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Mediterranean: A Certain Genius of Inhabiting

B.A. Gonçalo Duarte Gomes

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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.

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- Transportation Systems
- Coasts and Fortifications
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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

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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.

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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.

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- Accept the manuscript without further revision
- Accept after revision
- Ask authors to resubmit
- Reject

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.

DOI number - Each paper published in the Journal of Mediterranean Cities is assigned a DOI® number, which appears beneath the author's affiliation in the published paper.

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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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).

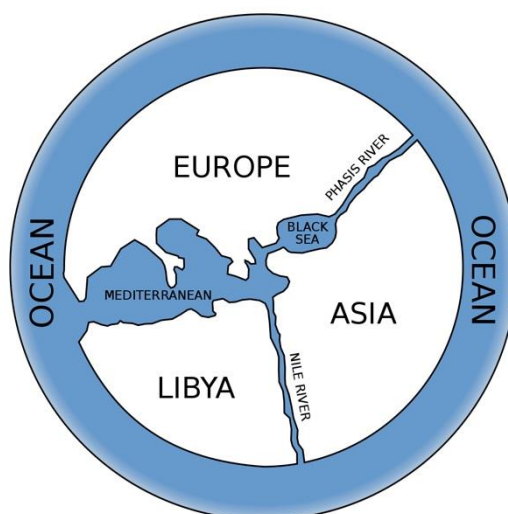


Figure 1. Representation of Anaximander's map
(https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Anaximander_world_map-en.svg)

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.).

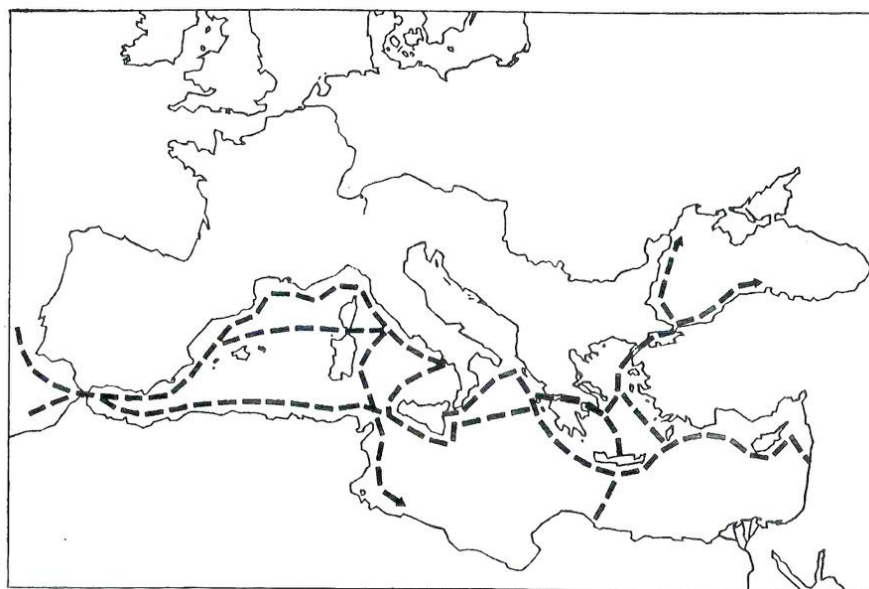


Figure 2. Navigation routes in the Mediterranean (Jabouille, 1996, p. 22)

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?

