

Towards Resili(g)ence

Città intelligenti, paesaggi resilienti

PhD course in
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University of Genova

curated by / a cura di
Manuel Gausa

Addoc Logos
Urban and territorial policies

A multiscalar PhD Laboratory

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1



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Urban and
territorial policies

#1 | Towards Resili(g)ence

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FUTURE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN RURAL-COASTAL LANDSCAPE

Today, therefore, we are faced with a situation in which the cities of the coast for some aspects have been consolidated thanks to decades of urban sprawl, for others, however, especially where the urban contexts has occupied spontaneously peripheral areas. The so-called sprawl towns, superimposing over the surrounding rural territory has given way to formless and chaotic expansion of the urban core over the years.

Since the Seventies the research, about the growth and decline processes of the cities, were not limited to an only urban perspective, but have investigated all the economic globalization phenomena that incorporate and act on urban spaces, identified «... not only such as object of study, but also as a strategic reference for the theory of a wide range of social, economic and political processes in the current era» (Sassen, 1997).

These complex dynamics and the current revolutionary phenomena are shaping new perspectives in the evolution of rural suburbs that are emerging nowadays thanks to the progress of technology in contemporary society and the close connection with the development of primary activities. Faced with this varied context, which is the present-day architect's position towards the planning of this 'new' Mediterranean countryside farmland in terms of production and environmental development?

The advent of mass technological systems, new processes of governance in urban planning, awareness of strategies to recycle degraded urban spaces and the integration of these in the community, have outlined an epochal paradigm shift, the antithesis of urban-rural or metropolitan-periphery is therefore largely out-dated. The small and medium rural Mediterranean today's cities are the result of the evolution of these phenomena and the various strategic planning processes of the twentieth century (Rome Treaty 1957), which have radically changed the balances and the models of life in the rural areas. Many of them, however, were able to reinvent and adapt themselves to the new requirements in terms of:

- socio-cultural aspects, promoting inclusion and social hybridization;
- environmental issues, focusing new attention to issues relating to the consumption of resources and preservation of the landscape;
- economic activities, aiming to improve the seaside activities;
- agricultural programs, adapting to the rural development programs.

To approach the study of this Mediterranean landscape in a consistent and non-reductive way, it is inevitable to understand that cannot be only one 'method' of planning, which can correlate every single aspect that makes up the city, without generating a superficial planning and the danger of an homogenisation of the territories.

• Narratives •

Within a framework that consider the contemporary phenomena, the renewed interest about the reoccupation of the farmland – or 'rurbanization', to quote Sorokin, Zimmerman, and Galpin – it was a concept that significantly changed the relationship in the urban-rural dichotomy, approaching the concept of rural-urban continuum. This process will have to be thought so that it can adapt to future changes where the perception of space, context and environment, will be radically changed «The city, in fact, seems less and less topical and territorial and more and more teletopical and deeply extraterritorial, in which central and suburban geometric notions are losing their meanings» (Virilio, 1996).

The technological revolution that affects the rural peripheries and the agricultural sector is indeed the result of the now inseparable existence of technological devices entered permanently into the everyday life of each of us, an extension of the same person. Should they be considered a key element in dealing with governance issues related to the rural development?

Over the last decade the interest in the identification of development scenarios for the local contexts, has renewed into the model of macro-regions, which encompass areas related conceptually to each other beyond the geographical localization. One of these is the Mediterranean area, intended as a theoretical concept that interprets the idea of “Mediterranean character”.

The Mediterranean multi-city is the place of relationships and exchanges among different landscapes and cultures, “contaminated” by the wide networks of relationships that touch the shores of this sea, with ideas, styles, techniques and knowledge, which spread its effects along the whole coastal areas. Thanks to this biodiversity along the Mediterranean coasts there are very heterogeneous urban centres, they keep changing and evolving with a continuous territorial consumption, which today has led to outline «the global shape of the Mediterranean city» as defined by Cardarelli (Cardarelli 1987, p.84).

