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# Heritage and sustainable development; bound-partners in a believable future<sup>1</sup>

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## Summary

Two global notions are improving their importance: heritage and sustainable development – obviously involving safeguard and climate changes.

New transformations in urban areas are showing the great tension existing among heritage and development needs. Heritage and Sustainable development still need, public interventions with the purpose of implement a virtuous and self standing development strategy. The great Maghreb's towns will be presented as study case: challenges, chances and realities.

It's largely clear that the main issues to manage heritage and sustainability at urban scale are not any more technical ones. The issue is a global policy able to combine together the countless partial strategies and interests existing in human settlements.

Generally speaking, both heritage and sustainability are requesting public strategies and policies; therefore a transformation of general urban actors in advised ones is needed.

**Keywords:** Maghreb, Casablanca, Tunis, Algiers, sustainable development, modern heritage.

Paying attention to the general speeches about town planning, urban transformation and landscape modification, we can frequently observe the use, and often the abuse, of two global notions: heritage and sustainable development – obviously involving safeguard and climate changes.

Those two notions are global ones since they are inclusive and each one of them is ready to contain the whole ecumene inside its own universal space. Of course I'm overstating the reality, but not so much. Actually these two "expanding" notions will be obliged to face each other and they are called to manage a common way of life.

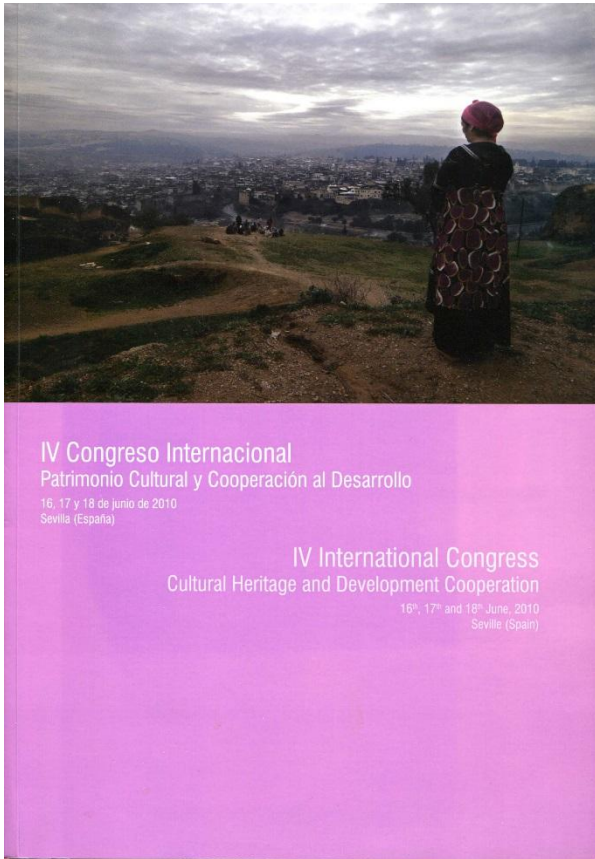
Will they find a pacific co-existence or will they suffer of an obliged one? Will the future of our globe assist to a competition between sustainability(s) and heritage(s) or they will collaborate among them?

We are interested in following the development of the relations among those different ways to face the contemporary changes mainly because the two notions look like based over a common acting area. They are overlapping at least on two fields we are really interested in; both are summon up intangible assets in order to justify a way of working on tangible ones. They are also referring to an extended time, largely wider than a direct personal experience; we like to imagine a special site on the timeline that's almost "past of past" and "future of future". In that special site, the two notions are collaborating - or not.

Inflecting sustainable development into urban landscapes transformation, we can learn about eco-quarters, urban project involved in global sustainability, passive and active houses or, more generically, sustainable habitat. Those actions are really interesting and central in a new way of planning and conceptualizing the nowadays spaces for human life.

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<sup>1</sup>CARABELLI, ROMEO, « Heritage and sustainable development; bound-partners in a believable future », in CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL Y COOPERACIÓN AL DESARROLLO (ed.), *Libro de actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Patrimonio Cultural y Cooperación al Desarrollo 16, 17 y 18 de junio de 2010, Sevilla (España) = Prints of the papers of the IV International Congress on Cultural Heritage and Development Cooperation: 16th, 17th and 18th June, 2010. Seville (Spain)*, Sevilla, Comité Científico del IV Congreso de Patrimonio Cultural y Cooperación al Desarrollo, 2010, pp. 85-89.



