



SPACE, ARCHITECTURE, AND POWER. THE TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP PLACEMAKING IN HISTORIC ARABIC-ISLAMIC CITIES

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ABSTRACT

Urban spaces are the end-product of various power deliberations and different urban processes, mainly the top-down and bottom-up. This study investigates the role of the two urban processes in placemaking in historic Arabic-Islamic cities. The investigation demonstrates each urban process's role in creating the major mosque's spatial context in Mecca, Medina, Cairo, Fes, Damascus, and Tripoli of Libya. Aiming to clear some preconceived ideas -strongly affected by the Renaissance's spectacular values- about Arabic-Islamic urbanism, this article studied major Arab-Islamic cities in qualitative and quantitative approaches. The oldest available cartographic materials are investigated locally concerning political values and changes. Street patterns, space typology, and major mosque spatial context in historic Arabic-Islamic cities are studied, relating each type of urban process to placemaking's symbolic value. Before the end of the 17th century, historic Arabic-Islamic cities adopted a bottom-up process by taking advantage of the community's right to assert the order of their built environment. The top-down process was limited mainly to the architectural level of authoritarian mosques and their context. The ontological freedom and the right to control the place shifted due to exogenous political influences from the public to the authorities. By adopting the Renaissance's urban values, the top-down urban process expanded its domination on architectural and urban levels, shifting the mosque's function from socioeconomic to an artistic value. This adaptation was achieved by promoting the mosque as an artifact and creating a spectacular spatial context.

KEYWORDS:

Urban Studies; Islamic Architecture and Urbanism; Placemaking; Authoritarian Power; Historic Cities; Arabic-Islamic Cities

INTRODUCTION

The urban space is one of the two essential elements creating the city identity [1]. While buildings might be seen as spatial defining elements, spaces are human public activities' containers. The past affects the present [2] and our inherited affects our cities' future [3]. One way to achieve sustainability is to preserve, learn from and implement indigenous urban processes [4]. A sustainable urban process stands behind a sustainable urban product [5].

In the last two centuries (1800-2000), the Arab world witnessed overwhelming urban changes and transformations, some of them are exogenous, and others are considered indigenous but evolved. New exogenous urban components dominated the Arabic city fabrics, such as disconnecting the mosque from its physical context, transforming it into a power representational element or an artifact, introducing theatrical and celebrative straight roads and central

spaces (or Public Squares). Pilgrims' high density, circulation, and accessibility are arguments presented by Saudi authorities -in the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries- for disconnecting the two "holy" mosques of Mecca and Medina from their physical context and constructing vast open areas around them. They argued that mosques' disconnection is out of respect for their "holiness", and their exposure to the observer must strengthen their emotional value (Figure 1). After reconstructing the two mosques -in the late 20th century- by adopting new architectural theories, their intimacy was lost in favour of the economic and political power representation. However, the high-rise buildings surrounding the two mosques of Mecca and Medina degraded their visual impacts. Praying in a hotel room on the 20th floor overlooking the Qaba'a -as a tiny object- cannot be considered out of respect to the "holiness" of the place (Figure 2). The mosque was considered an object

whose primary value lies in its aesthetic appeal. 'In other words, the value of the mosque became established *visually* rather than socially' [6].

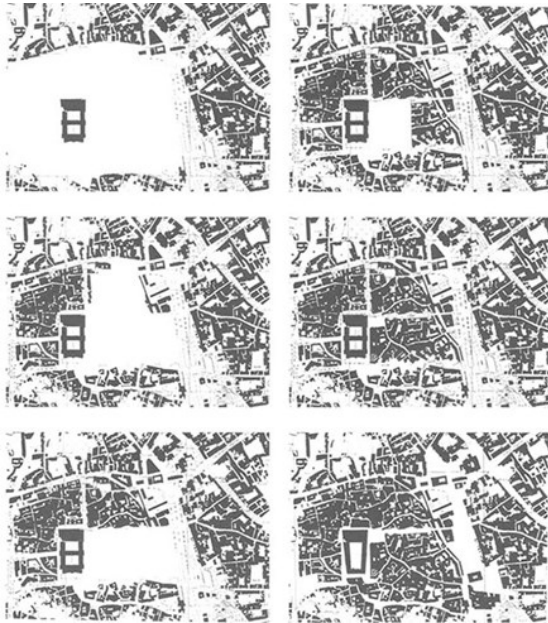


Figure 1. Bulldozer in the Prophet Mosque's context in Medina; consecutive stages [7]