The interest to focus on rural and coastal Mediterranean cities is not, however, a novelty, already more than a decade ago in the objectives of European projects (eg. ‘Europe 2000+’) the Arco Latino had been identified as one of the eight ‘interested regions’ to the development programs of “transnational perspectives of the European territory”.

Among the issues it reads: “in the 80s, the demographic change has stabilized or even reversed for natural demographics reasons or for immigration of ‘new rural dwellers’ coming from the urban space. Rural areas have been able to attract inhabitants, but also economic activities, because of their proximity to highly urbanized areas and their tourist character.” (Report Europe 2000+).

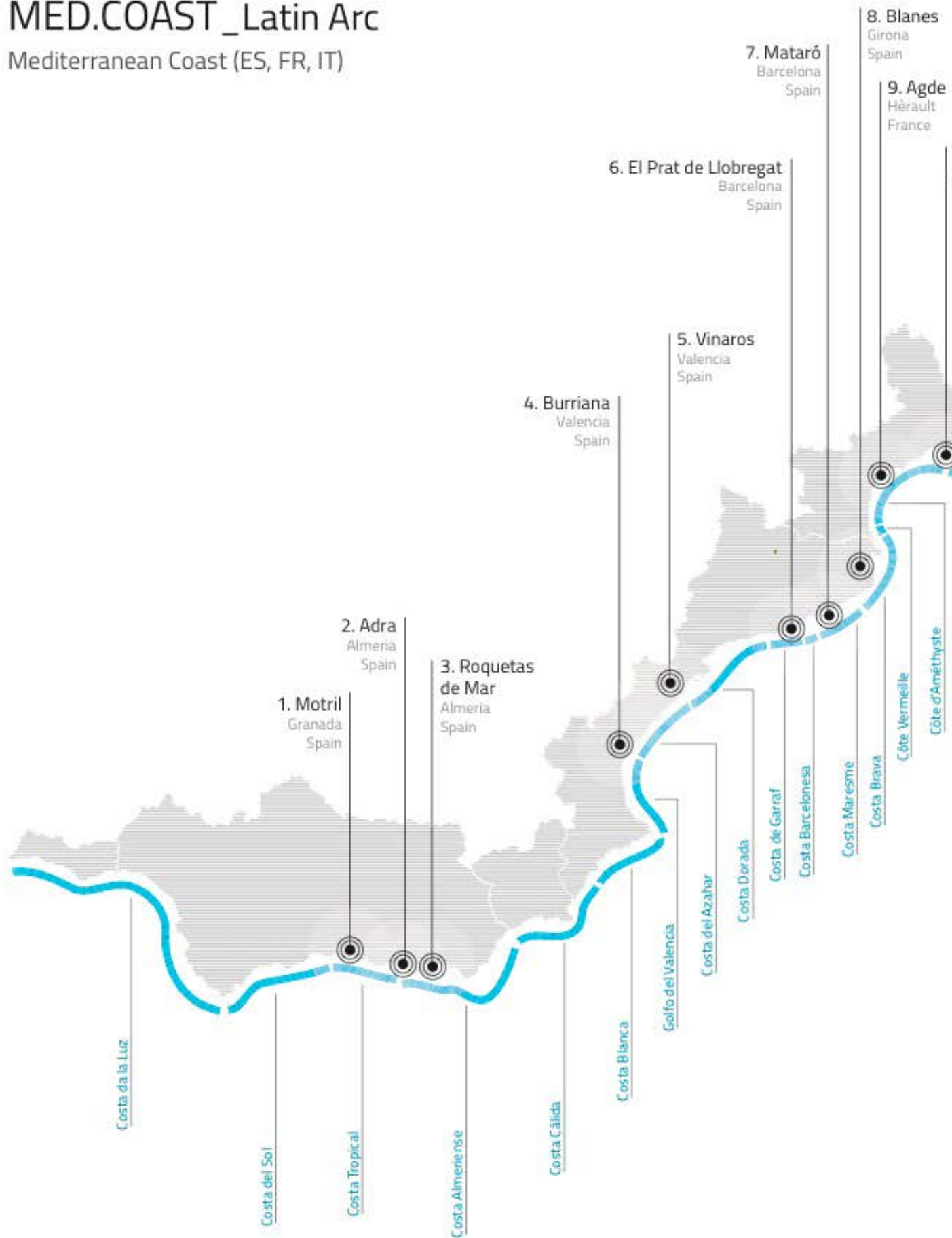
Through these on-going evolutionary processes, the Mediterranean coastal cities are – on one side - consolidated by decades of immigration and urban sprawl – and on the other, instead - in a complete change and difficulties to recover its own identity, especially where these have expanded and occupied chaotically peripheral areas by infrastructures and large commercial-industrial districts. They therefore are outlined, along the border bow, real spread cities, where the rural land has given way to a formless appropriation of the urban fabric.