At the same time, we know that more of 50% of world inhabitants are already living in urban areas; not only in developed country but also in developing ones. It means that the interest on new awareness about climate change and energy issues is crucial but ... but it need to be supported by a special issue on urban built environment, the real estate environment for the most of human beings.

All new sustainable building, all new sustainable quarter is a laudable one but it doesn't solve the problem if we don't manage the (old) existing habitat. People going to live in a "green", "low impact" and "sustainable" environment; leave their former environment, which is not changing. Therefore, the new sustainability is forgetting the old estate, which will be used by other people, improving the global environmental impact.

Should we destroy our built environment if is not sustainable? Maybe yes, maybe no but in some parts of our towns, the question is a displaced one at least because the heritage areas are areas we decided to preserve. In some urban places, the two notions must manage a way to live together because heritage is there and climate is changing. How to manage it? Will be a cultural synthesis between the two notions possible?

Architectural and urban patrimonial inheritance are components of ours life, therefore they have to combine theirs transformations integrating living societies; they are a part of the contemporary existence, consequently they are involved in the resiliency action towards the new sustainable needs.

To proceed with field observation, we have chosen to work in the specific area of Mediterranean towns because of a global reason: they are both subjected to a "patrimonialisation" process and immediately connected with some climate changes, and more precisely with the climate heating and the water rarefaction.

The **historical studies** and the **practical observation** in different regions of the Mediterranean highlight the existence of a "new" architectural and **urban modern heritage** dating from the **19th** and the **20th centuries**, largely unknown and underestimated. This heritage results from the mutual interaction of different cultures and the merging of local and exogenous know-how that occurred among the European colonies, protectorates and mandates and in the late Ottoman Empire but it was not only an outcome of the "western and colonial" rule, as it is frequently considered. In many cases indeed, the southern city fabrics were also invested by modernization processes, integrating new technologies and spatial configurations in the "traditional" urban structure.

**New types of buildings and urban spaces** were created, which are appropriated and used by the present urban societies, with a specific richness and meaning. Their conservation requires the understanding of multiple and often conflicting models and meanings, but also the raising of the awareness and the dissemination of their mutual contribution and interpenetration in the different Mediterranean cultures.

Architectural and urban features of the last two centuries are nowadays spatial markers, which are shaping our towns. This material production is associated to the industrial revolution, to the **general modernisation** of all the Mediterranean countries, to some national "westernization" strategies and, of course, to colonialism.

At the same time, those quarters are at **the core of the nowadays urban areas** and they need to be transformed in order to participate to the **contemporary challenge** of economical, social and sustainable development. Therefore, all countries are keeping into their agenda new changes to update their towns.

Those recent quarters are indicated as “new towns” (*villesnouvelles*), or “European towns”, or “colonial towns” to differentiate them from the ancient walled cities, the medinas as they are nowadays called in Maghreb. All those definitions are correct and incorrect at the same time, as all stereotypes they are an absolute simplification of the complex meaning of a human and social realities. There were new parts of the town also inside the ancient quarters; while outside the walls there were also local/native inhabitants, and not only European or colonial ones.

These modern areas are interesting for our activities also because of their typologies; they are modern and active quarters, free of old fashioned patrimonial identities. The **potential value** of the last two centuries architectural and urban heritage needs to be enhanced and requires a better valorisation to play a proactive role in the development strategies, at the national and local level.

These 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century urban realities often reflect specific and relevant social and economical configurations, in spite of the lack of appropriate conservation and development initiatives respecting their tangible and intangible heritage.

We estimate that the mutual heritage of the last two centuries across Mediterranean basin represents a common **field of action** that needs a **global approach including** a significant interest to sustainable methods of transformation. Due to its recent – and often imported and imposed – origin, this heritage, despite its massive presence in the historic fabric and townscape, is rather neglected and suffers from a lack of interest; clearly reflected in the inadequacy of valorisation strategies and sensitization campaigns.