Figure 2. Contemporary context of the Mecca Mosque

Turning the mosque into an artifact was taken to its extreme in the Island Mosque in Jeddah, KSA. It is constructed on an artificial island away from the seashore overlooking Jeddah's sea promenade. The mosque is indeed a piece of art; its architectural character promotes a rural Egyptian character

designed by Abdel Wahid el-Waqiel. Observing the mosque throughout the day exposes its nominal value to the socio-cultural needs of Muslims. Another example of the mosque as a visual artifact is El-Hassan II mosque in Morocco. It promotes the Moroccan monarchy's strength and richness by being the biggest mosque in the Muslim world. Its minaret is the highest one. Its extreme luxury and construction on the Atlantic Ocean shore, disconnected from the city's urban mass. It created many doubts about its socio-cultural role in the resident's life. El-Hassan II mosque was constructed to be seen from the Ocean as an authoritarian religious symbol (Compare Figure 3A with 3B).

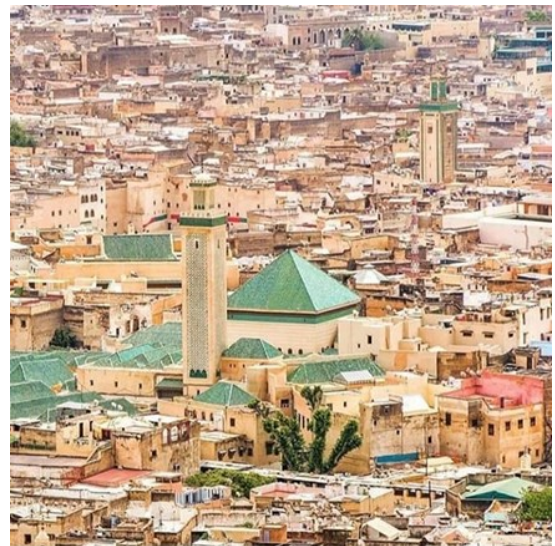


Figure 3A. El-Hassan II Mosque, Morocco (Contemporary)

Figure 3B. Fes major Mosque, Morocco (Historic)

Several urban developments around Arab world were considered iconic urban role models, such as the Jubail and Yanbu cities in KSA. Their technical report [8] presented their design concepts to modernize the local urban identity. Public Squares, open spaces, and creation vistas by isolating the mosque from its physical context were promoted as a natural development of Arabic-Islamic place identities (Figure 4). Modernity seems to be the most vital standing ground for invading Arabic city with exogenous urban elements and architectural theories. The author argues that the Euro-centric concept of the Renaissance's

theatrical form, as Curuceru defined it [9], and the American car-oriented urbanization was considered synonyms for modernism.

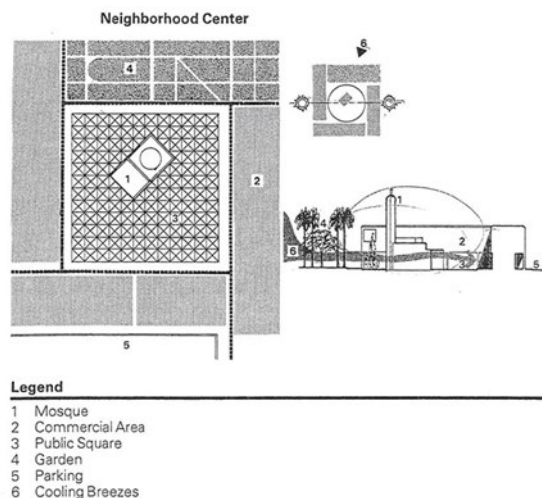


Figure 4. Jubail placemaking and the mosque [8]

Furthermore, the author argues that the Renaissance's urbanism influences those new exogenous urban components to create dramatic and authoritarian power representation. In his study on historic Cairo, Saad questioned the necessity of imposing the Renaissance's rules in interpreting local urbanism [10]. However, his study limitation on historic Cairo can be considered an exception to the Arabic-Islamic urbanism. Western-centric urban design concepts were applied without sufficient debates about their subjective validity to local urban identity. When local urban designers looked to western urbanization, they saw nothing but its spectacular authoritarian power representations [11].

STUDY AIMS AND METHODS

This study aims to test some preconceived ideas about the traditional role of the mosque and central space in the historic Arabic-Islamic city. This aim will investigate major Arabic-Islamic historic towns in Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, such as Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Cairo, Tripoli in Libya, Algiers, and Fess.

Isfahan cannot be considered an Arabic-Islamic city. Proximity to the Arab world, urban-political solid values, and significant role in the Muslim civilization still encourage the author to investigate its urban transformation during Safavid dynasty period. Furthermore, the Isfahan case represents the authoritarian power's impact on the urban fabric. The urban authoritarian power representation might help shed light on comprehending exogenous urban phenomena in our case study. The role of indigenous spatial articulation around the Arabic-Islamic cities' major mosques and their central spaces will be described as political and cultural changes. Tracing urban changes along the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries should help comprehend their symbolic meanings.

