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## **IMPRESSUM**

### **Journal of Mediterranean Cities** **Volume 1, Issue 1, December 2021**

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# Journal of Mediterranean Cities

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## About the Journal

The journal aims to link interdisciplinary human habitat studies in the EURO-MED region, from architecture and urbanism to regional planning, including the relationship between human-dominated and natural systems. It seeks to pursue the goals of multi-stakeholder operations such as SUDs, UfM Action Plans and more, towards resilient cities and sustainable social structures.

The growing needs to foster a deeper understanding of standards and emerging aspects in the region lead to the need for a scientific platform in which academics, professionals and stakeholders work together to deal with and take action to address the rising forces in our cities. Therefore, governmental, and non-governmental organizations from different countries come together to lay the foundations and set pillars for achieving the goals and needs of today and tomorrow.

Accordingly, the journal provides science-led strategic insight and guidance for sustainable and resilient cities, with a general perspective on coastal cities, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean region. Topics draw on scientific knowledge and research to make regional policies and practices as future-proof as possible. The Schools of Architecture and Urbanism are considered as potential driving forces and hubs for the profound science-led transformation and integration in the region, and thus, the Journal aims to bring together schools of Architecture and Urban Studies from different regions, in one platform.

## Coverages

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- Water and Land
- Dwelling and Communities
- Heritage & Vernacular Studies
- Environment and Sustainability
- Transportation Systems
- Coasts and Fortifications
- Education

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The manuscript submission and peer-review process are broken down into the following steps:

- The author submits a manuscript;
- The Editor assigns Reviewers to the manuscript;
- The Reviewers review the manuscript;
- The Editor drafts a decision to be sent to the Author.

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## EDITORIAL

"Journal of Mediterranean Cities" is dedicated to focusing on habitat studies and challenges facing our cities. The journal provides science-led strategic insight and guidance for sustainable and resilient cities, with a general perspective on coastal cities, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean region. Topics draw on scientific knowledge and research to make regional policies and practices as future-proof as possible. The Schools of Architecture and Urbanism are considered as potential driving forces and hubs for the profound science-led transformation and integration in the region, and thus, the Journal aims to bring together schools of Architecture and Urban Studies from different regions, in one platform. All articles are published in English and undergo a peer-review process.

### Educational Technology

*Journal of Mediterranean Cities* has an international editorial board of eminent experts in their field from Algeria, Bangladesh, Botswana, Bulgaria, Egypt, Erbil, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Netherlands, Nigeria, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Prague, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States of America. We are confident that JMC will attract a great number of editors, eminent scientists in the field. The selection will be based on the activities of the editors and their desire to contribute to the development of the journal. *Journal of Mediterranean Cities* provides a platform for academics and scientists professionals to refer and discuss recent progress in the fields of their interests. Authors are encouraged to contribute articles that are not published or not under review in any other journal. Each submitted manuscript is evaluated based on the originality of its contribution to the field of scholarly publishing, the soundness of its theory and methodology, the coherence of its analysis and its availability to readers (grammar and style). The normal turn-around time for the evaluation of manuscripts is one to two months from the date of receipt.

Submission of an original manuscript to the journal will be taken to mean that it represents original work not previously published, that is not being considered elsewhere for publication; that the author is willing to assign the copyright to the journal as per a contract that will be sent to the author just before the publication and, if accepted, it will be published in print and online, and it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, for commercial purposes, in any language, without the consent of the publisher. The names and email addresses entered in this journal site will be used exclusively for the stated purposes of this journal and will not be made available for any other purpose or to any other party. The requirement for the submission of a paper implies that it has not been published before; that it is not under consideration for publication anywhere else.

When considering submitting an article, the Editors have provided the following criteria to assist authors with preparing their submissions:

**Originality** – The author should ensure that the manuscript has not been previously published nor is being considered by another journal.

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**Writing** – Please write in good English (American or British usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these). For non-native English speakers, and perhaps even for some native English speakers, grammar, spelling, usage, and punctuation of the texts are very important for an effective presentation. Hence, manuscripts are expected to be written in a clear, cogent, and readily understandable by an international readership.

Manuscripts must be submitted online. Electronic submission reduces the editorial processing and reviewing time. As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission compliance with all the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors who do not adhere to the following guidelines:

- The submission has not been previously published or presented to another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).
- The submission file is in OpenOffice, Microsoft Word, RTF, or WordPerfect document file format.
- Where available, URLs for the references have been provided.
- Where available, DOI numbers for the references have been provided.

The text is single-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics, rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures, and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the Author Guidelines. If submitting to a peer-reviewed section of the journal, the instructions in **Ensuring a Blind Review** have been followed.

A manuscript goes through the peer-review process. Authors submit manuscripts to **Editorial office** via the online system. The acknowledgement letter should be sent to the author to confirm the receipt of the manuscript. The Chief Editor first reviews manuscripts. Chief Editor is assisted by Section Editors (could also be Co- or Associate Editors). The Editor assigns a Section Editor to see the manuscript through the complete review process and return it with a recommendation or decision. The manuscript is checked to see if it meets the scope of the Journal and its formal requirements. If it is incorrect or unsuitable, the author should be informed, and the manuscript filed (or returned if requested) – direct rejection. Manuscripts that are not suitable for publication in the Journal are rejected. A Rejection letter is sent to the author stating the reason for rejection. If the manuscript conforms to the aims and scope of the Journal and formally abides by the Instructions to Authors, it is sent out for review. Depending on the type of paper, it could be accepted immediately for publication (invited Editorial, Book review etc.) by the Chief Editor. Check that the manuscript has been written and styled in accordance with the Journal style; that it carries an abstract (if applicable), keywords, correct reference system etc. and check that the correct blinding system has been used. If anything is missing, Editor in Chief through the associate editor will ask the authors to complete it before the manuscript is sent out for review. The manuscript is sent out for review. The reviewer reads and evaluates the manuscript and eventually sends a review report to the Chief Editor. The time for review can be set to 2-6 weeks depending on the discipline (more time is usually given to papers in the humanities and social sciences). Make sure to provide the reviewer with clear instructions for the work, e.g., outlined in the form of a Review report or several questions to be considered. Based on the reviewers' comments the Chief Editor decides to:

- Accept the manuscript without further revision
- Accept after revision
- Ask authors to resubmit
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An acceptance letter is sent to the author and the final manuscript is forwarded to production. Sometimes, the authors are requested to revise in accordance with reviewers' comments and submit the updated version or their manuscript to the Chief Editor. The time for review can be set to 2-6 weeks depending on the discipline and type of additional data, information or argument required. The authors are requested to make substantial revisions to their manuscripts and resubmit for a new evaluation. A rejection letter is sent to the author and the manuscript is archived. Reviewers might be informed about the decision. After review, a manuscript goes to the Copy Editor who will correct the manuscript concerning the correct referencing system, confirmation with the journal style and layout. When Copy Editor finishes his/her work they send manuscripts to the Layout editor. Layout Editor is responsible for structuring the original manuscript, including figures and tables, into an article, activating necessary links and preparing the manuscript in the various formats, in our case PDF and HTML format. When Layout Editor finishes his/her job they send manuscripts to Proof Editor. Proof Editor confirms that the manuscript has gone through all the stages and can be published.

This issue contains 2 articles. The editors seek to publish articles considering urban actions in the area of Littoral Territories, Urban Studies, Housing Strategies, Heritage & Vernacular Studies, Environmental Sciences, and educational systems in coastal regions.

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With kind regards,  
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## Mediterranean: A Certain Genius of Inhabiting

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### ABSTRACT

*Embracing a geographic reality that connects the East to the West, and the North to the South, the Mediterranean basin is a melting pot of landscape diversity, which embodies equally distinct cultures, languages, behaviours, creeds, and many other identity traits, intercrossed in a shared History. But above all plurality, is it possible to identify a unity in the approach to the act of inhabiting, of architecting – in an etymological sense of building, of creating Man's place – landscape and, consequently and intrinsically, housing, through processes that, albeit formally apart, are very close in essence? Through the analysis of different authors, with different approaches – from Braudel's historiography to the traveling impressionism of Matvejevitch, through Orlando Ribeiro's passionate but thorough scrutiny – we will try to reveal a transversal inhabitation genius, not confined to a determined loci, in search of that which translates a wider ethos: the Mediterranean.*

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### 1. Introduction: The Mediterranean

What is the Mediterranean? This question, geographically unusual as it may seem, because of its apparently immediate answer, embodies a complexity that unveils on the direct proportion of the deepening of the reflection around it. Orlando Ribeiro conceptualized the Mediterranean as follows: "as a natural unit it is essentially defined by position, climate, the unfolding of its orography", adding that "as a human individuality, the resemblance that its ways of life present from one end to the other, for only once, and by a few centuries alone, can we talk about a political organization that encompassed the whole: the Roman Empire" (2011, p. 37).

It then appears as more than mere geographic boundaries, something that, from earthly elements, can sublime itself into an essence that cannot be confined or explained only through physical or abstract administrative frontiers. Fernand Braudel also adopted a cautious approach in defining the boundaries of the Mediterranean, comparing it to a "luminous beam, whose intensity fades without being possible to definitely establishing the line between shadow and light" (1995, p. 193).

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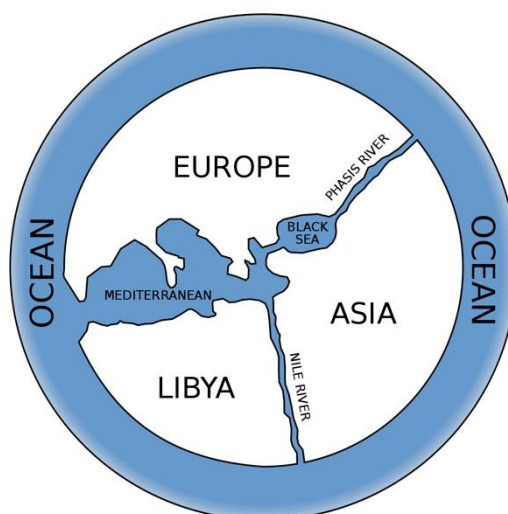
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It is then less baffling Predrag Matvejevitich's conclusion, immediately upon opening his *Mediterranean Breviary*, about the state of the art of setting the Mediterranean's frontiers: "we aren't exactly sure how far it extends" (2019, p. 19). A doubt that ranges from Classic Antiquity. Albeit the obvious circumscription of the mediterraneus within its margins and the narrow opening guarded by the Pillars of Hercules (Mons Calpe to the North and Mons Abila to the South) something else was foreseeable. In Anaximander's map – or that which is thought to be its faithful representation, predecessor of even Ptolemy's "Geography" – the Mediterranean, center of the known world, materializes the author's cosmogonic conception of apeiron (Brotton, 2013, pp. 25 – 26).



**Figure 1.** Representation of Anaximander's map  
([https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Anaximander\\_world\\_map-en.svg](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Anaximander_world_map-en.svg))

Presenting a diffuse concept of ethology, this idea postulates the existence of an overseeing identity, original, from where all the micro identities stem. This is to say that in the Mediterranean coexists a duality that makes it simultaneously divergent and convergent, a polysemic point of concentration and dissemination of fundamental values that are embodied and expressed in different manners, while, nonetheless, forming a heterogeneous cultural unity. This later evolves to the roman concept of *orbis terrarium* (the limits of the terrestrial horizon). Even knowing the world beyond their World, the romans abridged the concept of civilization to the Mediterranean, in a deliberate form of chauvinism, conceived to unitarily state an authentic Mediterranean culture. In order to understand it, four fundamental factors must be considered: climate, orography, movement and people.