Do not forget that agricultural and rural dimension of the Mediterranean has been - and still continues to be - a central and essential element for the economy and society of this landscape.

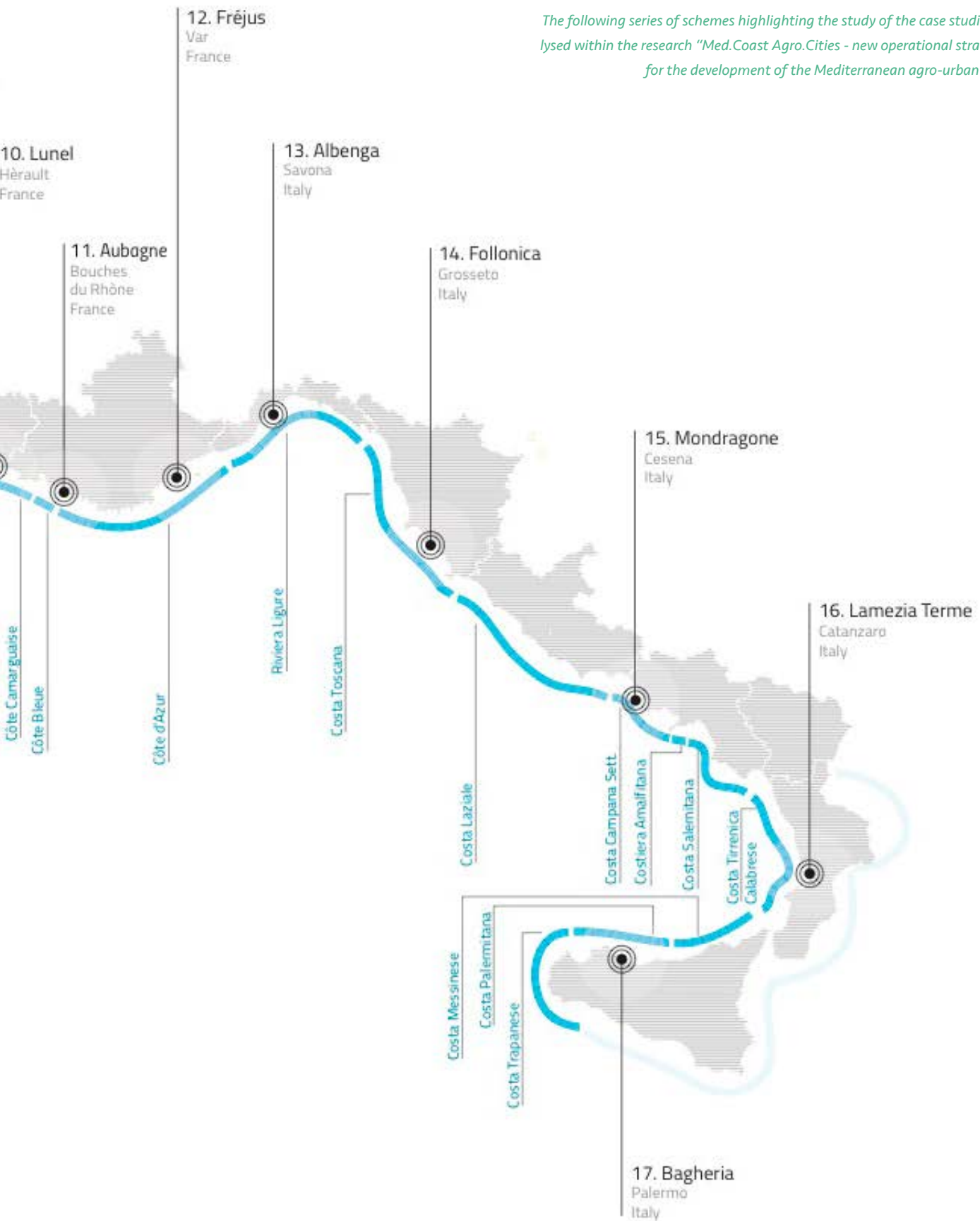
The wealth of natural resources and the diversity of landscapes make the Mediterranean a unique echo-region, however, the industrial development, the incessant building – in Italy, for example, from 1971 to 2010, about 5 million hectares of agricultural land were urbanized (datas Mipaaf, ENEA, Ispra) –, the unfair social habits, the constant increase of pollutants and the progressive reduction of primary resources, such as water resource, continue to undermine this fragile ecosystem.























































