

**THE SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE DES URBANISTES  
AND THE INVENTION OF URBANISM**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation demonstrates that it was the *Société Française des Urbanistes* (SFU) that invented urbanism in the interwar period, rooting it in Henri Bergson's theories of creative evolution and Paul Vidal de la Blache's principles of human geography. Scholars have historically overlooked this contribution, and do so even today. They define urbanism generically, mostly describing a positivist science of spatial organization, incorporating infrastructural, hygienic, and social engineering systems. Rectifying this misconception, I reveal how this group of practicing architects and theorists—attempting to offset the erosive effects of commercialism on cities—forged, in 1911 in Paris, a reformist alliance founded on faith in metaphysics and social science. In coining the term *urbanisme*, SFU established the field based on principles that defied positivist notions of urban development and deterministic ideas of human evolution.

I analyze SFU's spatial schemes and written oeuvres, in concert with contemporaneous scholarship on urban theory, geography, and philosophy, to contend that Bergson's anti-positivist discourse on time and consciousness is central to our understanding of urbanism and its origins. Besides establishing the professional, legal, and academic foundations of urbanism in France, SFU engaged in a global urban reform campaign, drawing up restructuring schemes for cities in Europe, North and South America, the Eastern Mediterranean, North and East Africa, and Southeast Asia. They scripted numerous architectural treatises, essays, and legal texts, and organized international conferences to debate methods of reforming post-WWI cities. This formidable production had a profound impact on the cities and subsequent generations of planners who grappled with the problem of mitigating industrialization's negative outcomes. The dissertation charts the group's social networks by tracing the genealogy of ideas by Western thinkers that influenced SFU's conception of urbanism. It displays the ways in which SFU applied these ideas in distinctive settings, revealing the cultural influences these planners exerted on administrators and policy makers. Ultimately, the dissertation shows that SFU established urbanism as a "scientific art" of territorial development, emphasizing inventiveness and individual experience and seeking to reconcile the conditions of the modern city with the allegedly timeless features that characterized the pre-industrial landscape: spiritualism, nature, tradition, and art.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The genesis of my dissertation can be traced back to the moment I wrote my master's thesis at MIT and encountered the writings of René Danger. My project examined the long nineteenth-century urbanization of Beirut, for which Danger had put forward a restructuring scheme in 1933. That same year, he wrote a book entitled *Urbanism Course: City Planning Techniques*. Concurrently with composing the final chapter, with its focus on French planning, I explored the content of the book. On page 54, Danger writes:

The various urban forms [...] correspond to physically, ethnographically, socially, and historically different milieus. They all have their own physiognomy and personality. It would be imprudent for an urbanist to look for a series of typified layouts and shape them all in the same cast.<sup>1</sup>

Although Danger's ascription of metaphysical qualities such as "physiognomy" and "personality" to the land to be reformed aroused my curiosity, I did not delve into their implications, especially thinking that I am reading a mere "urban planning manual," as the book's preface describes it. Four years later, after I completed my PhD coursework and began to develop my dissertation proposal—in an effort to expand my previous research and write about colonialism and the restructuring of Arab Mediterranean cities by French planners—I read Danger's text again and finally recognized that there is a very exciting link between French philosophy, geography, and urban planning that even the most technical of planners—Danger was a surveyor (*géomètre*)—are trying to convey, and that Danger was a member of an association—the *Société Française des Urbanistes* or SFU—that is behind this movement. My immediate desire was to investigate this connection, instead of crafting another colonial planning narrative.

Now, as I read through this historiography, it became apparent to me that scholars have dismissed SFU as a collective and a movement, and that they have misattributed and misconstrued urbanism. It is remarkable that the well-established field of modern architecture and planning has historically overlooked SFU and its contribution and continues to do so even today. Scholars define urbanism generically, mostly signifying how inhabitants of urban areas, such as towns and cities, interact with the built environment around them, or describing the process of spatial organization by architects, planners, and other experts, who integrate technical systems like zoning, sanitation facilities, and novel infrastructures, along with open and green spaces.

I aspired to dispel this misconception by elucidating how, back in 1911, in the French capital, a collective of intellectuals and architects united with the aim of countering the erosive impacts of capitalism and industrialization on the urban landscape. They forged a reformist alliance, grounded in a profound belief in the potency of anti-positivist metaphysics and social science. Through this alliance, they sought to restore the true essence and character of cities, aiming to preserve their unique physiognomy.

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<sup>1</sup> René Danger, *Cours d'urbanisme: technique des plans d'aménagement de villes* (Léon Eyrolles, 1933), 54. I restate this in the Introduction.

The process of industrial modernization in fin-de-siècle France was marked by a recurring cycle of population decline and urban discontent. The catalyst for establishing SFU stemmed from a heightened recognition of the achievements made by other nations and the need for France to improve its planning efficiency and set up urban planning laws.

After some early explorations of this work, I wondered about the contexts in which SFU's ideas emerged. Through research in archives and libraries in France and a significant effort to collect all the important interwar publications by SFU and other urban and social thinkers from libraries in the United States, I uncovered a wide constellation of materials that led to the profound realization that SFU invented urbanism, rooting it in Henri Bergson's philosophy of time and consciousness and Paul Vidal de la Blache's principles of human geography.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, I embarked on a mission to unveil the core tenets of *urbanisme*, as conceived by SFU. My goal was to elucidate the principles of urbanism while simultaneously illustrating the practical implementation of these theories in the actual transformation of cities.

My dissertation relies on a thorough analysis of urban treatises, journalistic essays, legal texts, and conference proceedings generated by SFU, as well as spatial schemes produced by these planners. The bulk of the archives crucial to this project are situated in France, primarily Paris. My research journey had led me there, where I was diligently conducting my studies when the unexpected COVID pandemic broke out, compelling me to return to Boston for safety and logistical reasons. Despite the challenges posed by this turn of events, I continued my research remotely, navigating through the unprecedented circumstances to advance my work.

During my brief time in Paris before the pandemic, I consulted publications by SFU at the CEDIAS-*Musée Social* library. At the Institute of Urbanism's Poëte and Sellier library, I examined the teaching records of Marcel Poëte, Léon Jaussely, and Jacques Gréber, and traced the establishment of the school and the 1919 Cornudet planning law. I studied the various interwar publications on urbanism at the National Library (*Bibliothèque nationale de France*), the National Institute of Art History (*Institut national d'histoire de l'art*, INHA), the City Hall Administrative Library (*Bibliothèque de l'Hôtel de Ville*, BHdV), the Historical Library of the City of Paris (*Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris*), the Suresnes Museum of Urban and Social History (*Musée d'Histoire Urbaine et Sociale*, MUS), the Suresnes Municipal Archives (including the Henri Sellier Library archives), and the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville library. I am thankful to the archivists and librarians from these

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<sup>2</sup> Before the birth of SFU, the term *urbanisme* had a presence in the lexicon, but it carried a markedly different meaning and was not widely employed. As far back as the eighteenth century, the term could be found in French dictionaries, but it remained rather obscure. Also, interestingly, in 1910, French engineer Pierre Clerget (1875–1943) used the term *urbanisme* in an article entitled “L’urbanisme: étude historique, géographique et économique.” However, in his usage, urbanism served merely as a synonym for urbanization, lacking the specialized meaning that the *Société* urbanists would later attribute to it. It is noteworthy that the *Société* urbanists might not have been aware of these earlier sources and interpretations. In their writings, they unequivocally assert ownership of the term, considering it their intellectual creation. Their tireless efforts led to the popularization of *urbanisme* and to the establishment of its specific definition encompassing the intricate process it delineates. See Pierre Clerget, “L’urbanisme: étude historique, géographique et économique.” *Bulletin de la Société neuchâteloise de géographie* 20, 1910: 214-231.

institutions who provided invaluable assistance during my inquiries, particularly Jose Mayorga, Pascal Fort, Haude de Chalendar, and Emeline Trion.

Owing to the ensuing lockdown measures the pandemic enforced, I was unable to return to France to gain access to the supplementary archives of SFU, particularly those at the National Archives of the World of Work (*Centre des Archives du Monde du Travail*) in Roubaix, which include some manuscripts, letters, and legal pamphlets. As I continue to advance and refine this project for a book publication, I have intentions to revisit France and conclude the necessary archival work in Roubaix. While architectural treatises shine a light on the ideals and ambitions that might have motivated the activities of SFU planners, institutional documents will permit a more comprehensive narrative of SFU's engagement with public and private sectors, within France and beyond, as well as an anthropological history of the association: how the members worked; where (besides at the *Musée Social* library) and when they met; and how they undertook their studies. By examining conference proceedings and journal articles, I have managed to construct a significant portion of this historical backdrop, which I have integrated into the Introduction. Moving forward with the conversion of the dissertation into a book, I aim to allocate an entire chapter exclusively to this crucial material.

For retrieving the urbanists' plans and drawings, I have consulted the online archives of the French Institute of Architecture, City of Architecture and Heritage (*Le Centre d'archives d'architecture contemporaine, Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine*), as well as various contemporary publications that feature these materials. Regrettably, my access to the physical archives of the French Institute of Architecture proved elusive, as it, like all archives in France, had to close its doors during the COVID pandemic. Even before the pandemic, my attempts were thwarted by the institute's closure for renovation. Upon my return to France, I eagerly anticipate immersing myself in some of SFU's drawings and design reports that were once beyond my reach.

My collection of interwar publications by SFU and various other urban and social thinkers was made possible through the invaluable resources of MIT's libraries and their "Interlibrary Borrowing" services. The library faced closure for nine long months during the pandemic, after which I was immensely fortunate to benefit from the commendable initiative of mailing books to all students across the country. This unwavering support ensured uninterrupted access to essential research materials, enabling me to resume my writing with renewed motivation and dedication.

The cities that formed the focus of my writing (Paris, Marseille, Rabat, and Istanbul) were chosen based on both the themes that I discuss and my personal familiarity with the cities. I held a firm stance against writing about any city that I had not personally experienced. For the cities I had not seen before the pandemic, I made a point of traveling to them once the lockdowns were lifted. During my short visits, I focused on surveying their urban settings and gaining firsthand insights for my research. I intend to revisit them to conduct a more comprehensive examination. My focus will be on delving into municipal and state archives, which will shed light on the commissioning of the plans and the urbanists' active engagement with the local community and administrators involved in the planning process.

