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Cities Compared: Cosmopolitanism in the Mediterranean and adjacent regions

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Concept and objective of the programme

The object of this programme is to bring together research on cosmopolitanism in order to compare cities of different regions bordering on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, from various disciplinary perspectives, from history to political sciences or political philosophy. A focus will always be the city. The aim is to confront theories of cosmopolitanism and civil society with concrete historical urban case studies in a comparative way. Thus the attempt will be made to push forward the theoretical discussion of the concepts beyond Eurocentrism and at the same time to connect recent research on Mediterranean cities to ongoing theoretical debates¹.

The questions of how people of different cultural and religious background live together increasingly exercises people's mind, notably in conjunction with an increasingly awareness of global connectivity. Do Arabs or Muslims in Europe live in parallel societies? How do Europeans live in Algiers, Cairo, Istanbul or in Saudi Arabian cities? What is the historical experience of urban foreign communities in the Near East? And how does it compare to the experience of foreign communities in European towns. How is such cohabitation conceptualized, how is it translated into practice? How are urban societies dealing with the impact of global changes and the change from Empires to nation states? How have urban traditions been reinterpreted? Often the concept of cosmopolitanism is evoked to conjure up the image of citizens of the world, easily fitting into different contexts which openly receive them. But when applied to urban realities, describing the diversity of the society, this is then contrasted with the notion of communities closed onto themselves, hostile to their environment and potentially subversive to its integrity. Can a civil society develop in a non-western context, and if so, on what base? The concept of civil society is used as a precondition for democracy and good governance. Comparative historical analysis has been limited so far. The debate on civil society suggests that the origins of civil society were located in towns and in the relationship of town and country, that it developed in the context of European societies, which were more suited to the development of a stable pluralist civil society than others. What are the local traditions of intermediate societal groups on the other side of the Mediterranean. How were they organised in the Ottoman Empire and how did they changed with the advent of the modern nation states. Were stable civil societies only located in Western Europe? And were civil society 'models' imported from Western Europe to the Near East? If so, how and when did it work, when not? How did the process from old to new regimes of governance functioned? What can we learn of European urban history in this field and what from other historical paths? How was something like civil society conceptualised in the Near East?

¹ For a general presentation of the concept: Vertovec, Steven & Cohen, Robin, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: theory, context and practice*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 314 p. Breckenridge (Carol), *Cosmopolitanism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2002, 241 p.

The concept of cosmopolitanism in political philosophy

The concept of cosmopolitanism has been elaborated in the Hellenistic context, and has indeed been used and reinterpreted throughout history. What seems most interesting is to discuss the evolution of its meaning from the Greek idea of the government of the world as an extended city, to the social situation of Mediterranean, Middle-Eastern and Oriental towns and the present debate about world governance, urban governance and life in the cities.

A discussion of the history of the concepts of cosmopolitanism and civil society are necessary in the process of building a common field for discussion. The fact that the history of the concepts relates mostly to European political philosophy must not be considered as a Eurocentric vision, but instead as a clarification of the origins and connotations of a concept whose circulation will be at the centre of the programme.

The first use of the term cosmopolitanism comes from the cynical tradition. The concept has later been used by the Stoicians and is thus in essence a Mediterranean concept. It matured with the decline of the model of the Greek city and of the model of governance it had promoted in the whole ancient world. At the time of the imperial experience of Alexander, the Cynicals introduce the idea of an egalitarian morale, based on the individual. The Stoicians invent the idea of the world as a super-city, with citizens of the world². Cosmopolitanism is then from the very beginning a notion situated at the articulation between the government of the world and its differences and the urban government.

From the very beginning the cosmopolitan idea included a tension between the universal and the individual, between the idea of the possible coexistence of different identities of the individual and a need for an egalitarian-individualist attitude of indifference regarding men (and only very much later women) as citizens of the world or as participating entities in urban social life. The concept of cosmopolitanism is also born at the articulation between ethics and concrete governance of diversity. The urban question is thus at the very heart of cosmopolitanism.