### 1.1. Climate

The Mediterranean climate, which is exerts a relatively homogeneous influence throughout the Mediterranean basin, is fundamentally characterized by its dryness, thermal intensity and longevity of its summers, and the amenity of the winters. Precipitation, more uncertain than scarce, concentrates in short periods (mainly during autumn and spring), a climatic originality that originates violent rainfalls, in a torrential regime.

Given its location, the Mediterranean exists in the feeble threshold between the desert's barrenness, the Atlantic humidity, and the continental harshness. And even though it disappears in those areas, the Mediterranean fulfils itself in their shared rims.

An example of the importance of climate in the Mediterranean is its relationship with the prosperity, but also decline, of the Roman Empire. Rome's dominance is associated to longstanding favourable climatic conditions in the region, in average terms. On the other side, the end of the Western Roman Empire, in 476 A.D. (the beginning of Odoacer's reign), corresponds to a period of significant cooling of Northern Europe's climate, forcing large masses of population to roam South, searching for more favourable conditions of life, in an "invasion" that would, in time, precipitate the fall of the Roman Empire (Comellas, 2011, p. 154 – 162).

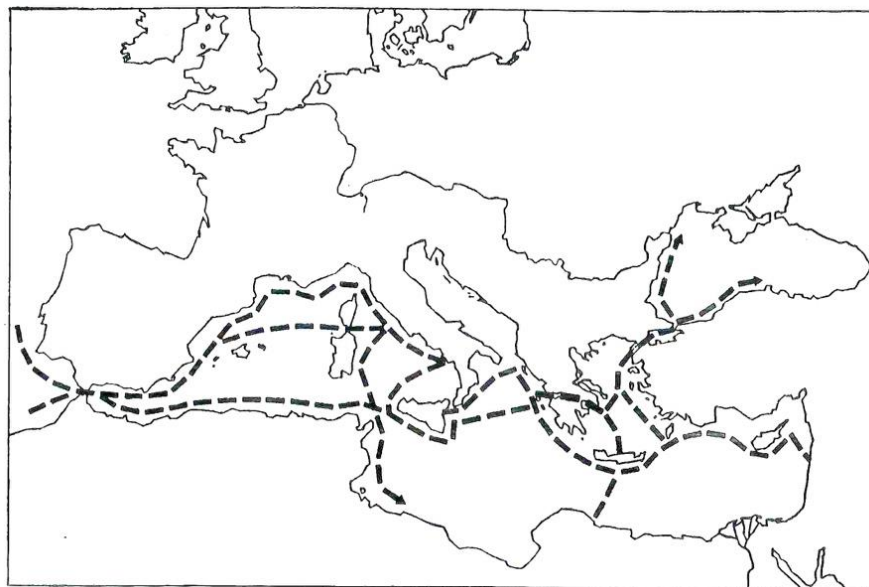
### 1.2. Orography

Orography is determinant, for "the Mediterranean is reduced to a fringe between mountain and sea" (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 46), usually dominated by limestone, "background of white fleshless mountains, provided of nothing but shreds of reddish soil (...) and one of the reasons for its poorness" (ibid., p. 38). The exiguity of lowlands and even more of flatlands – originating an intricate hydrographic network – causes that both water and fertility, which allow permanence and survival, are achieved through a "sustained effort, in which victory is achieved only by struggle and maintained by uninterrupted vigilance" (ibid., p. 49), including the removal and organization of rocks in farmland, more notably in the pharaonic works of Mediterranean terraces – "more sweat was poured to build dry-stone walls on the slopes (...) than to build the pyramids" (Matvejevitch, 2019, p. 77). In the Mediterranean, one occupies more what is possible, rather than what is desired.

### 1.3. Movement

Movement in the Mediterranean is a decisive issue for population, economic and cultural dynamics. In such a way, that it can be understood as an ecosystem, defined not only by its variables of state, but also by the relations between them (flows).

"The Mediterranean is united only by the movement of men" (Braudel, 1995, p. 310), a theory which transforms this region in a "space-movement". First of all, through the sea, completing and complementing margins: "it is not the water that connects Mediterranean regions, but the seafaring peoples" (ibid.).

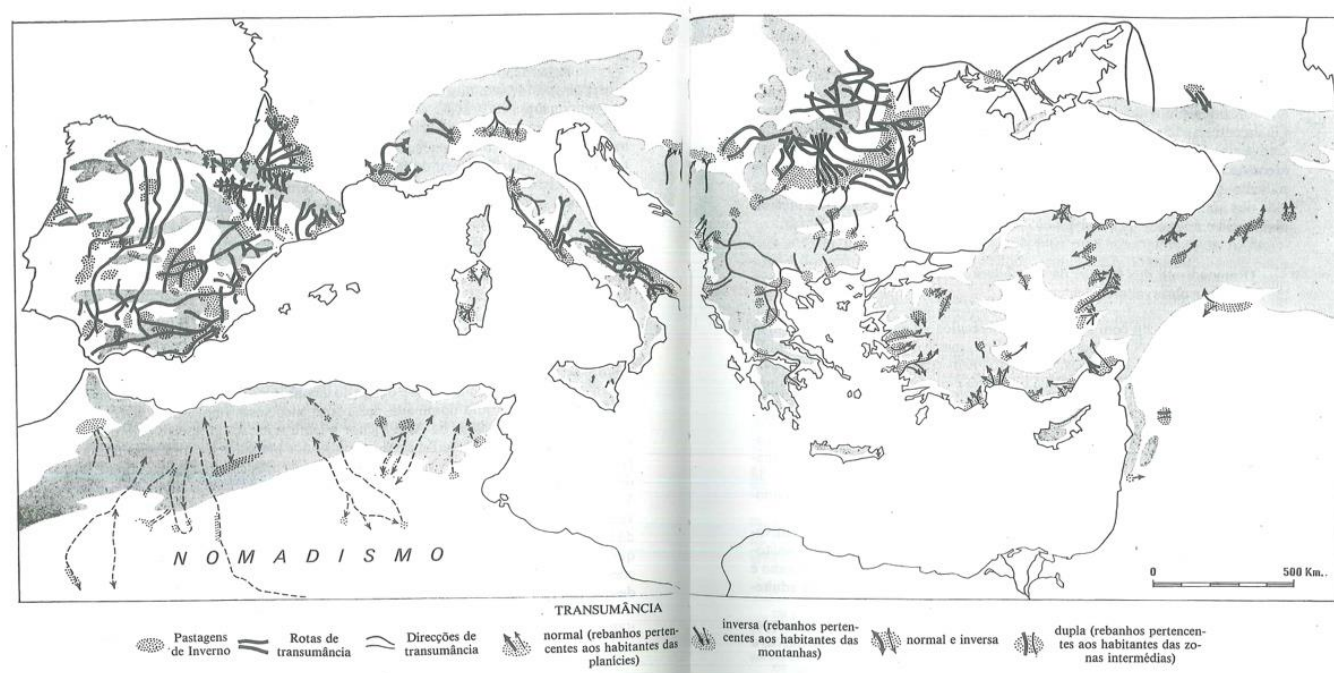


**Figure 2.** Navigation routes in the Mediterranean (Jabouille, 1996, p. 22)

By land, in addition to trading routes, transhumance and nomadism set the pace to both people and landscapes in the Mediterranean, originating intense exchanges. Migration and the itinerancy of labour and working hands are trademarks of the Mediterranean Man: peasants move to the mountain, mountain dwellers move to the cities, Southerners to the North, Easterners to the West, and Westerners to overseas.

This circulation of people carries knowledge, culture, tools, craftsmanship, practices, sayings – similar gibberish and even profanity, such as the finger gesture, the Latin *digitus impudicus* and the Greek *katapygon*) – and myths.

Not only through trade, but also through tourism, dating back as far as the Classic Antiquity, with many authors sharing their trips around the Mediterranean (Jabouille, 1996, p. 56 – 63). What would they say about the contemporary Mediterranean management of the migratory crisis?



**Figure 3.** Transhumance and nomadism in the Mediterranean (Braudel, 1995, pp. 114 – 115)

The *pax romana* played a key part in this process, allowing an unparalleled level of cultural dissemination and assimilation. Lucien Febvre, while imagining the surprise that Herodotus might feel watching 1940's peasants, was certain that Pliny, the Elder would not feel any awkwardness (Braudel, 2001, p. 336). In Portugal, the village founded under the roman administration, two thousand years ago, are one of three defining historic moments for the evolution of rural cadaster (Beires, Amaral & Ribeiro, 2013, p. 92). As summed up by Ovid: "*romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem*".

#### 1.4. People

Orlando Ribeiro saw the mediterranean Man as a “transhumant shepherd, seafarer, (...) mostly, a crude worker of the land” (2011, p. 198), that was predestined to localism by his surrounding environment, but whom the sea condemned to a life of bonding and relating to his next of kin. Accepting Durkheim's theory that “social organization was a model for spatial organization, which is its decal” (Silvano, 2010, p. 14), the mediterranean man is depicted by his landscape.

Again in Orlando Ribeiro's words, now about the algarvians (the southernmost region of Portugal), we have a reading of the mediterranean folks' character: “But the Algarve is not the Garden of Eden. Take a look at how fields and woods are enclosed by sterile limestone outcrops. Take a look at how, everywhere, stone walls, beautiful prickly pear hedges, sparse houses and the intertwining of roads, show how much this is an occupied land. Emigration is a resource and a necessity. The algarvian carries with him his way of accommodating, his open and welcoming appearance, his taste for laughter and talking; with the vivacity that made him famous he is, in geography and temperament, the most meridional of the Portuguese.” (1998, p. 164). Hard working, sacrificed, deeply connected to the land and, in spite all, joyful and bold: this is the mediterranean temper. “Without even talking about swindle. In certain cities, mostly in their seaports, it is more than a simple skill: it is one of the Mediterranean sciences, or even a form of art” (Matvejevitch, 2019, p. 29).

This Mediterranean spirit shares History and blood, in a miscegenation process that crosses Phoenician trading posts, Greek colonies and Roman provinces, up until our days. Imaginary itself, is pooled through a profound memory, inscribed in mythology (the mythological underground rivers are nothing but a mystification of karsts and aquifers), which translates the intense cultural circulation, leaving each margin of the Mediterranean reflecting about its significant and opposite other, just like a single cultural and social ecosystem, in a shared catharsis, because “no single one people gathers all the Mediterranean traits: they are scattered through” (ibid., p. 112).

For the Mediterranean people, time is relative, and so is the separation between the living and the dead. For that which is old and the dead are clearly present today and in the living, as if myth and reality fused.

#### 1.5. The strange Mediterranean familiarity

From his journey through the Mediterranean, Paul Theroux tells us of a transversal feeling to the locals of every country, revealed by a common phrase: “this is not one country – this is many countries” (Theroux, 1996, p. 75). This reveals yet another particularity of the Mediterranean. If the Mediterranean ethos covers whole countries, it ranges only over parts of others, rarely going beyond the first significant elevation of the terrain. “As soon as you cross the first mountain, the connection with the sea is interrupted, and the region transforms (...) in inland” (Matvejevitch, 2019, p. 92), a passage that, although referring to the region of Mostar, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, perfectly describes the peculiar relation between seaside Algarve and inland, where people from the latter, when descending the hills, say “I'm going to the Algarve”, because they do not identify with it. Therefore, nations better understand and fully fulfil themselves in the Mediterranean pooling with foreign countries, rather than inside their own borders. The Mediterranean condition is a more comfortable “skin” than the national condition. It is a homeland within nations, as a strange Mediterranean familiarity, which penetrates even language, given that “it is then observable (...) a cohabitation of two or several languages: vernacular idioms of Mediterranean affiliation and the national language, said literary, of more or less continental origin” (ibid., p. 60). Maybe this is why it is so frequent the lack of understanding between that which we can call the Mediterranean community and the rest of the European Union, cleaving North and South.

