

# ALEXANDRIA'S SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ON PUBLIC SPACES

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## Abstract

This paper is devoted to understanding the question of public spaces in the city of Alexandria as an embodiment of our social environment - as *Alexandrians* - by doing a historical survey through the last 200 years, as the year 1805 represents the actual beginning of the **modern history of urbanism in Egypt** by the time *Mohamed Ali pasha* (the viceroy) was in power ruling Egypt.

It is determined to divide the 200 year period into five main sectors in scope of study according to political/economical pivotal events that took place which had a very significant impact on the Egyptian lands and peoples, as these issues - *politics and economy* - always result in direct social changes whether positively or negatively.

**Keywords:** post-colonial/cosmopolitan cities, Napoleon in Egypt, Mohamed Ali, modern Alexandria, Nasser, Nationalism.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Obviously the revolution of 25 Jan. revealed our urgent need of public spaces in our city, as the protesters appeared not to have some public place in the whole city to gather in and show their objection. In a point of view, the former regime intentionally worked on reshaping all the public spaces in the city of Alexandria in order to forbid all kinds of mob - *grouping* - as a matter of national security, On the other hand some sociologists claim that these recent changes that occurred on public realms in the city were mostly due to major social changes.

This paper is about to discuss the question of the impact of social changes on public spaces in the city, as this paper adopts the theory of socialists describing changes in public spaces as a direct reaction to social environment, but it has been proven in this paper - *through a historical survey* - that the social environment is also a direct reaction to political and economic conditions.

Community of Alexandria is considered the most convenient sample to study in this paper as it reflects an accurate picture of the whole Egyptian social environment in miniature; it consists of majority middle-class inhabitants, a minority of upper-class and elite and an average value of lower-class and poor inhabitants, also this community does not suffer from the random diversity of population as in Cairo for instance.

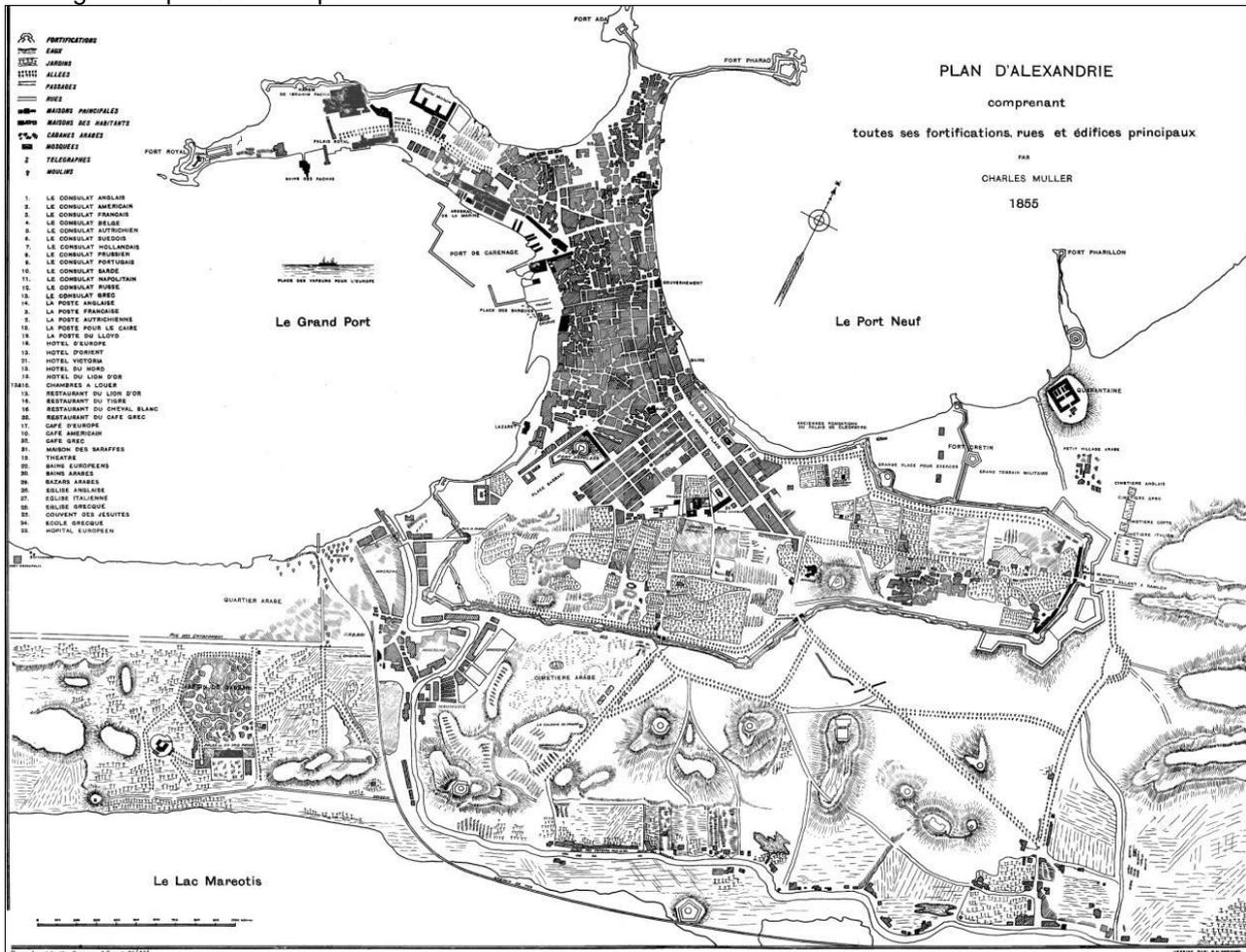
The place of "Tahrir" or "*place des consuls*" was chosen to be studied more in detail as a symbolic place in the city that represents all features of identifying the city and people along the 200 years of study, it is also necessary to go through the major events that took place in this space in a way of conclusion to the whole socio-political changes occurred in Egypt.

