

The Great Challenges of Mediterranean Cities

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On November 25th, 2005, the city of Barcelona organised a “Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Cities” within the framework of the tenth anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. More than forty town-mayors from towns both North and South of the Mediterranean gathered at this conference with the aim of analysing the situation of cities in the partner countries, of measuring the challenges that these cities face and of determining priority areas for action which could be integrated in the new European Neighbourhood Policy.

It is within this framework that the city of Barcelona asked the Marseille Institut de la Méditerranée to carry out a study on the largest cities of the Mediterranean, which conclusions were debated during the Conference, as described below. These conclusions were collected within a common declaration that was signed by the mayors present at the conference and presented to the representatives of the European Commission that also attended the event. This declaration suggests that the urban dimension should be taken more into account in the new European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as proposing a firm development plan for basic public services. This recommendation is currently being debated within the Commission.

Cities are a permanent aspect of Mediterranean history. It is along the coasts, along the dense and ancient scattering of cities, that commerce has thrived following the maritime routes, eventually forming what we now know as the Me-

diterranean area. The most ancient cities in the world were founded here. Most of these cities were, in one age or another, large and active centres that shone their light along the length of the Mediterranean and into the Middle East. Eventually, the great commercial currents were abandoned, to the benefit, at first, of Venetian and Ottoman powers, and then of European colonial powers.

These cities currently face multiple challenges. They are, from this point of view, a magnifying mirror of the difficulties encountered by Mediterranean countries within the present trend of globalisation, which is unfavourable to these countries and to which they are finding it hard to adapt.

The attraction of the great towns of the South is imposing a surplus of population that exceeds their capacities of spatial expansion. Moreover, nowhere is the magnitude of the problems arising from urban changes more evident: the increasing need for housing, infrastructure, provision of water and energy, schools, hospitals, as well as the lack of control of food and industrial markets, give rise to speculation, penury and price increases, and are closely tied to the movement of concentrations and spatial redistribution of activities.

It is evident that Mediterranean cities share the majority of management-dysfunctions that concern urban regions around the world; however, in the Mediterranean, these problems are characterised by their magnitude and by the lack of means to address them. Today, “town” is synonymous with “bad lifestyle”, “discomfort” and “insecurity” for its inhabitants. Within a situation of high unemployment, the rural exodus amplifies an informal sector that represents a means of survival for millions of citizens.

The risks of social destabilisation that result from this situation are significant. Large sections of urban population, victims of social and economic insufficiencies, suffer extreme poverty, as manifested both in the monetary sense and in the lack of quality of life. Moreover, insecurity and violence also represent a menace for those in precarious situations, who may become easy prey for integrist networks.

At the same time, a different aspect of cities which exists together with those described above and which is becoming stronger, is the one of the modern city, open to the world, aspiring to become part of the great European and worldwide chorus and playing the role, within their own country, of cutting-edge of economic dynamism and transformer of society. It is the “competitive” city, which has included itself within a process of integration into the regional and global network, seeking a high specialisation based on the attraction of investment to an easy and pleasant urban environment with a highly qualified workforce. The majority of great cities aspire to continue playing the role of the “regional capital”, standing out in the Euro-Mediterranean environment and beyond. All great cities of the South are therefore territories of transition for social, economic and environmental changes, where great stakes are played for the entry of their own countries into the “world-economy” from which they have hitherto been excluded.

Amongst all these challenges, the first and perhaps foremost challenge is that of demography. In this sense, the urban population of the countries of the South and East of the Mediterranean, estimated today as 165 million inhabitants, is predicted to grow by about 4 million

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CITIES CONFERENCE, BARCELONA+10 RESULTS, SUBJECTS DEBATED AND PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

On 25th and 26th November 2005, Barcelona City Council, in collaboration with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Eurocities, organised the Euro-Mediterranean Cities Conference, Barcelona+10, in the days leading up to the Heads of State and Government Summit. The objective of the Cities Conference was to provide a platform for local governments to present their positions on the Barcelona Process.

The Cities Conference merged with that of the Regions on the Saturday afternoon, 26th November to present a Joint Cities and Regions Declaration before the European Union, which was represented by the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of the Council, Javier Solana.

The Cities Conference

The Euro-Mediterranean Cities Conference brought together more than 70 mayors and local representatives from both sides of the Mediterranean basin. It gave an opportunity to assess the intermunicipal cooperation over the last ten years, as well as to define the principal lines of a joint action plan.

The mayors stated that many of the key subjects that affect the Mediterranean area, such as the growth in extreme poverty and the lack of resources in the cities to be able to offer adequate services, are related to the explosion in urban growth.

The current situation

A study undertaken at the request of the city of Barcelona, by the Institut de la Méditerranée in Marseille, was used as the basis for the debate. It analyses the situation of ten Mediterranean cities, 10 years after Barcelona. The Mediterranean cities studied are: Algiers, Alexandria, Amman, Beirut, Casablanca, Damascus, Gaza, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv and Tunis.

The document makes conclusions on the lack of resources destined to the region and on the need to move from isolated projects to coor-

ordinated action within a proper regional development strategy, which is tied to the Millennium Development Goals.