## 2. Inhabiting the Mediterranean

How, then, is the Mediterranean inhabited? How does one architect – as a verb, the exercise of mediation between the needs, possibilities and conditionings, especially environmental ones – that process of inhabiting, in the etymological sense of building, of creating shelter for Man, a basic need, as synthesized by Alejandro de la Sota, “Man needed shelter, he needed to bring some order to his life on earth: he built” (Puente, 2002, p. 134). And how does one achieve that in a space that, more than geographically, is located in an ethos, in a genius of inhabiting that can't be confined to a single or specific loci?

If humanized landscapes, such as the Mediterranean ones, are “those which Man modelled to satisfy his needs” (Caldeira Cabral, 1993, p. 46), and housing is “a product of Man, a fact of culture, and it will be in Man himself and in the laws of his cultural creation that we must seek their reason to be and the decisive explanation of the house which is his work” (Oliveira & Galhano, 2003, p. 14), the inhabiting is explained via the inhabitant, whom, in turn, is explained by his surroundings, which over him exert a deterministic influence. To put it differently, “around architecture there are important things happening. Climate and landscape (...) are all part of these surroundings that give architecture a reason to be” (Serra, 2006, p. 12). How does the Mediterranean express itself in landscape and urban organization, and housing itself?

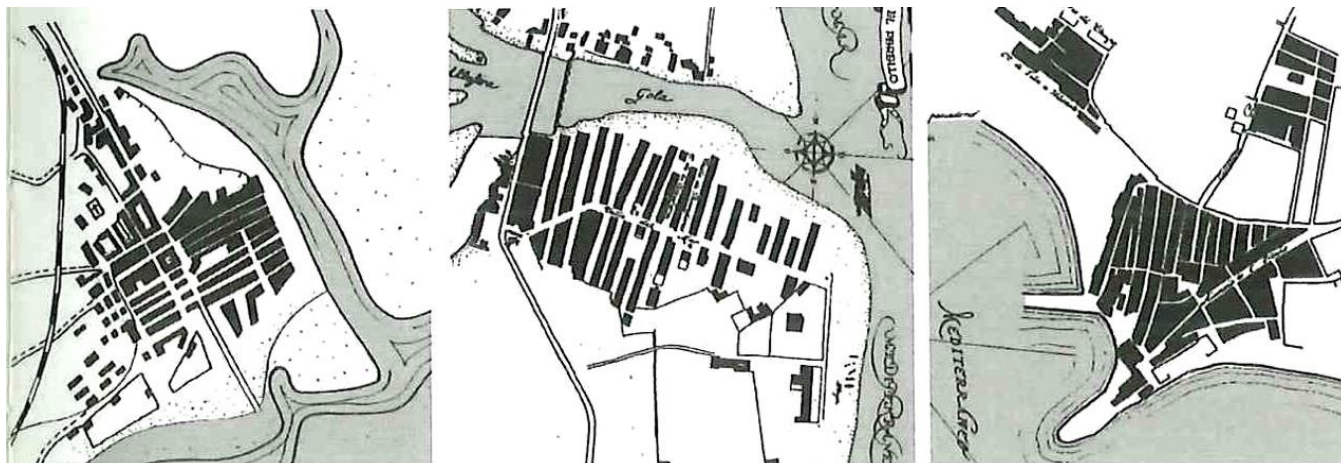
### 2.1. The city in the landscape

It is on the mountain, where the Mediterranean “has given (...) its first steps” (Braudel, 1995, p. 62), that we find the original settlements, which immediately express the umbilical relation with the landscape. Avoiding the risks, violence, and insalubrity that the torrential rainfall associates to the plains and lowlands (*aqua, vita et mors*), it is on the slopes – so often deeply and costly modeled for that purpose – that the pioneers of the Mediterranean humanization have settled, in spite of the inconveniency and difficulty in accessing water.

Through agglomeration, for houses, just like animals, get together to protect themselves from harsh winds and to share shades that allow to endure the blazing heat: “all of the Mediterranean is a land of villages that punctuate, from far to far, the fields where Man does not work or live. Villages of close quartered houses, sometimes more than compact, actually crowded, not seldom hanging from high spots and, therefore, dissociated from the fields.” (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 138).

The urban fabric of seaside settlements always relates – usually adopting an orthogonal shape – to the nearby sea. The two verses from the algarvian poet António Pereira “I am an algarvian / and my street ends in the sea” synthesize not only the Algarve, but the entire relationship that, in the mediterranean coastal edge, is established between cities and the sea.





**Figure 4.** Habitational settlements of Fusetá (PT), El Perelló e Benidorm (ES) (Tostões, 2016, p. 79)

Seaside settlements are always connected to a harbor, which can be bigger or smaller, and to a mountainous counterpart, located in an uncomfortable but high ground, which allows control over the coastal recess.

## 2.2. The house

The Mediterranean house is identifiable, more than by volume or aesthetics, by the relations established with its surroundings.

Immediately, with the climate. The Mediterranean house always has concerns regarding climatization, which translate into structural adaptations. Its architecture is one of living, and not so much of architectural objects, it is not an end, but a means to give something to those that will inhabit it. That is why exterior openings are few and narrow, with high ceilings to preserve freshness (amplified by inner patios, with water, vegetation, or both), *reixa* (a form of wood lattice, or equivalent) in doors and/or large windows, an *açoteia* (flat rooftop) as a way of using the scorching sun to dry fruits or other products of the land.

This is why, throughout the Mediterranean, constructive units and repeated architectural elements and patterns are identifiable, without prejudice of their formal adaptation to specific contexts and available materials, which create a shared identity, with unique local expressions. This is the case of the rounded house (Ribeiro, 2013, pp. 61 – 62), of the vaulted roofs, *façades*, patios, ovens, chimneys, cisterns, or alcoves, as documented by Mafalda Pacheco (Tostões, 2016, pp. 71 – 97).

## 3. Where's the Mediterranean?

If architecture – both of landscape and buildings – is an expression of civilizational values, is it today, in the national context of Portugal, faithful to the Mediterranean ethos? In face of what has been exposed, is it legitimate to question where has the Mediterranean gone, in the Portuguese context? Is present days' architecture an identity factor or, on the contrary, a mischaracterization one? Certainly not an evolution one, as it results not from a progressive metamorphosis, but from a substitution process, imposed by external values.

### 3.1. Is Portugal Mediterranean?

Matvejevitch excludes Portugal from his Mediterranean reflections. Braudel claims that "the Portuguese example carries us outside the boundaries of the Mediterranean" (1995, p. 63) – while, nevertheless, he points out several examples from Portugal as corollaries of the Mediterranean ethos.

Orlando Ribeiro (1998) concludes that Portugal is Atlantic by position, but Mediterranean by calling.

This sense of Mediterranean appropriation in Portugal is so deeply rooted, that the messianic belief of Father António Vieira in the Fifth Empire is founded on a direct heritage from Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, domains that grew and expanded from inside the Mediterranean Basin, as maritime and commercial potentates, beyond their military power.

Of Portugal one could then say to be, in a fantastic expression by Ricardo Agarez, a Mediterranean riddle in the Atlantic, even though it has committed a "good treason" to its geographic and ethologic alma mater through the Diaspora, initiating a long process of deviation of the centralizing axis of the Mediterranean (in a westbound course, after changing from Mesopotamia to Greece, and from here to Rome), broadening its horizons with transatlantic and intercontinental journeys.

This geographic opening to the world by Portuguese seafaring forces the Mediterranean to share its global centrality, but it also allows that, through the maritime and overseas expansion, the Mediterranean identity is carried to new boundaries, consolidating, for example, in the açoteias (flat rooftops) of Mozambique or in the "scissor roofing" (typically from Tavira, in the Algarve) that will appear in the Portuguese Indies (Ribeiro, 2013).

### 3.2. Can the Mediterranean save the world?

Mediterranean heritage is nowadays rapidly eroding. "The disappearing of regional houses (...) is also another aspect of that general movement of leveling that characterizes our time, fatal corollary of industrialization, which sets the erasing of essential affective values and the fascinating diversity of the world – the end of a Humanism that was a philosophy of life." (Oliveira & Galhano, 2003, p. 374), at the same time that "is ongoing, from some time ago, a systematic destruction of traditional systems (...) a phenomenon (...) that promotes deep mischaracterization of the traditional landscape (...), namely of its identification with the Mediterranean imprint" (Duarte Gomes, 2017).

Modern life, obsessed with efficiency and speed (distances are measured in time, not in distances) is sentencing to death the old villages "set peacefully on high grounds, accessible by winding paths, when not by stairs" (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 139), for the primacy of the automobile does not sympathize with roads for people, donkeys and oxen.

The criticism enclosed in Paul Virilio's reflection, that through his "grey ecology" attacks the pollution of Nature-Grandeur that degrades distances and the duration of time, can perfectly fit in a defense of a "Mediterraneanity": "the world has shrunk, has shrunk terribly, we no longer travel, we dislocate" (Virilio, 2000, p. 92). Because the Mediterranean clashes, by lagging, with contemporary world: "educated in respect for very old civilization values, the Mediterranean does not unconditionally sacrifice its reason to live to time, money and efficiency – the three great modern-day idols" (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 30).

When analyzed in depth, this Mediterranean essence, slow and inefficient, but telluric and humanist, supplies effective answers and mechanisms to contemporary challenges, that question models based on infinite growth in a world of finite resources. Its characteristics even connect with modern degrowth principles (Latouche, 2020), of which we can stand out the values of sharing and cooperating, the adaptation of productive apparatus to the conditionings of the environment and the reduction of waste.

To be able to contribute to the healing of this conflict, it is mandatory that landscape and buildings architecture respect the Mediterranean ethos, (re)interpreting and (re)designing it in current time.

Recovering, in landscape and housing models, the principles of the lowest level of energy and the respect for resources and their limits, sparingly exploring them, in similarity to the traditional inhabiting of the Mediterranean. Recovering the respect for the scarcity and importance (value, not price) of the land, something that contrasts with the contemporary carelessness in soil and space management, without understanding them as a strategic reserve of fertility and productive capacity, not increasable by mere will or positive thinking.

Recovering and maybe once again lighting the humanity beacon that Mediterranean culture withstood for so long in Europe – which it founded, educated and raised – and the World, and to which's eclipse the frailty of the European Union is not foreign.

Recovering the fundament of the very success of “Mediterraneanity”.

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## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

## Ethics statements

Studies involving animal subjects: No animal studies are presented in this manuscript.

Studies involving human subjects: No human studies are presented in this manuscript.

Inclusion of identifiable human data: No potentially identifiable human images or data is presented in this study.

## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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## The Awareness Level as a Sine qua non Condition for the Citizen Involvement Level in Urban Actions

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### ABSTRACT

*Every urban action is the result of a thoughtful or unthoughtful decision and a common product between the city's decision-maker and those who live and experience it. The importance of citizen involvement in urban actions is more than obvious. The person who lives the city cannot be just a witness or a simple user. The citizenship definition refers to this involvement through the city manufacturing. However, who can get involved? The citizen who is not an expert in all aspects of urban life should have a high level of awareness in order to become positively involved. This level of awareness depends on several factors, between educations, willingness, it is imperative to think about ways to increase this awareness in order to increase involvement itself. In this contribution, we will study the citizen involvement indices related to the level of awareness, based on one Algerian society case: El Oued city.*

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### 1. Introduction

Urban actions unite actors. Indeed, in the best of all possible worlds, these actions should be collective actions, in partnership and mobilizing all types of actors, including citizens. Through its expertise in use and its ownership of the city, it is a key player in any urban action. If in some countries, the involvement of citizens is done systematically, in other countries such as Algeria this requires substantive work on the call for participation and the right to involvement and see even the sense of involvement. This sense of involvement depends on several factors, between education, willingness, and possibility of involvement, it is imperative to think about ways to increase this awareness in order to increase involvement itself. Urban education and inducement for participation and involvement are basic when it comes to raise

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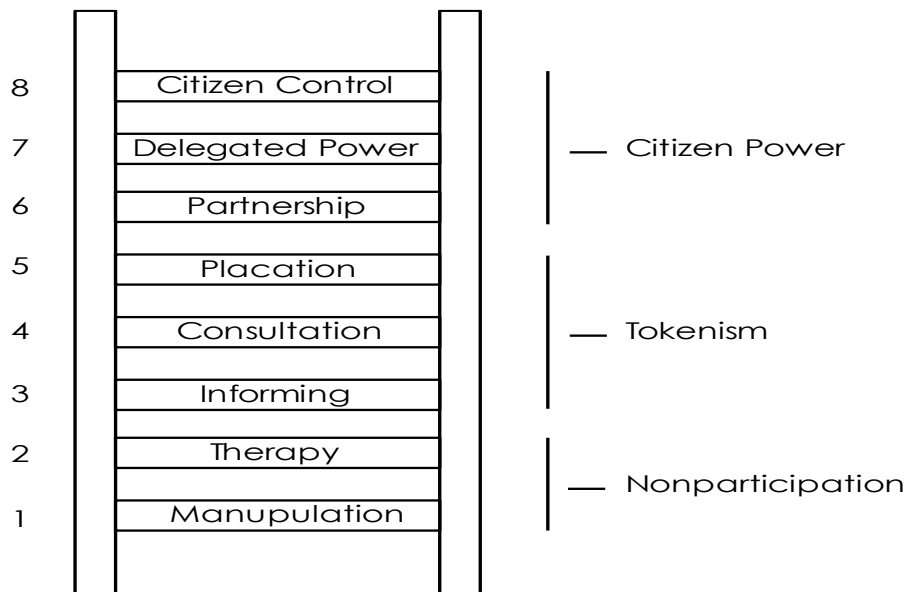
KORTI, R., Mouhoubi, N., & BOUDEMAGH, S. (2021). The Awareness Level as a Sine qua non Condition for the Citizen Involvement Level in Urban Actions. Journal of Mediterranean Cities, 1(1), 11-22. [https://doi.org/10.38027/mediterranean-cities\\_vol1no1\\_2](https://doi.org/10.38027/mediterranean-cities_vol1no1_2)

the level of participation. In this contribution, we will study the indices of citizen involvement in relation to the level of awareness, based on Algerian society case which is El Oued.

## 2. Citizen involvement and urban actions

"Urban" public action being "any action that contributes to the development and operation of towns and cities" (ARAB N, IDT J, LE FLEUVE M P. 2009. p188), it is characterized by its complexity of fact that it involves a multitude of actors and a crossroads of interests. It is successful when its practice is done in a concerted manner and becomes accepted by bringing together all the players. The citizen being the main element and the very center of these actions, he is called to participate and get involved in these actions.

The Participation as a concept is generally defined as the gathering of concern, it is the guarantor of the acceptability of the action by its recipients and users, minimizes the risk of rejection of the project and the feeling of exclusion inhabitants. The involvement of citizens in urban action is essential for its success, even it is very difficult to translate the participation concept in urban actions. The search for methods and tools to facilitate this participation is an issue for all actors involved in urban actions. Several levels of participation have been identified, the most observed level of participation in most countries is the so-called passive participation (MDSFS & ADS 2007), where the user and / or the inhabitant is a mere spectator of the changes that affect their environment and their living environment. He is totally excluded from the decision-making process where he is just informed. Some may consider this as a form of participation, but for ARNSTEIN R, this is one of tokenism degree.



**Figure 1.** The eight participation ladders according to Arnstein R Sherry (ARNSTEIN R. S, 1996)

The second level is the so-called active participation or most often called physical one (MDSFS & ADS 2007), where the population is considered as a means and an instrument (Ibid), to carry out an action of which it was excluded or not during the planning or during the decisions about it. The most researched level of participation and the highest one is the citizen control according to Arnstein R. It's the degree where the population carry out the task's identification, analysis, decision-making, planning, financing (participate by partnership) and evaluation of the action.

These levels of participation are varying from scholar's point of view, and even in the professional world. Scholars cannot decide whether 06 or 08 degrees. There are even those who decline only three real degrees of participation. However, the more we get into the degrees of participation, the more the urban project tends towards sustainability, as affirms Ariella MASBOUNGI: "if the consultation is one of the main words of the sustainable urban project, it must be participatory and not only informative ..." (Galhardo, 2014).

We summarize the degrees of participation as follows:

- Information: where it is a question of informing about the project decided in closed rooms;
- Consultation: gathering the opinion of participants and these opinions can be used (not necessarily) for decision support after analysis;
- Concertation: seeking compromise on choices and prior opinions that stipulates an exchange of information to reach a consensus and a joint decision;
- Dialogue: exchange of points of view, without seeking compromise but rather the construction of innovative solutions;
- Involvement: to engage his responsibility in the project;
- Participation: integrate the project into its design through decision support and even funding;
- Ownership: to appropriate the project and conferring on its own appropriation;
- Accession: total sharing of objectives with co-decision and co-production;
- Co decision and co-management: the association of the inhabitant in the decision and the management of the project;
- Self-management: which means that it is the inhabitant who makes the decisions on the projects, but also on their budget.

In all these levels, the representation of the publication is essential even it is almost impossible given the diversity, which exists, then the choice is question difficult, the criteria of choice must be established on good bases (level of study, citizenship, sex ...) so that the sample is as present as possible. Thus, the elected representative are the main actors in this process.

### **2.1. From information to adhesion: tools and objectives**

The participation level and approach used are mainly depends on the objectives that are presumed. Tools can be diversified in the search of a better solutions in urban actions. The citizen is the main actors that all the process is turning around. The table below explains the different levels and tools used depending on the objectives searched.

**Table 1.** From information to adhesion: tools and objectives (MOUHOUBI N, 2017, page 84-85)

Level	Degree	Approach	Tools	Actors	Objective
Passive	Information	Share decisions already made to residents and external bodies	Posters, websites, presses, TV		inform
Physical and advisory	consultation	Collect the opinions and use them for decision support	Questionnaire, surveys, interview, blog, vote, televoting, focus groups	Inhabitants and internal and external authorities	collect information, and collect opinions; guarantee the feasibility of the project
	concertation	and share reasons, objectives and arguments	Round table; meeting; statement of reasons; TV vote.	The inhabitants, the users but much more the sectorial actors whose policies are confronted and the objectives too.	Search for compromise and consensus, establishment of contract or consultation agreement where the compromise will be official.
	Dialogue	Exchange of opinions and points of view.	Forum, clubs, discussion center, brainstorming meetings	Inhabitants and all concerned actors.	Mutual exchange, constitutions of a collective problem.
decision	Involvement	Commitment and designation of roles	Partnership and signature of contract and convention	Inhabitants and all concerned actors...	empower
	Participation	Join the project	All tools are welcome	All actors	Exchange, commitment, responsibility, and compromise research.
	ownership	Presentation of objectives and exchange of points of view	All tools are welcome	All actors	Consensus and ownership of the project
	Membership / adhesion	Gather all the information held by each actor to problematize and solve	All tools are welcome	All actors	Co-design, co-decision, co-development, and co-production of the project.



It is essential to say that participation is a very important pillar in the urban action. It allows clearly seeing the expectations of the recipients of the project. It not only allows a good elaboration of solutions to the problems of society that are perceived in a different way between inhabitants and leaders, but, even better, allows to use this perception to better conceive the problem.

However, some constraints and difficulties are evident in the implementation of the participatory approach:

- Operations may be fragmented due to real estate financing;
- Merging roles and difficulty of managing actors and their games;
- Difficulty of integration and involvement of all actors;
- Divergence of stakeholder interests and difficulty in reaching consensus;
- Difficulty in selecting participants and representing residents;
- Confiscation and monopolization of power by the representatives of the inhabitants;
- Splitting participation by leading to an amorphous consensus;
- The NIMBY attitude that develops in the individualized society and which poses a problem of fruitless participation;
- The cost of the participation procedure.

For a better result of the participation, the objective of the participation must be clearly defined before launching the method of participation, however "... the objectives of the participation remain unclear and the methods little controlled" (BACQUE MH 2009. P23) and participation becomes a waste of time and money for unsatisfactory results.

## 2.2. How does the involvement come about; several scenarios arise?

The pseudo common sense says that you just have to ask people what they want and that's it! (VERDIER Ph. 2009. P5). But participation is much more complex than that. It manifests itself according to three mobilization scenarios which are a kind of process to make one's voice heard; thus, two approaches are defined by BACQUE M.H (BACQUE M.H. 2009).

First, the top-down approach, it comes from the top of the pyramid (politico-institutional) to develop a project adequate to local needs in the form of consultation. This approach is very widespread in France (Ibid.).

Then, the Bottom-up approach, it is a more frequent approach in North America, it is materialized by the mobilization of social movement which takes the orders of local development, and which can even develop counter-projects by the mobilization of knowledge, and it is also the first form of participation that existed during the project of the Hales of Baltard with 600 counter-projects developed.

However, there is a combined bottom-up and top-down approach that BEREZOWSKA-AZZAG calls the middle way, is the mix between the two approaches and is in the form of a round trip. She can also influence decisions from the bottom up.

These procedures use several types of procedures, of which we can cite:

- **Referendums:** where municipalities and public authorities consult residents by giving them the power to vote directly for or against a project. This procedure, which is more widespread in Switzerland as well as in the United States, makes it possible to involve all the inhabitants, (coming from the political authorities or the inhabitants themselves). It is undoubtedly effective, especially when it comes to making major political and constitutional decisions.

- **Neighbourhood councils:** it is the constitution of the representatives of the inhabitants in the form of a group, it is with these councils that the debates on the projects are initiated. This form is more common in France. The work of these groups becomes more effective if they are diverse;
- **Participatory budgets:** this form is used most in Latin America, where the inhabitant can participate in discussing the budget of the project;
- **Community development:** here it is the inhabitants who manage their local services, the Anglo-Saxon countries use this type of procedure the most;
- **Consensus conferences:** as the name suggests, the purpose of this procedure is to reach consensus by using the conference as a means of presentation and debate;
- **Advisory committees:** these are committees made up of institutions and unelected residents or specific groups that are consulted during a project, this form has recently experienced considerable success;
- **Participatory strategic plans:** these are forms of back and forth where the inhabitant is involved in the planning.

These procedures were developed to become operational methods of implementation of participation, they are, as we have already said, from one country to another but also differ depending on the purpose of their implementation.

### 3. The Awareness level scale

Psychologically, awareness is the ability to perceive, identify, think and behave in an appropriate manner. It is what we feel and what we know about ourselves, others and the world. In this sense, it encompasses the apprehension of our subjective experience and objective perception of reality.

Being aware of something is to have a full and clear knowledge of what to do, existence or reality of that thing. The human has consciousness and let his willing influenced by his feelings, he has a character feature of its own: it is able to control his actions, thoughts and decisions (Rafika et al., 2016).

Awareness refers to citizens' understanding of their position as part of a state system within the framework of democracy (Yani et al., 2017). When citizens' awareness is poor, it is assumed that they are apathetic and will not participate in the planning and urban actions. On the other hand, if citizens are aware, they would be more willing to participate. The more awareness of the citizens, the more eligible their participation would be. However, awareness is the most important factor that encourages individuals to engage in local activities.

The aim of this section is to present a clear analytical framework for identifying the main determinants of awareness and generating empirically testable predictions, there is a substantial amount of literature on the subject of public involvement awareness, researchers from different fields of study have compiled a summary of the relevant issues of citizen involvement awareness.