New transformations in those areas are showing the **great tension existing among heritage and development needs**. In this context, the only chance we have to propose to next generations a safeguarded heritage included into a sustainable development strategy is to enhance knowledge and awareness about heritage and sustainability and, at the same time, to improve public led strategies.

Heritage needed, and still needs, public interventions with the purpose of implement safeguard. Sustainable development too needs public strategies to take off towards a virtuous and self standing implementing strategy. Heritage and sustainability are collective and global interests; the private sector is frequently unable to manage global and collective issues, it has not the intellectual and operational instruments to deal with this kind of stakes.

The goal for a winning strategy should be the transformation of the diffuse heritage into contemporary active and participation instruments of development. The great Maghreb’s towns will be presented as study case: challenges, chances and realities.

We realized that the ground level is the richest place for active interfaces among the town’s formal and informal actors and the main place to deal with. That’s the reason why we are mainly focusing on this ground level, the “0” one, the one of the public road.

The three biggest towns in Maghreb area – Algiers, Casablanca and Tunis – are under transformation through urban projects that are producing spin offs in both areas of sustainable development and heritage safeguard. Obviously they are producing different kind of heritage areas and, at the same time, they are introducing indispensable urban innovations, perhaps sustainable ones.

**Tunis** downtown is an old laboratory case; in order to avoid all unsuitable references to the colonial period the area is called “*hyper centre*”. It’s a space which includes nowadays the whole ancient walled city and the more representative area built during the last two centuries. With or without consciousness, the “heritage core” is becoming an *unicum*, from the “lake” to the Kasbah’s hill.

We point out that this large area was already conceptualized in the late 1960s by the overall project proposed by the Olivier-Clément Cacoub atelier during the first period of Bourquiba presidency. That project, forecasting a global transformation of the area following the International style concepts, conceived wide and irresponsible demolitions in the old town and, luckily, it wasn’t achieved.

Several works of heritage protection were fulfilled in Tunis and in the late 1990s the rehabilitation of the Bourguiba Avenue was the chance to (re)establish the conceptual cohesion of the spaces between the lake and the hill. The process was really controversial and the result is really different from the initially forecast configuration.

In **Algiers**, after some decades of slow motion following political and terrorism issues, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century town is dealing with a wide programme of heavy infrastructures of public transport. The whole “recent historical centre” (the historical centre without the well-known Kasbah) will be

encompassed by rail transports, tramways and metro. This will transform completely the approach to the recent heritage centre and to the private transport system.

Men are at work everywhere in **Casablanca's** nuke. After the pharaonic project of the great mosque, the coast is "on work": a new look for the Corniche, the erection of a high class Marina and the reconstruction of CasaPort train station area. Immediately inside those areas, a tramway service is foreseen, even if the project had languishing during the last two years, at the opposite of the tramway in the capital, Rabat, where the tramway line has quickly improved.

It's largely clear that the main issues to manage heritage and sustainability at urban scale are not any more technical ones; nowadays technology and experts exist on site, locals or internationals, while once the lack of expert and technology was a real handicap for both heritage safeguard and sustainable development. The issue is a global one able to combine together the countless partial strategies and interests existing in a town and formulating global policies for an adequate development.

Generally speaking, both heritage and sustainability are requesting public strategies and policies. Only with a global urban approach it is possible to design solutions for those ambitions; partial actions focusing only heritage or only sustainability can't be efficient ones. Actually, the first step to improve a positive operative merge between safeguard and sustainability is a friendly analysis system able to offer an appropriate environment to "natural" actors. Fields operations need to transform ordinary landscape and urban actors in advised ones.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

This text is a partial formalisation of two ongoing experiences in the frame of two projects that the author is coordinating:

1. *Mutual Heritage: from historical integration to contemporary active participation*, a project on the recent architectural and urban heritage in the Mediterranean area funded by the European Union within the Euromed Heritage 4 programme.
2. **R+0 !** *Développement durable et conception des espaces publics des centres modernes des villes méditerranéennes* a project on sustainable development in recent heritage spaces funded by the PACA region, the PUCA and the Caisse des dépôts et des consignations within the Projet d'Institut du Bâtiment Méditerranéen (IBMed)