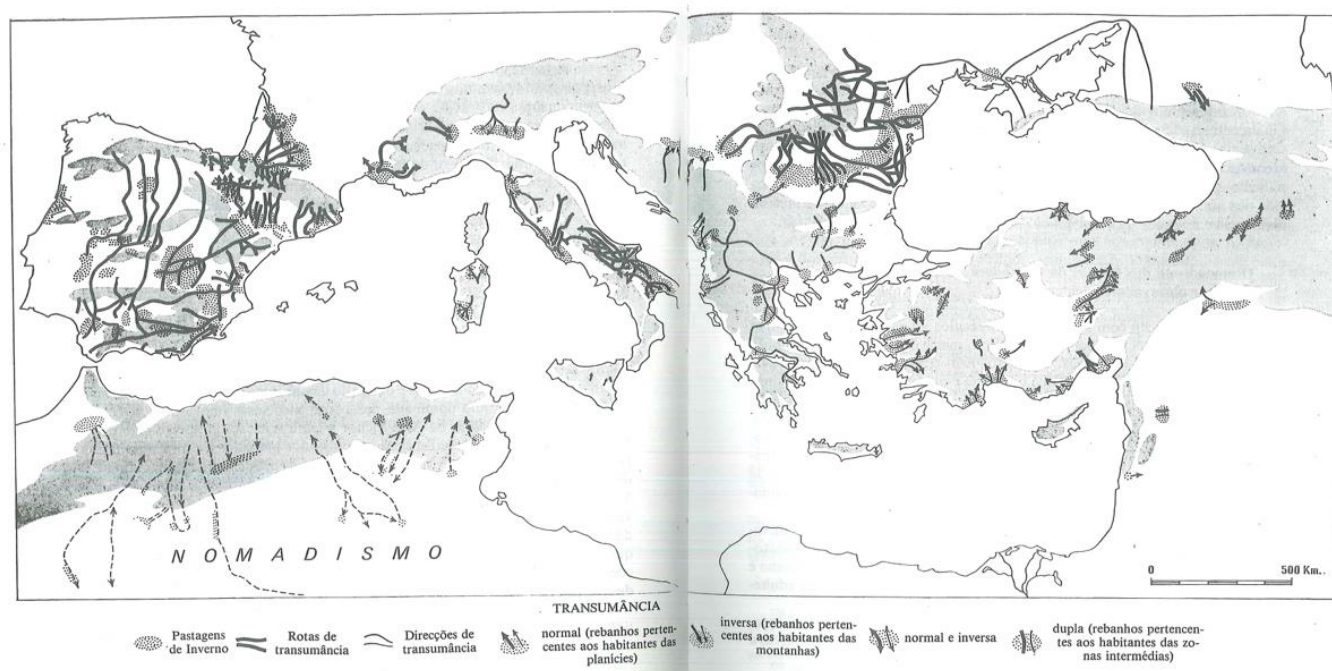


Figure 3. Transhumance and nomadism in the Mediterranean (Braudel, 1995, pp. 114 – 115)

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.

