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## Modernization of the Cities of the Ottoman Empire (1800-1920)

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### *Résumé*

A partir du début du XIXe siècle, alors qu'une faible part de la population de l'Empire ottoman réside en milieu urbain, les villes sont touchées par un mouvement de croissance sans précédent. En quelques décennies, des dizaines de milliers de personnes, nées en milieu rural ou bien en zones de nomadisation, se fixent dans des villes. A toutes les échelles d'appréhension de la réalité urbaine, les transformations s'accélérent et les modalités de développement changent. Si ce mouvement n'est pas synchrone – certaines villes démarrent avant les autres –, il constitue un phénomène nouveau car il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un accroissement des recompositions mais aussi d'un moment de rupture quant aux modes d'administration, quant à la répartition des groupes sociaux et des activités dans l'espace et quant aux formes architecturales et urbaines.

### Abstract

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, when only a small portion of the Ottoman Empire's population was living in an urban environment, cities came to be affected by an unprecedented movement of growth. Within a few decades, tens of thousands of people born in a rural environment, or in nomad zones, settled in the cities. The process of transformation accelerated, and modalities of development changed, at every level of apprehension within the urban reality. Although this movement was not synchronous one – some cities took off before others – it nonetheless constituted a new phenomenon: it was not simply a matter of growing re-composition but represented a break with regard to modes of administration, to the division of social groups and activities within space, and to architectural and urban forms.



## **Modernization of the Cities of the Ottoman Empire (1800-1920)**

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, when only a small portion of the Ottoman Empire's population was living in an urban environment, cities came to be affected by an unprecedented movement of growth. Within a few decades, tens of thousands of people born in a rural environment, or in nomad zones, settled in the cities. The process of transformation accelerated, and modalities of development changed, at every level of apprehension within the urban reality. Although this movement was not a synchronous One – some cities took off before others – it nonetheless constituted a new phenomenon: it was not simply a matter of growing recomposition but represented a break with regard to modes of administration, to the division of social groups and activities within space, and to architectural and urban forms.

### **A new context**

This movement should be viewed within the framework of a far larger set of transformations extending beyond the Empire's borders. The Mediterranean of the nineteenth century was marked, first of all, by the rapid rise of western imperialism attested to by an intensification of the exchanges, especially economic ones, between the two shores. In this period, too, the Ottoman Empire lost numerous provinces to the colonial expansion of the great powers and to the building of new independent nation states.

#### *Intensification of exchanges, new dynamics*

From the 1830s on, the progress of steam navigation, which accelerated exchanges and lowered the costs involved, led to an increase in the volume of merchandise transported by sea. By virtue of this development, the Ottoman shore of the Mediterranean became, at one and the same time, a source of raw materials to supply the new European factories and a vast potential market for the production of these. The cities primarily affected by this movement were the ports: Salonica, Istanbul, Smyrna, Mersin, Beirut, Haifa, and Alexandria. A fierce competition developed between these establishments; on the Palestinian and Syrian coasts in particular, real battles for influence sprang up between them. In this context, the moving of foreign consulates, between 1840 and 1860, from Acre to Haifa or, further north, from Tarsus to Mersin, testified to the recomposition and downgrading involved, to the benefit of ports that had the means to absorb agricultural surplus and attract foreign ships.<sup>1</sup> Communications

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<sup>1</sup>. Mahmoud Yazbak, "Immigration and Integration: Haifa the Port City of Nineteenth Century Palestine," in *Mersin, the Mediterranean and Modernity: Heritage of the long Nineteenth Century* (Mersin, 2002), 51-52; Meltem Toksöz, "An eastern Mediterranean Port—Town in the Nineteenth Century," in *Mersin, the Mediterranean and Modernity*, 15.

between these ports and the cities of the interior played a crucial role in such recompositions. In Egypt, Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, who, from the first years of the nineteenth century, thought to distance himself from the Sublime Porte, understood well enough the issues at stake in the development of the ports. At the end of the 1810s, he ordered the digging of the Mahmudiyya canal, which would shorten the time for the journey between Cairo – then the chief city of the Egyptian province and Alexandria.<sup>2</sup> These works paved the way for the creation of a military dockyard in this city. On the Syrian coast, the silting up of the port of Sidon, in the first half of the nineteenth century, deprived Damascus of its maritime outlet.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, consulates and western trading houses installed themselves in Beirut. Even so, the ninety-kilometre journey between the two cities took no less than three days on horseback via the Lebanese highlands and the Bīqā‘ plain. At the beginning of the 1860s, a private company opened a road for coaches between Beirut and Damascus<sup>4</sup>. Thanks to this arrangement, wagons needed only thirteen hours to go from one city to the other<sup>5</sup>. It was at this moment that steam navigation imposed itself for good on the ports of the Levant; sailing ships were downgraded and condemned to coastal redistribution.<sup>6</sup> A few years later, railways guaranteed the penetration of western markets from the ports into the interior. In 1866, the inauguration of two railways from Smyrna to Aydin (to the southeast) and Casaba (to the east) testified clearly to this new dynamic.<sup>7</sup> It was also illustrated by the lively competition that developed, during the 1890s, between the different western companies aiming to equip Syria and Palestine with railways.<sup>8</sup> The ratification of port-cities was contemporary with the development of these railways. During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, Smyrna, Salonica, Istanbul, and finally Beirut, acquired quays and equipment facilitating loading and storage operations, together with customs checks.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>. Michael J. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead, Government and Society in Alexandria 1807-1882* (Cairo, 1997), 111.

<sup>3</sup>. John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria* (London, 1840), 52.

<sup>4</sup>. Leila Fawaz, “The Beirut-Damascus Road: Connecting the Syrian Coast to the Interior in the 19th Century,” in *The Syrian Land: Process of integration and Fragmentation. Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schaebler (Stuttgart, 1998), 19-28.

<sup>5</sup>. Eleuthère Elefériadès, *Les chemins de fer en Syrie et au Liban, étude, historique, financière et économique* (Beirut, 1944), 37-39.

<sup>6</sup>. Boutros Labaki, *Introduction à l'histoire économique du Liban. Soie et commerce extérieur en fin de période ottomane (1840-1914)* (Beyrouth 1984), 58.

<sup>7</sup>. Paul Dumont, « La période des Tanzîmât (1839-1878) », *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, ed. Robert Mantran (Paris, 1989), 496.

<sup>8</sup>. Elefériadès, *Les chemins de fer en Syrie* Jacques Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l'empire ottoman (1895-1914)* (Paris, 1977), 163-166 and 318-330.

<sup>9</sup>. For Smyrna, see Elena Frangakis Syrett, « The Dynamics of Economic Development: Izmir and Western Anatolia, Late 19th / Early 20th Centuries », in *Mersin, the Mediterranean and Modernity*, 65-72; for Salonica, see Meropi Anastasiadou, *Salonique, 1830-1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes* (Leiden, New York, Cologne, 2000), 141-145; for Istanbul, see Zeynep Celik, *The Remaking of Istanbul. Portrait of an Ottoman city in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, 1986), 75; for Beirut, see C. Babikian, *La Compagnie du port de Beyrouth, histoire d'une concession 1887-1990*, thesis, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1996).

Ships transported men as well as merchandise. Following the treaty of Balta Liman, signed in 1838 between the Porte, France, and Britain,<sup>10</sup> more and more foreign contractors came to settle in the Empire. Two years later, a spinner from the Drôme settled in Beirut with some forty French women workers.<sup>11</sup> In Egypt, in Alexandria, and then in Cairo, there were abundant cases, at the beginning of the 1870s, not a week would go by without Khedive Isma‘il Pasha receiving a request for the setting up of a factory or the development of some new activity. The foreign presence in the Empire was also fostered, finally, by the expansion of tourism, reflected in the multiplication of travel guides from the 1860s on, and in the setting up of services (luxury hotels, travel agencies, and so on) that accompanied this development. This should not, however, mask a reverse movement, smaller in scale indeed but equally significant. From the mid-1820s on, Muhammad ‘Ali began sending a scholastic mission to France. The expedition’s 43 grant-holders were designed to become senior public officers in his administration.<sup>12</sup> For their part, Ottoman officials multiplied their trips to Europe, where they drew the ideas underlying the first reforms. In 1846, Ahmed Bey, the governor of Tunisia, spent a month in Paris, where he visited not only the museums but also some manufacturers and the polytechnic.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Independence and reforms*

The nineteenth century was also a time of slow dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire. The chronology of secessions was inaugurated by Serbia at the very beginning of the nineteenth century (1804), and the Greeks, Valaks, and Moldovans followed suit in the years that followed. The Balkans, where separatist regions contained more Christians than Muslims, were not the only scene of secessionist movements. Two years after the Serb revolt, the Wahhabis, settled in Saudi Arabia since the eighteenth century, seized the cities of Mecca and Medina. Thereafter, the 1830s were decisive, with the frontiers of the Empire threatened on several fronts. The troops of the Russian Czar entered Anatolia in 1828; then, three years later, France occupied Algeria, while the Egyptians seized the opportunity provided by the Sultan’s relative weakness to occupy Syria. The British, for their part, seized Aden. It was within this framework that the Porte set up the first administrative reforms (*tanzimat*) at the end of the 1830s. In its attempts to regain power over the remaining parts of the Empire, it relied especially on the cities’ role as staging posts in guaranteeing a more efficient control over the territory.