## 2 MOHAMED ALI RULES EGYPT (1805-1840)

### 2.1. Establishment of the modern state

Egypt's modern renaissance begins with the rise of *Mohamed Ali* (Egypt's Wali, or Viceroy) to power in 1805. In his efforts to make of Egypt an autonomous power in the region, he embarked on a policy of modernization that touched upon every aspect of Egyptian life. *Mohamed Ali's* vision of reviving the city of Alexandria was coupled with some grand projects such as the digging of the *Mahmoudeih* canal, the creation

of a new port and arsenal, and the expansion of the city to include new European quarters matching those of the great capitals of Europe.



Map of Alexandria, the Ottoman city and the European extension, dated 1855, By Charles Muller. Atlas Historique de la ville et des ports d'Alexandrie, par M. Gaston Jondet.

To develop his grand projects, the pasha drew upon the expertise of foreign consultants and artists in every field to modernize his administration and execute his projects. This came at a time when the end of the Napoleonic wars prompted migrations to the orient, and especially to Egypt, where opportunities for career development were available to experienced professionals. The earliest recruits in 1818 included some Italian architects, such as *Romero*, to build the Wali's palace at *Ras el Tin*. This came at a time when Turkish styles were being introduced by the viceroy to replace earlier medieval styles.

But this trend did not last for long. As the pasha, and even more his descendants, looked away from the sublime Porte, emphasizing theirs' and the autonomy of Egypt from Ottoman rule, they moved certainly towards Europe for ersatz sources of inspiration and models to follow. Under such conditions, engineer *Francesco Mancini* terminated a career in the offices of the viceroy *Eugene Beauharnais* 1805-1815, and was later employed in the service of *Ibrahim Pasha*, the son of Egypt's viceroy.

## 2.2. Early contacts with Modernity

Cosmopolitan Alexandria was revived after a long decline by *Mohamed Ali*. Under his rule, Alexandria flourished from a forgotten backwater to the foremost city in the Mediterranean. Hundreds of thousands of foreigners (they were not called immigrants then) flocked to it, in search of opportunities and security. Alexandria opened its arms to them, and in return for its hospitality, they built, embellished and enriched it – both materially and culturally.

Alexandria boasted an international aura, with Europeanizing architecture; with an economy built on trade in wider imperial networks; and most conspicuously with a population marked by Greek, Italian, Syro-

Lebanese, Jewish, Armenians, and British communities, among others.

Under Mancini's directions, the Ornato in Alexandria was modeled on similar commission d'Ornato already functioning in Italian cities such as Milan and Venice, though in Alexandria the situation was rather different.

The function of the Ornato did not focus much on artists' embellishing activities but rather responded more to the urgent planning needs of a rapidly expanding city. Its objective was administered through organizing the building activity, while setting the standards and directions for future development. Moreover, the board of the Ornato included members of select elite of the Alexandrian community alongside technical and government functionaries, thereby ensuring a wider public participation in the steering and monitoring of its functions. Mancini's promotion to the technical offices of the Ornato in 1834, the first planning commission in the city and the whole country, was a unique opportunity to introduce the new order, *Tanzim*, to the nascent cosmopolitan city.

### 2.3. The Emergence of a Place (Place d'armes)

This long rectangular square was created in the 1840s under the joint supervision of *Ibrahim Pasha* and *Francesco Mancini*, both playing a leading part in the *Commission d'Ornato*. Old photographs and maps enable us to see the square in detail as *Giuseppe Regaldi* saw it in 1850. At the southeast corner stand the *Okelle of St. Mark* and the Neo-Byzantine/Neo-Moorish Anglican church by the London architect *James William Wildt*. Along its eastern side are the neoclassical *Okelle d'Abro* and *Okelle de France*, the traditional-style *Okelle Moharrem Bey*, and the Neo-Moorish *Okelle Zinia* by the Venetian architect *Antonio Lucovich*.



Place d'Armes d'Alexandrie, dated 1850. Property of special collections, university of Washington libraries.