Basing on the previous scholars, we establish four points improving citizen awareness:

- **Level of knowledge and competence**

This point is basically about knowing their elementary rights as citizen to involve, or about having some knowledge that allows them to be effectively involved.

- **Level of commitment and responsibility towards their community**

Responsibility towards community it is a notion that refers the citizen to his own actions; It is also a person who is in charge of making decisions.

- **Level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders**

In this point, we are trying to know the citizen readiness to exchange knowledge and resources with the different actors.

- **Level of willingness to get involved in the future**

In this point, we are trying to figure out if citizens wish to participate in the succeeding urban actions.

#### **4. Method**

##### **4.1. Sample and procedure**

This study was conducted in February and March 2019. A total of 267 participants living in El Oued city were asked to complete this Arabic-translated survey, the population evaluated consisted of all contacted individuals aged 18 years old and above who were willing to participate in the study. Contacted individuals who were less than 18 years old, did not wish to participate were excluded from the study.

We determined the study sample according to the simple random probability design where each individual of the target population had an equal (and known) chance of being part of the selected sample, no selection bias affects the selection process of individuals to be surveyed and made sure to diversify the sample as much as possible (age, sex, level of education, occupation, etc.).

##### **4.2. Questionnaire**

We translated the scale criteria for awareness level of citizen in a survey, which contains two types of closed questions, dichotomous questions, and multiple-choice questions. We have developed a semi structured questionnaire consists of four sections and each section containing a group of questions/items.

#### **5. Results and Discussion**

The significance of the city in which we all live and carry out our daily life routines cannot be overemphasized, the interdependence between man and environment is so obvious beyond any hesitant mind. Algerian's cities degradation became apparent in recent decades, largely as a result of authority's greedy actions exacerbating the situation.

Hence, the global scientists' attention has been brought to the need for a better and more effective urban actions through citizen involvement. Citizen awareness became crucial condition for inducing the involvement process in urban actions in order to achieve this goal.

This study aims to determine whether citizens are aware of their involvement in urban actions and what factors could influence citizen's perceptions of the participation process.

Notes provided by the participants in the pilot testing proving that the questionnaire items were straightforward, easy to understand, and in a reasonable order. For the research instrument suitability and reliability, and a CRONBACH test achieved a score of 50% and 88%, and this value reflects an acceptable internal consistency, indicating that the content of the questionnaire is well adopted into the sample environment.

The values obtained were later inputted in SPSS statistical software

The analysis and interpretation of the data in this research work are made by the SPSS 2017 software which offers several tabulations and graphs, following these steps:

- First, the technique of principal component analysis (PCA) which aims to structure the starting variables by grouping them into a smaller number of factors;

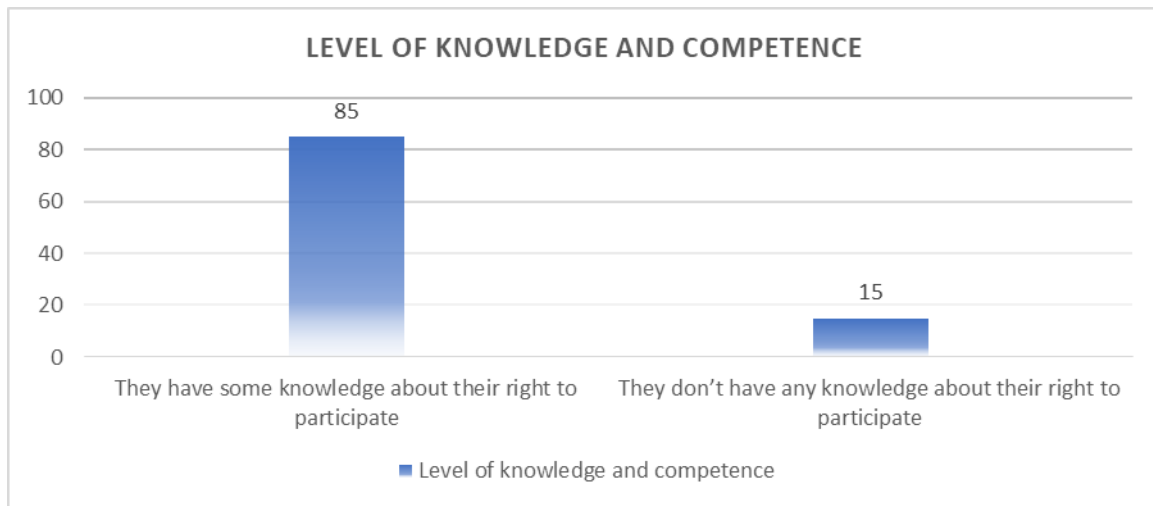
- Subsequently, the internal consistency of each dimension was measured using the  $\alpha$  of CRONBACH (which is usually used as a measure of the internal consistency of a multi-item scale);
- Finally, visualization of the results in the form of tables and graphs.

The data were collected with one sample size of 267 participants living in El Oued city located in the Algerian South Est, prior to data collection, we performed a pre-test to examine the suitability and reliability of the research instrument, using the  $\alpha$  from CRONBACH (1951) which is commonly used as a measure of internal consistency of a scale with several items (Cronbach. 1951).

**Table 2.** Relevance and reliability survey test

Item group	Number of items	Expected interval of a value	Cronbach's Alpha value
Level of knowledge and competence	3	50%	0.35-0.55
Level of commitment and responsibility	1	88%	0.70-0.90
Level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders	1	88%	0.70-0.90
Level of willingness to get involved in the future	1	88%	0.70-0.90

From our demographic data, our participants were primarily young (average 35 years) and had at least a university degree (67%). After the results interpretation of the present study, we found that the majority of the participants were aware of their right to participate and be involved in urban actions (Fig.2).



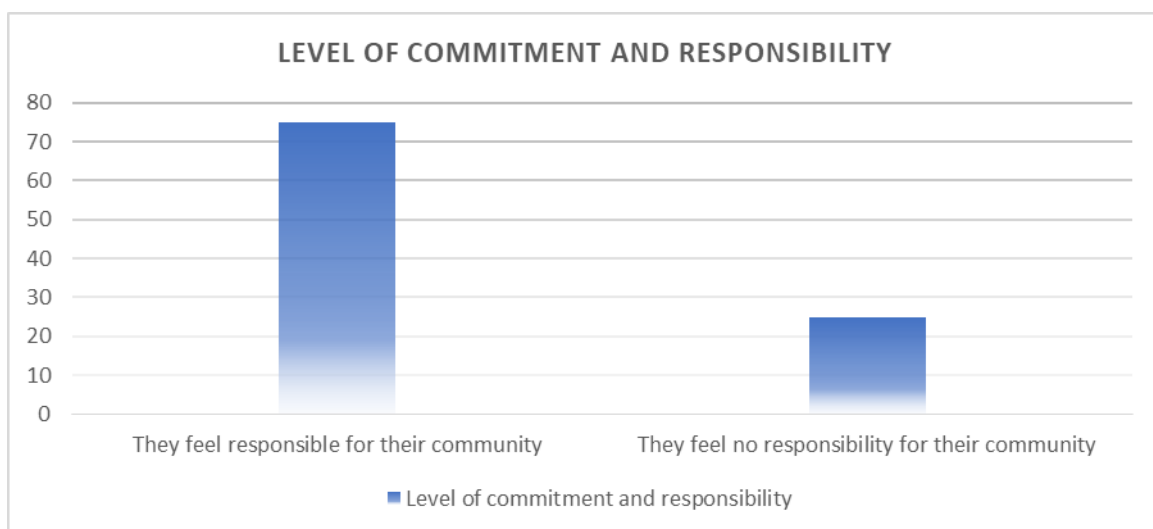
**Figure 2.** Level of knowledge and competence (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

From the figure above, the level of knowledge and competence of the respondents were ranked from Low to High. However, out of the total 267 citizens investigated, only 40 citizens fall under the low category of Low awareness with the valid percent of 15%. This result can be explained by the fact that

the majority of participants in our survey have a high academic level and by the popularization of information through social networks. However, it is to be distinguished between knowledge of the rights to participation and knowledge of urban actions undertaken in the citizen's-built environment. Indeed, the fact that most citizens know that they have the right to participate in the construction and conservation of their built environment does not guarantee their participation without having the third degree of passive participation and Tokenism; which is according to ARNSTEIN R: information. The presence of a channel that can ensure the dissemination of information relating to urban actions undertaken or to be undertaken is crucial for the very exercise of this right to information. In other words, what would be the point of knowing your right to participation and involvement in urban actions when their planning and design are done in closed rooms? This right to participate can only be fully exercised if the citizen is aware of the urban actions, projects and projection in his environment.

In the Oued and in Algeria in general, these channels of information spreading are lacking. Indeed, the official sites and pages of the public authorities in charge of urban actions are not always supplied and the displays in their seats are not often consulted by citizens. This blockage of information constitutes a first obstacle to the active participation of citizens, it then starts from ignorance of urban actions to disappointment when they are carried out (Mouhoubi, N. and Boudemagh, S.S., 2015). As a result, a feeling of exclusion spreads among the citizens, this exclusion often leads to the creation of indifference or anger (Ibid.).

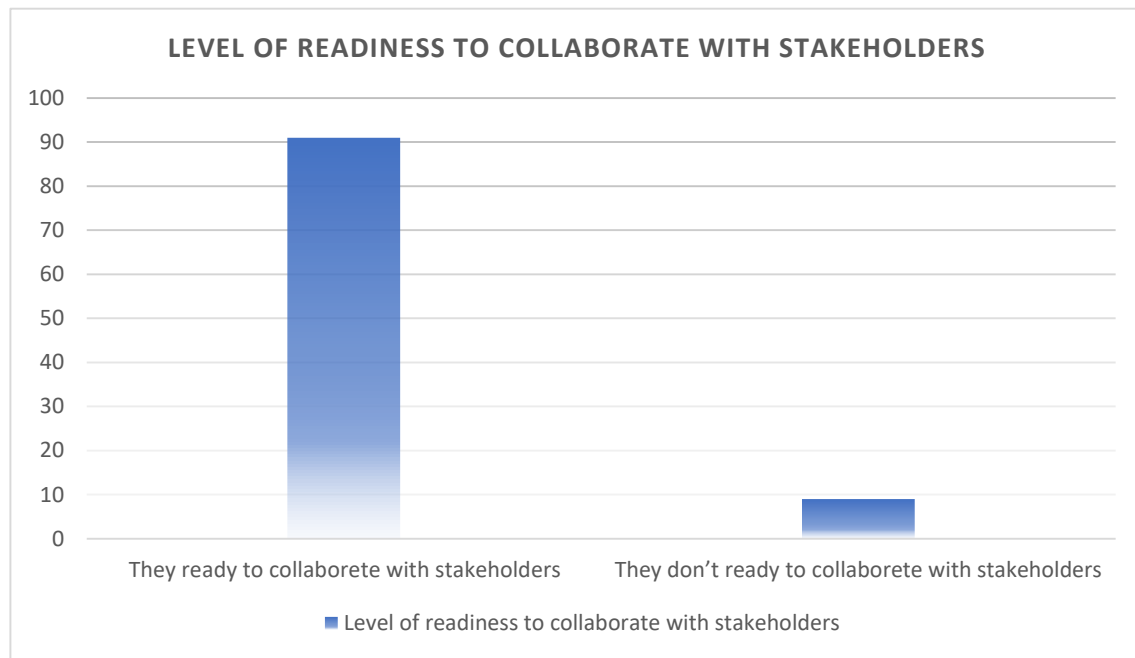
Thus, this anger comes from the commitment and responsibility that citizen have for his city. The result of our survey shows that citizens of El Oued city exhibited the most positive attitudes and the greatest level of commitment and responsibility towards their community (78% of citizens said that they feel responsible for their city) (Fig. 3). Thus, the higher level of responsibility is necessarily reflecting the good level of citizen involvement awareness towards their city issues. This higher level of commitment and responsibility are confirmed in the readiness and the will to collaborate with stakeholders and participate in the various urban actions (Fig. 4 & Fig. 5), indeed, the citizens with higher level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders made the largest count of 243 out of the 267 total respondents with valid percent of 91%. Thus, data from the study generally revealed high level of citizens who are ready to collaborate with stakeholders among El Oued citizens.