MED.COAST_Latin Arc

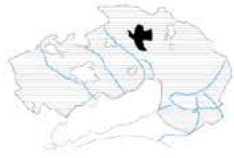








































Mediterranean Coast (ES, FR, IT)

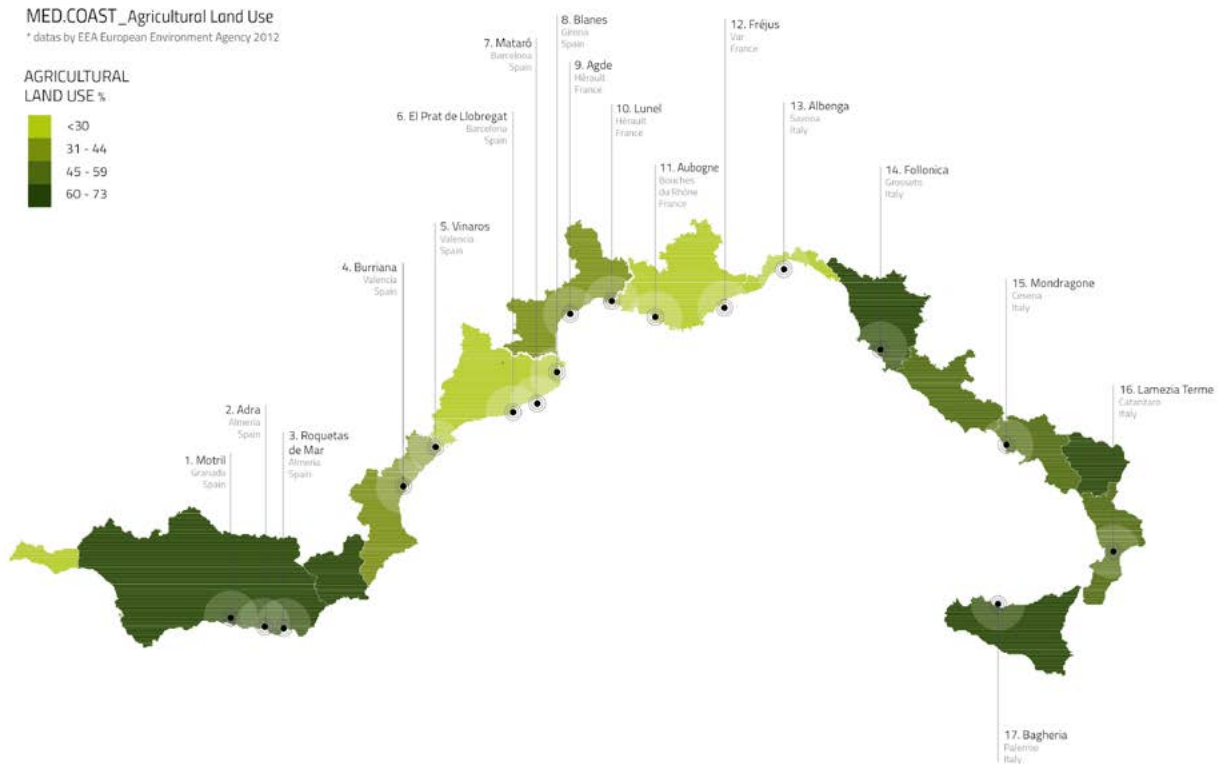


The following series of schemes highlighting the study of the case studies analysed within the research "Med.Coast Agro.Cities - new operational strategies for the development of the Mediterranean agro-urban areas".