Investigating indigenous spatial articulation in

historic Arabic-Islamic cities will be achieved by the earliest available cartographic materials for each city, historical references, and urban literature.

THE STUDY RESULTS

The preliminary visual study and in-depth investigations of historic Arabic-Islamic cities' maps during their indigenous urbanization processes revealed the following characteristics:

1. Typical spatial features; geometric irregularity, and mosques' high-level attachment to their physical context,
2. Two zones were identified in historic Medina. The first zone is the Prophet mosque's zone and the second surrounds the first but in a decentralized form. The second zone reveals a unique spatial element; a central residential space or outdoor courtyard that was not found in other Arabic-Islamic cities. A dynamic urbanization nature towered minimized public spaces and creating denser urban fabric. Even in Damascus, its authoritarian Roman grid-iron street pattern transformed into an irregular street pattern [12]. Besides, the urban condition was denser [13],
3. None of the major mosques presented a vista for a celebrative or theatrical street,
4. Negligible traces of central spaces were found. They were considered as traffic nodes, open markets, or *Meydans*,
5. Due to the unavailability of detailed cartographic material for Mecca's residential areas, the author could not quantitatively determine whether Mecca adopted the same central spaces for its residential entities, like Medina or linear spaces as other areas Arabic-Islamic cities. In its technical report, the Egyptian Surveying Authority claims that it was difficult to access most of Mecca's residential area by its surveyors in 1940 due to local community social restrictions [14].

SPATIAL ARTICULATIONS IN HISTORIC ARABIC-ISLAMIC CITIES

The city is a highly complex system where many integrated forces interact. Their interactions create various urban components. The urban space is produced by the pattern of power interactions and imposes itself on its users. 'Space encourages and discourages certain forms of interaction. It gives shape to social structures and ideologies' [15].

Furthermore, the street network 'is a crucial ingredient in cities. It allows individuals to work, transport and exchange goods' [16]. Regenerating a city requires the fulfillment of its residents' socio-cultural, economic, and political demands. Those demands are expressed by residents' actions [17]. The bottom-up urbanization process is created by gathering knowledge, ideas, and proposals. The bottom-up urbanization process is a term that identifies a variety of individual public interventions in creating, choosing, modifying, transforming, and adopting urban components. It is 'very similar to the

concept of resilience' [17]. Power relationships are pivotal elements in urbanization; they can alter, affect, change and transform the urban outcome. They are related to the most decisive players and forces dominating the urban network(s) [18][19]. Traditional Arabic-Islamic urbanism is not only about products but mainly about values, processes [20], and power type and level [21]. It is these three important dimensions that we can learn the most from traditional Islamic urbanization.

The Roman Empire witnessed a significant defeat by the Moslems in Syria. Later, the Moslems defeated the Roman army and established their first settlement in Egypt, *Fustat*. Unlike Damascus, *Fustat* was not transformed from Roman urbanism to Islamic; it was built on an empty site. Other cities emerged in North Africa following *Fustat* or Damascus' footsteps, such as *Qirawan* in Tunis, *Fes* in Morocco, and *Tripoli* in Libya. Early urbanization in the Muslim world followed two concepts: the Damascus case, similar to *Fustat*. Moslems' first settlements were built either on earlier settlements, adjacent to them or on vacant land and remote from older settlements. For example, *Algiers* was founded by the Phoenicians in 1200 BC. Then in 944, the Berber Bologhine Ibn Ziri built the city of *El-Djezair* (*Algiers*), which then evolved under Ottoman Empire from 1516 until the 19th century. In 1830, France colonized Algeria, and a new urban renewal plan was introduced to change its capital's indigenous identity to an exogenous French one [22]. Mecca and Medina existed before Islam; they presented a semi-urban-Bedouin style. The open area around *Qa'ba* was used as a worship place before any structure was built around it.

Historic Arabic-Islamic cities showed urban similarities in some aspects and diversities in others. They showed similarities in their spatial qualities, ranging from irregular to semi-irregular urban spaces. For example, Damascus's spatial quality was more regular than other Arabic-Islamic cities, especially in areas strongly affected by the Roman street pattern, the city forum, and the Roman monumental structures. However, Damascus's Roman grid-iron street pattern was transformed into an irregular tree-type street pattern. Its straight wide major arterial roads were transformed to narrow, irregular, and semi-irregular roads (Figure 5), and its big Roman shops were transformed into smaller ones [13], (Figure 6).



Figure 5. Damascus street pattern's transformation [23]

Mecca's and Medina's mosques were the first two mosques in Islam. The first is significant for being the *Qibla* of all Moslems during praying and the second is because it contains the Prophet Mohammed's mosque.

