

European Architects in Africa, in the Near and Middle East, from 1947 to the end of the twentieth century. Legacy and future perspectives

ANNA IRENE DEL MONACO¹

Abstract: At the end of the World War II, several European States projected throughout the extended Mediterranean – with the political and strategic backup of the United Nations, Development Cooperation, Svimez, World Bank and Ford Foundation – to support the social and economic modernization of less developed countries and former colonies, from North Africa to Iran. This initial study intends to start the recomposition a half-century picture of a cross-disciplinary constellation of European technical and intellectual skills, hybridized with the local cultures in the Mediterranean non-European countries, providing unpredicted interpretations compared to the mainstream architectural historiography of the twentieth century. Therefore, this study has the long term aim to collect these past projects in an Atlas with the scope to develop Future Scenarios to be elaborated with local peers for the next reconstructions in the Near and Middle East, and north Africa, tackling the issue of the balance between urbanization and geopolitics to enhance urban quality.

Keywords: Extended Mediterranean, modern architectural history, European architects.

Premise

At the end of the World War II, several European States projected throughout the extended Mediterranean – with the political and strategic backup of the United Nations, Development Cooperation, Svimez, World Bank and Ford Foundation – to support the social and economic modernization of less developed countries and former colonies, from North Africa to Iran. Some of the most promising or prestigious

1. Anna Irene Del Monaco, Assistant Professor, Sapienza University of Rome, email: anna.delmonaco@uniroma1.it.

This paper represent a first outcome on a topic constituting the base for a research grant application at Sapienza which will be tentatively submitted in 2018 titled “Architetti europei in Africa, nel Vicino e nel Medio Oriente, dal 1947 alla fine del secolo ventesimo. Il ruolo della diplomazia internazionale e della cooperazione allo sviluppo. Eredità e prospettive future”. This work will be also the base for a further research application as ERC Advanced 2018.

architectural-engineering firms opened their local offices in those countries to design and implement development plans, infrastructures, public buildings, and neighborhoods. Most of these programs were soon joined by private entrepreneurial initiatives. These prominent public-private economic and political network of synergies have been scarcely explored as a whole while they are neglected proofs of how the States actively shaped and created markets and steered innovative changes. In recent years some of these projects have been the subject of curatorial researches, publications and exhibitions especially focused on the work of solo architects or of complex cultural phenomenons as Mediterranean modernism, Post-colonial Urbanism. Therefore, there is a lack of in-depth analysis to comprehensively measure the impact – whether positive or negative – of European architectural and urban projects in shaping and inventing the collective identity in the extended Mediterranean. This initial study intends to start the recomposition a half-century picture of a cross-disciplinary constellation of European technical and intellectual skills, hybridized with the local cultures in the Mediterranean non-European countries, providing unpredicted interpretations compared to the mainstream architectural historiography of the twentieth century. Therefore, this study has the long term aim to collect in an Atlas these past projects with the scope to develop Future Scenarios to be elaborated with local peers for the next reconstructions in the Near and Middle East, and North Africa, tackling the issue of the balance between urbanization and geopolitics to enhance urban quality.

The modern Mediterranean as a European Invention

The Mediterranean is a geographical space where for thousands of years architectural monuments and masterpieces of urban architecture have been conceived for defence,² representation of power,³ social and collective purpose, distribution of wealth by different civilizations which have left a palimpsest of their own urban heritage. Fernand Braudel's pioneering indispensable research is considered as the legitimation of the “civilization of the Mediterranean” as a subject of