**Figure 3.** Level of commitment and responsibility (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

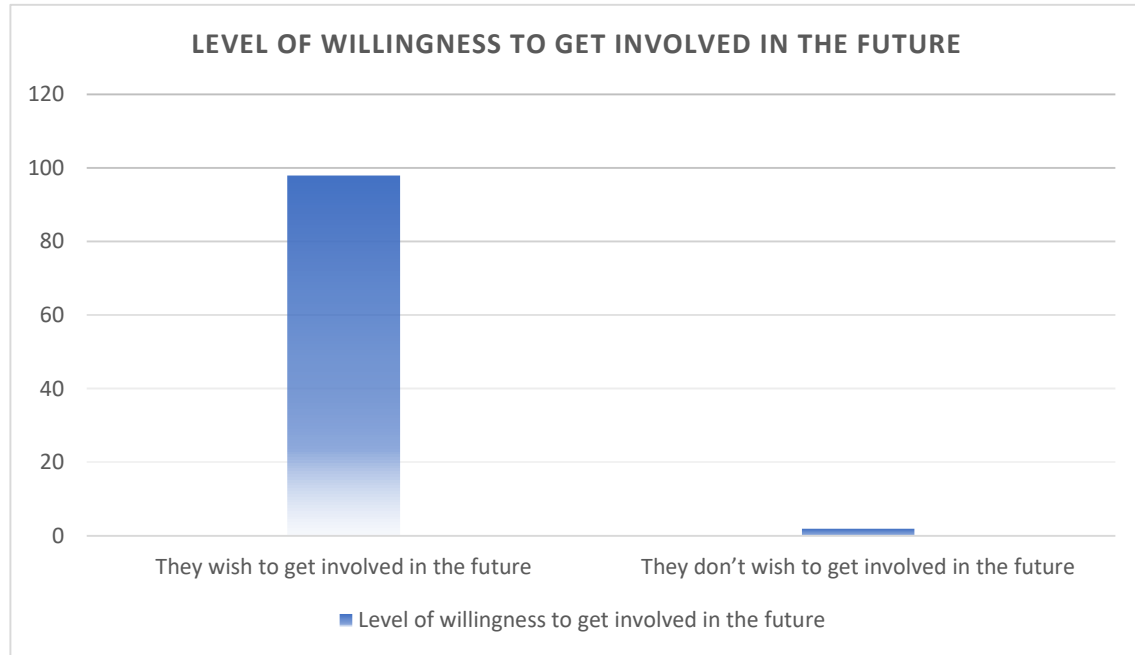
This result found citizens of El Oued city exhibited the most positive attitudes and the greatest level of commitment and responsibility towards their community (78% of citizens said that they feel responsible

for their city). Thus, the higher level of responsibility is necessarily reflecting the good level of citizen involvement awareness towards their city issues.



**Figure 4.** Level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

The citizens with higher level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders made the largest count of 243 out of the 267 total respondents with valid percent of 91%. Thus, data from the study generally revealed high level of citizens who are ready to collaborate with stakeholders among El Oued citizens.



**Figure 5.** Level of willingness to get involved in the future (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

As to confirm, the proportions of respondents who wish to get involved in the future carry 98% which is the largest proportion of the total sampled population. The remaining 2%, which does not present a commitment to future participation, is justified by the fact of having lost confidence in their ability to change their environment and especially by the fact of being excluded for decades from urban actions. Thus, we are witnessing the weakness of the bond of trust between citizens and the actors in charge of urban actions. Citizens often feel that their opinion and participation is not of great importance to these actors (Mouhoubi, N. and Boudemagh, S.S., 2015) this only increases the feeling and attitude of exclusion.

The study also attempted to find out the attitudes and citizens' sense of responsibility towards their community. Since attitudes are sets of values and feelings of concern towards city improvement and urban actions, they may affect one's feeling of responsibility towards the city. Therefore, positive attitudes shape citizens' behaviour and perceptions towards the responsible actions to environment (Hungerford et al, 2010). The results express also some degree of concern from El Oued citizens, that they are not only aware of involvement in urban actions, but also have certain feelings towards their city issues.

## 6. Conclusions

The study surveyed citizens' involvement awareness level in urban actions. Results from the study revealed that a significantly higher proportion of citizens exhibited high awareness level by 90% of the total sampled population.

Also results of this research highlighted that although citizens had a high level of awareness this gain did not turn into effective involvement. In other words, the study's findings suggest that citizen's awareness level toward their community may not be the sole thing that motivates them to get involved in urban actions. The study also found that having a high level of awareness is linked to having positive attitudes and a greater sense of responsibility for the city.

As a result, this study has uncovered a significant research vacuum that needs to be filled in order to learn more about what other factors, if any, can motivate citizens to actively participate in urban actions and cities' issues. This may apply to larger community and other actions relevant to the city.

Therefore, a thorough study is required in order to arrive at a reliable conclusion and to determine what other factors encourage effective citizens' involvement.

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### Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

### Ethics statements

Studies involving animal subjects: No animal studies are presented in this manuscript.

Studies involving human subjects: No human studies are presented in this manuscript.

Inclusion of identifiable human data: No potentially identifiable human images or data is presented in this study.

### Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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## Journal of Mediterranean Cities: Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice for Sustainable Urban Futures

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### ABSTRACT

*The Journal of Mediterranean Cities serves as a vital platform for addressing urban challenges in the Mediterranean region, with a focus on sustainability and resilience. It fosters interdisciplinary research integrating fields such as architecture, urban design, climate science, and sociology to inform regional policies and practical applications. The journal's core objectives include promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, shaping urban policies, and supporting young scholars. By bridging the gap between scientific inquiry and real-world implementation, it contributes to the sustainable development of Mediterranean cities, addressing issues like climate adaptation, socio-economic inequality, and historical preservation. Through open access, peer-reviewed research, and global collaborations, the journal strives to inspire innovative urban solutions and foster dialogue among academics, policymakers, and practitioners.*

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### 1. Introduction

The Journal of Mediterranean Cities focuses on the study of urban challenges, promoting sustainable and resilient city planning, especially in the Mediterranean region. The journal prioritizes science-driven insights, aiming to shape regional policies through research. It serves as a platform for collaboration between architecture and urbanism schools to drive transformational integration.

The journal is committed to bridging the gap between scientific research and urban challenges, specifically tailored to the Mediterranean region. It stands at the intersection of cutting-edge architectural, environmental, and urban planning studies, providing invaluable insights to address the evolving demands of cities and their inhabitants. This scientific platform was developed with a firm belief in the transformative potential of research, with a goal to support the development of resilient, sustainable cities that can thrive in the face of global and regional challenges.

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## 2. Scientific Approach and Strategic Vision

At the heart of the journal's scientific approach lies a dedication to sustainability and resilience. The Mediterranean region is rich with diverse urban environments, each with its own set of opportunities and challenges (Gospodini, 2018). With a focus on interdisciplinary research, the journal draws from fields such as urban design, architecture, climate science, sociology, and economics to develop a comprehensive understanding of urban systems. The unique challenges posed by the Mediterranean climate, ranging from rising sea levels to increasing urban density and pollution, require innovative solutions deeply rooted in scientific inquiry (Hirt, 2020).

The journal's scientific strategy revolves around the integration of theory and practice. It encourages contributions that not only theorize but also provide practical applications. This is particularly important in the Mediterranean, where the impacts of climate change, migration, and socio-economic shifts are deeply felt. By promoting research that is both academically rigorous and practically applicable, the journal seeks to influence regional urban policies and planning decisions that are grounded in robust evidence.

Moreover, the Journal of Mediterranean Cities strives to become a central hub for dialogue among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. Through collaborations with architectural and urban studies institutions worldwide, the journal envisions a shared knowledge base that transcends borders, encouraging the exchange of best practices and innovative approaches to city planning and design.

## 3. Objectives of the Journal

The primary objective of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities is to contribute to the sustainable development of Mediterranean cities by fostering an understanding of the unique urban issues that cities in this region face. These issues include, but are not limited to, climate adaptation, housing shortages, socio-economic inequalities, and historical preservation. The journal's secondary objectives include:

- a. Promoting interdisciplinary research: Encouraging papers that draw on a range of academic disciplines, from environmental studies to cultural history, creating a holistic understanding of the factors shaping Mediterranean cities.
- b. Shaping urban policies: Providing a platform for the dissemination of evidence-based research, with the aim to directly influence policy-making at the local and regional levels. Cities in the Mediterranean region face unique governance challenges, and the journal supports the development of resilient, sustainable policies that can withstand future challenges.
- c. Bridging the gap between academic research and practical implementation: The journal is committed to ensuring that the insights gained from the research published are applied in practice, benefiting city planners, architects, and local governments.
- d. Supporting young researchers and scholars: Providing a platform for the next generation of urban planners and architects to showcase their research and ideas, thus inspiring fresh perspectives on the challenges facing Mediterranean cities.
- e. Fostering international collaboration: Bringing together scholars from across the globe to share expertise and contribute to the sustainable development of Mediterranean cities. Collaboration is key to solving the complex problems of urbanization, and by working together, more can be achieved than any one institution or individual could alone.

## 4. Significance of the Mediterranean Region

The Mediterranean region holds unparalleled importance due to its rich cultural heritage, strategic geopolitical position, and unique environmental conditions (Albrechts, 2020). Historically, it has been a cradle of civilizations, and today, it continues to be a dynamic region experiencing rapid urbanization,

migration, and socio-economic transformations. Cities in the Mediterranean face pressing challenges, such as the effects of climate change, resource scarcity, and increasing population density. These challenges necessitate innovative urban planning strategies that balance growth with sustainability. The Mediterranean's fragile ecosystems, compounded by rising sea levels and shifting weather patterns, present urgent environmental concerns. Furthermore, the region's diverse socio-political landscape demands policies that address not only environmental sustainability but also social equity and economic resilience. Addressing these multifaceted issues is critical to ensuring the prosperity of Mediterranean cities.

### **5. The Role of the Journal in the Mediterranean**

A scientific journal like the Journal of Mediterranean Cities plays a pivotal role in driving regional development by contributing research that informs and inspires action on issues that matter most to the Mediterranean. By serving as a bridge between research, policy, and practice, the journal facilitates cross-border collaboration, bringing together experts to generate solutions that reflect the shared yet distinct challenges of the region.

The journal's contributions support local governments, urban planners, and policymakers in adopting evidence-based strategies that promote sustainable urban development, mitigate the effects of climate change, and improve the quality of life for residents. By disseminating cutting-edge research, it provides a platform for knowledge exchange, inspiring innovation in architecture, city planning, and environmental management, while fostering a shared vision for the future of the Mediterranean.