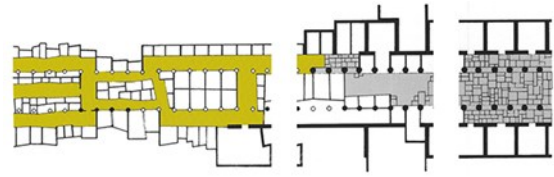


Figure 6. Damascus shops' transformation [24]

At first, Medina's mosque was constructed in a straightforward and modest concept; a courtyard surrounded by a wall, two sheltered areas constructed with palm trees column and covered with palm leaves on two opposite sides, and a row of rooms on the third side for the Prophet and his family. According to the traditional Bedouin style, the Prophet Mosque in Medina was constructed on vacant land detached from its surroundings. By the end of the 17th century, Medina presented similar behavior to other Arabic-Islamic cities; its urban fabric became dense. Regular and semi-irregular central spaces in historic Medina were not public; they were part of the residential entity's private territory and were used as front courtyards [25] (Figures 7 and 8); thus, they cannot be considered Public Squares.

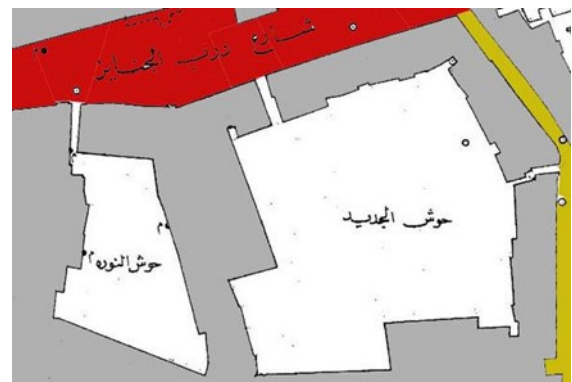


Figure 7. Medina residential central spaces

Amr ibn el-A'ss mosque was the first mosque in *Fustat*, Egypt. It followed the Prophet mosque's footsteps. It was constructed in stone, marble columns, and a wooden ceiling. Since *Fustat* was the first Muslim settlement in Egypt, many vacant areas dominated its urban structure. Moreover, the mosque was detached from its surrounding. In time, *Fustat* became dense and the city's physical component surrounded the mosque.

Ibn Tulun's mosque was the second major mosque (*Juma'a* mosque) in Egypt. It was built in northern *Fustat* using brick columns, walls, and a wooden ceiling. It was detached from its physical context on a small hilltop, its visual celebrative impact was overwhelming. After establishing *Cairo* as a *Fatimid* ruling seat, the *Azhar* mosque was constructed in stone with a wooden

ceiling and used as an official *Juma'a* praying place. However, another mosque was constructed in northern Cairo and was adopted as the official *Juma'a* mosque in a decade later. The mosque became known as *El-Hakim* mosque; it was constructed of bricks, stones, marble columns, and a wooden ceiling. Its architectural style, grandeur, and detachment from its physical context created a strong dominant visual impact which represents the Fatimid state's authoritarian power.



Figure 8. A central residential space in Medina

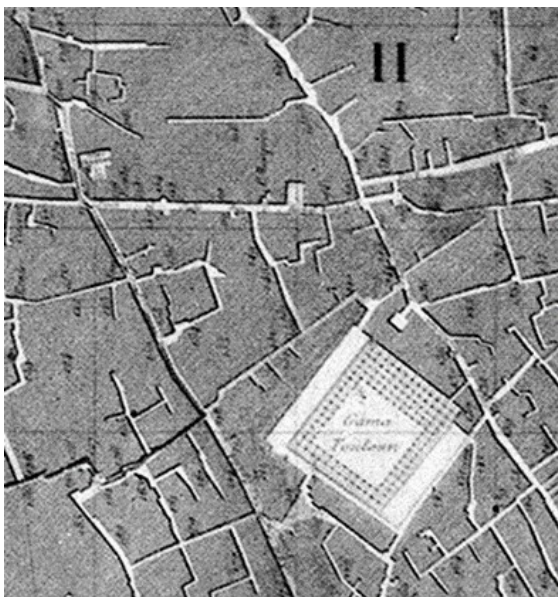


Figure 9. Ibn Tulun context during the French occupation (1798-1801), [26]

A century after establishing the *Fatimid* Cairo, it transformed from a *Fatimid Temenos* [61] to an actual city [28]; its urban fabric became dense and all vacant lands in the city were built [29]. By the time of Egypt's

French occupation (1798-1801), Ibn-Tulun and Hakim among other mosques, became attached and embedded within their physical context [30]. Private and public structures became attached to their façades (Figure 9). Minimizing the public sphere, generating urban compactness, and the free transformation of major mosques' physical context in historic Cairo was a conscious urban attitude [31]. Medina, Mecca, Damascus, Tunis, Algiers, and Fes demonstrated similar action; their major mosques became attached to their physical context on different levels; from attached to semi-detached (Figure 10). No matter the Arabic-Islamic city's origin (built on a virgin site or Roman settlement), they all followed the same urban process, from the open and regular urban form to the dense and irregular one [23].