2. CHRISTIE 2006.

3. DEL MONACO 2012.

historical analysis⁴: “What is the Mediterranean? It is one thousand things at the same time. Not one landscape but innumerable landscapes. Not a sea, but a succession of seas. Not a civilization, but civilizations amassed on top of one another. To travel within the Mediterranean is to encounter the Roman world in Lebanon, prehistory in Sardinia, the Greek cities in Sicily, the Arab presence in Spain, Turkish Islam in Yugoslavia. It is to plunge deeply into the centuries, down to the megalithic constructions of Malta or the pyramids of Egypt. It is to meet very old things, still alive, that rub elbows with ultramodern ones”⁵. Braudel’s thesis was focused on relationships between civilization and cultures and shared many concepts with the Saint-Simonians and with the intellectuals of the “Algiers School” (Camus, Levallois).⁶ Also, Henri Pirenne proposed an original thesis in his essential *Maometto e Carlo Magno*⁷ (Mohammed and Charlemagne), – especially chapter two on the Mediterranean navigation –, to be considered together with the historians that have refuted or sustained him as D.C. Dennet and R.S. Lopez, A. Dopsch. Furthermore Maurice Aymard,⁸ a distinguished disciple of Braudel, introduces the opposition character and the complex coexistence between the programmatic nature of myths and the persistent spontaneous Mediterranean disorder, despite the unifying violence of modernization: “The modern urban planning was born in the Mediterranean, in the Greece of the fifth century, with Hippodamus of Miletus, inventor of the urban grid in planning. It has triumphed in every period of cultural disenchantment, in which the systematic reproduction of a pre-established, and rethought, early model takes a kind of revenge on spontaneous development: Hellenistic Greece, Rome, the Renaissance and the Baroque age, our world contemporary”. Among the Italian scholarly architects involved in the Mediterranean as a research theme Benedetto Gravagnuolo points out, quoting José Rovira’s essay on Josep Luis Sert, and Massimo Bontempelli’s⁹ work *Realismo Magico* (Magic Realism), that the timing at the post-World

4. GRAVAGNUOLO 2010, p. 16.

5. BRAUDEL 1977, p.7.

6. BOUCHARD, FERME 2013, p. 27.

7. PIRENNE 1937 (2005).

8. AYMARD 1977, p. 131.

9. BONTEMPELLI 1928.

War II political and physical reconstruction was important to elaborate “the deceit that the Mediterranean myth dispenses [...] the transhistorical representation of the past as present. [...] a desire for simple and harmonious construction”.¹⁰ Among the work of the “italianists abroad”, instead, the book by Jean François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and contested identities* is a proof of the raising interest of international scholars in Mediterranean Modernism, in different brands of Mediterraneanism. Indeed, it demonstrates the duality and the complexity of modern movement especially if programmatically entwined with the tradition of the Grand Tour – which is an attractive topic for the Anglosaxons.¹¹ What in previous theoretical works was defined “critical regionalism”, “vernacular” or “picturesque” architecture, for some of the contributors to Lejeune-Sabatino’s book is defined “the other modernity”. [...] “A radical reappraisal of the most influential thinkers and form givers of the modern movement architecture, and their relationship to both the classical and the vernacular centered on the Mediterranean basin, has been a key force in a revised cartography of architectural modernism”.¹² In any case, this approach demonstrates architect’s need to research for a new theoretical framework, within a new geopolitical order based on less ideological concepts and more on the professional identity of architects and their precedents – from social to cultural history – but still oscillating between the artistic fascination of “what today remains of our capacity to reinvent the world?”¹³ and the “collective aspects of producing and learning together”.¹⁴

10. GRAVAGNUOLO 2010, pp. 16-17.

11. DE SETA 2014.

12. BERGDOLL 2010, p. xv.

13. To use the words of Bartolomeu Mari in his foreword to the book *Constant's New Babylon. The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* by Mark Wigley: “Here, then, is a first intriguing question: what today remains of our capacity to reinvent the world?” trying to explain the ratio of Constant’s New Babylon.