The role of the state might be affirmed in a number of different ways. Following the riots, in 1819~1820, by the chief men of religion in Aleppo against the representatives

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<sup>10</sup>. This treaty eliminated monopolies and Customs protection from the Empire and authorized the French and British to carry out commercial activities. See Dumont, “La période des Tanzimat,” 496.

<sup>11</sup>. Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme*, 493.

<sup>12</sup>. Anouar Louca, « La médiation de Tahtâwi 1801-1873 », *La France & l’Égypte à l’époque des vice-rois 1805-1882*, ed. Daniel Panzac and André Raymond (Cairo, 2002), 60.

<sup>13</sup>. *Histoire de Tunis par J.J. Marcel, ... précédée par une description de cette régence par L. Franck* (Tunis, 1979), 210-214; Noureddine Sraieb, “Le voyage d’Ahmed Bey a Paris, en 1846,” in *Itinéraires de France en Tunisie*, ed. D. Jacobi (Marseille, 1995).

of the Porte, the governor ordered the destruction of the district gates that had impeded his re-conquest of the city.<sup>14</sup> A decade on, Istanbul reinforced its power in Iraq by eliminating the Georgian Mamluks, former slaves who had been governing the region, in the Sultan's name, since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Some years later, in the wake of the conquest of Algeria by the French, the Porte exiled the members of the family that had been in power in Barbary Tripoli for more than a century, replacing the Pasha by an appointed governor more easily subject to its own control.<sup>16</sup> In both these cases, large cities – Bassora, Baghdad, Mosul, and Tripoli – were the chief places for a renewed installation of the Ottoman administration.

## **Modes of administration, management, and legislation**

### *A new legislation*

Even before the first text of the administrative reforms was promulgated, the Ottoman authority concerned itself with the organization of the Empire's cities. In 1836, Mustafa Reshid Pasha, regarded as the founding father of the *tanzimat*, proposed to the Sultan a series of measures aimed at improving the layout of the city and avoiding the spread of fires.<sup>17</sup> His suggestions were substantially taken into account some years later in a ruling the – *ilmubaher* – prohibiting the use of flammable material in construction, regulating the width of streets according to their role in the road network, and prohibiting cul-de-sacs.<sup>18</sup> This legislation was subsequently the subject of further specific rulings (1848). In 1863 it was extended to all the cities of the Empire, then, in 1882, the numerous regulations were assembled in a code of construction.<sup>19</sup> However, these texts were often only partially applied. They set up a general framework, a kind of objective in the field of urbanization, but a number of factors impeded their implementation.

First, the legislation was prepared in Istanbul, though designed for all the cities of the Empire. It was produced by writers who resided in the capital and whose main objective was to control construction there, and especially to reduce the risks of fires.<sup>20</sup> However, these wooden constructions, largely open to the exterior by means of panelling, were quite different from most of those erected in the Arab provinces, which were rather made out of stone, brick or cob. Hence, the imperial regulation was applied in variable manner, according to local particularities. This was the case in Damascus, for instance,

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<sup>14</sup>. Jean-Claude David and Gérard Degeorge, *Alep* (Paris, 2002), 297.

<sup>15</sup>. Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La question irakienne*, (Paris, 2002), 17.

<sup>16</sup>. Nora Lafi, *Une ville du Maghreb entre ancien régime et réformes ottomanes. Genèse des institutions à Tripoli de Barbarie (1795-1911)* (Paris, 2002), 185.

<sup>17</sup>. Alain Borie, Pierre Pinon and Stéphane Yérasimos, *L'Occidentalisation d'Istanbul au XIXe siècle*, research report (La Défense, 1989), 5; Dumont, « La période des Tanzîmât », 492.

<sup>18</sup>. İlhan Tekeli, « Nineteenth century transformation of Istanbul area », in *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire*, ed. Paul Dumont and François Georgeon (Paris, 1992), 38.

<sup>19</sup>. Tekeli, « Nineteenth century transformation », 39.

<sup>20</sup>. I. Tekeli clearly shows how the great fires in Istanbul – 750 buildings destroyed in 1856, 3,500 in 1864, and so on – determined the successive reinforcements of legislation regarding building. See Tekeli, “Nineteenth century transformation,” 38-40.

where the legislation corresponded poorly with the practical knowledge of construction professionals.<sup>21</sup> In Egypt, the first general texts of urban legislation appeared later; they go back to the beginning of the 1880s.<sup>22</sup> However, the *Commissione di Ornato*, established in 1834 by Muhammad 'Ali Pasha in Alexandria, put together a detailed regulation with a view to ensuring its control over the city's development and over new buildings.<sup>23</sup>

Besides, it was difficult to define *a priori* the administrative structure most apt to obtain the results anticipated by the law. As is indicated by the multiple sharp reminders, and the modifications in the organization of public services, reforms were implemented by trial and error. Moreover, during the last years of the *tanzimat*, administrative decisions were highly centralized. At the end of the 1850s, following the Crimean war during which the stationing of troops in the cities demonstrated these latter's poor management; reformers began to consider the advantages of developing power on the local level.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Local power/central power*

Up to the mid-1850s, city management had been left to the services of the provincial administrations. From then on, we witness the creation of the first municipal bodies, of which the first of all saw the light in Istanbul in 1855. Opinions are divided as to the results obtained within the framework of this initial experience. Nonetheless, municipal com» missions multiplied thereafter in the large cities: in 1863 in Beirut, in 1869 in Salonica, the following year in Barbary Tripoli, and so on. In 1877, the parliament extended the municipal regime to all the cities of the Empire.<sup>25</sup> By law, these new administrations were responsible for a long list of tasks, from the supervision of new buildings to the establishment of shelters for the destitute, along with the policing of markets and the keeping of civil registers.<sup>26</sup> However, the meagre means made available to them did not permit most of these tasks to be carried out.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in those cities that were also provincial capitals, or in future capitals of those countries in the process of becoming free, the creation of municipal bodies was not achieved without difficulty: the central authority always had reservations about the emergence of strong local powers. In Istanbul, the "experiment" was limited to districts inhabited by Europeans and situated on

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<sup>21</sup>. Jean-Luc Arnaud, *Damas, recompositions urbaines et renouvellement de l'architecture, 1860-1925* (Arles, 2004), 3rd part.

<sup>22</sup>. Jean-Luc Arnaud, *Le Caire - mise en place d'une ville moderne, 1867-1907. Des intérêts du prince aux sociétés privées* (Arles, 1998), 231-241.

<sup>23</sup>. Reimer, *Colonial Bridgehead*, 73-75.

<sup>24</sup>. Tekeli, « Nineteenth century transformation », 35.

<sup>25</sup>. Dumont, "La période des Tanzimat," 492.

<sup>26</sup>. « Attributions générales de l'administration municipale », in Georges Young, *Corps de droit Ottoman* (Oxford, 1905), vol. 1, 70-71.