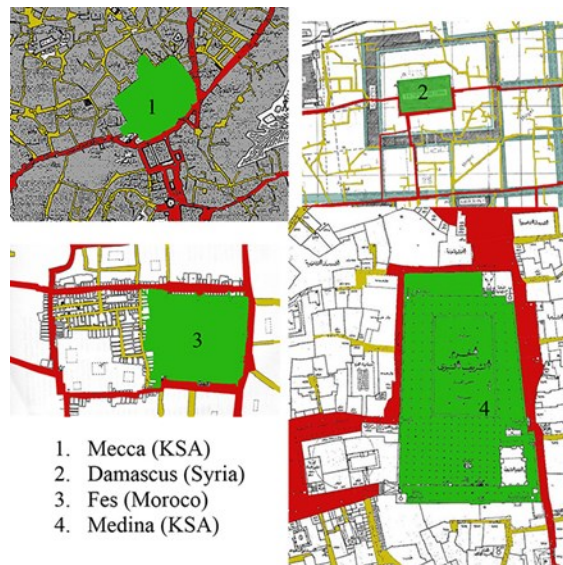


Figure 10. Major mosques' attachment levels

AUTHORITARIAN POWER REPRESENTATION IN HISTORIC ARABIC-ISLAMIC CITIES

During the rapid imperial expansion, the Roman Empire implemented a standard street pattern in its provincial settlements (*Castrum Romanum*) [32]. Nevertheless, Kostof argued that the Islamic city presented no public arena, unlike the Roman provincial settlements [33]. Damascus was the capital of the *Umayyad* dynasty (005-774). It was the first dynasty in the Islamic Empire, and the Roman urban values were still active. The *Umayyad* took advantage of the Roman Forum to create the power representation effect required for their dynasty. The remaining Roman celebration and theatrical structures were kept to increase the visual impact of the *Umayyad* mosque's approach (Figure 11). Later, its approach was transformed from the arched style to the Islamic typical covered style. When the *Umayyad* started losing their political power, bottom-up urbanism began to invade the Roman Forum. Within a century, the *Umayyad* mosque was surrounded by residential, commercial, and public structures. So, this

can minimize its spectacular impact and integrate it with the urban ensemble.

Foucault discussed the meaning of controlling urban space as a reflection of authoritarian disciplinary power practice [34]. Introducing the square as an urban symbolic political order [35] was practiced in *Fatimid Cairo*. The first known *Meydan* in Cairo was constructed during the *Fatimid era* (969-1171). Initially, the Arabic word *Meydan* means field, horse racing, sports training, and military practicing ground. The *Fatimid Meydan* occupied a centralized position in Cairo. It was defined by the two royal palaces of the *Fatimid Calif*.

The *Meydan* was used for authoritarian celebrations and military parades. A century later, the *Fatimid Meydan* disappeared under the pressure of bottom-up urbanism. Another vast open area immersed by the city's eastern periphery at the citadel during the *Mamluks eras*. Until the end of the 17th century, the city kept that significant vast open area, known as *Qara-Meydan*. Its vast adjacent spaces were separated from each other by *Mamluk's authoritarian structures* [26] (Figure 12).



Figure 11. The Umayyad Mosque's Roman approach

Open areas in historic Arabic-Islamic cities were either used as open markets, caravan resting areas (*Manakh*), or *Meydans* [57], [70], [71]. Furthermore, they were related to political and military structures in *Fatimid Cairo* and *Umayyad Damascus* or were created after the westernized urbanization model during the 19th and 20th centuries as in *Tunis*, *Fes*, and *Tripoli*. Moreover, *Qara-Meydan* at *Cairo citadel* was used as a

marketplace when the *Mamluk princes* did not use it for training or sports entertainment. However, its proximity to the citadel, monumental structures, and the *Mamluks' palaces* with their celebratory function strengthened its authoritarian power representations. In the Western meaning of the term, the nonexistence of public squares in historic Arabic-Islamic cities and *Cairo* [36], [38] was a typical urban feature.