14. See Hannes Meyer’s words, From the article “Die neue Welt” that Meyer published in 1926 in ABC Beiträge zum Bauen [Contributions to Building], an architectural magazine founded in 1923 by Hannes Meyer, Hans Schmidt, Mart Stam and the Suprematist El Lissitzky. “Co-operation rules the world. The community rules the individual”. Meyer sincerely believed that co-operation was the most valuable alternative social structure, one founded not on the production of surplus value, but on the collective needs and desires of the mass society that produced it.

Towards a historiographical turn for future design challenges

Therefore, if recently historians discuss to assess Braudel's influence on contemporary historical practice and how his book "has weathered the paradigm shift from social history... to cultural history",¹⁵ contemporary architectural historiography is still prevalently embedded with the discourse on styles, ideology of the aesthetic. During the past decade the works of remarkable scholars and historians of architecture such as Jean Louis Cohen, Sibel Bozdogan, Maristella Casciato, David Rifkin, etc., stated the beginning of a historiographical turn. Cohen maintains that the histories of architecture written since Sigfried Giedion are quasi-fictions.¹⁶ These studies enriched the understanding of historical documents, but lack a long term historical comprehensive reading (1945-1990s) of European Architects' projects in the Mediterranean, with special reference to the construction of public works and housing, the architectural typologies producing the most relevant impact on the collective identity from post- World War II up to contemporary times. The methodological framework was conceived by Cohen with the intention of consciously avoiding a Eurocentric selection of authors and works and limiting the historiographical strategy to a list of twentieth-century architecture aesthetic "influences". Then, the publication of "a plethora of monographs" – as Cohen would affirm – on individual unpublished authors, disseminated further detailed information that have generated other researches. This is what happened with Maristella Casciato in *Transnational Urbanism and Post-colonial Challenges*¹⁷ continuing the investigation around Le Corbusier. The Casciato's lecture at Harvard was hosted by Rahul Mehrotra, Professor of Urban Design and Planning, an advocate of informal urbanism in India. After the presentation, based mainly on the works of Charles Abrams, Otto H. Koenigsberger, Michel Ecochard, Le Corbusier, Ernest Weissmann, Patrick Geddes, one Indian scholar present at Casciato's lecture intervened affirming that the contribute to India by Le Corbusier was more negative than positive, since he introduced an approach to architecture based on the French *grandeur* so that the problems of low-cost housing in India after 50s are much further from the approach established and experimented through the intervention of the United Nation Technical Assistance Administration; the same could

15. HEYWOOD 2013, p. 66-103.

16. COHEN 2012, pp. 14-17.

17. CASCIATO 2015,

be said for the north African interventions at Casablanca by the Team X members. It is important to remember the almost parallel CIAMs (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne).¹⁸ Therefore Casciato and Avermaete's research are among the few directly useful and available and are fundamental to accelerate the preliminary phases of the research. Also the issue OASE#82 of 2010 edited by Tom Avermaete and Johan Lagae, *L'Afrique, c'est chic. Architecture and Planning in Africa 1950-70* and the OASE#95 of 2015, *Crossing Boundaries Transcultural Practices in Architecture and Urbanism*, includes articles on Constantinos Doxiadis, Michel Écochard, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, Otto Koenigsberger. Another remarkable contemporary survey is presented by Josep Lluís Mateo and Krunoslav Ivanisin in *Middle East. Landscape, City, Architecture*.¹⁹ Mateo's research will update the selection of works which Paolo Portoghesi had already developed in 1982 with the Venice Biennale exhibition *Architettura nei paesi islamici: seconda mostra internazionale di architettura*²⁰. There is also another kind of historiography to be considered, as the one of Francescomaria Tedesco, Franco Cassano – sociologically and anthropologically based – and the fundamental *Orientalism* by Edward Said. For all this, this study is a first attempt to elaborate an Atlas rather than a History of architecture as outcome, and break the ground compared to the inevitable historiographical trends based on aesthetic “influences” and embedding the Architectural Atlas with multi-disciplinary datas and new interpretation elements of project already published but whose long term impact in the real world are scarcely assessed and considered.