Bordering the old Frank Quarter are the *Café d'Europe* and the *Okelle Gibarra*. The western side of the square is lined with the elegant *Okelle d'Anastasy* and three large

blocks similar in size, the *Hotel de l'Europe*, and the *Okelles Domaines de l'Etat* and *Ibrahim Pasha*. At the highest point, dominating the square from its southern end, stands the temple-like edifice of the *Tossizza Palace* (later to become the stock exchange, or *la bourse*).

The square was the "court" of trading-consuls, merchants, and financiers with whom *Mohamed Ali* associated. With the sole exception of the Anglican church, all other buildings are *okelles*, a westernized form of the Arabic word *wikala* indicating commercial structures traditionally used in Egypt for warehousing and trade, also serving as a hostelry for dealers. All compact blocks of approximately the same height, some have a traditional layout, such as the vast *Okelle Moharrem Bey*, while others look more like European mansions.

## 3 MOHAMED ALI'S DESCENDANTS (1840-1882)

### 3.1. Towards Civilization

Under *Ismail* (1863-1879), the Egyptian government debt rose from £3 million to nearly £100 million, largely due to *Ismail's* efforts to modernize Egypt. In addition to completing the Suez Canal, he hired veterans of the civil war in the United States to train his army, built more than a thousand miles of railroads, developed a deepwater port at Alexandria, financed land reclamation and irrigation projects to create more farm land and paid Ottoman authorities in Constantinople to allow his son *Tewfik* to succeed him.

*Ismail* also spent money to expand the Egyptian cotton industry. During the shortages caused by the US Civil War, this effort was successful, but once the war ended Egypt was left with an enormous debt and declining export revenues. Efforts to refinance the debt only made things worse because service fees on foreign loans absorbed a large part of their value. In one instance, Egypt received only £35 million from five

loans worth £55 million, and because Egypt paid interest on the full value of the loans, the contractual interest rate of seven percent turned into an effective rate that went as high as twenty percent.

By 1875, even though Egypt had repaid £29 million on its loans, it still owed £46 million and the country was near bankruptcy. British Prime Minister *Benjamin Disraeli* learned from private sources that the Egyptian shares in the Suez Canal were for sale. Acting without parliamentary authorization, he bought them for the British government and thereby greatly increased the British stake in Egyptian stability.

*Ismail's* government requested British financial advisors in 1876 and *Disraeli* sent *Stephen Case* to investigate Egypt's economic situation. *Case* reported that Egypt's economy was basically sound but needed additional European direction. Acting on *Case's* recommendations, the governments of France and Britain - Egypt's largest creditors- sent representatives to oversee the Egyptian finances. *Evelyn Baring* -later Lord Cromer- represented the British as "Controller of the Revenue" while the French provided "Controller of the Expenditure" in 1878. Other Europeans joined the Egyptian ministry briefly in 1878-1879, but Anglo-French participation survived until 1882.

### 3.2. An international trade capital

In the second half of the 19th century, Egypt's economic potential prompted increased migration to Egypt. In spite of the *Risorgimento* of 1861 and the return of some Italians to Italy, Italian migration to Egypt increased and remained on the rise until the early 1930s. The *Colonia Italiana* represented the second largest foreign community after the Greek, though it was never identified as a formal community organization like that of the Greek *Kinotis* in 1843. The first Italian welfare foundation was established around 1862.

By virtue of lack of assimilation with the local culture, Italians, like other foreign communities such as Greek, French, British, Russians, Maltese and German etc., identified themselves as Europeans – an important condition for the emergence of a so-called '*Cosmopolitan culture*'. This residual culture, resulting from the presence of a diverse community, introduced Egypt to western ideas and capitalist modes of production and consumption. The economic condition and status of Europeans were made favourable by Capitulations, a system of special privileges granted to foreigners in the Ottoman provinces which exempted them from taxation and jurisdiction under local Islamic law *Sharia*.

### 3.3. A place in Growth (Place des Consuls)

Because the new urban spaces around this square reflected both the power and wealth of the viceregal family, and the growing influence of the foreign consuls, the square was renamed *Place des Consuls*. More importantly, the new urban space was embellished with an obelisk in its centre (Later replaced with a statue of *Mohamed Ali*), and with fountains and music kiosks, and was surrounded with hotels, *café* concerts, and restaurants. All this reflected a newly adopted life style similar to those of the great European cities. Yet in the mind's eye of many travelers, as apparent from their description, the character of the place remained to a



great extent quite eclectic. *Gustave Flaubert*, affirming its eclectic character, said about it: "*Grande ville, avec la place des consuls batarde, mi-arabe, mi-europe'ene, messieurs en pantaloon blanc et tarbouch...*"

The statue of Ismail Pasha, Place des consuls, Alexandria. Dated 1920's.

Under *Ismail* (1863-1879), the *Place des Consuls* extended to overlook the waterfront of the *Eastern Harbour* by adding a rectangular French garden perpendicular to the main court of the square forming the known "T" shape of the place. Hotels, consulates, large trading firms, restaurants and *Cafés* were installed within the new extension of the place; also a church and a synagogue were established in the place to

become a symbol of a modern pluralistic community existing in the city of Alexandria.