<sup>27</sup>. The exception that proves the rule was the municipality of Mersin. Levying a tax on merchandise passing through its port, it seems to have been endowed with somewhat comfortable budgets. See Toksöz, "An eastern Mediterranean Port-Town," 16-17.



the left shore of the Golden Horn, away from the palaces and State offices.<sup>28</sup> In Tunis, it was the seminal pact of 1857, adopted under pressure from European representatives – particularly France and Britain – that imposed the creation of a municipal commission. The Bey resigned himself, the following year, to the establishment of such a commission, but, in order to maintain control over it, reserved for himself the right to appoint the president and his deputy; and he reduced its resources to the point that, from the moment it assumed its functions, the commission was incapable of fulfilling its tasks. Finally, it often covered the same ground as older bodies, whose roles had not been redefined when the commission was created.<sup>29</sup>

In the other cities of the Empire, local powers received no better treatment from the central authority. In law, the respective competences of the governor and the local assembly (*majlis*) were clearly defined.<sup>30</sup> In reality, things were not so clear. In Damascus, for example, there was apparently regular interference. In view of the frequent changes of governors, and the varying degrees of competence they accorded themselves, the local power and its technical services could have very different means at its disposal.<sup>31</sup> Aleppo, for its part, did not seem to be subject to the same pressure from governors. The municipal authority established in 1868 provided services more developed than those of its counterpart in Damascus.<sup>32</sup> However, the interventionism of the Ottoman power in local affairs was by no means limited to Damascus. In Salonica, thirty years after the creation of the municipality, it was the Porte that issued a concession for the building and exploitation of a local transportation network.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, despite the multiple projects and propositions established since 1870, Cairo had no autonomous municipal services before the end of the 1940s. The central power, Egyptian, then (after 1882) British did not wish for the development of a local force in a city that had national administrative services. These reservations on the part of the authorities to some extent demonstrated that, since 1870, Cairo had no longer been a provincial capital within the Ottoman Empire, but rather the capital of an Egypt already possessing a high degree of independence.

Despite the difficulties they encountered, despite the constraints imposed by the central powers, except in Cairo, the largest cities all had municipal services by the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. In general, these bodies and their mode of functioning (on the basis of annual budgets) were a novel feature in the

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<sup>28</sup>. Tekeli, “Nineteenth century transformation,” 35-36. For the municipal legislation of the sixth circle (Pera and Galata), see also Young, *Corps de droit*, vol. 6, 149-167.

<sup>29</sup>. Mohammed Abdelaziz Ben Achour, *Catégories de la société tunisoise dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle. Les élites musulmanes* (Tunis, 1989), 299 et seq. On the attributes of this *majlis al-baladi*, see Jélal Abdelkafi, *La médina de Tunis, espace historique* (Paris, 1989), 24.

<sup>30</sup>. Moshe Ma'oz, « Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period Between 1840 and 1861 », *Bulletin of School of oriental and African studies*, 29 (1966): 280 et seq.

<sup>31</sup>. Franck Fries, *Damas (1860-1946), la mise en place de la ville moderne. Des règlements au plan*, doctoral thesis (Marne-la -Vallée, 2000), 77 et seq.

<sup>32</sup>. Bruce Masters, « Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries », in *Alep et la Syrie du nord, Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62 (1991), 15 -158 Fries, *Damas*, 83.

<sup>33</sup>. Anastasiadou, *Salonique*, 168.

cities and in the management of their civic services, even though in Barbary Tripoli the first municipal commission, established in 1870, apparently took up once more the prerogatives of the old *mashiyakha al-bilad*.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Ad hoc interventions*

Prior to the nineteenth century and the reforms, Ottoman cities did not lack administrative structures; civic tasks were, however, divided among a number of civil and religious bodies of local or Central origin.<sup>35</sup> These institutions provided a “public service” in daily life, but were not responsible for more substantial planning. According to this system, tax revenues were divided between the imperial treasury and that of the governor. There was no “budget” for the city.<sup>36</sup> Hence, major works were always carried out on the basis of necessity, urgency or the decisions of governors. The financing of these operations was then provided either through the exceptional raising of taxes, as happened in Barbary Tripoli in 1827 for the repair of part of the surrounding wall,<sup>37</sup> or, in Damascus in 1743, by the governor himself.<sup>38</sup> The first reforms, and the local assemblies (*majlis*) established by virtue of the reforms’ recommendations, did nothing to improve such practices. In the mid-1840s, the Damascus *majlis* had no source of revenue whatsoever. It was more of an intermediary between the central administration and the people than a municipal establishment.<sup>39</sup> Hence the exceptional nature of large-scale civic work persisted. For instance, in Bursa, in 1861, a visit by the Sultan led to the widening and improvement of a number of entrance roads to the city.<sup>40</sup> Such practices continued even after the creation of municipalities. Visits by important personages, inaugurations, or even the decisions of a governor or a sultan, were reasons for partial improvements that did not result from planned operations. It should be noted, however, that the need to improve road networks was a preoccupation for civic officials.

In most cities of the Anatolian plateau and the European provinces, houses were built of wood. Hence, they were regularly affected by fires that sometimes destroyed entire quarters. These disasters were all the more devastating in that streets were narrow and the density of land occupation was high. As a preventive measure, and in addition to rules related to construction material and the size of buildings, legislation, from 1863 on,

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<sup>34</sup>. Lafi, *Une ville du Maghreb*, 228.

<sup>35</sup>. André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris, 1985), chapter 3 : « Les fonctions urbaines », 118-167 Stéphane Yérasimos, « La Réglementation urbaine ottomane (XVIe-XIXe siècles) » in *Proceedings of the Second International Meeting on Modern Ottoman Studies and the Turkish Republic*, ed. Emeri van Donzel (Leiden, 1989), 1-14.

<sup>36</sup>. Antoine Abdel Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Beyrouth, 1982), 188.

<sup>37</sup>. Lafi, *Une ville du Maghreb*, 155.

<sup>38</sup>. Abdel Nour, *Introduction*, 192-193.

<sup>39</sup>. Elizateth Thompson, « Ottoman Political Reform in the Provinces / the Damascus Advisory Council in 1844-45 », *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 25 (1993), 458-461.

<sup>40</sup>. Béatrice Saint-Laurent, « Un amateur de théâtre : Ahmed Vefik pacha et le remodelage de Bursa dans le dernier tiers du XIXe siècle » in *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire*, ed. Paul Dumont and François Georgeon, (Paris, 1992), 103.

also laid down measures for the regrouping of land in destroyed quarters, so as to regulate the layout of streets and widen them according to how heavily they were used. The regulation provided for no fewer than five categories, with a width from 4.50 to 11.40 metres, and it also indicated maximum heights authorized for buildings alongside these.<sup>41</sup> In Istanbul, for instance, where fires were particularly violent – that of 1864 destroyed more than 3,500 houses – a special commission was placed in charge of fixing the new layout of roads and distributing the remaining pieces of land.<sup>42</sup> These operations resulted in squared pieces of land whose forms differed from that of the older fabrics.<sup>43</sup> They also led to an improvement in the local road network. Extension zones of the city were subject to a similar regulation. For new land divisions, however, and for those replacing burned-down quarters, the intervention perimeters corresponded to the land available in such a way that road layouts established in accordance with this principle did not always connect in a satisfactory manner (figure 1). Hence, the improvements introduced by this legislation were always sporadic; sometimes they even turned out to be contradictory vis-à-vis the general planning for each city.<sup>44</sup>

In Egypt, and despite the magnitude of activities launched in Cairo by Isma‘il Pasha at the end of the 1860s with a view to promoting the development of the city – in five years he delivered more than 200 hectares of new quarters to the property market – the chronology of projects and works reflected several changes in attitude regarding interventions, in the old fabric in particular; they demonstrate a process of trial and error rather than one of programmed organization.<sup>45</sup>

## **New urban functions and new forms of segregation**

### *New urban functions*

The new models for the exercise of power, and the development of services by the State in various fields, such as civil status, public works, or even post and telegraph communications, contributed to fostering the roles of cities, which became, especially following the reform of the provinces from 1864 on, real staging posts for the central administration.<sup>46</sup> However, the Sublime Porte did not limit its activities to management administration. Following the *tanzimat*, a wave of secularization – in the fields of justice, education, and health-involved the public authorities in the development of new activities mostly concentrated in the cities. Transformations in the production sector and strong growth

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<sup>41</sup>. Law of October 20, 1863, Borie *et al.*, *L'Occidentalisation d'Istanbul*, p. 72-80. This law incorporated a category “cul-de-sac”, which had not been mentioned in the 1861 (Grégoire Aristarchi, *Législation ottomane ou recueil des lois, règlements, ordonnances... de l'Empire ottoman. Troisième partie. Droit administratif* (Constantinople, 1874), 200) and which was eliminated by the law of August 22, 1891 (Young, *Corps de droit*, 6:137).

<sup>42</sup>. Tekeli, « Nineteenth century transformation », 40.