In *Iran (224-651 AD)*, the *Sassanid Empire* promoted central spaces as places for religious rituals and official ceremonies [39]. Ancient *Persia* showed an early grid-iron street pattern, celebratory, and spectacular architecture [40]–[42]. Following the *Sassanid's footsteps*, one of the early authoritarian attempts to organize spectacular spaces and mosques in *Iran* was during the *Safavids Empire (1501-1736 AD)*. A chronicle representation of *Nagsh-e Jahan-Meydan* in *Isfahan, Iran*, demonstrates the contextual evolution of *Jama'a el-Shah* from the 5th to the 19th centuries [43]. The authorities leveled a vast area to construct a monumental *Juma'a mosque* and *Meydan*.

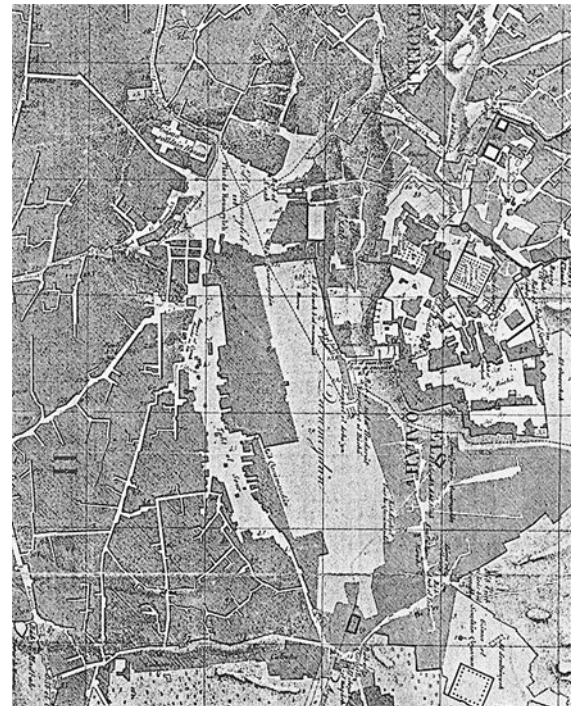


Figure 12. *Qara-Meydan* at *Cairo Citadel*, 5244, [60]

Babaie argued that the vast *Safavid Meydan*, the grid-iron street pattern, and monumental architecture imprinted the dynasty's sovereignty and power's spiritual mapping. 'Persian square was associated with the state authority and governmental headquarters' [36].

The *Safavid ruling classes* created their urban interventions as authoritarian power representation. The large-scale and grandiose architecture was loaded with different spectacular messages [36]. The *Safavids* authorities might have attempted to revitalize the ancient *Persian urbanization* for power representation. *Nagsh-e Jahan-Meydan* was used for authoritarian

celebrations, military parades, and governmental political propaganda. However, Isfahan's central area kept losing its dense urban fabric after the so-called 'Islamic Revolution'. Large-scale urban projects among which vast *Meydans* and wide celebrational streets were implemented 'to generate an Islamic identity.' [44]

THE EXOGENOUS URBAN SHIFT IN DECISION MAKING

In Western cultures, historical architecture was used to create an 'eye-catching impression' [45] and create an impression of surveillance [33]. Sinking, elevating, connecting, or detaching the building from its physical context creates different visual impacts [33], [46]. Historic unplanned or self-organized urbanism is evolved over centuries and small-scale or individual parcels. Still, the Haussmannian interventions-style happened during a relative 'short time and at a large spatial scale' [16].

Cairo witnessed its first authoritarian top-down intervention in 1846 during Mohammed Ali Pasha's reign (1805-1847). However, Cairo had to wait till his grandson Ismail Pasha came to power (1863-1879). It was appointed *Khedive* to experience its larger-scale urban interventions and deformations. Around 12 significant *Meydans* were connected with wide straight roads and *percées*. The *Meydans* mostly adopted circular, and few adopted rectangular shapes. Within one year (1869-1870), Ismail Pasha's dreams of Europeanizing Cairo covered an area more than the traditional city area. *Meydans*, significant authoritarian structures, and gardens were adopted as visual vistas for celebrational roads. The French Renaissance's theatrical and spectacular urbanism [9] invaded the city's image. Ismail Pasha removed all Mamluks' structures, detaching *Qara-Meydan*, from its adjacent spaces, and creating one monumental vast open area. The surrounding structures strengthened the area's celebratory and spectacular visual impacts. The new *Meydan* was used for authoritarian celebrations, military parades, and Royale occasions. All Arabic-Islamic cities experienced a similar urban shift within a different time frame.