In the framework of Egyptian-Italian socio-political relations under *Mohamed Ali's* descendants, the Italian consulate in Alexandria built a statue of *Ismail Pasha* (Later became the *Unknown Maritime soldier Monument*) to lie on top of the French garden looking at the *Eastern Harbour*. Also the Italian architect *Avoscani* (A member of the *Commission d'Ornato*) was intending to introduce the city of Alexandria to the modern European culture of music, so theatre and opera house became a reality with the creation of *Zizinia theatre* in 1863 (Later became the *Anglican church of St. Mark*). Although it was criticized for its unstable foundations and weak acoustics, the *Zizinia* theatre, modeled on *Lirico* theatre of Milan, was a structural and architectural novelty in Alexandria.

## 4 EGYPT UNDER OCCUPATION (1882-1956)

### 4.1. A Capitalist Cosmopolitan community

Britain's main interest was in stabilizing the region, so the government tended to support the Ottoman Empire -theoretically sovereign over Egypt- against all challengers, while British merchants tried to find business opportunities in the Nile Valley and *Suez*. An "overland route" opened between the port of Alexandria and the Gulf of Suez in the 1840s and *George Stephenson's* railroad, completed in the 1850s, improved the route. Although it could not handle bulk cargoes, which traveled by ship around Africa, the railroad and telegraph line sped up communications between Britain and India, and was put to especially good use in organizing military forces to put down the 1857 Indian Mutiny.

The opening of the *Suez Canal* in 1869 complicated the British position in Egypt. The government had opposed the construction of the *Suez Canal* from the beginning, but all that had accomplished was to force Egypt into a partnership with the French to build the canal. British canal opponents feared that British shipping would gravitate towards the canal and become dependent on it, then suffer interruptions during war time because the canal was too vulnerable.

The opponents were partially correct, the canal was enormously successful and British merchants flocked towards it. In its first thirteen years of operation, the freight that travelled through the canal each year increased from just under a half million to more than five million tons, and British ships carried more than eighty percent of it by 1882. At first, the British government tolerated that arrangement, since British ships paid only nominal fees to pass through a canal owned by European (mostly French) investors (55%) and the Egyptian government (45%). According to the British Foreign Secretary Lord *Palmerstone*, Britain had no interest in possessing Egypt as long as Egypt was "well-run and hospitable"; i.e. British merchants could operate freely there. But the process of modernization, with its dependence on French military advisors, British capital and other foreign influences, stimulated the Egyptian nationalist movement, and ultimately, that provided a pretext for the British government to get directly involved in the canal.

The trouble started in the 1870s when the Egyptian nationalist movement became active and began to target Europeans as well as Turks. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War encouraged Egyptian nationalists who viewed *Mohamed Ali* and his successors as "Turks." One of them was *Ahmed Arabi* -later known as *Arabi Pasha*-, a native Egyptian who received officer training in a school founded by *Mohamed Ali* and promotion to the rank of colonel under *Ali's* son *Said* (1854-1863). *Arabi* and his colleagues were particularly incensed at how Egypt became indebted to foreigners during the reign of *Said's* nephew *Ismail*.

British control of Egypt lasted for forty years, **from 1882 to 1922**. For twenty four of those years, until his retirement in 1907, Sir *Evelyn Baring* -later Lord *Cromer*- was the British Consul-General - and virtual ruler of Egypt. There was a constitution, with a legislative council and general assembly; but the Khedive and the prime minister had to accept the 'advice' of the Consul-General, and each Egyptian minister had his British adviser, and each provincial governor his British inspector. The British officials had direct access to the Consul-General, and neither the legislative council nor the general assembly had any real power. The Egyptians gave this regime their passive co-operation, except for an interlude after the accession as Khedive in 1892 of the young *Abbas II*, who unsuccessfully tried to shake off Lord *Cromer's* dominance.

On the **outbreak of the First World War** *Kitchener*-Successor of lord *Cromer*- left Egypt to become Secretary of State for War, and any further constitutional reforms were deferred for the duration of the war. On the entry of Turkey into the war on the side of Germany, Britain declared Egypt a British Protectorate, thereby ending the nominal suzerainty of the Turkish Sultan. The Khedive *Abbas II*, who was suspected of

anti-British intrigues, was deposed, and his uncle Hussein Kamil proclaimed Sultan of Egypt.

British forces, including troops from Australia, New Zealand and India, were concentrated in Egypt for the defense of the Suez Canal, on which the Turks made unsuccessful attacks across the Sinai peninsula in 1915 and 1916. The build-up of British forces in Egypt continued, reaching quarter of a million men in 1916, and Egypt became a base for Britain's Middle East campaigns, which resulted in the defeat of Turkey in 1918.

**From 1923 to 1936** Egyptian politics were dominated by the *Wafd*, under the leadership of *Zaghloul* until his death in 1927, and then under *Nahas*; but there were periodical assertions of authority by King *Fuad*, who inherited the autocratic spirit of his ancestors and had little liking for the position of a constitutional monarch. During this period negotiations for a treaty with Britain kept breaking down owing, on the one hand, to the *Wafd's* insistence on complete independence and the withdrawal of all British troops, and on the other hand to Britain's determination to keep troops for the defense of the Canal, and to maintain her position in the Sudan.