Many misunderstandings have also been created by misuses of the term, and by an empirical use of the concepts of cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism. The main problem is the confusion between the coexistence of several different parallel-societies and the existence of one single society mixing several components. What is important in this programme is to discuss the various uses of the concept in order to promote a crossed examination of different social and political situations, both in history and today. The fact that the philosophical concept of cosmopolitanism has been elaborated in a Mediterranean context is not enough to allow inappropriate uses and a mere and undiscussed transposition to local situations. This very transposition must be discussed in a critical way. But the concept remains an important tool to discuss such crucial issues as the idea of world city, world history, world government and governance, urban conviviality, the governance of conflict situations, the emergence of a civil society and the complex relation between East and West.

During the period of the European Enlightenment, the concept was reinterpreted, mostly in the context of the German philosophical debates. That is why an examination of its pertinence today cannot do without a renewed discussion of Kant's ideas on cosmopolitanism, world government and the role of the individual in the society³. More important even is the role of

² On the relevance of such issues in present debates: Hill, L., "The Two Republicae of the Roman Stoics: Can a Cosmopolite be a patriot", *Citizenship Studies*, 2000, 4, p. 65-79.

³ On present debates on this particular point, see, for example : Slomp, Gabriella, "Kant's critique of Hobbes: Sovereignty and Cosmopolitanism", *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 2005, 4, p. 83-85; Pojman, Louis,

the concept in the maturation of the modern political thought in Europe⁴ and the circulation of the concept between Europe and the Middle-East in a complex relationship. Nationalism in Europe has also been built as a concept in the political philosophy in a complex and constant relation to cosmopolitanism⁵ and the study of the diverse nationalist traditions in the Mediterranean and its adjacent regions has to deal with such complexity. This has to be remembered when studying the stakes of nationalism in the East. From the tension in the French Revolution between nation building and the promotion of universal values⁶, to the ambiguity generated by considerations on race and ethnicity in the European nation building processes⁷, discussions on cosmopolitanism have always been matters of great relevance. They became matters of even greater relevance when this tradition confronted with diversity and complexity in a region which had experienced different path towards the governance of diversity and in which the impact of the European tradition was accompanied with great ambiguities. But the issue of the regime of difference has also been treated in philosophical context. In the mediaval ages authors like al-Farabi (al-madina al-fadila⁸), al-Biruni ou al-Isfahani (kitab al-aghani⁹), for example, or Ibn Khaldun¹⁰, have proposed articulated visions of the urban society in which both the Greek philosophical heritage and local traditions have been the object of an original creation, which contributed to build the frame of urban governance in the region. This contribution have has to be studied in relation to the evolution or the urban government of differences in the region, as well. Here the monumental works on cities, the history of cities, civilisation and governance like those of al Maqrizi (khitat al-maqriziya)¹¹, Ali Mubarak (khitat al-tawfiqiyah¹²) or Jurji Zaidan (tarikh at-tamaddun al-islami¹³,) may offer new insights.

“Kant’s perpetual peace and cosmopolitanism”, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 2005, 36, p. 62-71; Nussbaum, M.C., “Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism”, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 1997, 5, p. 1-25.

⁴ See, for example : Rosenfeld, S., “Citizens of Nowhere in Particular: cosmopolitanism, writing, and political engagement in Eighteenth-century Europe”, *National Identities*, 2002, 4, p. 25-43.

⁵ See: Meinecke, Friedrich, *Cosmopolitanism and the national state*, Princeton University Press, 1970, 403 p. See also: Bowden, B., “Nationalism and cosmopolitanism: irreconcilable differences or possible bedfellows?”, *National Identities*, 2003, 5, p. 235-249.

⁶ See, for example : Armstrong, David, “State and Nation in the French Revolution”, *Revolution and World Order*, 1993, 1, p. 79-112; Armstrong, David, *Revolution and World Order*, Oxford, Calendon, 1993, 328 p.; Dédéyan, Charles, *Le cosmopolitisme européen sous la Révolution et l’Empire*, Paris, SEES, 1976, 641 p.