That said, I intend to complete an additional chapter that I started during COVID but that I had halted due to inaccessibility to the cities that the chapter tackles and necessary local archives. The chapter will be added when I develop this dissertation into a

book. Entitled “The Greening of Cities,” the chapter investigates the work of Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier, whose contributions have played a pivotal role in shaping SFU’s landscape concepts. The chapter shows how Forestier rethought the city through landscape architecture. He did not consider green areas as merely providing temporary relief from urban life as shaped by buildings and infrastructure. In other words, he did not see landscaping and urbanism as opposing one another. I examine Forestier’s urban reform schemes for Buenos Aires and Havana, both developed in the early 1930s, and reveal how Forestier reinvented urbanism as a landscape art charged with reconciling the design of the industrial city with its ecological conditions.

Writing a dissertation is an extraordinary and strenuous journey, and amidst the countless hours of solitary toil and daunting challenges lies a profound source of joy and privilege. What elevates this endeavor to true fulfillment is the chance to explore new ideas and share them with mentors, colleagues, friends, and family. Their genuine curiosity in my work and active involvement have been the driving force behind my perseverance, particularly during the challenging times of social isolation brought about by the pandemic.

Before acknowledging these contributions, I would like to express my gratitude to the History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture and Art Program, the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, the Department of Architecture, the Office of the Provost, and MISTI for providing financial support for completing this dissertation.

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee: my advisor, Mark Jarzombek, and my readers, Jean-Louis Cohen and Hashim Sarkis. Mark championed my work at MIT and this project from its nascent phases. Our conversations about philosophy, history, historicizing the modern, architecture at large, and the reverberations of urban planning across cities and societies have exerted a formative influence on my academic interests, contributing to my growth as a scholar. Had SFU intellectuals encountered Mark, an undeniable affection would have bloomed: Mark’s pedagogical philosophy advocates the psychological welfare of students, prioritizing a foundation of passion and contentment in one’s work, which, in his view, lays the groundwork for effective productivity. I deeply value his unwavering confidence in my work and his constant backing. Jean-Louis Cohen has tracked the evolution of this project since its inception. His four decades of dedicated scholarly pursuit within this domain carry profound weight, and his presence on the committee proved pivotal, particularly in matters of archival expertise and field-specific knowledge. His fervor for the subject matter, coupled with his eagerness to share his resources, has been truly commendable. Hashim’s keen fascination with geography and urbanism prompted me to include him as a member of my committee. An architect and scholar of remarkable productivity, he has imparted contributory insights regarding the intricacies of SFU’s spatial schemes and the integration of SFU’s theories and practical methods.

Beyond my committee, I have also benefitted from social and intellectual exchanges with a much broader community of scholars and colleagues at MIT. As I wrap up my journey at this institution, I am grateful to the classes I took or TA-ed with David Friedman, Timothy Hyde, Lauren Jacobi, Caroline Jones, Nasser Rabbat, Kristel Smentek, and James Wescoat. Renée Caso, Kathaleen Brearley, Anne Deveau, José Luis Argüello, and Tessa Haynes have been involved in guiding me through diverse challenges, consistently providing guidance and ensuring I had the requisite support at

every juncture. I cannot satisfactorily thank my colleagues from HTC, who made this journey both intellectually and socially gratifying: Nushelle de Silva, Dariel Cobb, Caroline Murphy, Sarah Rifky, Christiana Bonin, Nisa Ari, Alexandra Courcoula, Rixt Woudstra, Meitha Al Mazrooei, Manar Moursi, Iheb Guermazi, Deepa Ramaswamy, Michael Kubo, Jessica Varner, Jackson Davidow, Azra Dawood, Jack Hanly, Indrani Saha, Hampton Smith, Chelsea Spencer, Roxanne Goldberg, Phoebe Springstein, Nina Wexelblatt, Brittany Ellis, Maggie Freeman, Elizabeth Browne, Walker Downey, Duygu Demir, Courtney Lesoon, Huma Gupta, Eli Keller, ElDante Winston, Albert José-Antonio López, Suheyla Takesh, Irina Chernyakova, Jesse Feiman, Xuan Luo, Samuel Dubois, Delanie Linden, Krista Mileva-Frank, Maia Simon, Brandon Scott, and Olivia Wynne. I am particularly indebted to Nushelle for her steadfast support and encouragement during the intense last two months of writing. And finally, my heartfelt gratitude extends to Marilyn Levine, whose unwavering assistance over the past year has been instrumental in finishing this project. A highly perceptive and ceaselessly inquisitive thinker, reader, and interlocutor, Marilyn provided continuous motivation and accountability, patiently read my chapters, and helped me refine and polish them to their ultimate form.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Layla and Michel, who have been navigating through the challenges of a tumultuous Beirut. May the force of restitutive urbanism rejuvenate cities scarred by adversity. They are so many nowadays.

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## A NOTE ON THE TEXT

### **Translations**

All translations to English from French are my own. For names of institutions and titles of French books, I quote in English in the body text and provide the original French version in the footnotes.

### **Abbreviations**

I have used SFU or the *Société* to refer to the *Société Française des Urbanistes*.

### **Units of measure**

Throughout the dissertation, I have consistently employed the Imperial system, aligning with the conventions embraced by SFU planners.



## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation demonstrates that it was the *Société Française des Urbanistes* (SFU) that invented urbanism in the interwar period, rooting it in philosopher Henri Bergson's theories of creative evolution and geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache's principles of human geography.

Remarkably, the well-established field of modern architecture and planning has overlooked SFU's contribution. Since the early twentieth century, the term urbanism has been used generically, mostly to describe a positivist science of spatial organization, incorporating infrastructural, hygienic, and social engineering systems. Rectifying this misconception, I reveal how this group of practicing architects and theorists—in an attempt to offset the erosive effects of commercialism on the physical and social structure of cities—forged, in 1911 in Paris, a reformist alliance founded on faith in metaphysics and social science. In coining the term *urbanisme*, SFU established the field based on principles that defied positivist notions of urban development and deterministic ideas of human evolution.

I analyze SFU's spatial schemes and written oeuvres, in concert with primary scholarship on urban theory, geography, and philosophy that influenced SFU, to contend that Bergson's anti-positivist discourse on time and consciousness is central to our understanding of urbanism and its origins. Besides establishing the professional, legal, and academic foundations of urbanism in France, SFU engaged in a global urban reform campaign in the West and the colonial and independent non-West. These planners drew up comprehensive restructuring schemes for cities in Europe, North and South America,

and the French colonial Eastern Mediterranean, North and East Africa, and Southeast Asia. They also scripted numerous architectural treatises, journalistic essays,<sup>1</sup> and legal texts. They organized national and international conferences,<sup>2</sup> in which European and American experts debated methods of reforming post-WWI cities. I argue that this formidable and wide-ranging production had a profound impact on the cities and on subsequent generations of planners and thinkers who grappled with the problem of industrialization and mitigating its negative social effects, and yet the history of SFU, especially regarding its urban theories, is absent from our understanding of modern urbanism.

Addressing this lacuna, the dissertation charts the social networks and interconnections of the group, tracing the genealogy of ideas by Western social scientists and historians that influenced SFU's conception of urbanism. It displays the ways in which SFU applied these ideas in global urban settings with distinctive historical, geographic, and socioeconomic features. It reveals the cultural influences these planners

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<sup>1</sup> *La Vie Urbaine*, the official journal of the *Institut d'Urbanisme*, was the main journal in which SFU planners shared their ideas with the public. They also published in other journals, including *Urbanisme*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Annales de géographie*, *La Construction Moderne*, and *La Réforme Sociale*.

<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the three interwar decades, SFU hosted three remarkable conferences: *First Interallied Town Planning Conference* (Paris, June 11–13, 1919), *The Current State of Urbanism in France and Abroad* (Strasbourg, 1923), and *Urbanism Day* (organized at the Colonial Exposition, July 29, 1931). The proceedings of the first two conferences were published the same year the conferences were held: Société Française des Urbanistes, *First Interallied Town Planning Conference, held in Paris, June 11, 12, and 13, 1919* (Paris: La Bibliothèque de la Renaissance des Cités, 1919); and Société Française des Urbanistes, *Où en est l'urbanisme en France et à l'étranger, Strasbourg, 1923* (Paris: L. Eyrolles, 1923). The third symposium took place at the Colonial Exposition of 1931. The outcomes of this conference were documented in *Urbanisme*, with the publication being released in the year subsequent to the conference: Société Française des Urbanistes, "Rapports, Vœux et Compte-Rendu Général de la 'Journée de l'urbanisme'," *Urbanisme* 1, Numéro Hors-Série (1932). Moreover, members of SFU made notable contributions through numerous articles featured in the proceedings of the Colonial Exposition itself. See Hubert Lyautey, Henri Prost, Jean Royer, and de S. E. Vivier, *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux: 1 & 2* (Paris: Selbstverlag, 1932).

exerted on administrators and policy makers, and how this universal exchange of ideas informed the new field of urbanism. Ultimately, it demonstrates that SFU established urbanism as a “scientific art” of territorial development that emphasizes inventiveness, free will, and individual experience and seeks to reconcile the conditions of the modern, industrial city with features that, for SFU, characterized the pre-industrial landscape: spiritualism, nature, tradition, and art.

### *Bergsonian Time and Urbanism*

If you read the texts composed by planners from SFU, you find Bergsonian and Vidalian influences everywhere, even in the seemingly most technical writings such as *Urbanism Course: City Planning Techniques* (1933) by René Danger (1872–1954). In the book, which is supposed to be a mere “urban planning manual,”<sup>3</sup> Danger ascribes metaphysical qualities such as “physiognomy” and “personality” to the land to be reformed. In his urban study, he suggests:

The various urban forms [...] correspond to physically, ethnographically, socially, and historically different milieus. They all have their own physiognomy and personality. It would be imprudent for an urbanist to look for a series of typified layouts and shape them all in the same cast.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Musée Social*'s president, Georges Risler, prefaced the book, describing it as a “complete urban planning manual.” See René Danger, *Cours d'urbanisme: technique des plans d'aménagement de villes* (Léon Eyrolles, 1933), 4.

<sup>4</sup> See René Danger, *Cours d'urbanisme: technique des plans d'aménagement de villes* (Léon Eyrolles, 1933), 54.