**In 1936** -soon after the completion of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia- *Nahas's* government at last succeeded in negotiating a treaty with Britain, both sides making concessions. The treaty was to stand for twenty years. After the ratification of the Treaty Egypt became a member of the *League of Nations* 1937.

**In February 1945**-After *World war II* was over-, owing to an Allied decision that attendance at the Peace Conference would be confined to those countries which had declared war on the Axis powers, Egypt declared war on Germany and Japan. She then became one of the original members of the *United Nations*, where she used her enhanced status to try to gain international support for her renewed demands for the withdrawal of British troops from Egyptian territory. **In 1948**, the Zionists proclaimed the independent state of *Israel*, whereupon the armies of Egypt and the other surrounding Arab states invaded *Palestine*. After nine months of fighting the result was a triumph for Israel, which vastly increased its territory at the expense of its adversaries.

**In July 1952** Farouk was forced to abdicate and retire to exile after a successful *coup d'état* by some army officers. Their nominal leader was General *Neguib*, but the real driving force behind the coup was Colonel *Gamal Abdul Nasser*. For a year the infant *Fuad II* was king, but **in July 1953** Egypt was proclaimed a republic, with General *Neguib* as president and prime minister. **In 1953** an agreement was reached between Britain and Egypt providing for the independence of the Sudan within three years, an agreement which was fulfilled **on 1st January 1956** when the Sudan became a republic.

#### **4.2. A British strategic seaport on the Mediterranean**

Lord *Cromer* re-organized the finances of the country, revised the taxation, and developed the economy, making Egypt solvent and prosperous. The completion of the Delta Barrage and the extension of perennial irrigation in the 1890s increased the agricultural area by a fifth, and in 1902 the *Aswan Dam*, the great storage reservoir on the Nile, was completed. *Cromer* also abolished the ancient custom of compulsory unpaid labour, thus giving the peasants the elementary rights of free men. But, though he did not rule out eventual self-government for Egypt, he was convinced that the Egyptian educated classes had not yet the efficiency and integrity required for responsible positions in the administration. He was therefore unsympathetic to a revived nationalist movement which grew up among the largely French-educated upper and middle classes. In 1895 the Nationalist Party was founded by a young law student, *Mustafa Kamil*, on his return from Paris.

During the *World War I* martial law in Egypt prevented overt political agitation. But the Nationalist Party - the *Wafd*- grew greatly in strength, due to discontent with the establishment of the Protectorate - which seemed to make self-government more remote - and with British measures for the prosecution of the war which caused hard-ship to the people. In particular, thousands of '*fellahin*' peasants were conscripted on a six months basis for a Labour Corps, and their draught animals requisitioned for a Transport Corps for the Palestine campaign. Their resentment was the greater because, under the British, they had acquired a degree of personal liberty and lost some of their traditional patient endurance of oppression.

Immediately after the armistice in November 1918 *Saad Zaghloul*, leader of the *Wafd*, informed the British High Commissioner that the Egyptian people wanted complete independence. He, and the Prime Minister,

requested that a delegation be permitted to put Egypt's case before the Peace Conference. On Britain's refusal to allow *Zagloul* to be included in the delegation, the Prime Minister resigned, and riots broke out. The British deported *Zagloul* to Malta, with other Nationalist leaders, whereupon there was more widespread rioting and the administration was paralyzed by extensive damage to communications. Lord *Allenby*, victor of the Palestine campaign, was appointed High Commissioner and restored order. He then adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the Nationalists. *Zagloul* was released and allowed to represent Egypt's case at the Peace Conference - where, largely owing to his intransigence, the British Protectorate of Egypt was confirmed. Meanwhile the British government set up a Commission under Lord *Milner* to consider the future government of Egypt. The Commission recommended a treaty of alliance, under which Egypt's independence would be recognized subject to certain reservations to protect British interests. Negotiations on this basis broke down, mainly on the question of the location of British troops to protect the Canal. But, at *Allenby's* instigation, the British government in February 1922 made a unilateral declaration, ending the Protectorate and proclaiming Egypt an independent sovereign state reserving – pending subsequent agreement – four points: the security of Britain's imperial communications, the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression or interference, the protection of foreign residents, and the future of the Sudan.