Around the end of the 19th century, Tripoli and Medina experienced medium-scale urban interventions during the Ottoman era (1551-1911). As Çelik explained, in Tripoli, Turkish urban interventions were inspired by Algeria's French urbanization [47]. Nevertheless, they created their urban interventions outside the city walls. Straight streets were constructed radiating from a quadrilateral *Meydan* by the old city gate and its red citadel. It was used as an open market and for authoritarian celebrations. The Italian dictatorial regime decided to use the walled city as a tourism site during its occupation of Libya (1911-1942). Thus, the Italians put their urban efforts by modifying the Turkish urban area and expanding it around the city walls. The Turkish *Meydan* was transformed in size and function in Venice, imitating Piazza Sant Mark. The place was used by the fascists 'to flaunt their colonial

power' [25].

The Ottoman governor of Medina decided to create a straight road or a *percée* connecting the train terminal station to one of the Prophet mosque's gates. The gate was developed to create a substantial celebrative visual impact following the Ottoman architectural style (Figures 13, 14). During and after the 20th century, the physical context of Buldoze in Mecca and Medina mosques reshaped the area from an intimate to a spectacular and celebrational image with high-rise five-star hotels (Figures 1, 2).

It cannot be argued that other Arabic-Islamic cities witnessed their spatial transformation within a short period, such as Cairo. Still, each of their authoritarian top-down processes was achieved relatively little time than the endogenous urban development. By the beginning of the 20th century, the first large-scale authoritarian urban intervention in Medina occurred after the Kingdom was established and oil was discovered. Mecca, Medina, and Tripoli experienced their large-scale urban transformation after the oil discovery and establishing their 'modern independent' states. The new states aimed at exercising their political power in the urban form.

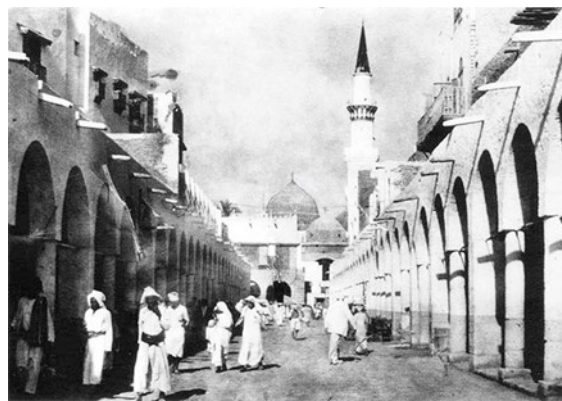


Figure 13. The Turkish street in Medina [25]

Figure 14. The celebrative Turkish Mosque's entrance [25]

Except for the Roman Damascus, all straight roads, regular *mejdans*, and vast open areas in historic Arabic-Islamic cities resulted from a small-scale top-down process. Ibn-Tulun, el-Hakim, and el-Sultan Hassan in Cairo, the *Umayyad* mosque in Damascus, and the Shah mosque in Isfahan shared the same relationship to authoritarianism. By the 18th century, detaching the mosque from its physical context was strongly related to large-scale and top-down urban decisions. Vast regular *mejdans* and celebrative regular roads were also related to authoritarianism in modern Arabic-Islamic cities. While many individual cumulative small-scale architectural decisions in the historic Arabic-Islamic cities created the whole urban ensemble, authoritarian interventions were large-scale projects promoting top-down and short-term urban decisions.

Historic Arabic-Islamic cities -like all unplanned cities- were subjected to the trial and error rule. Unplanned cities created their urbanization experiences in an inherited and cumulative process in a more extended time, allowing for feedback and corrections. Urban decision-making processes in historic Arabic-Islamic cities must have been subjected to complex governance networks. By showing efficiency in their hierarchic systems for centuries, historic Arabic-Islamic cities proved to be resilient. They withstand and recover from disturbances, learned from and adapted to changing circumstances while maintaining functioning as Barns and Nel defined the resilient city [48]. They are created by a wide range of socio-cultural actors able to determine 'the formulation and pursuit of collective goals at the local level' [49]. Urban decision-making responded to small-scale urban conflicts. It was part and parcel of the local urban governance networks. The bottom-up process ensured the identification and coherence of the parts and created significant place identities. It can be argued that individuals' actions might create urban chaos. On the other hand, relating the parts to the whole is a precondition to defining and accepting the supplied urban product[27].

In Damascus, top-down Roman urbanism was replaced by bottom-up processes [12], [50], [7]. Von Gruenbaum and Sauvaet, among others, considered such transformation to be a negative aspect reflecting the Islamic non-authoritarian urbanization character (Figures 5 and 6). Nevertheless, according to Foucault, bottom-up urbanization represents the public's right to assert the order of their built environment as ontological freedom [50]. Damascus public space was reduced to the minimum urban accessibility requirement [51], allowing the city residents to develop their built environment freely.