<sup>43</sup>. Borie *et al.*, *L'Occidentalisation d'Istanbul*, 97-109.

<sup>44</sup>. Stéphane Yérasimos, « La planification de l'espace en Turquie », *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 50 (1988), 109-110.

<sup>45</sup>. Arnaud, *Le Caire*, 33-183.

<sup>46</sup>. Dumont, « La période des Tanzîmât », 483.

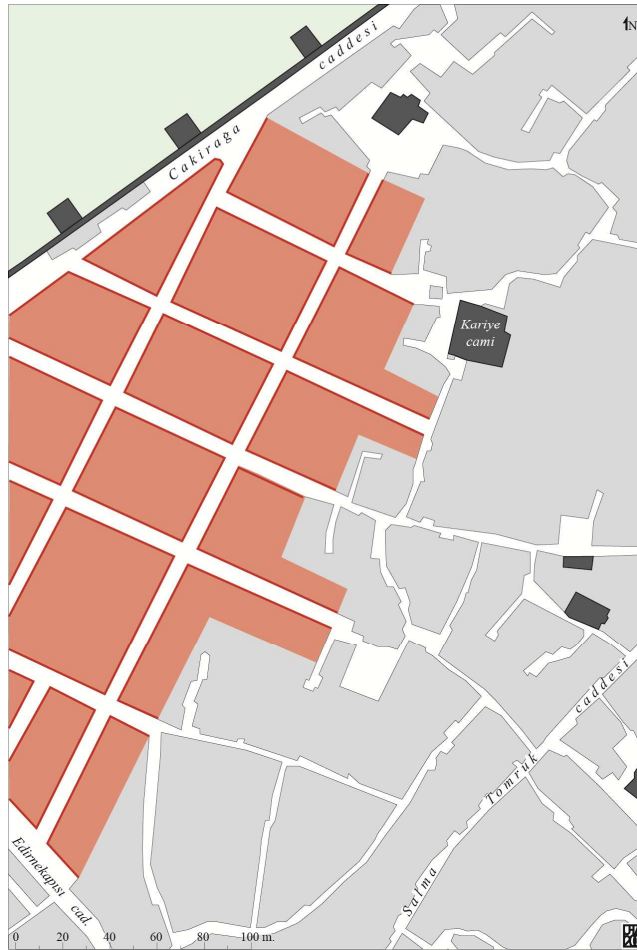


Figure 1. Istanbul, Edirnekapi quarter, land division prior to 1882. The width and the layout of the streets in in conformity with the *tanzimat*. While this quarter is well connected to the road network along the wall and on its south roadway, to the east and the north in is serviced by small alleways. Drawn by the author according to an 1882 map of Istanbul, published by E.H. Ayverdi in 1978, sheet D6.

in the tertiary sector also contributed to the diversification of activities. After the first endeavours by Muhammad 'Ali, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to industrialize Egypt began to bear some partial fruit,<sup>47</sup> the opening of the Empire to foreign capital in 1838 facilitated the setting up of establishments of an industrial or preindustrial character.<sup>48</sup> Western capitals did not only invest in the production sector; on the basis of new legislation permitting loans against a mortgage, and the acquisition of property by foreigners, investment turned towards new categories of activity: banking, brokerage and a whole higher tertiary sector bound up with overall administrative and economic supervision. During the same period, a general decline was noted in the craft

<sup>47</sup>. Ghislaine Alleaume, « Muhammad 'Ali, pacha d'Egypte (1771-1849) », *Pascal Coste, toutes les Egypte* (Marseille, 1998), 49-70; Linant bey de Bellefonds, *Mémoires sur les principaux travaux d'utilité publique exécutés en Egypte depuis la plus haute antiquité jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1872-73), 363-365.

<sup>48</sup>. Dumont, « La période des Tanzîmât », 493.

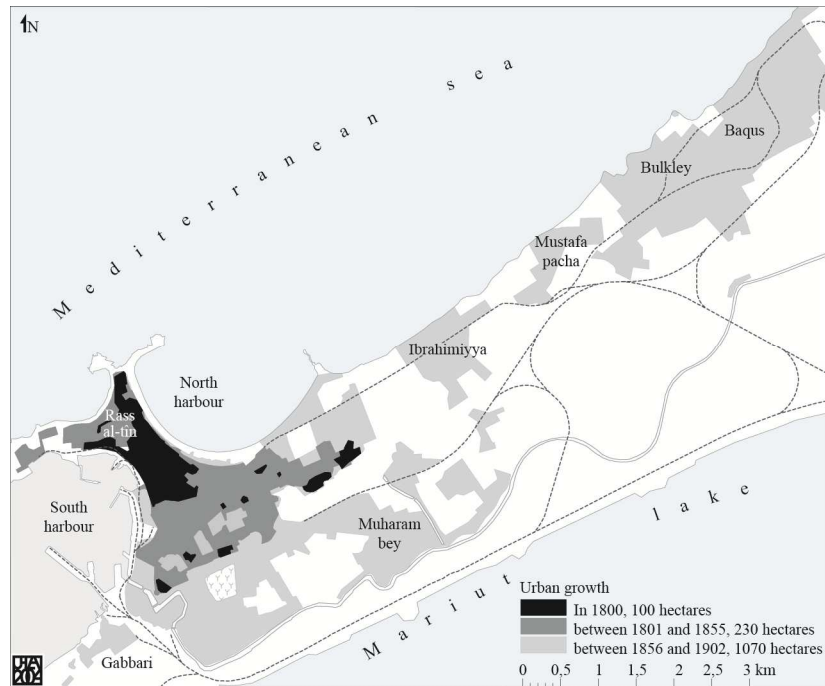


Figure 2. Alexandria, a very early movement of growth. The city, which was of some hundred hectares in 1800, had 330 in 1855 and 1,400 in 1902. Drawn by the author according to: "Alexandrie, Plan général des deux ports, de la ville moderne et de la ville des arabes", *Description de l'Egypte* (Paris, 1809), E.M., vol. 2, pl. 84 Charles Müller, *Plan d'Alexandrie comprenant toutes ses fortifications rues et édifices principaux par Charles Müller 1855* (Trieste, 1855) *Plan de la ville d'Alexandrie dressé par les services techniques de la municipalité 1902* (Alexandria, 1902).

sector.<sup>49</sup> The development of maritime and land transportation and the resulting decrease in costs strongly affected local production of goods for current consumption. Industrial products made in Europe (especially cloth) reached the countries of the south at prices often lower than those of local craftsmen. The latter were obliged to adapt, either by altering the kind of work they did or by making, at a lower price, products of inferior quality. Simultaneously, merchants in the import sector were pushed to develop and diversify their activities. Nor was the secondary sector affected only in what it produced for a local destination. In order to supply its industry with raw materials, there was a strong tendency for Europe's imports to become primary ones. For instance, while Syria, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, exported the greater part of its silk in the form of fabric, around 1830 the volume of exported fabric had decreased while that of thread had increased; by the end of the century, Syria was exporting less and less thread and more and more untreated cocoons. These transformations diminished the added value of exported products and led to the dismantling of local industries, which did not have the means to mobilize the capital necessary for their modernization.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup>. Charles Isawi, « Economic Change and Urbanization in the Middle East », in *Middle Eastern Cities*, ed. Ira Marvin Lapidus (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1969), 110; François Georgeon, « Le dernier sursaut (1878-1908) », in *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, ed. Robert Mantran (Paris, 1989), 551-552.

<sup>50</sup>. Labaki, *Introduction*, 325.