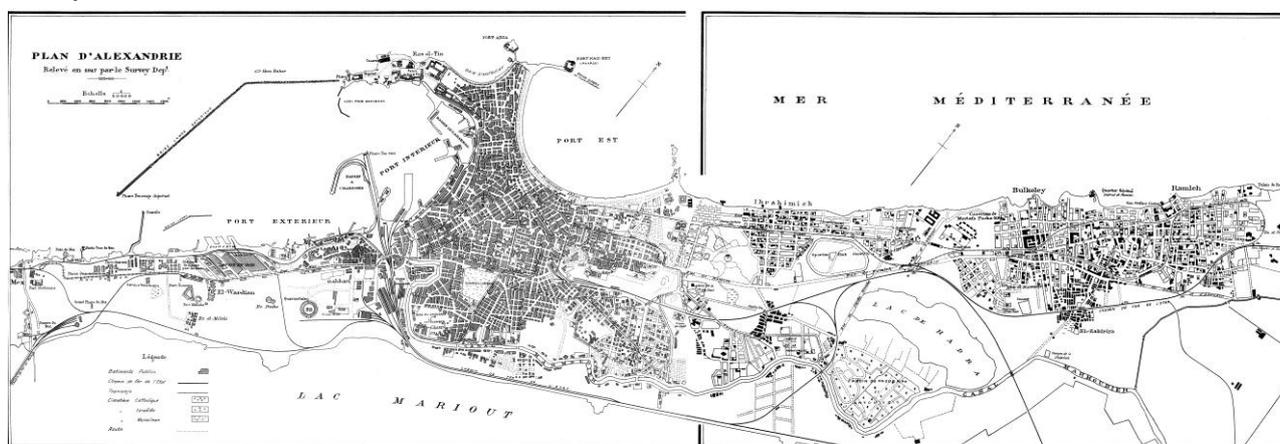
This declaration ended British rule in Egypt, which became a kingdom. *Fuad I*, who had succeeded his brother *Hussein Kamil* in 1917 as Sultan, became king. But Britain, through the reserved points, retained control of Egypt's foreign affairs – and continued to intervene in her internal to the extent necessary to maintain the four reservations. Negotiations went on for thirty years before the last British troops left and Egypt became completely independent.

During the British occupation there had never been an Egyptian Muslim prime minister. They had been an Armenian, a Turkish Jew, and two Turkish Muslims. After the 1936 treaty, the *Wafd* saw an eclipse, its unity had been largely based on the demand for independence. Now that a settlement with Britain had been agreed, internal dissension weakened the Party; and the young King *Farouk*, who had succeeded his father in 1936 at the age of 16 and at first attained widespread popularity, was hostile to the *Wafd*.

After 1948, Egyptian attempts to re-negotiate the 1936 Treaty with Britain made little progress. The big stumbling block was the *Sudan*, which Egypt wanted to rule – to which Britain, backed by the United Nations Security Council, would not agree. In 1950 *Nahas*, who had fallen from power in 1944, became prime minister again; and in 1951 he made a unilateral declaration abrogating the 1936 Treaty - an action which was rejected by Britain with the support of the United States and France.

So by July 1952, and after some 2,500 years of rule by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, Circassians, Albanians and Britons, Egypt was at last ruled once more by Egyptians.

The development of Capitalism has been the driving force behind the growth of the city of Alexandria, while the city has played a key part in the rise of Capitalism in Egypt. If we are to understand the dynamism of the city and the character of urban society, we must first examine the relationship between Capitalism and the city.



Map of Alexandria, dated 1917. By Charles Muller. Atlas Historique de la ville et des ports d'Alexandrie, par M. Gaston Jondet.

As shown in the map, by the year 1917 the city of Alexandria has witnessed a rapid expansion in both directions; east and west - from *Minet el-Bassal* district to *El-Ramleh* suburb - , as it had turned into a global trade and industrial center. The city was divided into four five main districts: **a) EL-RAMLEH** a High-class (*Elite*) residential suburb: villas and social sporting clubs. **b) THE DOWNTOWN El-Ramleh Station & Place Mohamed Ali**: a trade center, public and administration buildings and entertainment facilities. **c) MINET EL-BASSAL** Alexandria port district: trading companies, storehouses, the port workers housing and the *Bourse de Coton*. **d) KARMOUS** a Mid and Low-class residential area. **e) EL MAHMOUDEIH** banks: industrial zone of the city, a suburb of large factories.

### 4.3. Bombarded and Rebuilt (Places des Consuls)

The British bombardment of the city and the events that followed 11 July 1882 completely destroyed the European centre around the place *Mohamed Ali* - The symbol of power and wealth of Egypt. However, the compensation and indemnities, paid by the Egyptian Government, were crucial in effecting the quick recovery and rebuilding of the city centre, described by *Breccia* ' *Unsound prosperity*'.



A great progress towards modern Capitalism took place in Egypt after the year 1882 (British Occupation), which had a direct influence on the square that was expressed in installing major commercial buildings such as *The Bourse*, the *Royal Ottoman Bank* and the *2nd Bourse du Coton*.

These changes indicated the liberal capitalistic direction led by the rulers and supported by the British colonial policy in order to make an advantage of the Egyptian capitals and potentials.

## 5 EGYPT UNDER SOCIALISM (1956-1970)

### 5.1. Nationalism and Exodus

After the Great War a major new problem entered Middle East politics with the creation of Israel. A United Nations'-proposal for the division of Palestine, which had been a British mandate since the First World War, into Jewish and Arab states was accepted by the Jews but rejected by the Arabs. So, on Britain's withdrawal from the mandate in 1948, the Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel, whereupon the armies of Egypt and the other surrounding Arab states invaded Palestine. After nine months of fighting the result was a triumph for Israel, which vastly increased its territory at the expense of its adversaries.