After analysing the data collected and the investments undertaken over the last 10 years, the document states that a minimum of 10 thousand million euros is needed each year, which would mean 100 thousand million until 2015, to be able to respond adequately to the growing necessities of the large cities on the south shore of the Mediterranean. It calculates that this sum would permit it to cover around 50% of the deficit in urban infrastructures. Despite the criticism of the general balance of the results obtained in the Barcelona Process, the mayors emphasised the important role that the decentralised cooperation has played as a motor for development in the region and as a means of confraternity between the communities and their representatives.

The Conclusions

The local representatives underlined the need to give support to the cooperation between cities to promote peace in the region, the important pending subject of the decennium, and they confirmed their compromise to promote citizen participation in local government.

Consequently, the participants decided to form a Mediterranean Local Authorities Forum, which will meet regularly and provide a political arena that would permit the definition of a joint development strategy for the region and the debate of the recurring problems at a higher political level, to be able to find viable solutions.

At the same time, the mayors present welcomed the creation, within the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), of the Mediterranean Commission. The secretariat has been established in the city of Marseille and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region. This worldwide commission can become a platform for coordinating the various regional and transregional local government networks that operate in the Mediterranean.

The continuous promotion of equality between genders and the specific support for the participation of women in all spheres of society was recognised by the Conference as a principal objective that should be included in the joint actions. It highlighted the need for women to especially participate in the local decision-making bodies.

Success for Local Governments in the States' Summit Documents

The results of the States' Summit are brought together in a Declaration of the Presidency and an Action Plan, where we can see the positive effects of the political action undertaken by the participating cities, regions and networks in the Process.

The Declaration of the Presidency refers to the importance of reinforcing the ties between national governments and other actors, and particularly in the promotion of collaboration between local and regional administrations. On the other hand, the Action Plan promotes the processes of political decentralisation and the decentralisation of the provision of services, as a specific point to take into consideration in future actions.

The mentioned documents also contain other objectives identified in the Joint Declaration of Regions and Cities. These include the promotion of citizen participation in the taking of decisions and the work on gender equality, particularly in the promotion of the political participation of women in all areas of public administration.

This success, however modest, gives us the possibility to claim for specific support for the work of local governments in the region and to be able to redefine the cooperation programmes that are needed to promote the development of the Mediterranean basin.

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per year, representing a mean yearly increase of about 2.5%. The levels of urbanisation in these countries are expected to increase from 64% in 2004 to about 75% in 2025.

This urban explosion is both a recent and a brutal phenomenon. This increase is

very different, from the point of view of its steepness, from the growth experienced in Europe during the period of industrialisation when whole populations left their villages, attracted by industrial employment created in and around cities. The strong urban increase of the

1970s was fuelled by a rural exodus, itself fed by the inertia of endogenous demography.

The second challenge, linked to this demographic explosion, is the organisation and well functioning of services for the population.

**FIRST EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORT.
MARRAKECH, 15 DECEMBER 2005**

Within the framework of the MEDA programme, in November 2001 the European Commission approved the regional Euro-Mediterranean project, the *EuroMed Transport Project*, and it was awarded a budget. The project was aimed essentially at improving transport flow and quality, improving security and efficiency of merchandise and passenger transport systems in the region, and supporting the development of networks and infrastructures of multimodal transport, integrating them for better inter and intra-regional connections. The Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum is the frame of reference for regional co-operation on the matter of transport. Once or twice a year, it brings together senior government officials from the Transport Ministries of the 10 Mediterranean partners (Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Turkey) and the 25 European states. 2005 was a remarkable year for the EuroMed Transport Project because Transport Ministers met for the first time in Marrakech on 15th December 2005, to examine levels of co-operation in the transport sector.

The ministerial discussions were based on the conclusions of the Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean (drawn up by the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum) and the Final Report of the High Level Group on the extension of the trans-European transport network

into neighbouring countries, in order to identify priorities for future co-operation. The Ministers also emphasised their satisfaction and commitment to the European Neighbourhood Policy whilst seeking the elaboration of Action Plans with the existing partners. Regarding the assessment of current co-operation, the Ministers recalled the most notable successes of recent years, such as the Forum, the launch of the Euromed GNSS project (a programme of guided navigation using the EGNOS and GALILEO satellites) or the SAFEMED Project (for maritime safety and security), but they also showed their support for projects currently in preparation, such as the Intermodal Project (construction of a Mediterranean Motorway) and the Aviation Project (for the safety and management of air traffic).

Among the developments and the future co-operation initiatives proposed at the meeting were the following:

- Support for the implementation of an integrated and efficient transport system throughout the whole region;
- The establishment of a common framework which will support the reform process of the transport sector and guide future developments;
- The necessity of institutional reform in order to modernise and reinforce administrative capacities;

- Priority to be given to the creation of infrastructures and missing interconnections whether they be North-South or South-South;
- Implementation of port reforms to make the management of ports and their services more efficient, so as to also ensure freedom of navigation;
- The development of port connections with their hinterlands, co-operation between ports aimed at creating Motorways of the Sea and the strengthening of the role of rail in the multimodal system (by restructuring the sector and developing the network);
- The reinforcement of air transport, covering the questions of opening-up access to the market, aimed at promoting convergence and technical co-operation in the fields of security and management of air traffic, including the extension of the Euro-Mediterranean Common Aviation Area to MEDA partner countries.