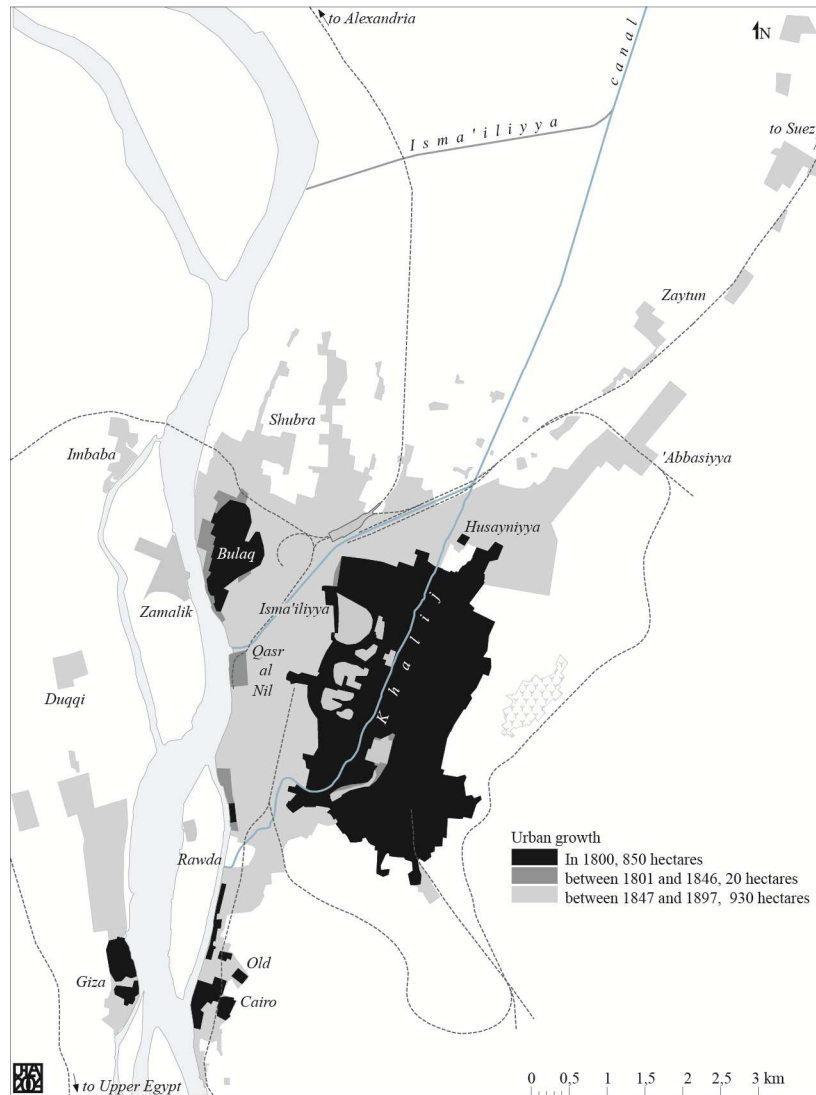


Figure 3. The urban growth of Cairo in the nineteenth century. This city was of 850 hectares in 1800, acquired some dozens more fifty years later and had reached 1,800 by the end of the 19th century. Drawn by the author according to Jacotin, dir., "Environs du Kaire - Plan général de Boulâq, du Kaire, de l'île de Roudah, du Vieux-Kaire et de Gyzeh", *Description de l'Egypte*, (Paris, 1809), E.M., vol. 1, pl. 15 "Plan général de la ville du Kaire et des environs" laid out in F. Pruner, *Topographie médicale du Kaire avec le plan de la ville et des environs* (Munich, 1847) *Plan général de la ville du Kaire et des environs, dressé par le service de la ville du Kaire* (Cairo, 1897).

The new urban functions were also determined by the development of services related to the dissemination of communication and transport techniques. The second half of the nineteenth century was that of telegraph, roads, railways, and, within cities, of tramways, water supply, drainage networks, and the provision of energy through gas and electricity. These activities were diverse and not always related directly to cities, but the headquarters of the companies bringing these things about were set in the urban centres. Numerous employees in this sector and its shadowy surrounding elements – especially all the brokers, whether dealing in paper assets or merchandise – had higher than average incomes. The new consumption practices bound up with this difference also constituted a

development vector of new service activities: the great cafes, restaurants, cinemas, and all the rest, multiplied to meet with the specific needs of this new social group.

### *Renewal social organization*

For the populations of the cities of the southern Mediterranean, the second half of the nineteenth century was a period of growth. This movement was fairly disparate. In general, maritime cities were quicker to advance (figure 2). Some, like Beirut and Alexandria, were affected by substantial migratory movements from the first half of the nineteenth century on. Their growth was still more spectacular in that each of these cities had, around 1800, only between 3,000 and 5,000 inhabitants. The more massive movement, however, happened later and marked a true break. While the beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by very different mutations – Cairo lost inhabitants while Alexandria began its growth – the second half of the century witnessed the development of all the cities; the urbanized part of the population increased in every region of the Empire (figure 3). This growth, mainly resulting from migratory movements, thus constituted the main generator of the renewal of urban societies.<sup>51</sup> The transformation in the activities and functions of cities also played an important part in this movement. Craft declined in favour of another mode of production: the factory, where large numbers of workers were salaried. On another side, the service sector recruited a growing number of employees. The introduction of a salaried class, the resultant formation of a working class, and the increase in the number of public sector employees and tertiary sector employees gave rise to substantial imbalances that led to a progressive loss in the power of traditional bodies. The disappearance of these last was, it is true, a lingering one;<sup>52</sup> nevertheless, a mass proletariat and a middle class of employees had appeared in most cities by the end of the second half of the nineteenth century. These were new social classes. The former were completely destitute, and their marginalization was stigmatized by the latter through the multiple charitable societies that came into being. In Egypt, the list of “principal inhabitants” and other notables, privately published, well reflected the dichotomy whereby the two worlds were separated. Those mentioned in such publications were first and foremost qualified by virtue of their professional activity. The tertiary sector was heavily over-represented. For Cairo, for instance, an 1896 index shows an exhaustive list of lawyers of foreign nationality, while mentioning only 11 out of the 1,340 grocers then in existence.<sup>53</sup> During this period, the creation of literary circles, historical societies or indeed clubs also reflected the emergence of new social classes distinguished by their practices of sociability and consumption.

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<sup>51</sup>. Kemal Karpat, « Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893 », *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9 (1978), 237-274.

<sup>52</sup>. For Egypt see Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago and London, 1969), 149-160 and chap. 12.

<sup>53</sup>. Jean-Luc Arnaud, « Artisans et commerçants dans les villes d’Égypte, à la fin du XIXe siècle, une source peu exploitée : les annuaires », in *Études sur les villes du Proche-Orient, XVIe-XIXe siècle. Hommages à André Raymond*, coordinated B. Marino (Damas, 2001), 205-206.



Figure 4. Damascus, example of the old urban fabric, Souq Sarouja quarter. The irregularity of land division makes for highly varied property values within a single quarter. Drawn by the author according to *Ville de Damas*, circonscription VI, Souk Sarouja, section 1, sheet 1 (Damascus, 1933).

### *Recompositions*

In general we may note, during the century under consideration, an overall correspondence between growth in the surface area of cities and growth in their population. This relation does not, however, mean that the new inhabitants – migrants or children – resided in the new quarters. On the contrary, periods of growth corresponded to acceleration in the recomposition of social groups and in activities within agglomerations. From the middle of the nineteenth century on, these recompositions were all the more important in that the modalities of the development of the urban fabric were changing. As the traditional Ottoman city grew in dense and continuous fashion, the opening up of its walls, and, later, the establishment of public means of transportation provided greater growth than ever before, with a far wider extent of land to be urbanized.

In Alexandria and Aleppo, in Bursa and Salonica, the traditional urban fabric comprised a juxtaposition of blocks and parcels, whose size might vary according to a ratio of one to 100. Hence, in one block – between its heart and its periphery – or in one parcel – between its facade and its deepest point – we might find pieces of land with diverse surface areas, values and returns which gave rise to a tight overlapping of activities and to different social groups (figure 4).

From the mid-1830s, and especially from the 1860s on, the importance of the supply of land with a potential for urbanization, and thus of property values, brought about





Figure. 5. Istanbul, example of a regular land division Kumkapi quarter. Major land division laid out following the 1684 fire in Istanbul. Drawn by the author according to Borie et al., *L'Occidentalisation d'Istanbul*, pl. A8.

by the obsolescence of the surrounding walls – Ankara did not have one after 1840<sup>54</sup> – resulted in another mode of organization. Lands were no longer divided ad hoc according to the wishes of those who might be able to build. In order to optimize the return and reduce the portion occupied by the road system, property owners pre-empted buyers by dividing their lands into geometrical and regular plots (figure 5). According to this mode of production, the variety and overlapping that had characterized the old fabric no longer existed: each land division targeted a selected, fairly homogeneous category of clients. Whereas, before, difference in the means of candidates to build had been expressed by the size of the parcel – the houses of the rich had been more spacious than those of the poor – rather than by the parcel's location, the abundance of the supply on the property market, higher than the demand, now allowed the development of new residential strategies: the location of plots – with respect to the centre, communications, activities, and so on – was a determining factor in making choices. In this context, social groups organized themselves into new quarters in a manner far more discriminating than in the old fabric.