The future Mediterranean as a Shared Reconstruction

A possible future outcome, moving from this study, could consist in the elaboration of possible scenarios for the future reconstruction and development projects in the extended Mediterranean needy post-conflict reconstructions and development throughout a multi-disciplinary strategy (architecture, economics, political sciences, data sciences) based on the collaboration between peers involving European and local professionals and intellectuals. For a half century the European Architectural legacy, grafted and entangled in underdeveloped Mediterranean countries,

18. MUMFORD 2000.

19. MATEO, IVANISIN 2013,

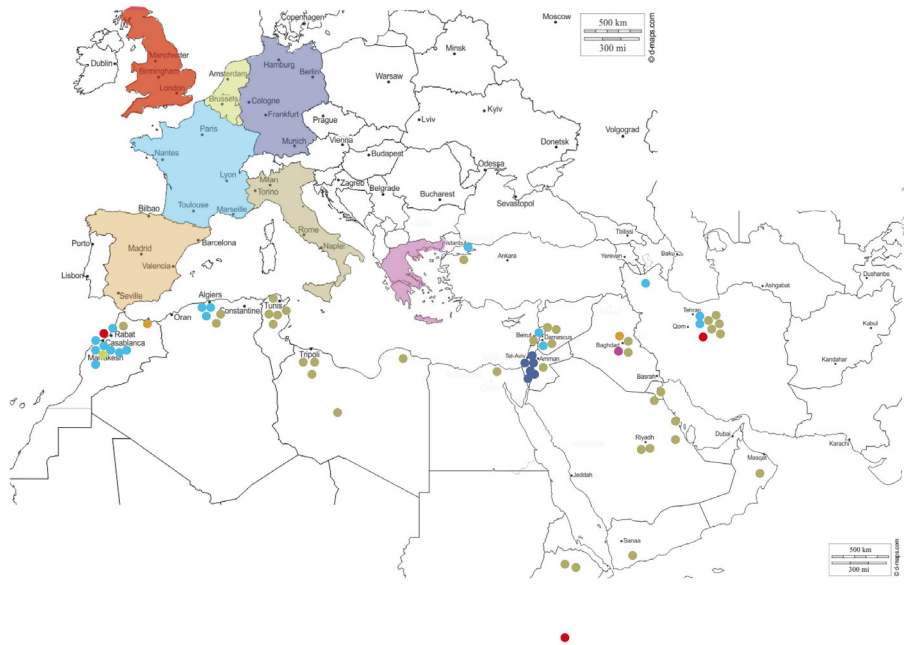
20. PORTOGHESI 1982.

contributed to the invention of their modernized collective and civic identity. After surveying those past projects it is time to admit mistakes and learn from the successful cases, renewing the role and the thinking of European Architects to build feasible scenarios to reconstruct the future extended Mediterranean through innovative public-private entrepreneurial initiatives. The architecture of the cities can still have a role to enhance and improve life quality and to address and advise policies and investments. The economist Giulio Sapelli presented lately in his book *Oltre il Capitalismo. Macchine, lavoro, proprietà*²¹ (Beyond Capitalism: Machines, Work, Property) a relevant perspective: “Africa will be in the very long run what in the short, very brief period will be the reconstruction of Libya and Mesopotamia. Germany and France will position themselves in Syria and in the Maghreb, competing with Trump, and of course the French will leave with respect to the other historically advantaged Europeans. A sort of irony of history: now it is Germany’s turn to hold the balance of European power and to extend it to an Africa wrongfully looked at only with the prospect of migration”. But the historical role of Italy cannot be disregarded. These past prominent public-private technical, economic and political network of synergies operating the Mediterranean (1945-1990s) have been scarcely explored as a whole system or as a variable combination of systems. They are neglected proofs of how the States actively shaped and created markets and steered innovative changes, in line with the recent approach presented by Mariana Mazzucato.²² The scenarios elaborated by this initial study will consider the current transformation of the political and economic framework (potential investors and sponsors, actors interested in rethinking development cooperation in the Mediterranean – renewable energies instead of oil, migrations, economic and political crises etc.) looking for a *new order*²³ – power and legitimation – including soft power mechanisms to build up a *shared culture* based on the contemporary qualities for a future sustainable Mediterranean habitat.