Planners and thinkers affiliated with SFU condemned technical formalism, “haughty routines,” and “the ugliness of standard urban models.”<sup>5</sup> They were dismayed by radical mechanization, which had transpired in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, and the homogenization and normalization of the social environment that industrialization brought about. Wanting to ensure the city’s cultural continuity and preserve its “physiognomy” in the face of modernization, SFU planners reverted to the past, aiming to preserve it and evoke it in their urban reform schemes. They believed that social relations could be restored by reconciling the past with the present. Conserving history would counteract the rational industrial order that prevailed. It would mitigate the negative, inevitable effects of technology.

Architects from the *Société* were persuaded by the very recent and influential concepts, promulgated by Bergson and other thinkers: that science alone cannot predict human emotions; that our present intermingles with our past; and that social actions are no less powerful than natural events in their ability to alter a social landscape. They recognized the importance of historical influences on the site in question and the need to satisfy the psychological wellbeing of the residents in the spatial design process.

SFU urbanists did not see time as positivist science considered it in the early twentieth century: abstract and homogenous. Influenced by Bergson, past time for SFU flows into the present. Bergsonian time, as distinct from quantitative time (which is measured in numbers such as hours and minutes) is “lived time” (*temps vécu*) or “real duration” (*durée réelle*). It is qualitative and connected with direct human experience. For

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<sup>5</sup> See Maréchal Lyautey’s Preface to Jean Royer and Vivier S. E. Du, *L’Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux: communications et rapports du Congrès international de l’urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays de latitude intertropicale* (Paris: Les Éditions d’Urbanisme, 1935), 7–8.

Bergson, scientific, quantitative time does not account for human emotions. Emphasizing experience over abstract designs, time as *durée réelle* is heterogeneous, not homogenous. If one tries to represent it by a spatial image such as a line, one will only generate abstract mathematical time. Drawing upon these ideas, SFU's chief member, Marcel Poëte (1866–1950), avers: “The science of man, a living social being, is the basis of urbanism: the complete science of man, not only of organic life, but also of psychic life.”<sup>6</sup>

### *Human Geography and Urbanism*

The *Société* urbanists promoted historic preservation and a temporally inclusive reading and restructuring of the land or the site in question. Their planning may be understood through the social and political lens of what I call *terrestrial urbanism*, an organizing principle derived from the French term *terrestre*, which they deployed to denote the land they wished to reform. They believed that “the natural object, which urbanism tends to modify, is an extended portion of the surface of the Earth (*Globe Terrestre*).”<sup>7</sup> *Terrestre*, in SFU's view, embodied history and geography, and these two were intertwined. History meant cultural continuity, as well as historical knowledge of the local culture, which the urbanist had to gradually procure. Geography equaled topography and people. *Urbanisme*, apparently, needed to “fuse the meanings of tradition and adaptation into one cohesive notion,” and to therefore “acquire deep knowledge of

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<sup>6</sup> Marcel Poëte, “L'esprit de l'urbanisme français,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jules Scrive-Loyer, “L'Urbanisme dans ses rapports avec la géographie humaine,” in *Où en est l'Urbanisme en France et à l'étranger: à l'occasion du Congrès International d'Urbanisme et d'Hygiène Municipale (Strasbourg, 1923)*, ed. Société Française des Urbanistes (Paris: Léon Eyrolles, 1923), 109.



the past and good understanding of the present,” for “building a decent city for the future.”<sup>8</sup>

While in Bergson’s work lies SFU’s principle of “lived time,” SFU found in geographer Vidal de la Blache’s historical approach to geography<sup>9</sup> an ideal for their “science” of planning: not merely the rational, technical science that has often been expounded by urban historians. I propose that the “science” of planning that SFU urbanists engaged with was linked to a historical order. A manifestation of the general laws of the “terrestrial organism” is to be found in “a sequence of events,” Vidal de la Blache suggests. No single part of the earth has significance in and of itself. “The features that make up the physiognomy of the countryside, considered in isolation, are significant as facts [...]. Only when they are related to the chain of events of which they are a part do they become important as scientific ideas.”<sup>10</sup> SFU urbanists sought to study these events. Urbanism was about extending them into the future. Bergson asserts: “No two moments are identical in a conscious being.”<sup>11</sup> Duration is therefore continuity of progress and heterogeneity. It is conservation of the past. Urbanism as the extension of the land is thus analogous to Bergson’s duration, where stepping out of time, going

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Hourticq, “L’Urbanisme et l’esthétique,” in *Les projets d’aménagement des villes et des régions: problèmes juridiques, administratifs et financiers*, ed. Institut International des Sciences Administratives (Melun: Imprimerie Administrative, 1937), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Vidal de la Blache’s major studies include: *La géographie humaine: ses rapports avec la géographie de la vie* (Versailles: Imprimerie Cerf, 1903); *Collection de cartes murales accompagnées de notices* (Paris: Librairie classique Armand Colin & Cie, 1889); *Histoire et géographie: atlas general* (Paris: A. Colin, 1922); *La France de l’est (Lorraine-Alsace): avec trois cartes hors texte* (Paris, A. Colin, 1920); *Les genres de vie dans la géographie humaine* (Paris: A. Colin, 1911); *Principles of Human Geography* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1972); *Tableau de la géographie de la France* (Paris: Hachette, 1903); “Des caractères distinctifs de la géographie,” *Annales de Géographie*, 1913: 289–299.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Vidal de la Blache, “Les conditions géographiques des faits sociaux,” *Annales de Géographie*, 1902, no. 11: 13–23.

<sup>11</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2007), 164.

backward, and looping around is possible.

SFU endeavored to freely step out of their contemporary time, seeking to define terrestrial experiences of the past: the gradual modifications that the environment has undergone as a result of successive ways of life. Both Bergson and Vidal de la Blache wrote about succession, as an element of time for the first, and of geography for the second. Vidal de la Blache states that each successive group inhabiting a particular region leaves its mark there, thus bequeathing to its successors new conditions of existence.<sup>12</sup> SFU sought to study these conditions.

### *Historiography of Modern Urbanism*

These philosophical and geographical themes that the dissertation examines have been overlooked in scholarship on urbanism, especially that of the early twentieth century, which continues to delineate urbanism as a science of the spatial organization of cities. This definition foregrounds positivist science over metaphysics, as well as the built fabric of the city over the planned environments beyond city walls, as privileged categories of analysis. Further, although historians have begun to examine the psychological concerns of planning and its connections with geography, the studies remain resolutely focused on the post-WWII period. The literature on earlier generations of planners, especially on French urbanists—on the rise of the profession (Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Paul Rabinow), the reorganization of ideas on urbanism in the early 1900s

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<sup>12</sup> Each group—with its particular habits, techniques, and social, economic, and psychological structures—deals in its own way with the problems set by the *milieu*. See Paul Vidal de la Blache, *La géographie humaine* (Imprimerie Cerf: Versailles, 1903), 219–240.

(Françoise Choay, Paul Claval, and Vincent Berdoulay), and institutional history (Rémi Baudouin)—overwhelmingly highlights the technical and bureaucratic aspects of planning.

Scholars have largely marginalized the *Société* planners. Architecture historian Jean-Louis Cohen has often emphasized this gap.<sup>13</sup> Textbooks of modern architecture have deemed them to be “nostalgic” or “backward moderns,” as, unlike the adherents of the Modern Movement, they adopted the neoclassical style. Similarly, colonial literature has dismissed SFU as a collective and a movement. Both bodies of literature have instead produced studies tackling only one or some of the urbanists’ activities in the world. These studies examine the urbanists in isolation from intellectual sources, covering such concerns as legislative measures and physical interventions (Janet Abu Lughod, Gwendolyn Wright, Cànâ Bilsel, and Pierre Pinon) and biographical data (Donatella Calabi and Bénédicte Leclerc).

To elaborate with a few telling examples, the few existing studies tend to lump SFU urbanists together with other “modernizers” who deployed technical and social

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Louis Cohen convincingly argues for the importance of writing the history of these planners and that they constituted part of a movement of theories and projects that allowed the appearance of what was called “urban art,” which gradually transformed from a delicate and organic artistic approach into a rational method linked to policies of social reform and municipal and regional public management. See Jean-Louis Cohen, “Les architectes français et l’art urbain,” in *Les Premiers urbanistes et l’art urbain*, ed. Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Rémi Baudouin (Paris: Ecole d’Architecture Paris-Villemin, 1987), 71. Cohen has various other publications on these planners, especially on Henri Prost, Eugène Hénard, Gaston Bardet, and Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier. See Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2002); Jean-Louis Cohen, ed., *Études sur les transformations de Paris, et autres écrits sur l’urbanisme* (Éditions de la Villette, 2012); Jean-Louis Cohen, “Gaston Bardet et la ‘Roma di Mussolini,’” *Zodiac/ Association pour la diffusion artistique et culturelle Bruxelles* 1997, no. 17: 70–85; Jean-Louis Cohen and André Lortie, *Des fortifs au périif: Paris, les seuils de la ville* (Paris: Picard éditeur, 1991); Jean-Louis Cohen, “Architectural History and the Colonial Question: Casablanca Algiers and Beyond,” *Architectural History*, 2006, no. 49: 349–368; Jean-Louis Cohen, “Les envois de Rome au début du XXe siècle et l’invention de l’urbanisme en France,” in *Figurations de la cité: autour du plan de Sienne au moyen-âge: envoi de Rome de Jean-Baptiste Hourlier 1930*, ed. Jean-Pierre Péneau et al. (Académie d’Architecture, 2016); and Jean-Louis Cohen et al., *Alger: paysage urbain et architectures 1800–2000* (Paris: Institut français d’architecture & Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, 2003).

engineering tools for controlling issues such as social relations, political movements, race, health, and hygiene.<sup>14</sup> The first body of literature was initiated in the 1960s and is mostly monographic.<sup>15</sup> Consider Roger Séassal’s *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Henri Prost (1874–1959)* (1960), Louis Hauteœur’s *L’œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme* (1960), and Peter M. Wolf’s *Eugène Hénard and the Beginning of Urbanism in Paris, 1900–1914* (1968). The latter body of work has been mostly written over the last four decades. Publications by scholars depict the planners’ work as positivistic and misconstrues their historicist approach as a colonial or class-based tactic for maintaining social peace. These include works by Fabiola Lopez-Duran (*Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity*, 2018), Vincent Berdoulay and Paul Claval’s (*Aux débuts de l’urbanisme français: regards croisés de scientifiques et de professionnels, fin XIX<sup>e</sup>–début XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2001), Viviane Claude and Pierre-Yves Saunier’s (“L’urbanisme au début du siècle: de la réforme urbaine à la compétence technique,” 1999), Hélène Vacher (*Projection coloniale et ville rationalisée: le rôle de l’espace colonial dans la constitution de l’urbanisme en France, 1900–1931*, 1997), Paul Rabinow (*French Modern: Forms and Norms of the Social Environment*, 1989), Susanna

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, Fabiola Lopez-Duran’s recent book, *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity* (2018), examines the work of some SFU urbanists, among other planners, who worked in Latin America. Lopez-Duran argues that architecture, uniting with science, was used for the dishonorable purposes of normalization, commodification, and standardization of humans and their environments. Lopez-Duran lumps SFU members Donat Alfred Agache and Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier together with Le Corbusier, claiming that these architects and “technical experts” used the Latin world as an open laboratory to practice their “science of perfecting the human race.” Their work, she suggests, exemplified “the inherent regulatory function of architecture” that “subscribed to social and racial segregation.” See Fabiola López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 1–19.