⁷ See, for example: Gikandi, Simon, “Race and Cosmopolitanism”, *American Literary History*, 2002, 14, p. 593-615; Holton, R. G., “Cosmopolitanism or Cosmopolitanisms? The universal races congress of 1911, *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 2002, 2, p. 153-170.

⁸ F ar ab i., Al-Farabi on the perfect state : Ab u Nasr al-F ar ab i’s Mab adi’ ar a’ ahl al-mad ina al-f adila : a revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary / by Richard Walzer, *Ar a’ ahl al-mad inah al-fad ilah*, English & Arabic, Oxford [Oxfordshire], Clarendon Press, New York : Oxford University Press, 1985, 571p.

⁹ Ab u al-Faraj al-Isbah an i, 897 or 8-967, al-Juz’ al-h ad i wa-al-`ishr un min Kit ab al-Agh an i, li-Ab i al-Faraj al-Isbah an i. Waqafa`alá tash`ihih wa-dabatahu Rudalf Bar un u al-Amrik an i, Laydan, Matba` Brayl, [1888], 280 p.

¹⁰ Ibn Khaldún, 1332-1404, al-Muqaddimah / `Abd al-Rahm an ibn Khald un. Kitâb al-`ibar. Algiers, M ufam lil-Nashr, 1991, 2 v.

¹¹ Maqr iz i, Ahmad ibn `Al i, 1364-1442, Kit ab al-khitat al-Maqr iz iyah, Mawa`iz wa-al-`tib ar. [from old catalog], [1959], 3 v.

¹² `Al i Mub arak, B ash a, 1823 or 4-1893, al-Khitat al-Tawf iq iyah al-jad idah li-Misr al-Q ahirah wa-mudunih a wa-bil adih a al-qad imah wa-shah irah / ta’ if `Al i Mub arak, al-Tab` ah 2, al-Q ahirah, Matba`at D ar al-Kutub, 1969-<2001>, v. 1-13.

¹³ Zaydan Jurji, Sh ir az i, Muhammad al-Mahd i al-Husayn i., Min al-tamaddun al-Isl ami, 1977, 408 p.

Present debates about cosmopolitan governance

The present debates are articulated in the context of cultural and political studies, in debates on world history, world governance, post-national and post-colonial issues¹⁴. There are two main trends. The first one discusses the globalized world and its possible cosmopolitan governance, often in the context of the concept of a “world society” (*Weltgesellschaft*)¹⁵. The second one is about the neo-liberal project: Is there a neo-liberal cosmopolitanism?¹⁶. In this context, there are also debates on corporate organizations as cosmopolitan forms of governance¹⁷. In the field of political philosophy, there is also an important debate on Habermas¹⁸. But what is interesting is also to focus on the urban situation. Historiography about urban governance is at a turn. It is no longer possible to treat urban administrative modernity as a mere importation in the region, and local traditions are presently the object of a renewed heuristic interest resulting in a deep reinterpretation: urban societies before the impact with Europe had developed original forms of government and of governance of diversity. The question of modernity in an urban context has been the object of a process of insertion into a more complex frame. But the question remains of the evolution of the governance of diversity, in relation to modernity, to nationalism and nation-state building processes, to administrative rationalization, to the evolution of the role of the individual in society, to the emergence of civil society and to changes in the role of confessional communities. From the impact with modernity and secularism, to the reinterpretation and forms of survival of previous forms of governance, or to their cancellation, many questions arise in the process of analysing the relationship in an urban Mediterranean context between tradition and modernity. And cosmopolitanism is at the heart of it, as well as civil society.

¹⁴ See, for example: Leonard, Philip, *Nationality between post-culturalism and post-colonial theory: a new cosmopolitanism*, New-York, Palgrave, 2005.