**In July 1952** Farouk was forced to abdicate and retire to exile after a successful coup d'état by some army officers. Their nominal leader was *General Neguib*, but the real driving force behind the coup was *Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser*. For a year the infant *Fuad II* was king, but in July 1953 Egypt was proclaimed a republic, with General Neguib as president and prime minister. Negotiations with Britain were resumed by the new masters of Egypt, and the deadlock over the Sudan was resolved by the attitude of *Neguib* who - himself half Sudanese - recognized the Sudan's right to self-government. **In 1953** an agreement was reached between Britain and Egypt providing for the independence of the Sudan within three years, an agreement which was fulfilled on 1st January 1956 when the Sudan became a republic.

**Early in 1954** a clash of personalities in the ruling military junta resulted in the concentration of all authority in the hands of *Colonel Nasser*, as prime minister; and later in that year he concluded an agreement with Britain ending the 1936 Treaty and providing for the withdrawal of all British troops from Egypt within two years - with the right to return in the event of aggression against an Arab state or Turkey. The last British troops left early **in 1956**; and in that year also *Nasser* became president.

The foreign policies of the various Arab states in the post-Second World War years varied according to the regime in power at any particular time. Though united in their enmity to Israel, they did not all readily fall in with Nasser's desire to be the leader of an Arab league. His interventionist policy was apt to annoy the other states, and his left wing attitude offended the remaining traditional regimes, of which Iraq was the leader. Nasser was affronted when Iraq in 1955 signed the Baghdad Pact with Britain, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan - though Iraq withdrew later when the King was killed in a military coup and Iraq became a republic. In the wider field of foreign relations the most notable development in Egypt was the greatly increased influence of Soviet Russia. A strong Soviet military mission advised the Egyptian armed forces, and most of Egypt's armaments were provided by the Communist countries. The Soviet Union was easily the leading nation in Egypt's foreign trade.

Worried by this Soviet infiltration, the United States and Britain in **1956** withdrew their offer of financial support for the building of the projected Aswan High Dam. (This new dam, some five miles up-stream from the existing Aswan Dam, was planned to maintain the level of the Nile constant throughout the year without flooding, and to provide hydroelectric power for Egyptian industry.) Nasser reacted immediately to this Anglo-American action by announcing the **nationalization of the Suez Canal**, a move which was regarded as illegal by the United States and Western Europe but against which no concerted action was taken.

Meanwhile relations between Egypt and Israel, always hostile due to the Arab nations' refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist, had deteriorated further with border disputes, and now with Israel being barred from using the Canal; and in October 1956 the Israelis invaded Sinai. Britain and France then intervened to protect the Canal taking Port Said by an airborne operation. But pressure from the United Nations - supported by both the United States and the Soviet Union - forced all three invaders to withdraw. This diplomatic success for Nasser outweighed Egypt's defeats at the hands of Israel, and Egyptian prestige in the Arab world soared. This prestige, and Egypt's determination not to let Soviet Russia acquire the domination in the middle East previously held by Britain and France, led to a union in 1958 between Egypt and Syria, where the Communist Party had been growing in influence.

The union, known as the **United Arab Republic (U.A.R.)**, was joined by the Yemen in the same year. But the union was short-lived. In **1961**, after a military coup in Syria - where there was some resentment at Egypt's domination - the union was dissolved (though Egypt retained the name U.A.R.)\*

**During the 1960s** Egypt became heavily involved in a civil war in the Yemen in which the royalists, supported by Saudi Arabia, were opposed by the Egyptian-supported revolutionary republicans, who eventually won. This struggle absorbed much of the Egyptian race - and it also complicated Britain's arrangements for giving independence to the Southern Yemen (Aden and neighboring sheikhdoms). The last British troops left Aden in 1967, and the Southern Yemen - like the Yemen (or northern Yemen) - became a republic.

Nasser's political activities were not confined to the Middle East. He made a bid for the leadership of African nationalism, in conjunction with President *Nkrumah* of the newly independent Ghana; but this activity faded after *Nkrumah's* overthrow in **1966**.

In **1967** enmity with Israel once more reached a climax. Tension on the Syria-Israel border, including the infiltration of terrorists from Syria into Israel, was bringing a further Arab-Israeli war nearer; and Egypt as Syria's ally, moved troops to the frontier and blockaded Eilat, the Israeli port on the Gulf of Akaba. Israel thereupon launched a full-scale attack on Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and in six days scored an overwhelming victory. Egypt lost the whole of the Sinai peninsula to Israel. A ceasefire was organized by the United Nations, but a virtual state of war continued to exist along the Suez Canal, which had been blocked by the Egyptians during the hostilities, and which remained blocked. President Nasser offered to resign, but by popular acclamation remained in office. Three years later, in **1970**, he died and left Sinai in the hands of Israel.

## 5.2. Transition to The Contrary

Under Nasser's regime the President was the head of state and the head of government. He appointed all ministers. The National Assembly was elected by universal suffrage, but only one political party was allowed, the *Arab Socialist Union*.