STUDY CASES	LOCALIZATION	SIZE	POPULATION	DENSITY	RURAL ZONE
1. Motril 	Province Granada Region Andalusia Country Spain 	 109,8 km ²	[2017] 60.420 	550,3 ab/km ² 	
2. Adra 	Province Almeria Region Andalusia Country Spain 	 90,1 km ²	[2017] 24.697 	274,1 ab/km ² 	
3. Roquetas de Mar 	Province Almeria Region Andalusia Country Spain 	 60 km ²	[2018] 94.925 	1556 ab/km ² 	
4. Burriana 	Province Castellón Region Valenciana Country Spain 	 47 km ²	[2017] 34.266 	733,3 ab/km ² 	
5. Vinaròs 	Province Castellón Region Valenciana Country Spain 	 95,5 km ²	[2017] 28.292 	296,4 ab/km ² 	
6. El Prat de Llobregat 	Province Barcelona Region Catalunya Country Spain 	 31,4 km ²	[2017] 60.897 	2034,9 ab/km ² 	
7. Mataró 	Province Barcelona Region Catalunya Country Spain 	 22,5 km ²	[2017] 126.127 	5598,2 ab/km ² 	
8. Blanes 	Province Girona Region Catalunya Country Spain 	 17,9 km ²	[2017] 38.813 	2169,5 ab/km ² 	
9. Agde 	Province Hérault Region Occitanie Country France 	 50,9 km ²	[2015] 26.946 	529,4 ab/km ² 	

STUDY CASES	LOCALIZATION	SIZE	POPULATION	DENSITY	RURAL ZONE
10. Lunel 	Province Hérault Region Occitanie Country France 	 23,1 km ²	[2015] 25.178 	1090 ab/km ² 	
11. Aubagne 	Province Bouches du-Rhône Region Côte d'Azur Country France 	 54,9 km ²	[2015] 45.410 	827,1 ab/km ² 	
12. Fréjus 	Province Var Region Côte d'Azur Country France 	 102,3 km ²	[2015] 52.879 	517,1 ab/km ² 	
13. Albenga 	Province Savona Region Liguria Country Italy 	 36,6 km ²	[2017] 24.042 	657,2 ab/km ² 	
14. Follonica 	Province Grosseto Region Tuscany Country Italy 	 56 km ²	[2017] 21.339 	380,9 ab/km ² 	
15. Mondragone 	Province Caserta Region Campania Country Italy 	 55,8 km ²	[2017] 28.760 	516,2 ab/km ² 	
16. Lamezia Terme 	Province Catanzaro Region Calabria Country Italy 	 162,4 km ²	[2017] 70.834 	436,1 ab/km ² 	
17. Bagheria 	Province Palermo Region Sicilia Country Italy 	 29,8 km ²	[2017] 55.281 	1853,6 ab/km ² 	