The property market and the obsolescence of surrounding walls were not the only factors behind these changes. The second half of the nineteenth century was also marked by a movement of industrialization. Factories, sometimes bringing together several hundred workers along with huge machines, could not find, in the old centres, land extensive enough for their purpose or providing sufficiently easy access. They were

<sup>54</sup>. François Georgeon, « Du poil de chèvre au Kalpak, l'évolution d'Ankara au dernier siècle de l'Empire ottoman », in *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire*, ed. Paul Dumont and François Georgeon (Paris, 1992), 117.

therefore obliged to settle on the periphery, in zones where property values were relatively low, either because of their distance from the centre or because they were already occupied by activities driving the value down. The Little Sicily quarter in Tunis had multiple inconveniences. It was far from the centre, and it was near the lake, which then served as an outlet for the city's sewage, often making the air in this zone unbreathable. Workshops and warehouses related to port activities settled there at the end of the nineteenth century. It was also a popular quarter, inhabited mainly by a community of Italian origin. Moreover, legislation promulgated during the same period supplemented the tendency to arrange the city by functional zones. Prohibitions on certain practices or certain populations in particular places multiplied. Establishments classified as "unhealthy and dangerous," cafes and drinking places, beggars, prostitutes, etc. – all these were obliged to exercise their activities in restricted zones determined by the legislator<sup>55</sup> This interventionism probably found its most extreme expression in 1920 in Alexandria, where the municipality decided to deny Bedouins access to the city.<sup>56</sup>

In order better to ensure the management of the city at the end of the nineteenth century, the public authorities (local or national) divided, classified, measured and plotted its various elements. The categories set up by all these things also contributed to reinforcing the phenomenon of segregation, or at least, in the same way as legislation, they determined the use to which each place was put. The setting up of new administrative intra-urban divisions often took the form of an outright takeover by public authorities. Each quarter was subjected to minute scrutiny; after which the administration categorized it according to its morphological, social and economic characteristics, and then accorded it the corresponding rights, means and services. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the drainage project in Cairo at the end of the nineteenth century provided conduits of different capacities for similar volumes of populations, depending on the quarters involved. The inhabitants of the old urban fabric (regarded as indigenous) were supposed to be smaller consumers of water than the inhabitants of more recent quarters.<sup>57</sup> Hence, due to the mode of land division, and to legislation and administrative activity, a new form of relation was developed between the composition of the urban space and the division of society. Although old cities were not isotropic – far from it – there was a development from a marked mixing of activities and social groups to specializations that were the outcome of new forms of segregation, even exclusion.

This segregation was First and foremost economic. A testimony to this is the way Jews profited from the new extensions of the cities to leave the quarters to which they had been confined for centuries. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were numerous Jews in the new quarters. It was the rich ones, though, who left the old urban fabrics,

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<sup>55</sup>. For Egypt, see Philippe Gelat, *Répertoire général annoté de la législation et de l'administration égyptiennes* (Alexandria, 1908), 2:622-641; for Tunisia, see *Législation communale de la Tunisie. Recueil des décrets et arrêtés municipaux par Joseph Valensi* (Tunis, 1897), 894 et seq; for Istanbul and other cities of the Empire, see Aristarchi, *Législation ottomane*, 53-54.

<sup>56</sup>. Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830-1930. Histoire d'une communauté citadine* (Le Caire, 1996), 504.

<sup>57</sup>. Ghislaine Alleaume, « Hygiène publique et travaux publics, les ingénieurs et l'assainissement du Caire (1882-1907) », *Annales islamologiques*, 20 (1984), 151-182.

abandoning the poor to their original quarters and moving to reside close to other inhabitants, and other national or religious communities, who enjoyed incomes comparable to theirs. It is noteworthy that in Cairo, in the mid-1940s, the Jewish community was fairly dispersed among several quarters of the agglomeration, but that its poorer members still occupied, closely packed and almost exclusively, the quarter of the old city which, a century earlier, had gathered the whole community together.

### **Renewed urban and architectural forms**

In all the cities of the Empire, the forms of urban extension changed. There was a development from the city built step by step, in the context of property and real estate markets showing little dynamism, to more open cities and more discontinuous urban fabrics, whose layout led to a network following new rules of organization. Extensions constituted the most visible phenomenon of mutation, but the nineteenth century was also a period of reconstruction of the city itself. If fires were responsible for the destruction of wooden houses in the northern part of the Empire, the southern cities also witnessed an acceleration of renewal in the overall nature of their building, especially with regard to domestic architecture. In Cairo, as in Damascus, most houses were the subject of transformation, heightening, and even reconstruction.<sup>58</sup> Urban landscapes were recomposed through several kinds of intervention; seen in the introduction of new architectural forms on the one hand, and the arrangement of layouts on the other.

#### *New centralities*

From 1826, following the military reform and the dismantlement of professional janissary bodies (which, in Aleppo for example, had been at the origin of a number of riots and had turned against the government at the beginning of the nineteenth century), the state built barracks to house the new army bodies raised by conscription. At first the troops were sometimes dispersed among a number of buildings taken up and/or fitted out within the cities. However, depending on the means available, new establishments, and huge four-square buildings arranged around a central yard,<sup>59</sup> were established in the immediate surroundings. In leaving the old urban fabrics and the difficulties of access that had characterized them, these barracks were directly linked to the new roads (and sometimes also railways) in a way that improved the mobility of troops. This position

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<sup>58</sup>. S. Weber has noted that three-quarters of the houses of the old urban fabric in Damascus were partially or totally rebuilt in the mid-19th century and the first decades of the following century. This renewal reflects a strong dynamic. See Stefan Weber, "Images of Imagined Worlds. Self-Image and Worldview in Late Ottoman Wall Paintings of Damascus", in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hansen, Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber (Beirut, 2002), 163. For Cairo, see Olivier Blin, « Le Caire XIXe-XXe siècles. De la *fasaha* à la *sala* comme modèles », *Espace centré. Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 20-21, (1987), 96.

<sup>59</sup>. The seventh regiment of the reformed Ottoman army was stationed in Beirut. In 1853, the first level of a huge barracks (the *serail*) was built, comprising several thousand square metres of flooring. It was the first construction of this type in Beirut. See May Davie, *Beyrouth 1825-1975 un siècle et demi d'urbanisme* (Beyrouth, 2001), 40.



Figure 6. Cairo, streets and cul-de-sacs, quarters to the northwest of the old city. Drawn by the author according to *Plan général de la ville du Caire et des environs* (Cairo, 1896).

also permitted, simultaneously, the control and defence of agglomerations.<sup>60</sup> By the end of the century, the development of railway networks also had a strong impact on the organization of city suburbs. Railway stations, often monumental, were their most visible expression, but the workshops for machine maintenance, the warehouses for coal and those of establishments whose economic activities were based on opportunities offered by this new means of transportation, often occupied considerable areas at the gates of the agglomerations. Nearer to these old centres, governors' palaces, schools, judicial courts, etc., played an important role in the organization of recent quarters and the designation of new centres of gravity. The development of the higher tertiary sector, reflected in major buildings like big hotels and banks, were also a mark of the new quarters.

In the old fabrics, the percentage of urbanized area allotted to the road system was very small, generally not higher than a fifth. This small portion was made up of two complementary types of ways: streets and cul-de-sacs (figure 6). The percentage of cul-de-sacs was greater in Arab regions; even so, road networks in Ottoman cities were more disjointed than those of western cities.<sup>61</sup> In the new quarters, streets were not only broad

<sup>60</sup>. On this subject, see the comments of David, *Alep*, 299.

<sup>61</sup>. Pierre Pinon, « Essai de définition morphologique de la ville ottomane des XVIIe XIXe siècles » *La culture urbaine des Balkans* (Belgrade and Paris, 1991), 147-155.

