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Roy MANN

# Recent U.S. Shoreline Studies and their relevance to Mediterranean Coastal Planning

The name of the sea all the world loves, the Mediterranean, means the sea « between the lands ». The coastal edges of these lands might well be also known, in this critical juncture of their history, as the *Medifortunean*, for they are experiencing actions (government policy decisions, private development initiative, public response to both of these, and the inexorable workings of nature itself on the interventions of man) that will determine how divergent their fate will be in the future from that of the past.

Until recently, all land and coastal development planning issues were easily simplified (perhaps oversimplified) into two general questions : whether change of an environment (natural, historic, scenic, etc.) ought to be provided in order to achieve a use objective ; and if so, how the change ought to be achieved, in terms of the aesthetic, ecological, and functional design relationships between the proposed project and the continuous environment, as well as within the project precinct itself.

Today, however, new emphases appear to be pointing to additional considerations as well. For one, there is a growing interest in preserving to as great a degree as possible the existing environmental qualities of entire coastlines or regions. Examples of this include Great Britain's Operation Neptune, intended to preserve the nation's coastline ; the recent legislation of state-wide zoning of land in the State of Hawaii in the United States ; and the bill newly submitted by Senator Edward M. Kennedy in the U. S. Congress to severely restrict further development on the scenic islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

Such actions obviously reflect the desires of not inconsiderable segments of the public in the countries or regions in which they pertain.

A second new emphasis is on preserving wilderness areas and protecting their perimeters from influences that might tend to diminish the wildlife or scenic values of the interior. A vivid example of this concern in the United States is provided by the case of Rookery Bay, a significant wildlife and wader habitat northwest of the Everglades on the Gulf coast of Florida. Although a large sanctuary was established in 1967, lack of action to protect the perimeter has permitted adjacent large scale development to interfere with drainage

patterns and with the wild qualities of the reserve itself.

The experience of the National Park Service (NPS) in the United States has also presented a strong indication of a growing public interest in protecting areas of significant natural, historic or scenic value from peripheral erosion or internal degradation as a result of unlimited crowd use. The NPS is now engaged in planning the acquisition or regulation of zones surrounding wilderness and primitive areas of the National Parks System in order to secure more meaningful protection for these fragile areas.

In addition to these relatively new emphases, it is apparent from reports on coastal development throughout the world as well as in the United States that increasing care is being exercised by both regulatory public agencies and developers in harmonizing urban and tourist facilities into their surroundings.

And yet, despite all the new round of caution, scenic coastal regions may be in graver danger from unwise development than ever before.

Four central reasons lie beneath this threat. First, an increasing portion of personal incomes in an increasing number of the world's nations is being spent on vacation travel and tourism. Second, a variety of governmental jurisdictions ranging from American municipalities to nations less developed than the United States have declined to institute adequate developmental controls because of a conviction that without attractive incentives to potential developers, the region or nation stands to lose economically. Third, the scale of development is increasing—both in terms of the size of structures now possible with modern technology and in terms of the areal spread of the total development. Fourth, partly as an outcome of the three previously cited reasons, the developers of large-scale projects are in many cases disregarding the advice of environmental experts. In one case, a vast-scale vacation village development on a Mediterranean island, the developer hired expert environmental planners of his own, only to pass over the planners' recommended program in favor of a more dense and therefore more lucrative alternative.

A number of coastal planning studies recently undertaken in the United States

may be of interest to those who are planning for better optimization of resources along the Mediterranean coast.

The 1970 National Estuary Study of the U. S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service was authorized by Congress as a result of the increasingly widespread concern for the protection of « public values in the land-water interface » fronting on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Great Lakes.

Appendix D of the Study, « Estuarine Landscape Survey and Analysis », assessed the U. S. coastal landscape and identified the *loci* of existing or potential conflict between environmental resources and technology (see Figure 1).

In 1971 the Florida Coastal Coordinating Council initiated coastal zone management plan studies along several reaches of the Florida peninsula. In one reach, the Escarosa Coastal Zone Management Plan Area, aesthetic and amenity values were identified and recommendations submitted for the identification of unit areas in which preservation, conservation or general development priorities and policies might be established.

A third study, General Guidelines for Use of the Great Lakes Shoreline, has recently been drafted for the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources for use within the Great Lakes Basin Commission's framework study for better management of the resources of the United States section of the Great Lakes coast. The Guidelines consist of recommendations for site location and design treatment as well as for improved regulatory frameworks at the state and local level (see Figure 2).

All three studies reveal the growing awareness among legislative and executive leaders that stronger policies for preserving existing coastline and better methodologies for evaluating environmental resources and predicting and preventing environmental impact are urgently needed.

One of the basic assumptions, for example, in the Great Lakes Shoreline Guideline study was that the appearance of the shoreline in the future would not be allowed to change significantly from its appearance today. A large part of the study effort was also geared toward evaluating the intrinsic aesthetic and recreational qualities of landforms, vegetative edges, horizon types, shore and beach configurations and unique scenic assets. Because of the vast increase in population anticipated in the Great Lakes Basin (from 29 million to 53 million by the year 2020), public officials and planners are now extremely sensitive to the need for protecting abundant stretches of open shoreline for future recreational use. There is also a large measure of understanding of the interrelationships between land use and industrial use with water quality and the quality of all land resources. Finally, there is a conscious effort to insure that wherever tourist, recreational or general urban development does take place, such development will be achieved with minimal impact on the appearance and other natural values of the existing environment.

Many questions still exist, of course, and may only be resolved through concerted and innovative planning investigation. In considering wilderness values, for example, one is faced with the problem of how to establish and preserve a meaningful gradient between urban and wild areas to maximize the intactness of those values which urban dwellers and tourists may take great pains to seek. In minimizing the impact of hotels and other large-scale developments, what guidelines may be established for setback? What alternatives are there, in fact, to erecting continuous walls of tourist facilities on beach frontages? Are there any forms of mini-transportation that would permit ample setback of resort hotels without diminishing the attractiveness of the facilities for potential tourist clientele? Are there alternative building materials, site earthworks, mass plantings and other landscape tools which can better disguise and harmonize coastal developments? And what tools ought to be developed to compensate localities, states, provinces, and even nations for loss of development income sacrificed for the sake of preserving unique—or typical—coastal reaches for the edification of a public that may reside largely outside their own borders?

Significant planning efforts have been made in the past and are being initiated currently by the nations of the Mediterranean. What has been reported above, however, is not too remote for consideration. Because at the heart of the travelers' desire is the impulse to witness that which is at the same time unique in the world and typical within its own environment. As world and Mediterranean populations increase toward some distant horizon, the spectrum of demand for tourist pleasures will shift away from leisure considerations alone towards a deeper desire to experience environments—scenic, natural, cultural, historic and recreational—that retain a preponderant image of qualities free from distortion by the travelers' own footprints.

