an element of cohesion of landscape and of kinds of Life that lives the region (Braudel, 1987). It defines the Mediterranean area as the space between the first olive trees coming from the North to the first palm groves that announce the desert in the South. In

the Mediterranean Knowledge, the Landscape and Settlements lead to constant reminders. In this great lake, in over three thousand years of history, cultures, traditions and techniques, commercial exchanges and political arrangements built an identity based on the contamination (Laureano Pietro, 2001). Today we are losing it. Mediterranean identity is a value and it will survive if it will remain the same.

Sea and Survival

The History of the Mediterranean is the story of important ports like the ones of Barcelona, Marseille, Geneva, Naples, Tunis, Algiers, Athens, Istanbul, Alexandria, Beirut, Tel Aviv, etc. Today we wonder if the transformations of the great port are operations locked in the city development, or if they are projects that look to the sea to be elements of communication for the whole Mediterranean basin. The question is: are ports the gates of Mediterranean? Are they opened to cultural exchanges? Are projects interested to recover a Mediterranean identity? Inaugurated in 2008, the "Porta di Lampedusa" is a monument dedicated to migrants (Figure 1). It's located in a little island of the Mediterranean in honor of people that arrived in the island of Sicily in search of a new and more dignified existence. The work, made by the Italian artist Mimmo Paladino and sponsored by the Foundation Amani and the poet and editor Arnaldo Mosca Mondadori, is 5-meter high and 3-meter wide. It is made by iron and ceramics and objects found on the sunken boats like shoes, bowls and glasses. The Gate of Lampedusa is an example of civility and respect (UNESCO-WWAP, 2006). This sculpture can be seen as project concept for all the ports surrounding the Mediterranean basin. The Mediterranean must again become a laboratory in which to experiment integrated projects that ensure both the protection of the Mediterranean identity and both the protection of a delicate ecosystem and highly susceptible to global warming (Lanz and Muller, 2006). Far from disappeared, in the dry land, the borders are spreading and multiplying and the Mediterranean identity has to come back to contrast the current situation. Ports and harbors have to be opened to the sea and they have to be the engines of change. The Mediterranean is a constellation of landings. They have to become were gates of access to the Mediterranean, point of contact between Land and Sea, places of union and exchange, space of alliances for migrants, cultures and religions. Mediterranean identity is a contamination and transformation. It's not given all at once, but is the subject of becoming: it builds in the encounter and can help overcome the purely economic logic of alliances (Mcharg, 2007). After years of neglecting, it is now necessary to re-establish a relationship with history as a form of heritage, and to promote a new relationship with water as a vehicle of cultural diffusion.

Figure 1. “*Porta di Lampedusa*”, Sculpture of Mimmo Paladino, Lampedusa, Italy. <http://www.erodoto108.com/lampedusa-e-in-festival2/>



Conclusions

The Mediterranean flows through the coasts of Italy, of Greece, Spain and the neighboring Morocco. There is a common matrix of colors, flavors, aromas and atmosphere that makes this sea the cradle of many countries, otherwise different (Arthus-Bertrand Yann, 2009). The ships of our ancestors, who sailed the Mediterranean to sell or trade merchandise, animated ports and the waterways, have been carriers of a slow cultural diffusion for centuries. This action of transmitting culture initially favored the coastal areas with natural harbors and subsequently the new ports and there was a progressive penetration in the inland using the river valleys. Today, our sea has become a no man's land and the mainland will continue to build barriers such as the Brenner wall in Austria. The Mediterranean is in charge of transmitting culture, the water has to go back to being solvent of ideas and peoples and Architecture needs to recover its political dimension. Today the routes of migrants can be read by reversing the direction of the travel, the ancient routes, such as those of the Romans, can be rediscovered and the Mediterranean can return to live with the tourist boats in search of ancient histories and new emotions. The projects that have the Mediterranean as working area must be taken into account by architects, artists and designers, institutions and academies because Our Sea (Mare Nostrum) has goes back to being the catchment area of the major project of communication and contamination.

References

- Andriani Carmen, *Il Patrimonio e l'Abitare* [The Heritage and Living]. Donzelli Editore. Roma 2010.
- Arthus-Bertrand Yann. *Home. La nostra Terra* [Our Earth]. Mondadori Electa. Milano 2009.
- Braudel, F. *Il Mediterraneo. Lo spazio, la storia, gli uomini, le tradizioni* [The Mediterranean. Space, history, people, traditions]. Bompiani editore. Milano 1987.
- Herwing Oliver, Thallemer Axel. *Water / Wasser - The Unity of Art and Science*. Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt GmbH. Stuttgart, Germany 2008.
- Lanz, K. and Muller, L. *Who owns the Water*, Lars Müller editore. Baden 2006.
- Laureano Pietro. *Atlante d'acqua: conoscenze tradizionali per la lotta alla desertificazione* [The Water Atlas: Traditional Knowledge to Combat Desertification]. Bollati Boringhieri editore. Torino 2001.
- Linton, J. 2010. *What Is Water?: the history of a modern abstraction* (May 2016). <http://bit.ly/2fKxT99>.
- Mcharg, I.L.. *Progettare con la Natura* [Design with Nature], Franco Muzio Editore. Padova 2007.
- Pellegrin P. and Anderson S. 2015, *Desperate Crossing* (October 2016). <http://nyti.ms/1Uu975B>.
- UNESCO-WWAP. *Water: a shared responsibility*. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2. Berghahn books. Barcelona 2006.