¹⁵ See, for example : Schiffauer, Werner, “Cosmopolitans are Cosmopolitans: on the relevance of local identification in globalizing society” in Friedman, Jonathan & Randeria, Shalini (eds.), *Worlds on the Move: Globalization, migration, and cultural security*, London, Tauris, 2004, p. 91-101; Yegenoglu, Meyda, “Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in a Globalized World”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2005, 28, p. 103-131; Went, R., “Economic Globalization plus Cosmopolitanism?”, *Review of International Political Economy*, 2004, 11, p. 337-355. Debates are also on alter globalization as cosmopolitanism: Nouzeilles, G. & Mignolo, W., “An Other Globalization: Toward a critical cosmopolitanism”, *Nepantla: Views from South*, 2003, 4, 1-4. Also: Lynn, W., “Canis Lupus Cosmopolis: Wolves in a Cosmopolitan Worldview”, *Word Views: Environment, Culture, Religion*, 2002, 6, p. 300-327, . Moore, Margaret, “Globalization, Cosmopolitanism and Minority nationalism”, *Minority Nationalism and the Changing National Order*, 2001, 1, p. 44-61; Archibugi, Daniele, *Debating cosmopolitics*, London, Verso, 2003, 310 p.

¹⁶ On these debates, see for example: Kiely, Ray, “What difference does difference make? Reflections on neo-conservatism as a liberal cosmopolitan project”, *Contemporary Politics*, 2004, 3-4, p. 185-202; Flikschuh, Katrin, “The Limits of Liberal Cosmopolitanism”, *Res Publica*, 2004, 10, p. 175-192; Kymlicka, Will, “From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism”, *Politics in the Vernacular*, 2001, 9, 203-221; Meyer, L.H., “Liberal cosmopolitanism and moral motivation”, *Global Society*, 2000, 14, p. 631-647; Scheffler, Samuel, *Boudaries and allegiances. Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal Thought*, Oxford University Press, 2001, 221 p.

¹⁷ See: Garsten, C., “The Cosmopolitan Organization: an essay on corporate accountability”, *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 2003, 3, p. 355-370.

¹⁸ See, for example: Fine, R. & Smith, W., “Jürgen Habermas’s theory of Cosmpolitanism”, *Constellations*, 2003, 10, p. 469-487; De Greiff, P., “Habermas on Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism”, *Ratio Juris*, 2002, 15, p. 418-438; Pensky, M., “Cosmopolitanism and the Solidarity Problem: Habermas on National and Cultural Identities”, *Constellations*, 2000, 7, p. 64-79. In a French context: Derrida, Jacques, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, London, Routledge, 2001, 60 p.

The Cosmopolitan Heritage in the Mediterranean and adjacent regions: the urban context

Due to its history as well to the history of the concept, this region is a useful starting point for an illustration of these debates and a privileged field from which arguments are drawn. As U. Beck recently warned, the transposition of considerations on cosmopolitanism from philosophy to social sciences is a source of misunderstandings¹⁹. But the very object of the present programme is to confront these discourses on the basis of a crossed study of history, political and governance issues.

The first question to discuss is the passage from a conception of cosmopolitanism as an ancient notion in political philosophy to a paradigm designating the social situation of cities from the region with a diverse population. Research in this field cannot remain limited to the gathering of empirical material but has to confront some theoretical problems. The key might be governance, *i.e.* the question as to how a juridical, administrative and ideological framework was created which allowed for the development of cosmopolitanism, and how this cosmopolitanism related to modern notions of the term and to different philosophical traditions, both European and Arabic.

The aim of the project is to encourage the study of particular regional situations in medieval and old regime urban governance, with a special focus on the governance of diversity: confessional communities, ethnic minorities, guilds, tariqas, and other associations ... in a number of towns of the area. This related partly to European, partly to Ottoman history. As it is assumed that modern notions of the nation state and citizenship dramatically changed the overall framework of social organisation, the project suggests to combine a study of Early Modern solutions to these questions, in addition to discussing the impact of colonialism, the importance of reforms in an imperial context and the development in the nation state. The governance of diversity in the Ottoman Empire, with the *millet* system, for example, is in fact a key issue in the understanding of the history of the region, as well as the concepts of *diaspora*, *minority*, *nation* and *colony* in the old meaning of the terms (group of foreigners) and its evolution toward modern urban societies. Research has to go beyond a merely empirical description and confront the theoretical aspects of the question. Thus, Ottoman, Arabic and European political philosophy, as well as the interpretation of urban cosmopolitanism in the Ottoman Empire²⁰ and the European coastal cities need to be considered in addition to the study of particular historical case studies to which the concept could be applied.