<sup>15</sup> For a few examples, see Roger Séassal, *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de Henri Prost (1874–1959)* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1960); Louis Hauteœur, *L’œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme* (Paris: Académie d’architecture, 1960); and Peter M. Wolf, *Eugène Hénard and the Beginning of Urbanism in Paris, 1900–1914* (The Hague: International Federation for Housing and Planning, 1968).

Magri and Christian Topalov (“De la cité-jardin à la ville rationalisée: un tournant du projet réformateur, 1905–1925: étude comparative France, Grande-Bretagne, Italie, États-unis,” 1987), and Jean-Pierre Gaudin (*L’avenir en plan: technique et politique dans la prévision urbaine, 1900–1930*, 1985).

Rabinow’s book, which studies French city planning, with the aim of explaining some of the forms of modern power and knowledge that French philosopher Michel Foucault had begun to map out, has been highly influential. Rabinow elucidates how new interventions, representations, and methods of analysis crystallized into the planned city as “regulator of modern society” and triggered the integration of social science and reform. He duly acknowledges that these urbanists’ work was far from being limited to spatial devices, and that it included a reflection on the urban socioeconomic system.<sup>16</sup> He lucidly explains that this generation of planners integrated an existing city and its complex history into a plan that allowed for change and continued economic prosperity; that its contribution lies in incorporating, in a comprehensive fashion, new social technologies and industry—spatially distributed and guided by the latest social science standards—into urban development; and that its work straddled the line between “sanitary engineering” and “art,” balancing aesthetic considerations with the scientific collection of social, hygienic, and economic data. However, Rabinow’s Foucauldian analytical framework dismisses these planners’ anti-positivist ideals and their genuine motives for adopting a regionalist approach.

Colonial histories of modern urbanism particularly focus on the technical and political aspects of planning, underscoring issues of military surveillance and control and

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<sup>16</sup> Cohen, “Les architectes français et l’art urbain,” 71–72.

segregation of European and indigenous communities. Janet Abu-Lughod's work on Rabat (1980), Gwendolyn Wright's work on Morocco, Indochina, and Madagascar (1991), Zeynep Çelik's work on Algiers (1997), to name a few important publications, are representative of this approach. SFU's allegedly "traditionalist" and "regionalist" methods of urban planning have been interpreted as a tactic to pacify the supposedly "traditional" colonized people.<sup>17</sup> In all this modern and colonial urbanism literature, scholars reasonably highlight the blending of modern and historicist stylistic features in the work of SFU planners but discount their distinctive social and philosophical ideology.

Histories that examine French modernism in the non-West, including French colonies, focus on questions of public hygiene and an entire array of other "rational" modernization techniques that were supposedly engineered in Europe and applied by expatriate professionals in an aim to control and "civilize" non-Western societies. Just as myopic as the focus on the "rational modern" paradigm is the emphasis on the subordinate "developing city" model. In the former, power seems to manifest in technology, and in the second, in formalist politics and superficial representational motifs.

Therefore, attempting to maintain the monolithic belief in the linear genealogy of "scientific" modernism, histories of urbanism have often described urban schemes by planners from SFU, which mostly embraced Beaux-Arts compositional principles and the neoclassical style, as "conservatively modern"<sup>18</sup> or anti-modern: "backward,"

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<sup>17</sup> Architectural and urban historian Gwendolyn Wright, for instance, claims that Henri Prost's "regionalist architecture" in Morocco was "a tactic to stabilize colonial domination." See Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 85.

<sup>18</sup> See Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Forms and Norms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 72.

“traditionalist,” and “regionalist.” Put differently, scholars have longed to maintain the idea that the development of modern urbanism was somewhat a linear progression: that over time, beginning in the mid-nineteenth and through the mid-twentieth centuries, architecture and urbanism became increasingly rational and technical, paralleling the evolution of capitalism. In light of such a view, modernization, as a total global project that ensued following the Industrial Revolution and was directed towards society, is seen as fundamentally imperial. It is so because it universalizes a particular idea of the “civilized” nation state that, recognizing its preeminence, is intent on enwrapping other developing nations and colonized territories into a system of its own rules. This dissertation, by highlighting the disillusionment of this group of thinkers and planners with industrialization and, what SFU planners calls, *la civilisation machiniste*,<sup>19</sup> departs from an inquiry that only ever sees Western modernization as a tool used to further European capitalist interests.

With a keen interest in the social sciences, I contend that pre-industrial settings—which existed in a few places in Europe and, more abundantly, in the colonial and noncolonial “developing world,” where SFU urbanists heavily exported their planning—offered these planners a terrain for contemplating the capitalist condition in France and alternatives to Western values, ways of life, and modes of production,<sup>20</sup> and for cogitating architectural schemes that were not possible in the profoundly industrialized cities of France and Europe. Examining recent relevant publications, Jeanne Haffner’s book, *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space* (2013), underscores this notion. However,

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<sup>19</sup> Marcel Poète, “L’esprit de l’urbanisme français,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 4.

<sup>20</sup> See Jeanne Haffner, *The View from Above: The Science of Social Space* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2013), 1–17.

Haffner stresses the rational planning compulsion. As she examines the emergence and development of the idea of social space, originally established by sociologist Henri Lefebvre, and its connection with aerial photography in the early to mid-twentieth century, she argues that various interwar developments involving aviation grew out of a century-long tradition of thinking about aerial vision in science, governance, and the arts. These industrial changes provided “an escape from worn out conventional techniques,” such as perspectives passed down from the Renaissance, and furnished new ways of “representing and controlling the landscape,”<sup>21</sup> which was “the basis, it seemed, for a veritable twentieth century Enlightenment project.”<sup>22</sup> In her assertions, the “rational” project of the Enlightenment seems undeviating and unremitting, and modern planning and geography is constantly moving towards the rational and technical and away from social, ideological, and aesthetic concerns.

Haffner’s theory draws upon an expansive body of literature with a strong belief in scientism that seems to overshadow other modes of architectural expression that did not take science as the chief modernization paradigm. Her views are aligned with, for instance, architecture historian Thomas Hall, who argues that, in the post-Industrial Revolution era, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, urban reformers were “finally able to capitalize on Enlightenment principles in reforming cities.”<sup>23</sup> “The shaping of nineteenth-century Paris,” Hall insists, “begins in the 1780s.”<sup>24</sup> According to Hall, eighteenth-century architectural theorists began questioning the

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<sup>21</sup> Haffner, *The View from Above*, 1–17.

<sup>22</sup> Haffner, *The View from Above*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hall, *Planning Europe’s Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development* (London: E & FN Spon, 1997), 59.

<sup>24</sup> Hall, *Planning Europe’s Capital Cities*, 59.



disorder and incoherence of the medieval town, which represented “a pile of houses heaped up pell-mell, without any system, economy or plan [...]. For instance, Marc-Antoine Laugier, in *Essai sur l'Architecture* (1755), called for unimpeded circulation.” This vision, Hall argues, “was shared by many enlightened elites of the period, as in the economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*.”<sup>25</sup> A century later, “some of these ideas of the rational town would guide Haussmann in his transformation of Paris.”<sup>26</sup>

Supplementing postcolonial theory, which has overwhelmingly served as a framework of analysis for studies of modern urban planning, and, instead, revealing the philosophical anti-materialist roots of urbanism, the dissertation challenges the prevailing scholarship that sees modern urbanism as an even and uninterrupted development of modern technical ideals with a constant ethos and mode of application. Tracing associations between French philosophy and urbanism and geography and urbanism, it presents a counter-history of one modernism among many. The dissertation indeed proves that the *Société* urbanists were neither “nostalgic” nor “anti-moderns.” Rather than

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<sup>25</sup> Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Hall, *Planning Europe's Capital Cities*, 59. For more literature that represents this approach, check architectural historian Antoine Picon's work. Picon suggests that “understanding how the city was organized and, above all, how it functioned seemed to be a precondition for its pacification.” The post-industrial modern period, prior to the mid-twentieth century, Picon explains, saw the development of new forms of spatial representations that, in turn, inspired novel conceptions about the ideal relationship among humans, landscapes, and technology. “The system of cartographic genres to which these representations belonged was permeated by the ambition to transform the French capital into a scientific object.” Much literature has adopted this idea that modern urbanism is constantly moving towards the rational. Haffner quotes Picon as well as anthropologist James Scott. For Haffner, the unique traits of aerial photography—most notable among them the technique's capability to abstract from everyday details, revealing an overall form or outline of societies below—made it useful in the development of the “High Modernist ideology,” which Scott defines as “a strong version of the beliefs in scientific and technological progress that were associated with industrialization in Western Europe and North America from roughly 1830 until World War I.” See Antoine Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 99; Antoine Picon, “French Engineers and Social Thought, 18–20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: An Archeology of Technocratic Ideals,” *History and Technology* 23, no. 3 (2007): 197–208; and James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 8. Haffner quotes Scott: Haffner, *The View from Above*, 16.

rupturing the past, they invented a modernism that was conceived as a historical continuum, from the past to the future.