Urban spaces are created to organize human public activities [52] or created due to public activities. In unplanned cities, where bottom-up urbanization is active, the urban space reflects cumulative human decisions of trial and error, selection, and discrimination. Thus, its symbolic meanings are different from planned cities or top-down urbanism. Cities must follow certain spatial logic even if they are

unplanned or appear disordered [53].

Even in the community participation process, urban decisions are taken according to top-down processes since the community must choose what is offered by the city administration or the consultant [54], [55]. Participants in the consensus might not always be affected by each decision taken during the vote. Besides, those who must tolerate any decisions' side effects might not tack the majority. On the other hand, bottom-up processes ensure individual representation, satisfaction, and micro-economic collaboration. Traditional and participatory urban processes might seem alike, but they are not. The traditional Arabic-Islamic urbanism depended on a bottom-up process based on trusting the community in their free decisions and actions. Its prescriptive nature was related to primary codes and regulations telling the community simply what not to do rather than what to do [5]. Habraken argued that creating an urban form is exercised according to the power of control [56]; thus, transforming the urban form reflects control. While bottom-up urbanism is generated due to ontological freedom, top-down urbanism, by definition, encourages large-scale urban investments and discourages individual micro-economy from taking place. In both cases, control is subjected to the process type of decision making; individual or authoritarian driven. Individual socioeconomic interests are rarely met due to what is claimed to be 'the common good'. In top-down urbanism, 'the common good' is determined by third parties and not by the user.

If any urban element which is considered an urban product, it is subjected to supply and demand rules. However, the demand for an urban product should create supply, and the urban product domination must reflect the community-conscious demand volume. The urban product, which proved its collective efficiency, would dominate the public urban market (the city), and *vice versa*; urban products that dominated the historic urban market (the unplanned city) should have proven their efficiency since they were produced in centuries. The inherited urban experiences are subjected to communities' connectivity and flow of information. The non-systematic method of delivering information between various communities and geographic sites might slow down the cumulative urban experience but ensure diversity in placemaking and decision corrections. The Arabic-Islamic urban system addressed values and principles for the familiar people. Thus, ordinary people were able to cope. Historic Arabic-Islamic cities were developed by how responsibilities are associated with urban rights [57]. The urban fabric underwent its development, transformation, and alterations due to the power relationships between different public players and powers.

CONCLUSIONS

None of the study cases presented physical detachment of their major mosques; they were all integrated into the urban ensemble. The

transformation of historic Arabic-Islamic cities from the open urban form to the dense and irregular tree-type street pattern leaves little doubt about the consciousness of the urban decisions taken by the local communities during the bottom-up processes.

The bottom-up process in historic Arabic-Islamic cities tended to create intimacy and reject authoritarian power representation. On the other hand, the top-down process in contemporary Arabic-Islamic cities tended to create spectacular, theatrical, and celebratory architecture and spaces.

The spatial identity of the major mosques' context in historic Arabic-Islamic cities might create a dilemma; either the historic communities did not respect their mosques or considered them socio-cultural buildings that need to function efficiently, independently from spectacular values and authoritarian power representation.

Despite their emotional and religious importance, the two "holy" mosques in historic Mecca and Medina presented neither celebratory nor dictatorial power during the bottom-up process. The argument of protecting the mosque's emotional value by detaching it from its urban context has no historical merit.

The apparent similarity between all mosques' spatial articulation in historic Arabic-Islamic cities leaves little doubt about the consciousness of historic communities' urban decisions.

During the bottom-up processes, Arabic-Islamic citizens, merchants, and artisans had the right to assert the order of their built environment and urban spaces [58]. The city kept changing, transforming, and developing small-scale and cumulative interventions, creating irregular and intimate spaces. Even spectacular authoritarian structures lost their power representational role due to the bottom-up urban processes.

The ontological freedom imposed its time aspect on the bottom-up urbanization allowing feedback. The bottom-up process of historic Arabic-Islamic cities reflected the community-conscious decisions in attaching the mosque to its physical context, minimizing central spaces, and imposing intimate visual impacts.

In contemporary Arabic urbanization, placing the mosque as a vista, detaching it from its physical context, adopting regular geometric, celebratory, and central theatrical spaces reflected authoritarian top-down urban processes and power representation. Unfortunately, more than two centuries of synoptic infrastructure [59] created our common preconceived ideas about Islamic urbanism. Mosques in the Arab world were transformed from intimate structures with a socio-cultural role to spectacular and theatrical artifacts. The biggest, the highest, and the most luxurious became design objectives. Detaching the mosque from its physical context might strengthen its visual and artistic impacts, but historically. It was not created for such an urban role.

The *Meydan* might be significant in contemporary urban social life, but historic evidence proved that

public social activities in Islamic-Arabic cities could be exercised in simpler, intimate, and non-authoritarian spatial articulations.

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