The development of civil society, or sometime the reasons of the failure of such a development are also an important issue, as it is an occasion to follow the evolution of old-regime forms of association (confessional, professional) into a modern situation. The passage from guilds to professional associations, or from communities to cultural associations, from notability to political parties, are central issues in the understanding of the evolution of urban societies, and of the evolution of the governance of diversity.

The passage to modernity in this field can be analyzed on a large time scale, including the whole XIXth and XXth centuries, up to present issues. But moments of radical changes can also be used as means to understand how the urban system passes from a situation to another: The Izmir fire of 1922, the Saloniki fire of 1917, the Alexandria riots of the 1950' for example. These moments can be used as means to discuss the processes of imperial collapse, nation-state building, the expression of nationalism, the changes in the definition of identity.

¹⁹ Beck, U., "Cosmopolitical Realism: on the Distinction between Cosmopolitanism in Philosophy and the Social Sciences", *Global Networks: a Journal of Transnational Affairs*, 2004, 4, p. 131-156.

²⁰ Lees, Loretta, *The emancipatory city?: paradoxes and possibilities*, London, Thousand Oaks, 2004, 243 p.

State of research

The founding publication on the study of governance in a cosmopolitan urban society is surely Ilbert's seminal study of Alexandria²¹. The French research since then has developed an empirical rather than a theoretical approach to the question, and rarely has confronted the description of the urban reality to the concept of cosmopolitanism. However, it provides much information on urban case studies, from Saloniki to Izmir²².

For Europe, research has been particularly productive about Venice and Livorno²³. The evolution of the interpretation of diversity in the context of the emerging of the notion of nation-state in Italy is indeed an interesting point for comparison.

Research on cosmopolitanism in the Mediterranean has also been the object of a recent conference in Nice, with papers by Anne Brogini on Malta, Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire on the Free Massonery, Samuel Fettah on Livorno, Marie Carmen Smyrnelis on Smyrne, Malte Fuhrmann on the Ottoman port cities, Randi Deguihem on Damascus, Katerina Trimi-Kirou on Alexandria, Buket Turkmen on Turkish nationalism and Yvan Gastaut²⁴.

This work often ignores the theoretical aspect of the question and its relevance in the political sciences, but provides an important informative frame. On the contrary many theoretical considerations ignore the empirical dimension and particularly the urban situation²⁵. The object of this programme is to set up a productive dialogue between these two fields, and to use information about the past governance of diversity in present debates about assimilation, integration, multiculturalism, hybridisation, and their expression in urban governance, urban architecture and organization and in the structure of the whole urban sphere. New research on the concept has been produced recently at the crossing of these trends²⁶ and the very core of the present programme will consist in exploring such heuristic horizons, where a discussion of the concept of cosmopolitanism can bring new interpretations to the history of the region, its relationship to modernity through urban governance and State building process, and its present relationship to the issues of governance, democracy and insertion in a globalized world. The intent is also to bring a diverse angle in the interpretation of present debates related to *Occidentalism*²⁷, Islamic radicalism as expression of a hatred of the West, or the complex issue of the governance of diversity in urban situations.

Civil society is thus another key issue. Urban research in this field has been recently the object of a deep renewal, and a useful collaboration can be expected with researchers dealing

²¹ Ilbert, Robert, *Alexandrie 1830-1930 : Histoire d'une communauté citadine*, Cairo, IFAO, 1996.