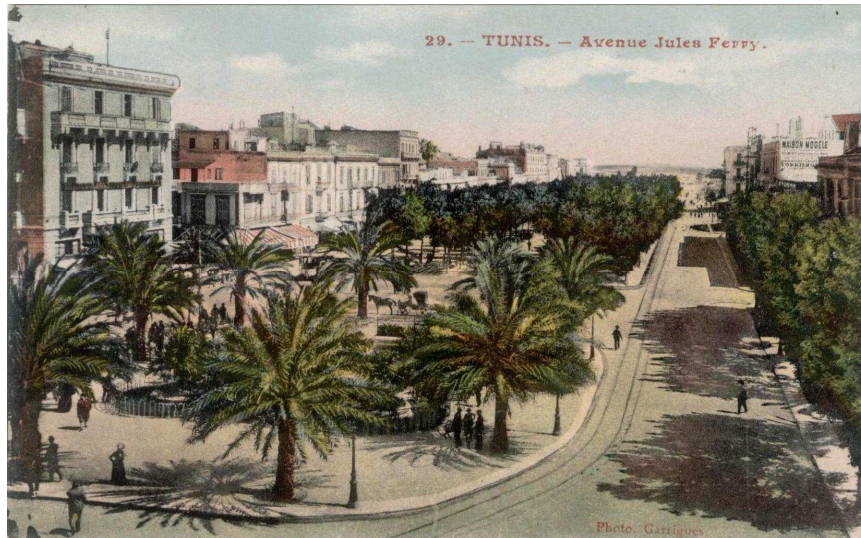


Figure 7. Tunis, Marine Avenue, around 1910. This avenue, inaugurated during the 1850s, links a gate of the old city with the bank of the lagoon. Author's collection.

and rectilinear; they were also laid out in such a way as to cross one other, thereby producing a full-scale grid utterly unlike the old fabric, where the number of potential routes from one place to another was always fairly limited. These quarters were often organized around squares that ensured a connection with the older ones. At the end of the 1860s, the municipality of the Pera-Galata quarter in Istanbul launched the initial project of a great square following the recent dismantlement of the walls of the Genoese period, and the opening of a new road in the old fabric, designed to provide passage for the first tramway (with animal traction). This arrangement took the Paris Place de l'Etoile as its model.<sup>62</sup> Some years later, the municipality headquarters was built at one end of this square, whose perspective it closed off.

Sometimes, gardens supplemented these arrangements, as was the case in Cairo with the laying out of the Azbakiyya Park at the beginning of the 1870s, or in Aleppo with the opening of a large public garden in 1900. In other cities, these walking places and the setting up of new activities adopted more linear forms; such was the case in Salonica, where the embankment, built at the beginning of the 1870s, was more than a kilometre long and brought together most of those establishments symbolizing modernity, such as large shops, cafes, theatres and hotels.<sup>63</sup> In Tunis, too, there was a long avenue which, in the mid-1880s, brought together the same establishments. It did not follow the lakeside, but led to it from one of the main gates of the medina (figure 7).

Connections between recently founded quarters and other quarters were also ensured by the opening up of new roads and by the improvement – widening and alignment – of the older ones. This practice was inaugurated in Cairo by Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, who, around 1845, ordered the opening of a street from the west side of the city towards the business centre. This road complemented the one laid out at the beginning of the century by the French army of occupation, between the port (Bulaq) and the city.

<sup>62</sup>. The places in question are Chichhane Square and Okcu Musa Street. See Zeynep Celik, *The Remaking of Istanbul. Portrait of an Ottoman city in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, 1986), 72.

<sup>63</sup>. Anastasiadou, *Salonique*, 192 et seq.



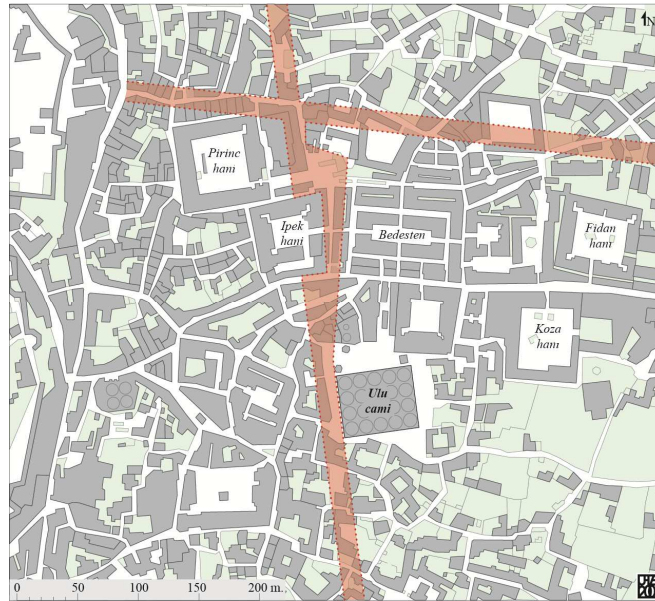


Figure 8. Bursa, the intersection of streets opened in the bazaar quarter following the 1855 earthquake. Drawn by the author according to two maps published by Mustafa Cezar, *Typical commercial Buildings of the Ottoman classical period and the Ottoman construction system* (Istanbul, 1983), 38 and 316.

Succeeding examples were of later date, but, in this sphere too, civic leaders profited from natural disasters. In Bursa, following the 1855 earthquake, the governor ordered the opening of two perpendicular streets designed to connect the commercial and religious centres (the bazaar and the great mosque) with the centre of civil and military power (figure 8).<sup>64</sup> In Salonica, the authorities also profited from the 1890 fire, which destroyed not fewer than 3,500 houses at least, to make the road layout more regular in the ravaged zones.<sup>65</sup> In the cities of the Arab world, where stone buildings resisted fires better than those of the north of the Empire, new streets created by destruction in the old quarters were always the exception.

These various urban and architectural operations resulted in the creation of new centres bringing together most of the administrative services and economic activities linked to modernity. By contrast, important religious sites (around the great mosques) and the traditional trading *suqs* became old centres, to some extent obsolete.

#### *Making property values profitable*

The new quarters were not only occupied by establishments of the authorities or those of the economic sectors; the development of urbanization also stemmed from growth of the population. Regardless of how they were produced, recent quarters designed for housing presented, in their turn, strong differences to the old ones. The growth of demand for land in the new centres, on the part of the higher tertiary sector, led to a general rise in property values. It drove proprietors to rationalize the zonal division

<sup>64</sup>. Saint-Laurent, « Un amateur de théâtre », 103.

<sup>65</sup>. Anastasiadou, *Salonique*, 121.

delivered to the market so as to avoid the formation of enclaves harmful to the optimal realization of these values.

The 'Amara al-Barraniyya suburb in Damascus is a good example in this respect. In this quarter organized along one of the city's main exit roads towards the north, the progressive patterning of plots became increasingly regular between the limit of urbanization reached in 1860 and that reached at the beginning of the 1920s. As we move further from the centre, access ways to plots bordering the road became wider and more rectilinear. For each operation parcels followed the same tendency to regularization. They were still divided in such a way as to avoid enclaves (which was not the case in land division prior to 1860), and their width became ever more regular.

The optimization of property revenue was not effected solely through land division. The construction of the first collective blocks was also an important testimony to this. Although this form of dwelling had long been known in Egypt,<sup>66</sup> it had not existed in other cities of the Empire except for travelers, foreigners, and single men. Imposed by the high price of land close to central zones, this type of architecture was at first sometimes hesitant in nature; it was the result of development, by trial and error, on the basis of older types (the *khan*) rather than stemming from any western influence.<sup>67</sup> However, whatever the mode of housing distribution and division, the first examples of these buildings presented some noteworthy features, being monumental and profusely ornamented. It was as though the features of their composition were intended to compensate for the less valorising nature of the architectural type in question.<sup>68</sup>

When interventions were made into the old urban fabric, the economic necessity of reducing the hearts of blocks also led to the formation of new architectural types that were set in place with a view to eliminating unprofitable parts of the land (figure 9), without occupying it more densely than other types. A new division of non-constructed spaces appeared: public spaces were introduced into the hearts of blocks so as to optimize property value. The new generic toponymy – *passage*, *cit *, etc. – statutory in Tunis, provided a good reflection of these new forms and new practices.

Quite apart from the architectural interest of these buildings, the construction dates of the first specimens in each city testify to their integration into the new economic and social system developing in the cities of the Ottoman Empire at the time. Coastal cities and, *a fortiori*, port cities started before the others. Alexandria was probably the earliest in this respect: apartment blocks were being put up there from the mid-1870s on (figure 10). Damascus, on the other hand, was clearly later to develop. The first examples of collective dwellings did not appear before the beginning of the 1920s. Between these extremes, it is noteworthy that the first blocks in Aleppo date from the very beginning of the twentieth century.