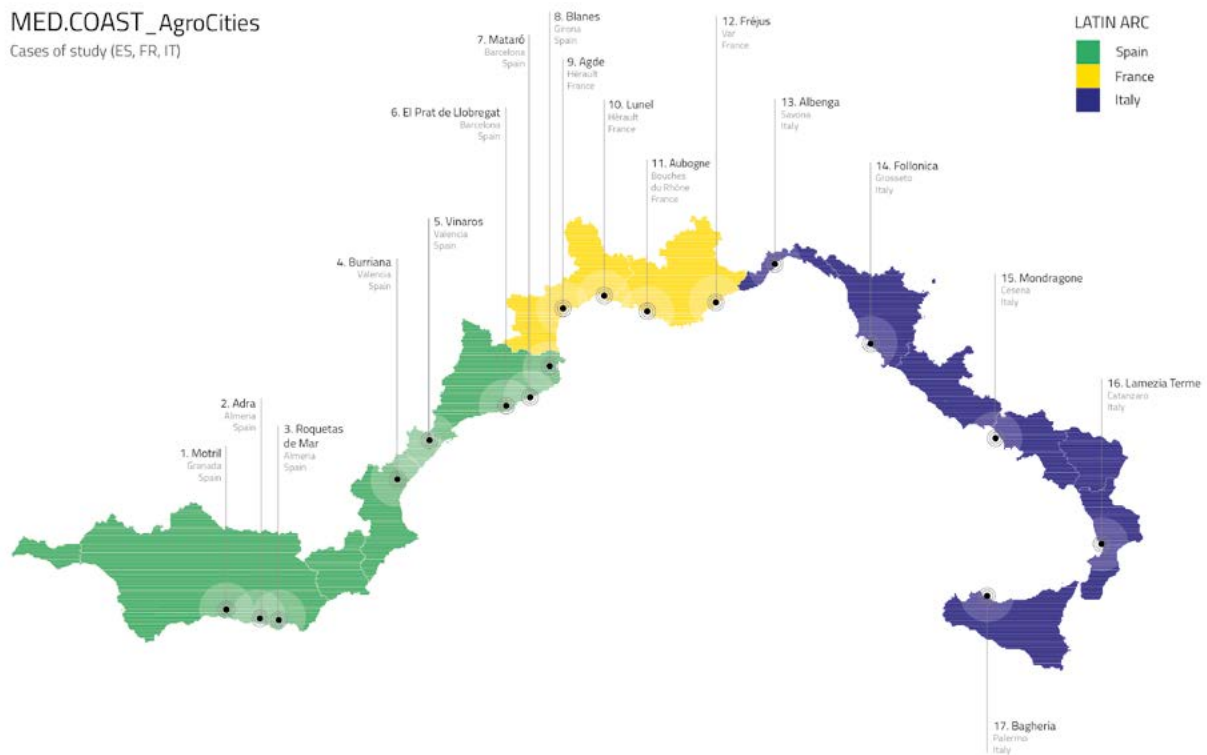


Despite international efforts, made in the last thirty years or so, in order to protect and preserve this unique landscape, it continues to deteriorate as a result of increased pressure on the environment. The impact of climate change, the threats to the biodiversity of the area, the soil erosion and the emissions, caused by the energy consumption, are strong evidence of the increasing vulnerability of this space. To it is added the serious phenomena of drought and the desertification processes with dramatic consequences for the rural territories. To aggravate the conditions and disparities between the shores of this sea, there are also the social dynamics – as the scourge of poverty in the southern of the Mediterranean farmlands – the deficient collective infrastructures (access to water, access to services, access to education) – the lack of efficient management policies – such as law organization of producers – the weakness of civil society and the logistical gaps.

So, the need to “identify the common basic elements to frame cities, regions and Mediterranean networks into a unified perspective” – in order to – “define the models compared with the theoretical ‘global’ models and process, therefore, an urban theory that can combine the achievements of modern planning with the concepts and experiences related to the Mediterranean specificities” (Pace, 1998) it’s an ambitious purpose as much as complex.

MED.COAST_AgroCities

Cases of study (ES, FR, IT)



The risk of ‘forgery’ – and implementation of approximate general theories about the urban planning – represents a possible and dangerous element and it’s necessary to must be careful. Even within the community strategies that incorporate macro-areas and ‘multi-cities’, it must maintain the principle that “each area is still a locus solus” (Rossi, 1972) with an inherent cultural, physical and local biodiversity and - therefore – it’s difficult to frame it into common replicable models.