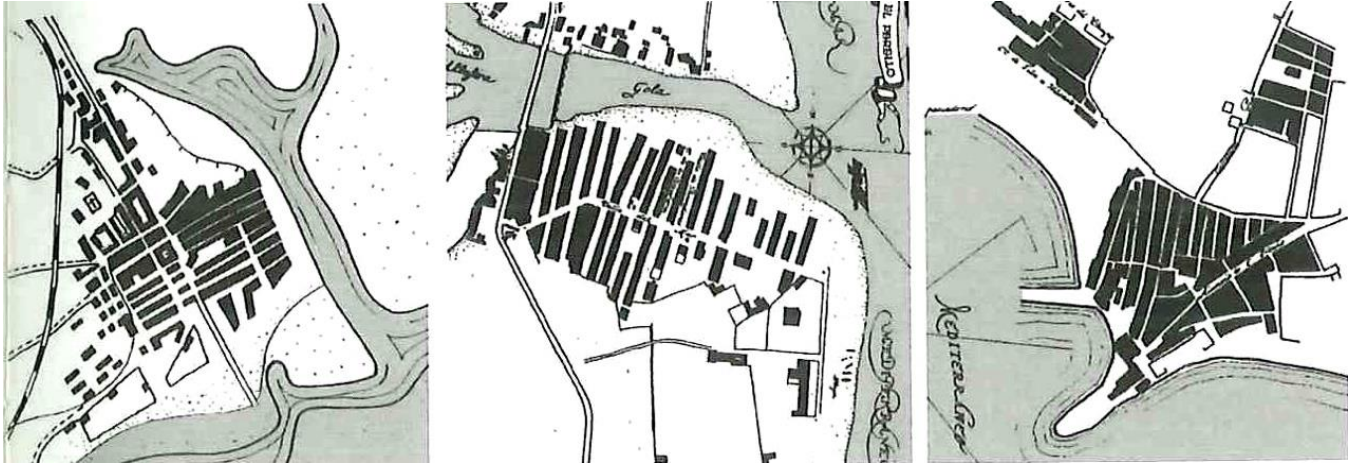


Figure 4. Habitational settlements of Fusetá (PT), El Perelló e Benidorm (ES) (Tostões, 2016, p. 79)

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.

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

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

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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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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.

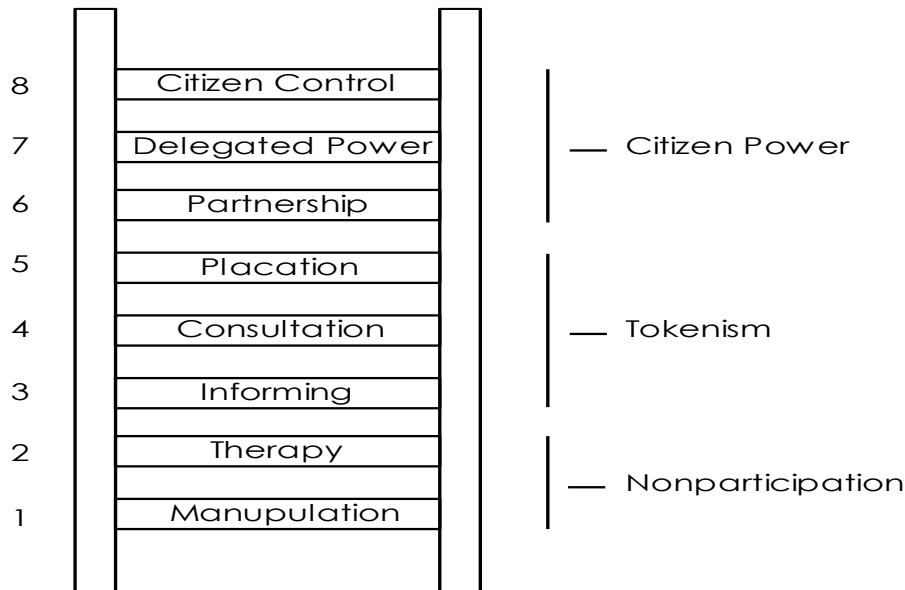


Figure 1. The eight participation ladders according to Arnstein R Sherry (ARNSTEIN R. S, 1996)

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 α 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 α 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).