With regards to associations between urban planning and geography, scholars have tended to focus on the post-WWII period,<sup>27</sup> in which geography, more visibly and in a quantitative fashion, inspired urban projects. In the second half of the twentieth century, geography experienced a radical transformation into a social science with the revolution of the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of urban and industrial studies. A significant number of geographers began engaging then a quantitative understanding of regional territory. Scholar Kenny Cupers suggests that “beyond analyzing the terrestrial distribution of human activities, geographers set themselves the new task of thinking the economy spatially.”<sup>28</sup> Contrary to prevailing scholarship that claims that French “classical geography”—the school of geographic thought founded on Vidal’s ideas—has remained in the purview of representation and administrative legislation in France, rather than action, until the mid-twentieth century, the dissertation reveals how SFU used Vidalian principles in both their writings and practice.

The dissertation, addressing these lacunae in the fields of urban history, philosophy, and geography, tackles the problem of modern urbanism from the

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<sup>27</sup> Architect and scholar Hashim Sarkis has studied the intricate relationship between geography and architecture, as well as urbanism, in the post-WWII era. In an article entitled “Le Corbusier’s ‘Geo-Architecture’ and the Emergence of Territorial Aesthetics” (2017), he explores how human geography was interpreted within Le Corbusier’s treatise *The Three Human Establishments* (1945) and his entry to the International Planning Competition for Berlin (1958). Sarkis additionally investigates the influence of human geography on the urban theories of prominent architects during the 1950s through the 1970s, including Constantinos Doxiadis, Kevin Lynch, Vittorio Gregotti, and Aldo Rossi. Some of these architects were influenced by Poëte and SFU. See Hashim Sarkis, “Le Corbusier’s ‘Geo-Architecture’ and the Emergence of Territorial Aesthetics,” in *Re-Scaling the Environment: New Landscapes of Design, 1960–1980*, Ákos Moravánszky and Karl R. Kegler, eds. (Berlin, Boston: Birkhäuser, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Kenny Cupers, “Géographie Volontaire and the Territorial Logic of Architecture,” *Architectural Histories* 4, no. 1 (2016): 4.

perspective of an early twentieth-century think tank that established urbanism as an academic and professional discipline in France during the second half of the Third Republic (1870–1940) and played a crucial role in the rising debate on social reform in France and the world. In seeking to recover the beliefs and sensibilities that attended SFU’s reform campaign, I draw on histories of social reform in France. Janet R. Horne (*A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social and the Rise of the Welfare State*, 2002) and Christian Topalov (*Laboratoires du nouveau siècle: la nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880–1914*, 1999) are among social historians who showed how private groups such as the *Musée Social*, with which some SFU members were associated, questioned the limits of classical liberalism and its notions of individual responsibility and reached across political lines to form a coalition with a common conviction in the transformative potential of social science. These studies hold significance as they concentrate on the complex and multifaceted early twentieth-century method of reform that deviated from traditional statist approaches. In a country with a history of state centralization, SFU’s reform campaign was not prompted by the state.

The main objective of French reform, as Horne reveals, has been built around the concept of “social defense,” in which reform is supposedly enacted in a defensive compromise between big businesses and ruling elites to preserve social order. Historian Sanford Elwitt, for instance, identifies private associations such as the *Musée Social* as the “offstage precincts of a conservative ruling class bloc,”<sup>29</sup> as many of the founders and members of the *Musée Social* comprised economic elites, a rising professional middle class with a collaborative effort to achieve reform. But I contend, in agreement with

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<sup>29</sup> Introduction to Janet R. Horne, *A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social & the Rise of the Welfare State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

Horne, that the importance of groups such as the *Musée Social* and the *Société Française des Urbanistes* goes far beyond offering a medium for a class-based ideology of social peace or an agent for industrial and business lobbies. To examine SFU's contribution is to widely undo the history of the French literati's value organisms: to investigate not only the political pressures but also the social, religious, philosophical, and cultural influences exerted on policy makers.

The dissertation also engages with history of philosophy and science. Jimena Canales and Mark Sinclair are among scholars who have investigated the debate that arose in the early twentieth century, persisting to this day between science and Bergsonian metaphysics of duration.<sup>30</sup> Taking cues from these studies, my dissertation argues that, like Bergson's philosophical input concerning time and consciousness, SFU's history has been overshadowed by the dominant historiography on science and positivist modernism. I show that the generation of planners to which SFU belonged assumed a role that transitioned the Haussmannian model of the mid-nineteenth century into a new modern form that precluded the modernism of the post-WWII era but was formally and

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<sup>30</sup> In a recent book entitled *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate that Changed our Understanding of Time*, Jimena Canales unveils the captivating narrative behind the explosive clash between Albert Einstein and Henri Bergson, a debate that has significantly shaped our comprehension of time and fostered an enduring schism between the realms of science and the humanities, still evident in contemporary discourse. Einstein and Bergson, on April 6, 1922, in Paris, publicly debated the nature of time. The former considered Bergson's theory of time to be "a soft, psychological notion, irreconcilable with the quantitative realities of physics," while Bergson argued that "time should not be understood exclusively through the lens of science." Bergson criticized Einstein's theory of time for being "a metaphysics grafted on to science, one that ignored the intuitive aspects of time." According to Canales, this collision of worldviews has reverberated throughout the twentieth century. See Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate that Changed our Understanding of Time* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015). Works by Mark Sinclair also explore the essential facets of Bergson's philosophical ideas, spanning from the formative influences that shaped his thinking to the enduring significance he holds today. See Mark Sinclair, *Bergson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020); and Mark Sinclair and Yaron Wolf, eds., *The Bergsonian Mind* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022).

stylistically quite distinct from it. Histories of modern urbanism have largely disregarded these early twentieth-century urbanists, as they did not restructure the neoclassical style and the Beaux-Arts compositional principles but only questioned their scale of application and the purposes to which they were applied. But in so doing, I argue, they paved the way for a significant reevaluation of society, space, and history.

### *The Setting*

The process of industrial modernization in fin-de-siècle France was marked by a recurring cycle of urban discontent, population decline, and colonial activities. In the aftermath of World War I, France sought to reinvigorate its productivity, but the heads of major industries were confronted with the sobering reality of lackluster output across various sectors. This predicament was exacerbated by the challenges of assimilating a fresh wave of workers who were, despite their inadequate skills, necessary due to the substantial decline in the French workforce, resulting from the war. Additionally, the major joint-stock banks were reluctant to invest in French industry, further compounding the nation's quandary. The national population growth of France, which had reached a plateau in the eighteenth century, started showing a concerning disparity compared to other European nations during the Second Empire (1852–1870). Over a span of thirty years, from 1881 to 1911, the French population witnessed a mere two-million increase, whereas England observed a surge of 10 million and Germany's populace soared by 20

million. In fact, during a specific five-year period from 1891 to 1895, deaths in France surpassed births by 300, indicating a precarious demographic situation.<sup>31</sup>

The concerted efforts made during the aftermath of the Great War had the objective of improving urban plans and municipal sanitation. In theory, these improvements were meant to be applied to all French construction activities. A crucial aspect of this initiative was the introduction of modern water and sewer systems. These changes were mandated by a significant law passed in 1919, which required official plans for large cities across the nation, as well as for cities and towns seeking to rebuild their damaged urban fabric after the war. However, the prevailing sentiment of the era was not aligned with forward-looking planning. French citizens were more concerned with reconstructing an idealized past that had significantly declined over the previous generations. Despite extensive discussions and public attention, fewer than one-quarter of the towns that were expected to approve plans had actually started preparing them, even two decades later. The city of Paris itself did not seriously begin the planning process until the 1930s, while other French municipalities rarely implemented any form of comprehensive master planning until after the Second World War. It was only after the establishment of administrative mechanisms for municipal control over land that progress in this regard was finally accomplished.

Instances of intervention, whenever they occurred, predominantly stemmed from private groups comprising advocates of social reform. The principal group that strived for change was the *Musée Social*. It was originally established to preserve documents from the Social Economy pavilion at the International Exposition of 1889, organized to

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<sup>31</sup> Gwendolyn Wright lays out this history in Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15–51.

commemorate the hundred-year anniversary of the French Revolution. Although called a museum, it was essentially a research institution centered on subjects such as social housing, urban development, and labor organization. The association included innovative architects and other technical experts, social scientists, and political reformers: some of the most influential activists and thinkers who contemplated the problem of social degeneration in their country and the deteriorating condition of Paris and other French cities.<sup>32</sup>

When it was founded, the *Musée Social* did not possess a uniform language or practice, but rather the mutual idea that Paris and France needed immediate social reform.<sup>33</sup> Men from disparate backgrounds and with different ideas worked together to resolve social problems, especially problems of work-related accidents and insurance. The project to create the museum came from a meeting of politician Jules Siegfried (1837–1922), economist and former Minister of Finance Léon Say (1826–1896), and engineer Émile Cheysson (1836–1910) with count Joseph Dominique Aldebert de Chambrun (1821–1899) in 1894.<sup>34</sup>

Firstly involved in efforts to develop relations concerning labor and capital, the *Musée Social* took a new turn towards urban development in 1907, with the establishment

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<sup>32</sup> Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 15–51.