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<sup>66</sup>. Jean-Claude Garcin, Bernard Maury, Jacques Revault and Mona Zakariya, *Palais et maisons du Caire,  poque mamelouke (XIIIe-XVIe si cles)*, (Paris, 1982), 175.

<sup>67</sup>. Jean-Claude David with the collaboration of Fawaz Baker, «  laboration de la nouveaut  en architecture en Syrie », *Environmental Design*, XV-XVI, 1-2 (1994-1995), 50-73.

<sup>68</sup>. It is worthy of note that the monumental character of the staircases marks the first blocks in each city: in Alexandria at the beginning of the 1880s and in Damascus forty years later.

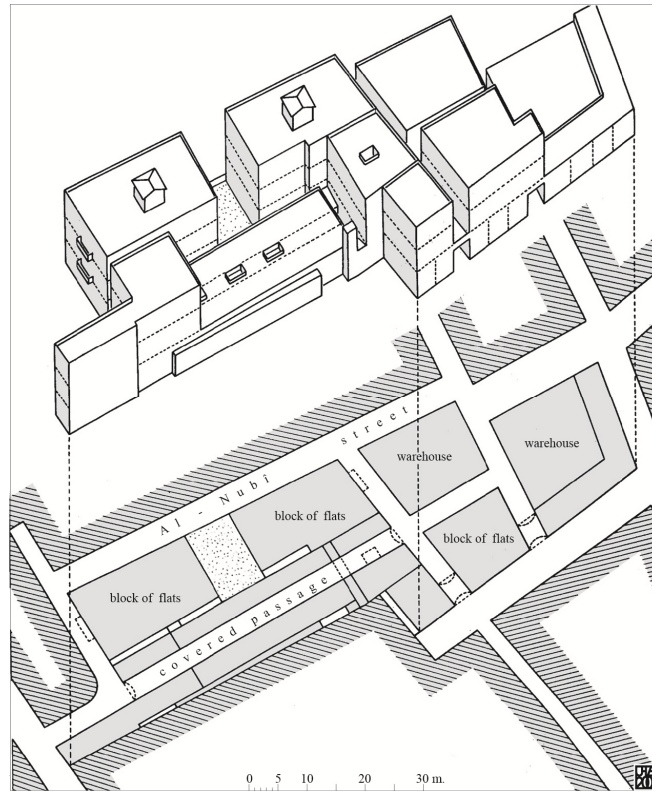


Figure 9. Cairo, covered passageway, Franc quarter. This assemblage, built around 1890, comprises five blocks, a warehouse, workshops and some thirty shops. Author's restitution and drawing, after E. Goad, *Insurance plan of Cairo - Egypt - March 1905* (London, Toronto, 1905).

### *From house to apartment block*

During periods of accelerating recomposition, the gap between the life span of buildings and transformations in demand in the property field is aggravated. By the turn of the twentieth century, the market was evolving so rapidly that the time spent in constructing buildings could represent a handicap for investors: by the time the work was finished, the architectural type identified six months or a year earlier turned out to be obsolete or maladapted to the market. In this context, those thinking to build, and attentive to possible reconversions of their property, included particular architectural features. Hence, the new types of building did not aim solely at making property profitable; they also had to be able to adapt to the rapid transformations of the market. The most frequent expression of this was the house-block; it was characteristic of a market subject to sudden and violent variations. This architectural type spread widely in all the cities of the Empire. There were buildings set on parcels whose surface area was no more than 500 square metres. Most often constructed on a base, it comprised two, sometimes three storeys, each arranged in such a way as to form a complete dwelling unit. Stairs opening to the outside on the ground floor serviced each floor. Contrary to the usual design of buildings, the entrance was on the side. On the facade, a few steps and a flight of steps gave direct access to the first level. This double arrangement of features allowed the building as a whole to be used as a villa. Doors separating the stairs of each floor also allowed their attribution to independent family units, or their renting to different families.



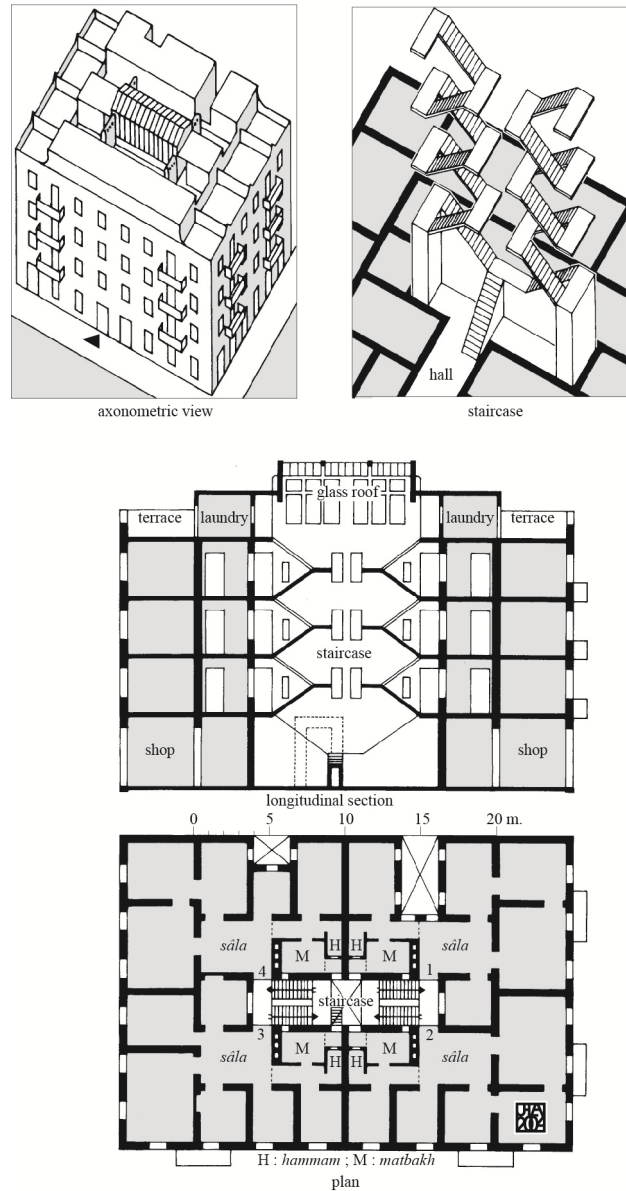


Figure 10. Alexandria, apartment block, Kum al-Nadura quarter. This block, built before the end of 1880s, comprises 12 dwellings, each of between 100 and 120 square metres. It is part of a compound of four identical blocks arranged around passageways and cul-de-sacs. Plotted and Drawn by the author.

Such an organization was, to say the least, ambiguous; thanks to the double entrance from the street and the functional and distributional independence of each floor, it was possible to transform a house into a block and so swiftly adapt the construction to the market and/ or social demand. This new architectural type, which appeared in Egypt and in Istanbul at the end of the nineteenth century, was later developed in Aleppo (beginning of the twentieth century), in Beirut a few years later and in Damascus at the start of the 1920s. It corresponds to a short period in which changes in property values, in the demand on real estate and in social practices did not follow the same rhythm, rather presenting major discrepancies. The building's double distributional principle allowed such discrepancies to be managed and arrangements to be made as and when necessary.

## Conclusion

With the exception of Egypt, which launched reforms long before other regions of the Empire, the period of large-scale urban change did not begin before the mid-nineteenth century. Hence, in less than three-quarters of a century, cities under the authority of the Sublime Porte were affected by an exceptional wave of transformations. This essay has attempted to demonstrate the point through examples in three fields only. It should be pointed out, however, that changes were no less significant in all other potential fields. During this period, there was a passing from the traditional Muslim city, as defined by A. Raymond,<sup>69</sup> to the modern city. Despite the unity of legislation and of the main modes of exercising power, cities were not affected simultaneously by the reforms. Gaps and accelerations are to be noted. Those cities that played the role of entrance point for merchandise, and for western influence, started before others. Nevertheless, other cities swiftly caught up with them and even passed them. Hence, despite noticeable differences in the potentiality of cities, and in the way reforms affected them, we might consider that, by the eve of the Empire's dismantlement at the beginning of the 1920s, a wave of modernization had passed through the greater part of its agglomerations.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>. Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes*.

<sup>70</sup>. The Arabian Peninsula constituted an exception to this picture. Even though this region of the Empire was so very extensive, it contained few large cities. In 1950, the most important, Mecca, had fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. See François Moriconi-Ebrard, *Géopolis, pour comparer les villes du monde* (Paris, 1994), 216.