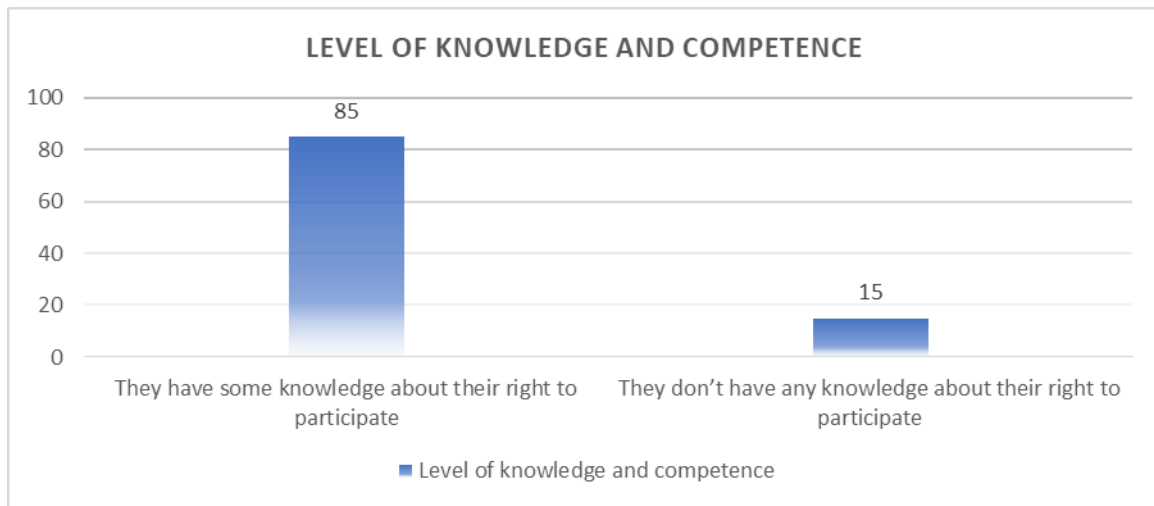


Figure 2. Level of knowledge and competence (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

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.

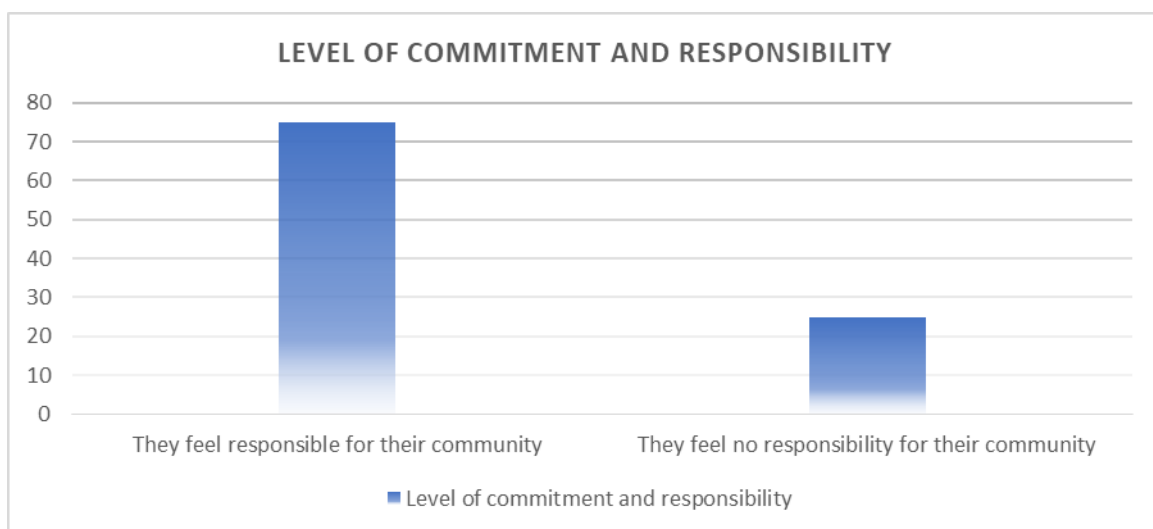


Figure 3. Level of commitment and responsibility (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

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.