<sup>33</sup> Horne argues that the *Musée Social*, existing in the interstices of government, philanthropy, and industry, and operating midway between the public interests of the state and the private interests of individuals, eventually laid the foundation of the welfare state. See Horne, *A Social Laboratory for Modern France*, 1–54. For understanding the cultural and political context of the period in which the *Musée Social* operated, it is also important to read the work of François Ewald about the development of the welfare state. Ewald argues that societies, given their inability to offer satisfactory solutions to the major challenges posed by industrialization, found in the philosophy of risk and the institution of insurance more appropriate instruments for governing themselves. See François Ewald, *Histoire de l'état providence: les origines de la solidarité* (Paris: Grasset, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> The count dedicated his entire wealth to the establishment of the foundation, which was formally inaugurated in March 1895.

of the *Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale*.<sup>35</sup> The inauguration of this new subdivision was prompted by an increased awareness of the accomplishments achieved by other nations. Notable examples include Germany's implementation of zoning regulations on the outskirts of cities, the establishment of American settlement houses and civic centers, and England's strategy to build a garden city at Letchworth. Situated in the heart of Paris, the *Musée Social* focused its attention on the imperative of devising a master plan for the redevelopment of the periphery, where the former fortifications once stood. Its *Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale* put forth a detailed, long-term program for housing, new traffic arteries, parks, parkways, and stately public buildings all along the ring. The proposal concealed a broader objective: to enhance the effectiveness of planning legislation across the entirety of the capital city. The *Musée Social* hoped that the municipal council, which had been obstinate for a long time and dominated by development interests, would take action.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to note that some of these concerns did not go entirely unheeded. New laws stipulated that new streets had to be at least fifteen meters wide to facilitate increased traffic, and just before the Great War, several municipalities completed major boulevards, left unfinished after 1871, for instance the Avenue de l'Opéra. Yet, since Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891) and Emperor Napoleon III's (r. 1852–1870) restructuring of Paris, no one had yet put forward a vision of French streets that embodied modern expertise and traditional aesthetics. Although the wider thoroughfares

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<sup>35</sup> Anne Cormier has written a dissertation on the accomplishments of the *Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale*. See Anne Cormier, *Extension, limites, espaces libres: les travaux de la Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale du Musée Social* (CEA Architecture Urbaine: École d'architecture de Paris-Villemin, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> The municipal council engaged in persistent deliberations regarding the unresolved elements of Haussmann's restructuring plan for Paris. However, every endeavor to introduce new or expanded boulevards was met with vehement public opposition.



undoubtedly had the capacity to handle the growing demands of vehicular traffic more efficiently than the narrow streets they replaced, municipalities appeared to struggle in ensuring their effective functionality. The grievances of the *Musée Social's Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale* focused on the congestion of traffic, the noxious odors emanating from horse manure and gasoline fumes, the peril faced by pedestrians due to the absence of safe intersections, and the lack of traffic regulations governing vehicle speed and direction. The sidewalks, too, failed to meet expectations, with pedestrians maneuvering through a difficult course of recently added amenities like lampposts, kiosks, benches, public restrooms, and various commercial stalls. Although some of these establishments boasted attractive designs and contributed rental income to the city, people still lamented the disorderly movement and the flagrant commercialism that had diminished the elegance of the traditional French streets.

The architects of the *Musée Social* presented innovative approaches to address urban traffic, but their endeavors were largely disregarded. One among them was architect Eugène Hénard (1849–1923), who meticulously documented his groundbreaking ideas in a comprehensive eight-volume series entitled *Études sur les transformations de Paris*, from 1903 to 1909. Regrettably, out of all the proposals he put forth to improve vehicular flow, only a single plan was actually implemented. In 1907, a significant development took place at the Place de l'Étoile, serving as the symbolic entrance to the capital city. This marked the inception of Hénard's clever creation, the *carrefour à gyration* or roundabout. His innovative concept mandated that all vehicles entering the circular intersection must turn right, ensuring a seamless and uninterrupted flow of traffic. This marked a pivotal moment in urban planning, as the roundabout

design became a standardized solution for all such *grandes places* across the city, to enhance traffic management and efficiency in the bustling metropolitan territory. Landscape architect Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier (1861–1930), another prominent figure associated with the *Musée Social*, approached the issue of traffic congestion both at a local level and from a theoretical perspective. In his remarkable urban analysis, *Grandes villes et systèmes de parcs*, published in 1906, Forestier drew upon the examples of English and American cities, notably praising Frederick Law Olmsted’s visionary plan for Boston. Forestier emphasized that for a municipality to undertake such an ambitious program, it was necessary to overcome the political divisions that had often hindered largescale development.

In the hope that professional authority would take action, Hénard and Forestier, along with other leading architects and landscape architects, formed the *Société Française des Architectes Urbanistes* (SFAH) in 1911. A couple of years later, it was renamed *Société Française des Urbanistes* (SFU). Besides these two, the founding members included architects Donat Alfred Agache (1875–1959), Jean Marcel Auburtin (1872–1926), André Bérard, Ernest Hébrard (1875–1933), Léon Jaussely (1875–1932), Albert Parenty (1877–1895), and Henri Prost (1874–1959), and landscape architect Édouard Redont.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that these architects and thinkers, more interested in culture than in politics, though fully aware that without public acceptance, they cannot apply their ideas, did not adhere to a common political ideology with the *Musée Social* and with the administrators they worked with. Their aims were different

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<sup>37</sup> SFU’s inaugural presidency was entrusted to Eugène Hénard, accompanied by Donat Alfred Agache in the role of secretary. Subsequently, Georges Risler, Louis Bonnier, Léon Jaussely, and Adolphe Dervaux assumed the presidency, succeeding Hénard.

and their areas of investigation protean. They only shared the common language of reform.

At the time the *Société* was formed, some of its founders were internationally celebrated architects. Prost, Jaussely, and Hébrard had won the *Prix de Rome* in 1902, 1903, and 1904, respectively. Jaussely had undertaken major plans for Barcelona (1905) and Berlin (1910). Hébrard would soon oversee a master plan for Thessaloniki (1917); Forestier for Havana, Buenos Aires, and Lisbon (mid 1920s); and Agache for Rio de Janeiro (1927). After completing his operations in Thessaloniki during the war, Hébrard relocated to Hanoi, then under French colonial rule. Appointed the head of the Indochina Architecture and Town Planning Service in 1921, he participated in the planning of new districts or urban improvements of several cities in the region: Hanoi, Hue, Dalat, Ho Chi Minh City, and Phnom Penh. Prost, after putting forth a significant master plan for Antwerp (1910), moved to Morocco (1913), where he lived for a decade and was involved in comprehensive projects for restructuring the country's major cities: Rabat, Marrakech, Meknes, Fez, and Casablanca. In the 1930s, he was commissioned by Turkey's president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, to put forward a scheme for Istanbul. In the middle of the decade, he developed an expansion plan for Paris. Before his work in Latin America, Forestier worked in Morocco, with Prost.

The *Prix de Rome* winners who gathered at Villa Medici between 1900 and 1909, including Tony Garnier, Jean Hulot, Paul Bigot, Prost, Jaussely, and Hébrard, were granted the privilege of research time and the promise of elite professional careers upon their return to France. However, the group found itself discontented with such easy dispensations. They admired the grandeur of antiquity, yet they could not help but

question the constraints imposed by the prize they had won. By doing so, they subtly challenged the authority of the French architectural establishment and its conventional representation of the French state. At the heart of the matter was their vision of the role of an architect in the twentieth century. This particular group firmly believed that the demands of the modern era called for new skills and priorities from architects, especially those destined to become future leaders in the profession. They considered traditional training in composition and a profound knowledge of historical monuments insufficient for creating good designs. They believed that even the most impressive contemporary or archaeological buildings must be studied within the larger urban context to truly understand their power and significance.

SFU architects-turned-urbanists encountered limited prospects to showcase their talents within their own country. However, the scarcity of commissions did not deter them from engaging in thoughtful discussions regarding the principles that French urbanists could adopt, in anticipation of public authorities eventually recognizing the necessity for their expertise. They persevered in contemplating the foundations upon which they could build their future contributions, hopeful that their valuable services would one day be embraced and utilized by the authorities. In a commanding speech delivered at a conference organized by SFU in Strasbourg (1923), the association's president, George Bechmann, avers:

In the early years of the twentieth century, a host of talented young architects undertook to revive the art of city plans, which had flourished in France throughout its history. It is to them that we owe the beautiful term *Urbanisme*, which has made a fortune in the world. They achieved many international

successes in this domain, long before the French public had even grasped the notion!<sup>38</sup>

Planners from SFU expressed their frustration in the conferences they organized, such as the *Journée de l'Urbanisme*, and in numerous articles published in *La Vie Urbaine* and *Urbanisme*, among other journals.

The consensus among these thinkers and professionals was clear: state intervention was essential for urban development. In turn, the state recognized the necessity of skilled professionals to direct its efforts. The most notable initiative<sup>39</sup> was the *École des Hautes Études Urbaines* (EHEU), co-established, immediately after the war (1918), by architect Louis Bonnier (1856–1946) and Poëte. In that regard, the *Musée Social*'s second president, Georges Risler (1853–1941), proclaims:

It is with sincere joy that we welcome this progress that the teaching of urbanism has finally been established in our country after England, Denmark, Germany, etc. In spite of strong opposition, we have been asking for it since 1908, and we have constantly insisted on obtaining it, notably at the Congress of the Social Hygiene Alliance in Roubaix in 1911, and in numerous publications.<sup>40</sup>

Aspiring professionals flocked to this institution as students. Eventually, in 1919, the *École des Hautes Études Urbaines* merged with the *École Pratique d'Études Urbaines*, founded around the same time as EHEU, to create the *Institut d'Urbanisme* at the

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<sup>38</sup> George Bechmann, "Urbanisme et législation en France," in *Où en est l'Urbanisme en France et à l'étranger: à l'occasion du Congrès International d'Urbanisme et d'Hygiène Municipale (Strasbourg, 1923)*, ed. Société Française des Urbanistes (Paris: Léon Eyrolles, 1923), 35.

<sup>39</sup> Another important initiative was the sponsorship that the *Musée Social* assumed of a School of Public Art during the war years. The school organized public lectures on a daily basis, aiming to engage citizens in architectural matters.

<sup>40</sup> Donat Alfred Agache and Georges Risler, *Nos agglomérations rurales, comment les aménager: étude monographique analytique, comparée d'un concours de plans de bourgs et villages* (Paris: Librairie de la Construction Moderne, 1918), XXXIV–XXXV.

University of Paris. The curriculum of the *Institut d'Urbanisme* was founded on the principles of state legislation and subsidies for urban improvements, local municipal control, assertive architectural leadership, and most vitally, Poëte's ideas of urban evolution, derived from Bergson's philosophy.

SFU served as a vibrant hub, where pioneering architects convened, recognizing urbanism as the most effective avenue for arranging advancements in the French metropolis. But as their ambitious reform initiatives were met with nothing but setbacks and disappointments within the homeland, members of the group sought opportunities overseas. I have mentioned the major city plans that the founders of SFU endeavored to reform. Later members of the association operated in even more cities. Jacques Gréber (1882–1962) put forth schemes for Lille (1920), Marseille (1932), and Ottawa (1937).<sup>41</sup> Georges Cassaigne put forward a master plan for Antananarivo (1918). René Danger, who established a practice with his brother, Raymond, in Paris in 1919 (*Société des Plans Régulateurs des Frères Danger*), drew up in the 1930s restructuring plans for several Eastern Mediterranean cities: Aleppo, Alexandretta, Antioch, Beirut, and Damascus. His professional activity outside France had begun earlier, in the early 1920s, initially in Bône. His office won the second prize in an international architectural competition for the plan of Valetta in 1924. The same year, he devised a plan for Izmir, and those of the neighboring towns of Manisa and Uşak. In Izmir, he worked with Prost.