²² For example : Darques, Régis, *Salonique au XXe siècle : de la cité ottomane à la métropole grecque*, Paris, Cnrs, 2000, 390 p. ; Georgelin, Hervé, *La fin de Smyrne : du cosmopolitisme aux nationalismes*, Paris, Cnrs, 2005, 254 p.

²³ See, for example : Bottin, Hervé & Calabi, Donatella (eds.), *Les étrangers dans la ville*, Paris, MSH, 1999, 486 p. and LoRomer, David, *Merchants and reform in Livorno*, Berkeley, UCLA, 1987, 389 p. See also Samuel Fettah's studies on Livorno. See also ; Sennet, Richard, *The conscience of the Eye : the design and social life of cities*, New-York, Norton, 1990, 266 p. (particularly chap. 5, p. 121: "In the presence of difference").

²⁴ Centre de la Méditerranée Moderne et Contemporaine, December 11-13, 2003 : *Le cosmopolitisme en Méditerranée : du modèle référentiel aux réalités du temps présent* (A publication is expected : Robert Escallier, Yvan Gastaut eds.)

²⁵ Pagden, A., "Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism and the legacy of European Imperialism", *Constellations*, 2000, 7, p. 3-22; Cocks, J., "A new Cosmopolitanism? V.S. Naipaul and Edward Said", *Constellations*, 2000, 7, p. 46-63.

²⁶ For example : Driessen, Henk, "Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism reconsidered", *History and Anthropology*, 2005, 16, p. 129-141; Sant Cassia, Paul & Schäfer, Isabel, "Mediterranean Conundrums: Pluridisciplinary perspectives for research in the social sciences", *History and Anthropology*, 2005, 16, p. 1-23; Meijer, Roel, *Cosmopolitanism, identity and authenticity in the Middle-East*, Richmond, Curzon, 1999, 196 p. See also: Ballinger, P., "Imperial nostalgia: mythologizing Habsburg Trieste", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2003, 8, p. 84-101.

²⁷ See : Buruma, Ian & Avishai, Margalit, *Occidentalism. The West in the eyes of its enemies*, New-York, Penguin, 2004. See also: Levy, Jacob, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford University Press, 2000, 268 p.

with different cultural contexts²⁸. Topics like the development of professional associations, labour organisations, cultural or educational associations, in relation to local heritages of cosmopolitanism have to be discussed in a wider frame as well as the trend of nostalgia of cosmopolitanism idealization and inserted into a concrete intend of writing a social, political and cultural history of this field, related to present debates.

Authors like Nelly Hanna for Egypt, Emad Hilal, Roel Meijer or Sami Zubaida have contributed in the renewal of social studies²⁹. The object of the present programme is to confront such trends to the general question of the governance of diversity in societies both of the past and of the present. The image of the urban social panorama through literature, movies and photography can also be the object of important contributions, in relation to the research trend developed at WIKO following the workshop on Arabic Literature and Urban Life (Sunil Sharma, 2004).

²⁸ See, for example, the « Between Cousins and Kings : Civil Society or Something Else » research initiative by R. Morris and Denis Bocquet (European Urban History Association), dealing with civil society in an imperial context.

²⁹ Hanna, Nelly, *In praise of books : a cultural history of Cairo's middle class, sixteenth to the eighteenth century*, Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 2003, 219 p.; Georg, Zubaida, Sami (editors), *Mass culture, popular culture, and social life in the Middle East*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987, 312 p.; Hilal, Emad Ahmad, *al-Baghay`a fi Misr : dir`asah ta`rikhiyah ijtim`iyah, 1834-1949*, al-Q`ahirah : al-`Arab`i lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi` , 2001, 254 p. (Hilal, Emad, *Prostitutes in Egypt: a socio-historical study, 1834-1949*); Meijer, Roel (Ed.), *Alienation or integration of Arab youth : between family, state and street*, Richmond, Surrey : Curzon, 2000, 223 p.; Meijer, Roel (Ed.), *Cosmopolitanism, identity and authenticity in the Middle East*, Richmond, Surrey : Curzon, 1999, 196 p.