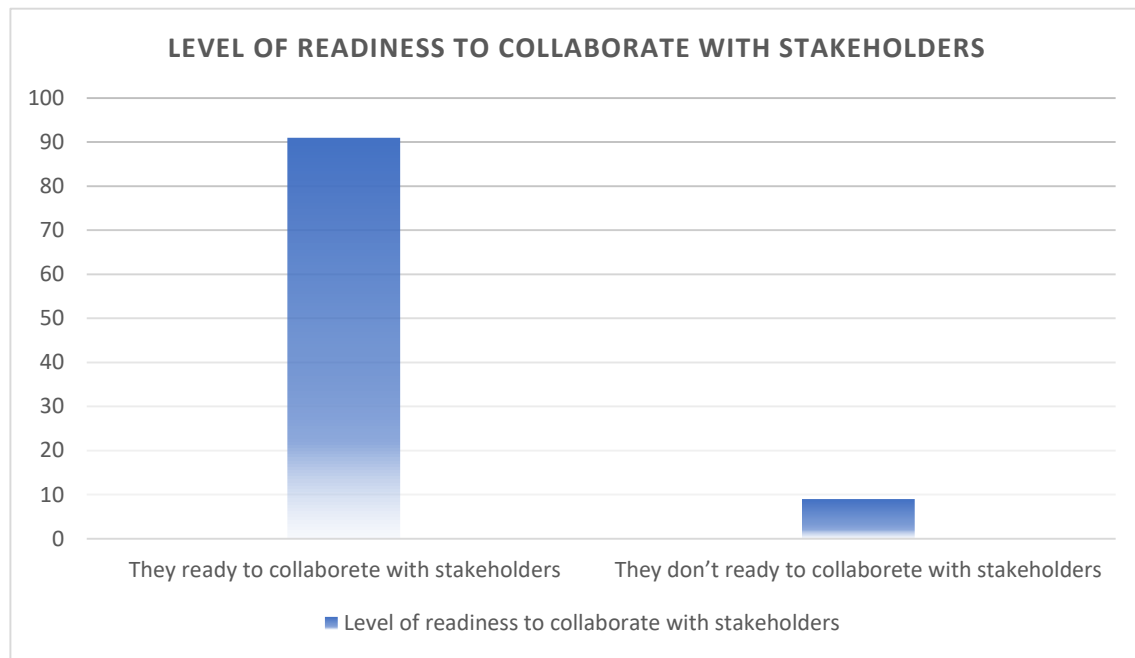


Figure 4. Level of readiness to collaborate with stakeholders (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

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.

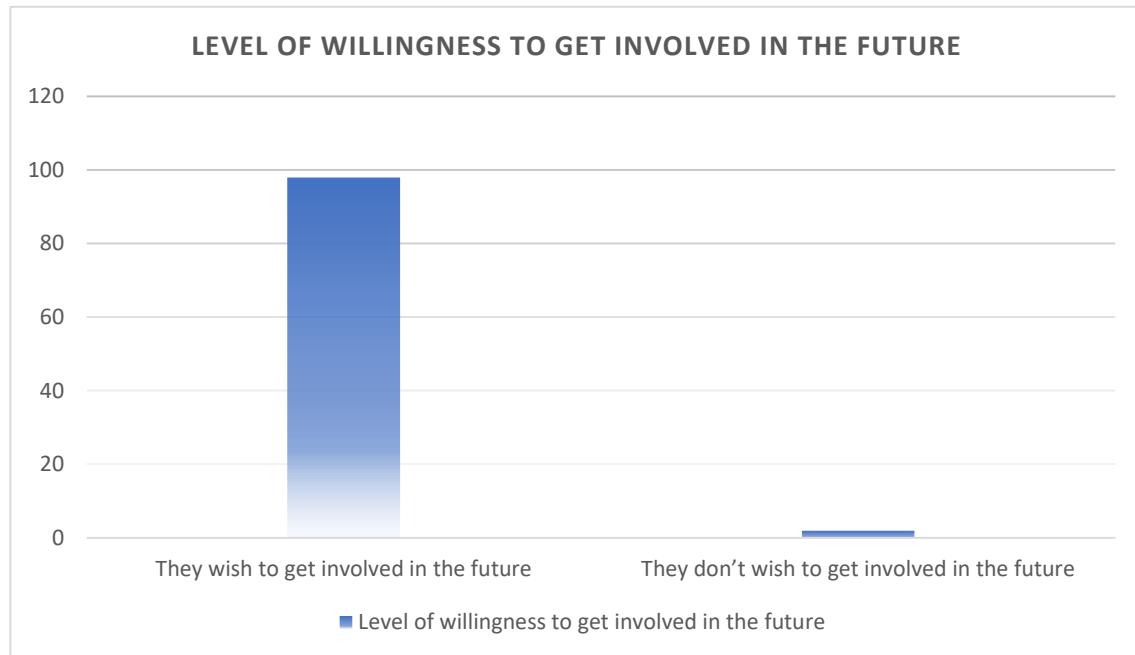


Figure 5. Level of willingness to get involved in the future (By author, 2019 using SPSS)

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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