Prost, Hébrard, Cassaigne, Forestier, and Danger worked under the French colonial regime. In their role as urban advisors to colonial officers, it is important to

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<sup>41</sup> Before working in France and Canada, Gréber was involved in the planning of Philadelphia, in the 1910s. In the proceedings of *Journée de l'Urbanisme*, SFU president Adolphe Dervaux highlights the accomplishments of the association's members. See Société Française des Urbanistes, "Rapports, Vœux et Compte-Rendu Général de la 'Journée de l'urbanisme,'" VI–VII.

recognize that they were not active proponents of colonialism. However, their ability to conduct their work, and often their material sustenance, relied heavily on the colonial authorities. For these young individuals, their initial true prospects were discovered overseas. As colonial professionals, they aspired to establish the importance of their work, demonstrating its relevance domestically and its intellectual value overall. While emphasizing the broader and theoretical significance of their research and policies, they also aimed to garner approval from their counterparts in the metropolitan centers. The other SFU urbanists who worked in Europe, the United States, Canada, Turkey, Greece, and Latin America were consultant planners, that is, private individuals, not state employees, offering their services to various municipalities. They also often submitted their urban schemes to local and international competitions organized democratically for the development of an existing city and the control of its expansion. It is the story of the aspiring urbanists that warrants our attention first, for it is out of their vigorous ambitions, as well as their frustrations and defeats, that the aesthetic, technical, and psychosocial reform experiment emerged, in the colonies and independent nations. It is this research, resulting from the theories formulated in Paris and in Rome and from the experiments conducted in various global locales, that spawned the development of *urbanisme*.

SFU emerged as a dynamic force of theories and endeavors in France and beyond, propelling the evolution of urbanism as a fusion of earlier artistic ideals and incipient disciplines in the natural and social sciences. This multidimensional realm constructed by urbanists underwent a profound metamorphosis following the aftermath of World War II, transitioning from an organic and artistic perspective to a meticulously calculated domain intertwined with municipal and regional governance policies. The dissertation concerns

the early phase, where intellectuals and architects operated within the parameters of a parapolitical sphere and on the margins of traditional government.

SFU comprised many individuals with various educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and political leanings. The members surely did not endorse a unified theory about life, the city, and urbanism. However, they all shared an anti-materialist philosophy of time and space, looking for alternatives to the historical rupture created by capitalism and industrialization. They wrote numerous texts, both individually and collectively. These published books, articles, and conference proceedings comprise the essence of their thoughts.

Arguing that SFU urbanists were not isolated thinkers, I construct this intellectual and urban history through an analysis of how new ways of thinking and designing territory circulated in a variety of environments. To explain the value of SFU's approach, I trace the lineage of concepts that influenced this group of planners. City planning ideas by SFU, the chapters show, were a merger of a lineage of ideas by French and European social and intellectual historians and urban theorists who questioned the period social order. Guiding ideas stemmed from the scholarship of Bergson, Vidal de la Blache, Pierre Guillaume Frédéric Le Play, Jacques Élisée Reclus, Émile Cheysson, Émile Durkheim, and Jean Brunhes, among others.

By amalgamating various fields of study such as philosophy, geography, sociology, and history into the realm of urban history, SFU exhibits profound interdisciplinarity. A fruitful utilization of the humanities emerges through the fusion of these disciplines. SFU's application of philosophy in relation to the city signifies a form of practice with an ontological approach to history and space, interpreted through



Bergson's philosophy of continuous transformation. Rather than a linear arrangement, and in lieu of mere factual documentation, SFU's understanding of history progresses as a dynamic structure that hopes to adapt to the conditions of the city in different temporal and cultural contexts.

Bergson's concept of non-linear duration introduced an alternative approach to scientific research and analysis. Unlike the positivistic methodologies embraced by figures like Auguste Comte, SFU's Bergsonian urbanism intertwined science with art and imagery. Members of the *Société* like Poëte contended that historical cartographic plans, spanning from the reign of Henri II to Napoleon III, offered a platform for acquiring experiential cognizance of the urban organism that combined scientific and artistic elements. By invoking the two terms, science and art, Poëte and SFU affirm the interdisciplinary of *urbanisme*. SFU members, throughout their written works, emphasize the necessity of incorporating diverse disciplines—"biology, psychology, sociology [...], history, physical and human geography, geology, meteorology, hygiene, legal science, and all economic and social sciences"<sup>42</sup>—to inform the techniques employed by architects and engineers.

Drawing from concurrent sociological, geographic, and philosophical studies, topography, SFU urbanists believed, embodied the earth's history, and history consisted of map-reading: of the figuration of mathematical, geodesic, climatological, and biogeographical data. They commenced their work with a meticulous survey documenting these—a procedure of "reading the land" that was intended to guide their final design. Architecture, they supposed, was a product of the historical and natural environment and

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<sup>42</sup> Gaston Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France," 5.

a device to reform that environment. “The development plan and the program of services can be naturally deduced,” an article published by SFU stated. “If we, [urbanists], were to paint an ideal urbanism, we would be extremely fortunate if we were able to deduce the painting from nature.”<sup>43</sup>

Alongside the final scheme, these urbanists produced a series of analytical sketches and “technical reports,” in which their historical unearthing of the geographic site is revealed. These preliminary studies have been, for the most part, overlooked by scholars. The protracted design process, I suggest, reveals the method through which these French planners constructed and justified their topographical narrative. History was supposed to constitute the beginning and the end of the terrestrial reformatory process. It was to be exhumed, analyzed, reconceptualized, in order to be ultimately built anew.

They wanted the region to be the source of their architectural style. They believed regions to be “living unities changing through time.”<sup>44</sup> Léon Rosenthal, art critic of *L’Humanité* and a *Musée Social* associate, underlined that such styles were “products of complex historical interactions of environment and form.”<sup>45</sup> Blind loyalty to regional types “only propagated pastiche,” he stated. “Styles emerged from intelligent use of local materials and skills. Because of the historical sedimentation they embodied, they

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<sup>43</sup> See Hourticq, “L’Urbanisme et l’esthétique,” 42. In another article, it is further suggested that “the geography of the site will teach [the urbanist] the influence of certain topographic fates such as insolation conditions and the direction of atmospheric currents that traverse the site and upon which the agglomeration naturally grew and orientated itself.” See Scrive-Loyer, “L’Urbanisme dans ses rapports avec la géographie humaine,” 113.

<sup>44</sup> As they campaigned for planning laws in France, members of the *Musée Social* and SFU endorsed regional styles for public and individual buildings. “Out of respect for the traditional physiognomy of our cities and villages, we,” they stated, “propose that municipal edifices be conceived with a character appropriate to the region.” See Jean-Claude Vigato, “Notes sur la question stylistique,” *Les Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale*, 1985: 15–17. More detail is contained in Jean-Claude Vigato, *L’Architecture régionaliste: France, 1890–1950* (Éditions Norma, 1994); Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Rémi Baudouin, *Les premiers urbanistes et l’art urbain* (Paris: École d’Architecture Paris-Villemin, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 137.

remained generally preferable to foreign styles.”<sup>46</sup> Some historians have identified works by SFU as “regionalist” without explaining why these planners adopted this style. Scholars like Rabinow have reasonably suggested that “regionalism” was not a nostalgic and backward movement, but rather based on “a rational appreciation and contemporary evaluation of the historical and social elements of the environment.”<sup>47</sup> This idea, however, remains incomplete. The dissertation seeks to understand SFU’s so-called “regionalism” through an analysis of their social philosophy, and to evaluate the ways in which these planners rethought urban development based on their understanding of nature, science, and art:

The word *urbanisme*, as we shall see, contains other assurances of life and happiness than the similar, non-corresponding foreign words: town planning, civic art, and *stadtebau*. The word *urbanisme*, a synthesis of very French ideologies, is a double affirmation: affirmation of the safeguard of the life of the city as an organized being and of the safeguard of the life of the least fortunate inhabitants.<sup>48</sup>

In sum, the dissertation shows how urbanism, as conceived by the *Société*, emerged as a practical and scholarly field that attempted to fuse the anti-positivist amelioration of industrial development with the actual geographic and biometric regulation of space in the West and in the French colonial non-West. I weigh SFU planners’ theoretical claims against the actual urban schemes that they devised. To that end, I utilize two different genres of primary sources: literary texts by contemporaneous geographers, philosophers, and historians, and by SFU—some scripted by individual

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<sup>46</sup> Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 137.

<sup>47</sup> Rabinow, *French Modern*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> Gaston Bardet, *Pierre sur pierre: construction du nouvel urbanisme* (Paris: Éditions L.C.B, 1945), 4.

members, some written collectively (such as proceedings of conferences and meetings)—as well as the original sets of drawings and architectural designs planned for the geographic regions in which SFU planners operated.

### *The Chapters*

At the outset of this Introduction, I emphasized SFU's pivotal role in establishing urbanism as a captivating blend of science and art. SFU, the chapters will show, established urbanism as a "scientific art" of territorial development, emphasizing inventiveness and individual experience and seeking to reconcile the conditions of the modern city with the allegedly timeless features that characterized the pre-industrial landscape: spiritualism, nature, tradition, and art. The dissertation is divided into three chapters that display these features. Each chapter is structured around texts by SFU and certain spatial reform schemes, where one of these features is most clearly exhibited. Through this arrangement, the chapters elucidate the underlying principles of urbanism while simultaneously illustrating the practical implementation of these theories in the actual transformation of the city.

Chapter One establishes the foundational framework. I introduce SFU's discourse on urbanism, which, I argue, is most palpable through the writings of Poëte. Immersing himself in Bergson's writings, Poëte absorbed the philosopher's theories on duration and skillfully translated them into concepts pertaining to the historical evolution of the city. Poëte argues that the only way to understand evolution over time and space is through the lens of urbanism, and that understanding the historical evolution of the city is a

precondition of its planning. This was the basis upon which the *Société* established their theoretical and practical methods of urbanism.