### **6. Achieving the Journal's Vision**

To achieve its ambitious vision, the Journal of Mediterranean Cities follows a multi-faceted strategy:

- a. **Rigorous Peer Review Process:** The journal ensures high academic standards by implementing a rigorous peer-review process for every submission. This guarantees the credibility of the research published and supports the journal's mission to influence urban policy and practice with well-grounded insights.
- b. **Collaborative Research Networks:** Encouraging collaboration between researchers from different disciplines and geographic regions ensures that the journal's published research is diverse in scope and reflective of the myriad challenges faced by cities in the Mediterranean. These networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices that can be applied in different urban contexts.
- c. **Open Access and Broad Dissemination:** Committed to the principle of open access, the journal believes that knowledge should be freely available to everyone, especially when it comes to public interest matters like sustainable urban development. By making research accessible to a global audience, the journal hopes to inspire change and foster learning across the Mediterranean and beyond.
- d. **Focus on Real-World Applications:** While academic rigor is crucial, the journal also places a strong emphasis on research that has real-world applications. The Mediterranean region is facing an unprecedented wave of urbanization, and the challenges that come with it—such as resource scarcity, infrastructure stress, and climate vulnerability—require solutions that can be implemented practically and in a timely manner. The research published informs architects, urban planners, and government officials who can apply these findings to their own work.
- e. **Global and Local Case Studies:** To provide a comprehensive understanding of urban issues, the journal features research that spans a range of cities across the Mediterranean, as well as comparable urban contexts from other parts of the world. This allows for rich comparative analysis and highlights successful interventions that can be adapted and applied to Mediterranean cities.
- f. **Engaging with Policymakers and Urban Practitioners:** In addition to serving the academic community, the journal actively engages with policymakers, urban planners, and architects. By

making its research accessible to these groups and providing them with actionable insights, the journal aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice, contributing to the development of more sustainable and resilient cities.

## 7. Conclusions

The Journal of Mediterranean Cities is a beacon of scholarly inquiry into the unique challenges facing urban environments in the Mediterranean region. Its commitment to sustainability, resilience, and interdisciplinary research is at the core of its mission. Through collaboration with global academic institutions, policymakers, and urban practitioners, the journal fosters innovative solutions that will shape the future of Mediterranean cities for generations to come.

By exploring the journal's latest issues, readers can join in the journey toward creating sustainable urban futures. Together, resilient, vibrant, and equitable cities responsive to the needs of their citizens can be built across the Mediterranean.

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## Advancing Heritage and Vernacular Studies: The Role of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities in Sustainable Urban Development

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### ABSTRACT

*The launch of the "Journal of Mediterranean Cities" represents a jumping step in the fields of heritage and vernacular studies in the Mediterranean area. Known for its heritage, impressive architecture, city context and vibrant urban settings the Mediterranean region offers a distinctive backdrop for exploring the connections between heritage preservation, architectural innovation, urban renewal, traditional construction methods and community conservation. The journal aims to address knowledge gaps by promoting collaboration among academics, architects, urban planners and policymakers to preserve the identity of the Mediterranean despite the fact of advocating for urban growth. By integrating disciplines like architecture, urban planning and regional development the Journal strives to encourage analyses and innovative problem-solving approaches that align with initiatives such as Urban Development (SUDs) and Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Action Plans. Highlighting the importance of preserving communities and cultural heritage this journal will highlight the significance of cooperation among stakeholders in shaping the future of Mediterranean cities. The journal is set to be a resource for scholars, policymakers and professionals in the field of architecture and urbanism who are committed to enhancing the fabric of urban spaces in this region.*

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I am writing to show my strong support for the launch of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities. This new Journal has the potential to improve our understanding and conservation efforts related to "heritage and vernacular" studies in the Mediterranean region. It comes at a time. Fills a crucial niche in academia providing a specialized space for interdisciplinary research and dialogues on the intricate issues and prospects within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean area, renowned for its heritage, architectural marvels and urban landscapes offers a captivating backdrop for exploring heritage and vernacular studies (Ocón, 2021; Lowenthal, 2015).

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The dynamic interplay between settlements and natural surroundings in this region presents both challenges and opportunities for scholars and experts (Steingress, 2005). The Journal of Mediterranean Cities is well-placed to address existing gaps in the knowledge and practice in fields such as "heritage conservation", "architectural design", "urban revitalization", "traditional building techniques" and "community preservation" efforts.

Preserving heritage sites and architectural treasures is essential to the maintenance of the essence of the Mediterranean identity. Yet there remains a shortage of research that investigates balancing these aspects with sustainable urban development (Ocón, 2021; Hillali, 2007). This journal stands composed to play a role in fostering collaboration among scholars, architects, urban planners and policymakers by providing a platform, for sharing insights, and research findings based on innovative approaches. Urban revitalization and rejuvenation efforts, in the Mediterranean necessitate a grasp of backgrounds and contemporary urban issues. It seems that this journal will focus on the disciplinary exploration of human living environments encompassing architecture, city planning, and regional development will facilitate in-depth analyses and creative problem-solving. By merging these fields, the Journal can aid in constructing areas and fostering sustainable societal frameworks aligning with endeavours such as: Sustainable Urban Development (SUDs) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Action Plans.

Furthermore, the attention given to concepts and local community preservation highlights the importance of safeguarding the distinct identity and cultural legacy of Mediterranean cities. Though often ignored in studies these aspects are fundamental for preserving the region's uniqueness and promoting culturally rich and socially sustainable progress.

The publications' commitment to engaging stakeholders and its support for initiatives like SUDs and UfM Action Plans underscore the significance of cooperation among scholars, decision-makers, professionals and residents in shaping the landscape of Mediterranean cities. Through nurturing collaborations, the publication can bridge the divide, between theory and application leading to impactful and enduring urban interventions. Overall, I applaud the team for introducing the Journal of Mediterranean Cities and I believe that this journal will be an asset, for academics, policymakers and professionals committed to safeguarding and enriching the cultural essence of cities and settlements, in the Mediterranean region. I am looking forward to the interesting studies that will be published in its articles.

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## Rediscovering the Mediterranean Urban Identity: Introducing Recently Launched Academic Journal

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### ABSTRACT

The Mediterranean region, known for its history and diverse cultures has shaped a unique urban landscape influenced by geography, weather and traditions. Surprisingly there has been limited exploration into this special urban environment. The recent launch of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities marks a step in addressing this oversight. By focusing on five themes—Water and Land, Housing and Communities, Heritage & Traditional Studies, Environment and Sustainability and Education—the journal provides a thorough platform for exploring the intricacies of Mediterranean urban planning. This article highlights the journal's role, in Undertaking issues faced by Mediterranean cities promoting interdisciplinary studies and contributing to sustainable urban development solutions.

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### 1. Introduction

The Mediterranean region, known for its historical heritage showcases a blend of diverse cultural, social and environmental factors (Altman & Portilla 2014). Despite its importance scholarly focus on Mediterranean cities has been fragmented in the past lacking an approach to address the specific challenges and opportunities they offer (Holfelder, R. L., & Malkin, I. 2015). The establishment of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities signifies a step towards bridging this gap by providing a platform for, in-depth academic exploration. The urban identity of Mediterranean cities is multi-faceted encompassing their roots architectural significance, socio-economic frameworks and environmental landscapes

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(Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 2011). Each city narrates a tale of human settlement, adaptation and resilience; however, these narratives have often been ignored or insufficiently examined in scholarly works. The Journal of Mediterranean Cities seeks to address this lacuna by promoting an understanding of these urban settings.



**Figure 1.** Map of the Mediterranean Sea and the Major cities around it.

This article discusses the themes covered by the journal showing how it can fill existing gaps and inspire research. By exploring topics like interactions between water and land communities and dwellings heritage and vernacular studies, environment and sustainability as well as the education we emphasize the importance of focused academic attention in these areas. This approach will lead to an understanding and more informed actions within the urban context of the Mediterranean.

## 2. The Importance of the “Journal of Mediterranean Cities”

The “Journal of Mediterranean Cities” will play an important role in academia by providing a dedicated platform for research solely focused methodologically on urban life and heritage preservation in the “Mediterranean region”. This specialized focus allows for a more nuanced comprehension of the unique challenges and opportunities present in this area by referring to the fact that it often gets ignored in broader urban studies.

Furthermore, the journal will ensure that high-quality research is published to advance knowledge in this context. This severe evaluation process enhances the credibility and impact of the journal establishing it as an authority on studies related to urban life. The journal will play a role in advancing evidence-based policies and practices to tackle urban challenges in the region.

## 3. The Journal's Thematic Scope

### 3.1. Water and Land

#### 3.1.1. Port-Cities

“Port cities” have always been crucial to the Mediterranean region. It acts as centre for trade, cultural interactions and economic activities. These urban hubs have not just facilitated the movement of goods and people it also been hotspots for the sharing of cultures and creativity. Undertaking challenges such as erosion, marine pollution and economic differences is essential for ensuring the lasting wealth of port



cities (Fameli et al., 2020). Moreover, exploring port cities in the Mediterranean setting can offer insights into coastal areas globally. By examining examples and classifying best practices researchers can contribute to a broader knowledge of how to sustainably manage and grow these vital urban spaces. Therefore, this thematic emphasis is vital for developing strategies that support these cities in thriving among contemporary problems.

### 3.1.2. Coastlines Revitalization

The Mediterranean coast well known for its natural beauty is under threat from urban growth, pollution, rising sea levels, etc (Catalán, Saurí, & Serra, 2008). These issues are deteriorated by the region's popularity as a tourist hotspot often leading to development and harm to the environment. To revitalize these coastlines innovative eco-political governance is needed, incorporating studies on blue initiatives to support sustainable coastal communities in Mediterranean regions (Trombadore, 2020).



**Figure 2.** Barcelona's revitalized coastline.

A vital focus area is the preservation and rehabilitation of habitats like wetlands that play a vital role in the protection of the coastal regions from erosion and floods. Understanding the functions of these environments through research can guide strategies for their protection and refurbishment. Moreover, promoting tourism practices can help balance economic advantages and environmental conservation.

### 3.1.3. Eco-Political Studies and Governance in Littoral Territories

These regions often encounter challenges such as conflicting interests among stakeholders, fragmented regulations and environmental vulnerabilities. Effective governance models are crucial, for harmonizing conservation with economic development by ensuring fair resource allocation. Studying this field can offer insights into the instruments and methods that support effective governance.

## 3.2. Infrastructure and Mobility

Infrastructure and transportation play crucial roles in the lives of cities in the Mediterranean region especially concerning connectivity and accessibility. The unique "geographical characteristics" of the region like its landscapes and extensive coastlines pose both challenges and opportunities for infrastructure advancement. One significant area, for investigation is establishing transportation systems that prioritize sustainability and accessibility. This journal by studying environmentally friendly modes of transport in cities can improve understanding of traffic congestion enhance air quality and elevate residents' overall quality of life.

### **3.3. Local and Global Migrations in Mediterranean Cities**

The presence of "immigrants" has had an impact on the cultural diversity and vibrancy of Mediterranean cities. Throughout history, these cities have been influenced by factors such as economic breaks, political tensions and environmental conditions (Kebsi, 2019). It is essential to understand how both local and international migrations affect development to create inclusive policies that promote social cohesion economic growth and housing solutions. Research into immigration can investigate the economic dynamics of migrant communities and their roles in city life (Salvati, 2021). This Journal aimed to include aspects like employment, education, housing availability and community unity. By recognizing the obstacles as well as the advantages linked to migration experts can shape policies that facilitate the integration of migrants, into their new communities.