21. SAPELLI 2018.

22. MAZZUCATO 2015.

23. KISSINGER 2014.



A draft census of the Architectural works in the extended Mediterranean 1945-1980s. Projects funded and promoted by the Government (Public) and Private Companies. To be integrated and updated by future research.

European Architects in the Extended Mediterranean (1945-1980s): a draft uncompleted list of the most significant designers, technicians, civil servant involved in the Mediterranean (cooperation projects and private investments). Considering this draft list (about 40 architects) the number of projects to be analysed and considered for the Atlas would be from 100 to 150. A careful investigation will be conducted during the future investigation to integrate and update the Atlas.

France: **Henri Prost** (1874-1959), Morocco, Turkey; **Le Corbusier** (1887-1965), Algeria; **Alexandre Courtiers** (1904-1974), Morocco; **Roland Simounet** (1927-1996), Algeria; **Fernand Pouillon** (1912-1986), Algeria, Iran; **Georges Candilis** (1913-1995) ATBAT-Afrique, Morocco, Iran; **Alexis Josic** (1921-1991) ATBAT-Afrique, Morocco, Iran; **Shadrach Woods** (1923-1973) ATBAT-Afrique, Morocco, Iran; **Michel Écochard** (1906-1985), Morocco, Syria, Lebanon; **Vladimir Bodiansky** (1984-1966) ATBAT-Afrique, Morocco; **André Godard** (1881-1965), Iran.

Spain: **Enrique Nieto y Nieto** (1883-1954), Morocco (Melilla); **Josep Lluís Sert**, (1902-1983), Baghdad, Iraq.

Italy: **Pier Luigi Nervi** (1891-1979), Kuwait; **Gio Ponti** (1881-1979 with Fausto Melotti, Iran, Pakistan; **Luigi Piccinato** (1899-1983), Algeria, Lybia, Turkey; **Luigi Moretti** (1906, 1973), Algeria; **Eugenio Montuori** (1907-1982), Lybia; **Riccardo Morandi** (1902-1089), Iraq, Lybia; **Ludovico Quaroni** (1910-1987), Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, Iran (unbuilt projects); **BBPR Gian Luigi Banfi** (1910-1945), **Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso** (1909-2004), **Enrico Peressutti** (1908-1976), **Ernesto Nathan Rogers** (1909-1969), Kuwait, Arabic Peninsula; **Vincenzo Monaco** (1911-1966), Tunisia; **Marcello D'Olivo** (1921-1991), Gabon, Congo, Libia, Giordania; **Pietro Barucci** (1922-), Ethiopia, Tunisia; **Eugenio Galdieri**

(1925-2010), Iran, Oman, Afghanistan; **Luigi Pellegrin** (1925-2001), Nigeria, Ciad, Spagna, Senegal e Arabia Saudita; **Andrea Nonis** (1929-2017); **Paolo Portoghesi** (1931-), Sudan (unbuilt projects); **Guido Canella** (1933-2011), Eritrea; **Lucio Barbera** (1937-), Lybia, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Iran, Arabic Peninsula, Egypt.

Greece: **Constantinos Doxiadis** (1913-1975), Arabic Peninsula, Pakistan.

Poland: **Charles Abrams** (1902-1970), UN Commission, New York City Housing and Development Administration.

UK: **Amyas Connell** (1901- 1966), Kenya; **Alison** (1928-1993) and **Peter Smithson** (1923-2003), Morocco, **Edwin Maxwell Fry** (1899-1987), Iran; **Jane Drew** (1911-1996), Iran.

