



Tourism Strategies and Colonial Heritage: Friend of Foe?

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The historical studies and the practical observation in different regions of the Mediterranean highlight the existence of a rich and diverse architectural and urban heritage coming from the modern colonial experiences, largely unknown and underestimated. Most of them are dating from the last two centuries and they are related to exogenous know-how, merged with local practices, materials and needs.

In many cases indeed, this “imported” heritage represents a specific element of the nowadays urban fabric, including their differences from the “traditional” urban structure. The potential value of this colonial architecture and urban heritage start to be recognized by local and international stakeholders and some of them are trying to transform this heritage in a new asset for tourism.

Local identity becomes an important issue exactly because of the origin of this heritage, which is producing controversial statements. Study cases in Maghreb area are showing that stakeholders are working on population awareness but also on identity factors in order to preserve the heritage and (or) to include it into a nowadays “market oriented” urban cultural landscape.

I would present the situation along the Moroccan Atlantic coast - where different colonial vestiges exist, coming from Portuguese, Spanish and French colonization - and the strategies to include those heritages both into tourist activities and into the local lives.

We can observe how the concept of place identity is used as an instrument of transformation, including both tangible and intangible heritage. At the same time, the “traditional” tourism places are facing the negative impacts of mass tourism and sustainability in urban development is becoming a reference.

The potential value of the colonial architectural and urban legacies needs to be enhanced and it requires a sustainable valorization to play a proactive role in the development strategies, at the national and local level.

KEY WORDS: Tourism, place identity, urban transformations.