It is therefore clear that briefly framed the features of this complex landscape – as previously mentioned – “define the models compared with the theoretical ‘global’ models and process, therefore, an urban theory that can combine the achievements of modern planning with the concepts and experiences related to the Mediterranean specificities” it’s a complicated goal, but nevertheless, if within the global framework fit realities as socially, culturally and economically different as the countries of the north and those of the southern Mediterranean the result can only belong to a purely theoretical sphere.

In order to ‘restrict’ the context within which this paper aims to investigate to provide new ideas and discussions it will focus on the countries of the Northern Mediterranean, that is the Latin Arc (Spain, France, Italy). This coastal area is particularly interesting because it has been, and still continues to be, subject of significant changes, mostly due to the incessant urbanization



brought caused by the Industrial Revolution, but also to the difficult socio-cultural integration – mostly arisen by the heavy immigration –, to the most critic recent economic conditions and the impact that globalization and the enormous technological advances have contributed to the development prospects of these realities.

Many of them, however, were able to reinvent and adapt to themselves the new requirements in terms of:

- socio-cultural aspects: promoting inclusion and social hybridization, such as the case of Jardin de Perpignan. Since 1997, the 45 companies in the area and more than 120,000 inhabitants in the south of France, started in Perpignan – one of the major agricultural town on the French coast – an agricultural development program, favoring the short chain and getting the creation of a recognizable brand in 2006;
- environmental issues: focusing new attention to issues relating to the consumption of resources and preservation of the landscape, as in the case of the Vega of Granada, for a long time it was the center of protection plans and programming strategies. In 2001 the drafting of the Plan General de Ordenación Urbana de Granada, PGOU has tried to solve the problems of the agricultural areas of the Vega proposing regeneration policies. In 2006 and in the following years started the proposal for the creation of the Parque del Milenio in order to safeguard the agricultural areas as an heritage of the city;
- economic activities: aiming to improve the seaside activities, as the Côte d'Azur in the southern France which is one of the leading examples of enhancement of the Mediterranean coast-

al-tourist industry. Famous all over the world this area has been able to promote itself, maintaining a specialization in the agricultural sector, especially the floral and horticultural business (it is produced in this area about one-third of the national production) and wineries activities, with over 19 productions DOC; - agricultural programs: adapting to the rural development programs, such as the Huerta of Valencia. The Plan de acción territorial de la Huerta de Valencia is linked to the European territorial strategy, based on: polycentric development, structuring of dynamic, attractive and competitive urban regios and a conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. In Dobris report, the Huerta was defined as one of the last six experiences of existing Mediterranean gardens on the edge of the urban centers in Europe.

The strong rural character of these areas has, therefore, enabled many cities along several coastal portions to consolidating its economy on agricultural production – since the mid-twentieth century onwards – and to compete nationally and internationally in the global market with quality materials (for example, the Andalusian coast, has a considerable export of fruits, vegetables and olive oil, or the Ligurian Coast, with the export of flowers and pot herbs).

The progressive rapprochement to agricultural and rural dynamics is a phenomenon that affects especially the younger generation in recent years. It is constantly increasing, in fact, the number of under-30s who, despite the high educational attainment levels, choose the agricultural activity, consciously leaving the prospects of underground work to move in rural suburbs and reinvent themselves in the role of entrepreneurs-farmers, probably prompted by the economic crisis of this decade too.

Just think that only in Italy in 2013 were founded more than twelve thousand agro-startup and designed a huge amount of agricultural Apps, trading platforms and new technological devices and services developed for agricultural purposes¹.

The amazing potential that today's technology offers, recently found a fertile development in the agribusiness (from the digital agronomist to the Big Data for farming) becoming an indispensable element for optimize the productions, reducing costs and better protecting the environment thanks to monitoring and automation devices and the awareness of this recent class of young farmers-entrepreneurs (commonly nicknamed farmers 2.0) with a strong propensity towards progress and innovation.

By promoting the innovation of tools and space in these new agricultural suburbs, will it be possible to align the objectives that the Mediterranean agriculture must impose oneself to become globally competitive, aiming to promote environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and the enhancement of production eco-friendly processes, keeping the identity character of this coastal landscape but approaching new prospects for sustainable development?

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