Germany: **Otto H. Koenigsberger** (1908-1999); **Eric Mendelsohn** (1887-1953), Tel Aviv; **Elsa Gidoni-Mandelstamm** (1901-1978), Tel Aviv; **Lotte Cohn** (1893-1983), Tel Aviv; **Genia Averbuch** (1909-1977), Tel Aviv.

Netherlands: **Ernest Weissmann** (1903-1985), United Nations (Geneva, New York); **Aldo Van Eyck** (1918-1999), Morocco.

Companies, International Organizations: ONU, Italian Companies: Italcosult, Tecnosider, Ing. Lodigiani S.p.A, CSC - Costruzioni Stradali e Civili S. A. of Lugano, ENI, Ghella, etc.

Offices: ATBAT Afrique, Honegger-Afrique, QUAS Quaroni Associati, MEFIT, PROGRESS Lucio Barbera, etc.

Bibliography

AYMARD 1977

Maurice Aymard 1977, *Spazi*, In Fernand Braudel 1977, *Il mediterraneo, Lo spazio, la storia, gli uomini, le tradizioni*, Bompiani, p. 131.

BERGDOLL 2010

Barry Bergdoll 2010, *Foreword*, In Jean Francoise Lejeune, Michelangelo Sabatino, *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and contested identities*, Routledge 2010, p. xv.

BONTEMPELLI 1928

Massimo Bontempelli 1928, *Realismo magico*, in "900", July 1928.

BRAUDEL 1977

Fernand Braudel. 1977, *Il mediterraneo, Lo spazio, la storia, gli uomini, le tradizioni*, Bompiani, p. 7.

BOUCHARD, FERME 2013

Norma Bouchard, Valerio Ferme 2013, *Italy and the Mediterranean: Words, Sounds, and Images of the Post-Cold War Era*, Palgrave Macmillan US, p. 27.

CASCIATO 2015

Maristella Casciato, Urbanization Lecture: *Transnational Urbanism and Post-colonial Challenges*, South Asian Institute Harvard, March 31, 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv2b715gf8o>

CHRISTIE 2006

Neil Christie, *From Constantine to Charlemagne: an archaeology of Italy, AD 300-800*, Ashgate Publishing, Hampshire, 2012.

L'ADC L'architettura delle città. The Journal of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni, n. 11/2017

DEL MONACO 2012

Anna Irene Del Monaco, *Città e limes, Roma, Beijing, New York*, Nuova Cultura, 2012.

DE SETA 2014

Cesare de Seta, *L'Italia nello specchio del Grand Tour*, Rizzoli 2014.

GRAVAGNUOLO 2010

Benedetto Gravagnuolo 2010, *From Schinkel to Le Corbusier. The Myth of the Mediterranean*, In Lejeune J.F., Sabatino M. 2010, *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and contested identities*, Routledge, p. 16.

KISSINGER 2014

Henry Kissinger, *World Order*, Penguin Books 2014.

HEYWOOD 2013

Colin Heywood, *Braudel revisited: the Mediterranean world, 1600–1800*, “Mediterranean Historical Review”, Vol. 28, n.1, p. 66-103.

MATEO, IVANISIN 2013

Joseph Lluís Mateo, Krunoslav Ivanisin 2013, *Middle East. Landscape, City, Architecture*, Park Books 2013.

MAZZUCATO 2015

Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*, Public Affairs 2015.

MUMFORD 2000

Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, MIT Press 2000.

PIRENNE 1937

Henry Pirenne 1937 (2005), Maometto e Carlo Magno, Laterza.

PORTOGHESI 1982

Paolo Portoghesi, *Architettura nei paesi islamici: seconda mostra internazionale di architettura*, Electa 1982.

SAPELLI 2018

Giulio Sapelli, *Oltre il Capitalismo. Macchine, lavoro, proprietà*, Guerrini e Associati/goWare 2018.