Nasser introduced a program of sweeping socialist measures, including nationalization of the banks and much of industry. But **Islamic conservatism** was resistant to revolutionary socialism and Communism made

little headway. The government, indeed, though strongly socialist, was **anti-Communist**. The Soviet Union, nevertheless, stood by its undertaking to help finance the Aswan High Dam, an undertaking given after the withdrawal of the Anglo- American offer in 1956.

Nasser always expressed interest in the condition of the people, and attempted to expand industry in order to lessen Egypt's dependence on agriculture. But 80% to 90% of the manual workers were still engaged on the land. Cotton remained the chief export. The tourist industry in recent years has been hit by the wars with Israel.

In contrast of elitism, privatism, and cosmopolitan pluralism, the post 1960's era was dominated by decolonization and state socialism. The socialist laws of nationalization and sequestration deprived foreigners of their livelihood and brought about their eventual exodus, therefore ending 150 years of Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism.

Most sequestered private Egyptian and foreign elitist property in the form of building stock was transformed into government offices and public institutions (such as schools and hospitals), and consequently suffered the ill fate of degradation due to the lack of maintenance, ill-conceived additions and remodeling.

A lot of foreigner private property was transferred to private Egyptians, who were unable to maintain them in the face of increasing economic pressures, and so sacrificed them for high rise apartment buildings, especially in suburban *Ramleh*. This process of metamorphosis resulted in the creation of a dense (common) urban order and a modern conventional style where the high rise apartment building, devoid of any cultural expressions and the vitality associated with modernism, is devoid sometimes of external finishing, with the (architecture of bricks and concrete) dominating its urban morphology.

The government imposition of (fair rent) meant the freezing and devaluation of returns on property value, thereby discouraging owners from maintaining their buildings and developers from investing in new ones. This deprived old buildings of maintenance, while increased population and migration pressures aggravated the demand for housing, and turned into a permanent crisis.

Even within the government's intensive industrialization policies in the successive five year plans there was hardly any significant western interest or contribution. Moreover, within a state-controlled system, and a deficit economy dependant on external borrowing and remittance from Egyptians working abroad, only small capital and enterprise were concerned, only a handful of small businesses and petty contracting survived and continued to function.

### 5.3. A Symbol being Demolished (EL-TAHRIR square)

By the year 1956, *Nasser* decided to put an end to the presence of foreign influence in Egypt, furthermore, in all the Arab lands. That came when he made a decision to nationalize the Suez canal as a reaction of Anglo-American financial pressures suspending the project of the *High Dam*.

Nasser always realized the importance of the political decisions' morale, so he thought of a way to emphasize his idea in the Egyptian and Arab conscience and soul; he chose the fourth anniversary of the departure of king Farouk from his palace in Alexandria to exile in Italy and never came back. *Nasser* decided to announce the nationalization directly on public from the building of *The Bourse* standing in front of place *Mohamed Ali (Place des Consuls)* the European heart of Alexandria, the city that presents the global heart of Egypt.

After the date 26 July 1956, nationalization laws took place and covered all public facilities in the square: companies, hotels, foreign properties and off course the major building of the *Bourse* - symbol of Egyptian Capitalism – was turned by 1961 into an official headquarter of the *Arab Social Union* party. Later, after *Nasser* had passed away, under *Hosni Mubarak* the whole building was demolished to be a car parking, also deterioration became reality in the whole square; as the French gardens were turned into public transportation stop and the statue of Ismail Pasha was moved to another place to take the base as a monument of the *unknown maritime soldier*. The place was renamed to *Tahrir* square, as all Egyptians were liberated from foreign colonization in this place.

The social environment of the place was totally distorted, all the social facilities such as restaurants, cafés and public gardens were intentionally removed from the place to be left to street vendors, garbage dumps and massive areas of car parking.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Finally, it had become quite clear that public spaces and the whole built environment act as a direct reaction towards social environment, they are a pure reflective image that reveals what is really happening in different societies, also taking public spaces in scope of study give many accurate indicators that show where exactly are the advantages and withdraws of a society reaching an evaluation: how healthy the society is or is not, what this society needs to develop, in which direction should this society be oriented to achieve a particular vision of renaissance.

People cannot do without physical public spaces in their daily life, even within the telecommunication revolution, this need appeared clearly during the 25Jan 2011 revolution; protesters were all connected online before this date but it did not satisfy the basic human need to socialize, share opinions, express conflicted points of view in public, feel the freedom of speech, even spending leisure time outdoors (Virtual Spaces are not enough to socialize).

The reasons that led us to a distorted social environment can be concluded in: The lack of a vision for the society, uncharted political and economic decisions and finally transforming form the culture of "*The Society*" to the culture of "*The Citizen*"; we do not think for the good of all of us, but every single person thinks only for his own good which creates multiple conflicts because we are not all on the same track (As we were during the construction of the High Dam), so we are in the need for having a vision for Egypt as a whole, also every decision has to be a part of a complete plan or a system to lead, the feeling of (All in One) drives us to a healthier life and a more developed country.

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