Finally, at the conference, a global agreement between the EU and Morocco in the field of aviation, the first of its kind, was also signed.

For further information:

Official website of the Conference:

www.mtpnet.gov.ma/euromedconference

Website of the EuroMed Transport Project (from which the Blue Paper on transport in the Mediterranean is downloadable): www.euromedtransport.org

Access to drinking water and to hygiene currently represents, as discussed above, a priority. Water resources are nearly insufficient everywhere, and in some places they reach dramatic proportions; physical infrastructure is seldom at the level required. The management of this sector is often faulty and financial resources are often lacking. A report of United Nations (UNSD Millennium Indicators OMS-Unicef – 2003) estimates that 30 million people do not have permanent access to drinking water in this region. The majority of these people are in suburban and rural areas of Turkey, Algeria, Morocco and Syria.

The urban infrastructures for distribution of drinking water and for sanitation are very insufficient and do not follow the increase of population in the majority of cities.

Sanitation poses a problem everywhere

and is at least as grave and urgent as access to drinking water. The level of collection and of domestic water-treatment especially is very low and, in some cases, even inexistent. As seen above, many large cities do not have a water-purification station. Nearly 90% of urban waste in the towns that were studied is discarded without treatment into the Mediterranean, which therefore receives 60,000 tonnes of detergents, 100 tonnes of mercury and 12,000 tonnes of phenols per year.

To this situation one must add the little control in the issue of industrial waste. Companies often found in urban or suburban environments are mostly insensitive to environmental constraints and little affected by legislation which, although abundant, is seldom implemented. These companies sometimes discard their polluting effluents into the sanitation net-

work, but often also into subterranean outlets, into rainwater streams or directly into the environment, particularly into natural watercourses.

As urban waste is concerned, the enormous urbanisation combined with the strong industrialisation have placed most of the cities studied in a situation of urgency: insufficient collection, piling-up of waste from savage or uncontrolled urban discharges and lack of treatment, particularly of special waste. It is estimated that at present there are nearly 40 million tonnes of urban waste generated in towns of the Euro-Mediterranean, representing about 0.7 kg per person per day. This volume increases by about 3 to 4% per year due to the combined effect of urban demography and evolution of lifestyles.

In all the cities that were studied, it was also evident that public transports were

insufficient due to the extent of agglomeration, that infrastructures were mediocre, that the inhabitants enjoyed only limited resources and that there were clear gaps in public funding. Recently, however, certain projects have seen the light in the aim for recovery of the public domain of public transport: the Cairo underground (a third line has been opened), the light metro of Tunis, the tramway of Istanbul and the project for the underground in Algiers. However, these projects risk not being completed due to their high cost. A project for an underground has been under debate in Casablanca for over twenty years. Finally, the third challenge is the fact that social housing does not spare any of the cities in the South and East of the Mediterranean. The urban environment has become totally de-structured in favour of the multiplication of the urban periphery consisting of shack-towns and precarious housing. The proportion of non-regulated housing is about 40 to 60% of new accommodation. These illegal constructions resemble the shack-towns that have arisen for many years around urban centres and where whole families, away from their native villages, are packed into improvised shelters. The reasons for this situation are nearly always the

same, relating to the difficulties encountered by the states to manage the use of grounds, to control speculation in the housing market and to produce sufficient social housing. Challenges of the same magnitude can be seen in the transition of the "productive city". The large cities of the Mediterranean represent a great proportion of the national wealth of their country. Immersed in the process of globalisation, the majority of towns frame their actions within strategic plans that aim to reconcile the attractiveness of the territory towards foreign investment, particularly in the services sector, with the constraints of an equilibrated spatial development. One of the most visible signs is the multiplication of the so-called "projects of urban regeneration" which tries to reconcile social and economic constraints within a single region. It is therefore necessary to note that these projects have hitherto tended to increase the spatial segregation between a centre that is rapidly modernising and a suburban space that accumulates environmental problems, sanitary risks and problems of access to transport and housing. There are answers to all of these problems. The solutions to these issues have

in many cases been identified a long time ago. But the practical application of solutions gives rise to questions of political priorities in accordance with urban development in the Mediterranean. Behind this question lies the issue of governance at different levels of intervention and of their coordination within a particular territory. However, today, the cities of the Mediterranean are at a transition stage in which two streams of logic meet: the traditional logic rooted in the state-organisation inherited from the past and which expresses itself through a rising administration, and a more modern logic which foundations lay in the separation of powers, transparency and respect for the law. This duality characterises the current situation of political systems and of the functioning of states, to the extent that the system of governance, as well as political structures, always require a double-interpretation. In conclusion, the problem of governance is at the crossroads of the reforms that must be carried out to further develop the country; furthermore, beyond the mere technical aspects, overcoming the challenges discussed above depends very much on the evolution of the institutional and political framework.