## **4. Dwelling and Communities**

### **4.1. Housing and Population Crisis**

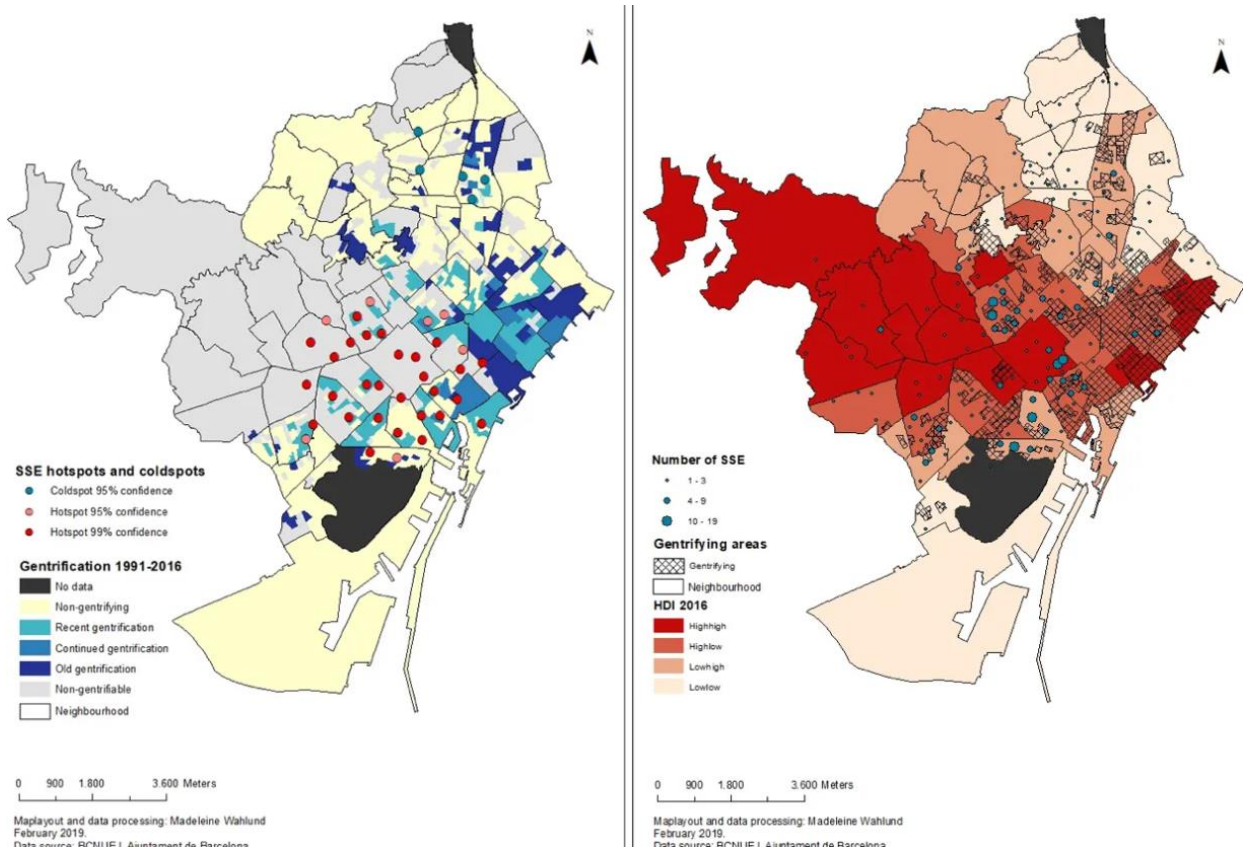
The housing problem in the Mediterranean region is deteriorated due to population growth, economic uncertainty, migration trends, etc., (Cividino Egidi, & Salvati, 2020). This challenge is marked by a lack of housing, overcrowding and unsatisfactory living conditions. To tackle this issue effectively we need housing solutions that, are budget-friendly eco friendly and provide to the diverse needs of communities. It is important to see research, on the housing crisis should investigate its root causes and potential remedies. This involves studying how government policies, market forces and socio-economic aspects influence housing outcomes. By analytical approaches to boost housing accessibility and improve affordability, researchers can contribute to creating more inclusive housing strategies.

### **4.2. Adaptive and Responsive Housing**

In urban development, it's crucial to have housing models that can adapt to changing demographic and environmental factors. These models could focus on flexibility, resilience and user-centred design to meet the growing needs and challenges of housing. Research in this field can guide the creation of housing solutions that cater to altering community needs and climate conditions. An important feature is developing housing units that are easy to modify or expand. This involves exploring construction methods, multipurpose spaces and innovative building materials.

### **4.3. Gentrification Strategies**

Exploring strategies for handling gentrification can help strike a balance, between progress and social fairness which have already been highlighted in the scope of this journal. Even though gentrification is often linked to renewal, it can also result in social inequalities and displacement. Gentrification typically involves residents moving into lower-income neighbourhoods leading to increased property values and living expenses (Hayes & Zaban 2020) resulting in weakening the social cohesion of communities.



**Figure 3.** Gentrification in Barcelona.

#### 4.4. Social Housing and Affordability

Social housing initiatives are vital for providing suitable housing for marginalized communities. These efforts aim to tackle housing disparities by offering subsidized housing choices for those with low incomes. This journal aimed to assess social housing models to develop policy and action towards creating more diverse urban spaces. As promised in the journal studies on housing can explore various methods of delivering affordable housing, including public housing, and non-profit organizations. By highlighting social housing researchers this journal would influence the formulation of policies that enhance “affordability” and “equality” in housing.

#### 4.5. Formal and Informal Development

It is vital to comprehend the relationship between Informal growth to craft urban policies that are both inclusive and sustainable. Investigations into settlements can investigate the socioeconomic factors driving unstructured growth as well as the problems faced by residents. This involves examining issues like land ownership, access to services and public integration. By publishing studies to enhance informal settlements and integrate them into the wider urban landscape researchers can contribute to the understanding of policies that increase inclusive urban progress in the Mediterranean context.

### 5. Heritage & Vernacular Studies

#### 5.1. Heritage and Architecture

Studying heritage and architecture as it has been highlighted here can investigate the challenges and prospects of safeguarding structures and locations. This involves exploring preservation methods,

strategies for reuse and the significance of heritage in revitalizing areas. By analytical approaches to conserving heritage researchers can propose policies, outlines and methods that strike a balance, between preservation and present-day needs.

### **5.2. Heritage and the City**

The connection, between heritage and urban growth is intricate involving preservation, adjustment and rejuvenation. Urban heritage doesn't just refer to structures. Also includes historical context, public areas and cultural environments. Research by publishing articles in this field can provide insights into methods that respect past traditions while meeting present-day requirements. Studies on heritage and urban areas can explore how historical sites can be integrated into city planning. This could involve considering ways to protect neighbourhoods improve access to heritage sites and encourage urban regeneration motivated by heritage (Leontidou, 2020). By identifying strategies, for preserving heritage authors can contribute to the creation of policies that back the growth of urban heritage.

### **5.3. Regeneration and Restoration**

Reviving infrastructure and neglected areas, through renewal and restoration projects is crucial. These endeavours play a role in boosting growth improving quality of life and preserving cultural heritage (.Such projects often entail renovating structures enhancing spaces and creating new facilities. Studies on regeneration investigate the processes and results of these initiatives García Ruiz et al., 2020). This involves analyzing the economic and environmental effects of regeneration schemes along with the obstacles and opportunities they present. By pinpointing strategies, for revitalization researchers can shape policies that foster sustainable and inclusive urban progress.

### **5.4. Vernacular Concepts**

Traditional architecture, influenced by customs and materials holds valuable insights, for eco-friendly design. Buildings constructed in styles often blend seamlessly with their surroundings showcasing a profound grasp of local climate and culture. Studying architectural approaches can inspire modern building methods that prioritize environmental and cultural considerations (Philokyrou, Michael, & Malaktou, 2021). Exploring architecture involves exploring the fundamental principles and methods that drive age-old construction techniques. This includes examining the use of materials, passive design tactics and community-centered building practices.

## **6. Environment and Sustainability**

### **6.1. Architecture and Climate Change**

In Mediterranean cities dealing with climate change presents a challenge requiring architects to come up with "adaptive solutions". Discovering how architecture intersects with climate change could help create spaces that are both resilient and sustainable. Studying how architecture can respond to climate change involves looking into ways to design buildings that can better handle challenges. By discovering strategies for designing in response to "climate issues" researchers can propose sustainable methods for the creation of more prepared buildings to resist in front of changing climates.

### **6.2. Energy Efficiency and Thermal Studies**

Buildings are the major factor in contributing to energy usage and emissions underscoring the importance of prioritizing energy efficiency in "sustainable development" efforts (Ouazzani Chahidi et al., 2021). Exploring energy efficiency involves studying methods to lower energy usage in buildings, such as "passive design strategies", "energy-efficient technologies" and "renewable energy" systems. This journal aimed to highlight the investigative approaches, to energy-conscious design researchers can shape the construction of eco-friendlier and economically viable buildings.

### **6.3. Arid and Semi-Arid Areas**

Cities in the Mediterranean located in semi-arid areas encounter distinct environmental obstacles such as lack of water, extreme heat and sparse vegetation. Dealing with these issues calls for approaches to managing “water sustainably” implementing green infrastructure to enhance resilience to climate change. Studies concentrating on these topics can disclose methods, for water management, and green infrastructure development.

### **6.4. Smart Architecture and Resilient Cities**

Innovative architectural design incorporates cutting-edge technologies to develop vigorous city settings. Smart Architecture and Resilient Cities encompass automated building systems, intelligent materials and digital design resources that improve building efficiency and flexibility. Implementation of the possibilities of architecture can spark advancements that boost urban sustainability and enhance the overall quality of life in cities.

## **7. Education**

### **7.1. Lifelong Learning Programs for Architecture and Urban Design**

Continuing education initiatives are crucial for providing professionals with the expertise to tackle modern urban issues. These programs facilitate learning and career advancement allowing architects and urban planners to stay up-to-date on new developments and technological advancements.

### **7.2. Transformative Pedagogies and Regional Curricula**

Teaching methods that bring about change and curricula tailored to the Mediterranean region can help students gain a grasp of urban planning in the area. Focusing on surroundings and a mix of subjects students can tackle the specific issues and advantages of the region. The journal aimed to Explore these methods to improve the effectiveness and influence of urban studies.

## **8. Discussion**

The different categories in the Journal of Mediterranean Cities offer a framework for undertaking the complex issues and opportunities in Mediterranean urban planning. Each category sheds light on research areas that have not been thoroughly explored in existing studies on the specific scientific platform as centralised content which I believe will pave the way for future investigations. The emphasis on water and land interactions, housing and communities' cultural heritage and traditional studies environmental concerns and sustainability well as education ensures a comprehensive approach to urban research.

By encouraging partnership across disciplines and incorporating viewpoints the journal aimed to spark creative ideas and contribute to the sustainable growth of Mediterranean cities. Research on housing and communities can help address housing shortages and promote fairness. Studies on heritage can enrich the preservation of cultural identity while research on environmental issues can lead to improvements in climate resilience and energy efficiency. Lastly, education-focused research can support learning initiatives and innovative teaching methods that equip professionals for modern urban challenges. I believe that the thematic range of the Journal of Mediterranean Cities is well thought out. Crucial for comprehending and Undertaking the distinct challenges of Mediterranean urban planning. By serving as a platform of publication, for academic exploration, the journal can bridge significant gaps in scholarly literature while fostering new solutions.

## **9. Conclusion**



Introducing the Journal of Mediterranean Cities is considered a step forward in the field of urban studies. By exploring research areas and offering a dedicated platform for scholarly investigation, the journal fills an important void in academic literature. Its thematic focus is well thought out by the editorial team which is required to be focused in the Mediterranean context.

This piece stresses the significance of this endeavour. Encourages active involvement from researchers, professionals and policymakers to participate in the journal discourse on Mediterranean urban culture. Through incorporating diverse view points the journal has the potential to inspire creative solutions and support sustainable progress in Mediterranean cities.

To sum up, the Journal of Mediterranean Cities serves as a forum for rolling research on Mediterranean urban issues. By shining a light on research areas within its thematic scope this piece underscores the importance of addressing the varied challenges and opportunities that Mediterranean cities face. The journal's emphasis on interactions between water and land, housing and communities heritage preservation, environmental sustainability and education ensures an approach to urban studies. I believe that by contributing to this publication and engaging with its themes, researchers, professionals and policymakers can enhance their understanding of Mediterranean culture while promoting sustainable cities for future generations.

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# Journal of Mediterranean Cities

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