In contrast to other members of the *Société*, Poëte never directly applied his expansive and imaginative ideas to practical design challenges. Instead, he assumed the role of a revered leader within the group, with the *Société* and the *Institut d'Urbanisme* acting as strongholds where his concepts gradually resonated among his colleagues. These fellow urbanists endeavored to implement Poëte's ideas about history, time, and free will in diverse cities across the globe. The ensuing chapters of the dissertation shed light on instances where these concepts were put into action, providing tangible illustrations of the practical application and effectiveness of Poëte's ideas.

Commencing with the exploration of the concept of the creative evolution of cities, which served as a driving force behind Poëte's writings and the teaching at the *Institut d'Urbanisme*, the following chapters explore the various dimensions of *urbanisme* as a terrestrial approach to planning, pioneered by SFU. In 1919, the *Société* played a major role in the establishment of the first French urbanism law, which required a growth plan for cities with over 10,000 inhabitants. With this expanded geographical scope, urbanists, despite their designation, were now tasked with the responsibility of developing not just cities but also the rural landscapes. Chapter Two examines the ideological roots of regional planning. Analyzing a growth plan for Marseille by Gréber (1932), it shows how the *Société* advanced an ecological approach to territorial development that sought to balance the needs of the industrial city with those of the countryside. Gréber's work illustrates the transformative notion that the city underwent.

Unbounded by national borders, SFU reimagined the city as a sprawling country in its own right.

While SFU established urbanism as a new “scientific art” of urban development, integrating modern sciences, it argued for its pre-industrial artistic roots. Building upon the preceding chapters’ examination of the *Société*’s efforts to reconcile mysticism and technology, as well as nature and technology, the third chapter investigates the aesthetic principles of urbanism. Analyzing Prost’s reform schemes for Rabat (1913) and Istanbul (1935), the chapter reveals the French urbanist’s positioning of Bergsonian ideals of creative evolution alongside neoclassical techniques of spatial organization to create a visually organized plan where local historical urban forms were incorporated into the architecture of the present. In this last chapter, the dissertation challenges the common scholarly opinion that twentieth-century city planning was a movement towards a scientific field, away from aesthetic concerns, and shows how “urban art,” the term the *Société* used to denote *urbanisme*’s aesthetic goals, was embedded in a discourse of conservation.



## CHAPTER ONE

### The Creative Evolution of Cities

Marcel Poëte was the prolific theorist and founder of *urbanisme*, a distinction that has been overlooked in histories of modern urban planning (figures 1 and 2). Though a librarian by training, he had a fascination with cities and established in 1912, together with architect and urban planner Louis Bonnier, the first plan for the expansion of Paris. In 1916, Poëte accomplished something even more remarkable. He converted the Historical Library of the City of Paris (*Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris*) into the Institute of History, Geography and Urban Economy of the city of Paris (*Institut d'histoire, de géographie, et d'économie urbaine de la Ville de Paris*). Prior to that point, planning had primarily evolved as a field of expertise rooted in an architect's education and training. Now, for the first time, it was grounded—and physically located—in a library, a place that not only promised access to scholarly materials, but also drove home the point that the city was deeply enmeshed in epistemological claims.

But Poëte's input extended beyond mere bookishness. I will argue that he theorized urbanism as an inventive intellectual practice within a Bergsonian, Spiritualist framework that defied positivism and deterministic theories of human evolution. Poëte and Bergson are nearly twin brothers, with parallel birth and death dates. The two never worked together, but Poëte read Bergson's texts on "creative evolution" fresh off the press and translated the philosopher's theories of "duration" into concepts about the city's historical evolution. Poëte was a prolific author. He was also a teacher, giving a course entitled "Evolution of Cities" at various points in time. He directed numerous theses, developing by the end of his career (1938) an extensive résumé. And yet, he seems to be



in the background when it comes to historicizing the modern city. In reality, Poëte brought forth a vision of urbanism as a science that was conditioned by its contemporaneity and that is fundamental to our own understanding of modern urbanism today. In this chapter, I will lay out Poëte's adoption of Bergsonian Spiritualism and its bearing on urban evolution; I will discuss the absence of these ideas in the existing scholarship; and finally, I will examine how Poëte applies his theories to the question of Paris's evolution.

Poëte revolutionizes the way we perceive and experience cities, arguing for an intuitive engagement: an experience that transcends the physical aspects and allows us to understand the evolving nature of cities. In fact, Poëte contends that the only way to understand human evolution over time and space is through the lens of urbanism, and that understanding the historical evolution of the city is a precondition of its planning. Poëte, indeed, established urbanism as a modern science that would not have been possible prior to the Industrial Revolution, but he gave the term a complex value, encompassing both science and art and reconciling the pre- and post-industrial features of planning.

In the writings of Poëte, we see how the author, while critiquing modernization and the machine, repositioned urbanism as an art that attempted to reconcile spiritualism with modern technology. Urbanism was thus incontrovertibly born out of the new science of psychology that Bergson advocated. Time is essential to life, and our past intermingles with our present.<sup>1</sup> Bergson's notion of creative evolution, hence, discerns duration in biological evolution and in life as a whole. The philosopher proposes the principle underlying all biological and psychological life as an *élan vital* (vital impetus or force),

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<sup>1</sup> According to Bergson, scientific, quantitative time does not account for this "durational" aspect of human life.

which can be understood as a force of creation perpetually striving to surmount the mechanical inertia of matter, giving rise to novel forms of life. The deeper duration leaves its imprint on a living being, the more distinct the organism becomes from a mere mechanism, as duration permeates and shapes it, rather than merely gliding over it.

Duration wields its greatest force when it pertains to the evolution of life as a whole, as this evolution constitutes “a single indivisible history”<sup>2</sup> through the unity and continuity of the animated matter that sustains it. Certain living beings may initially appear to possess individuality or independence, but upon closer examination, this facade dissolves. Internally, independence breaks down into the organic entities that constitute it, such as limbs, organs, and cells. Externally, it blends into the accord of the living being with others and its seamless connection to its ancestors and descendants.<sup>3</sup> For Bergson, “life appears as a current that goes from germ to germ, through the medium of a developed organism.”<sup>4</sup> In brief, life is a temporal, durational entity that constitutes all living beings. Following from that, Poëte shows that if the way we know influences the way we develop as living beings, it is through both “instinct” and “intellect” that we construct our cities, producing complex and diverse material and social organisms. Based on this assumption, the “interaction” of human beings with their environment, he considers, is intensified by the “inter-attraction” in which the social phenomenon is resolved.

For Poëte and other followers of Bergson, Spiritualism involves “intuition.” In contrast to sheer analysis, intuition is entering into an experience to be a part of what is

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Sinclair explains these processes in his book on Bergson. See Mark Sinclair, *Bergson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 206.

<sup>4</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 27–28.

observed: a fundamental experience within duration. As Bergson's theory of duration emphasized the subjective understanding of time and the continuous flow of lived experience, Poëte saw that this notion of time—as not simply a series of disconnected moments, but a dynamic, indivisible process—can be applied to the urban context. Change happens within the urban environment through what Poëte refers to as *sauts brusques* or sudden leaps, borrowing Bergson's term. The philosopher based his theory on the distinction between matter and *élan vital*, whose progression, he sees, is a line that continually deviates from its course. The evolution of matter is orderly and geometric. Disorder, on the other hand, with free and unpredictable creativity, is the effect of the vital impulse on its material environment. Taking Paris as an example, Poëte shows how Spiritualism is the main force behind the development of the city.

Poëte's full-fledged conception of urbanism was articulated at the end of his career, in the 1930s. In his final book, *Paris: Its Creative Evolution* (1938),<sup>5</sup> he proposes that the city is a social aggregate, of which human beings are the main components, and as such, the city is subject to the general laws of life that apply to individual human beings: complex beings who cannot be fully explained by experimental biology. To fully illuminate urban evolution, Poëte insists, it is necessary to bring in people's "inventive intelligence," "creative spirituality," and "free will." For Poëte, Bergsonian psychology finds its place in the study of city life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Poëte disseminated his ideas through publications such as *A City's Life: Paris, from Its Birth to Today* (1924), *Introduction to Urbanism: The Evolution of Cities, the Lesson of Antiquity* (1929), and *Paris: Its Creative Evolution* (1938), as well as through his teaching at the *Institut d'Urbanisme*, the first school of urbanism in France, which he founded in 1919. There, Poëte, along with other members of SFU, including Léon Jaussely, Jacques Gréber, Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier, and Gaston Bardet, taught seminars to a rising class of young urbanists and officials, giving early form to the practice of urbanism in France.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice* (Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938), 11.

## *Urbanism and Spiritualism*

The doctrine within which Bergson and Poëte are operating is labeled Spiritualism as it interrogated the reduction of the human mind to the ideal of the physical sciences, identifying the mind, *l'esprit*, with an immortal and free soul inferring faculties and innate ideas that are not accessible to physiology. Spiritualism referred basically to any system of thought that affirms the existence of an immaterial reality indiscernible to the senses. The Spiritualists believed that empirical knowledge cannot be acquired without the existence of a unitary, free ego with instinctive thoughts and talents. This postulate, asserting the human mind's agency, immateriality, and independence from the physical and biological determination studied by other knowledge producers, is the basis of Bergson's theory of creative evolution and the foundation of Poëte's urbanism.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to underline that Spiritualism, in the context of French philosophy, is not an interest in communication with spirits beyond the grave or with the occult, as some nineteenth-century social and religious movements dubbed "Spiritualism" held. The Spiritualist movement that Bergson and Poëte adhered to is a philosophical doctrine that confirms the reality of the human mind. Spiritualism contends that the self is free: that it

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<sup>7</sup> Giuseppe Bianco, "Bergson and the Spiritualist Origins of the Ideology of Creativity in Philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 5 (2020), 1034. By supporting Thomas Reid (1710–1796) against John Locke (1632–1704), and Maine de Biran (1766–1824) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) against the heritage of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780) and the *Idéologues*, the Spiritualists sought to discredit certain manifestations of materialism and empiricism that were embraced by adherents of Sensualism. Sensualism was seen as the primary ideological structure of the Revolution, posing political and religious risks for the Spiritualists. Environmental determinism found favor in the doctrine of Sensualism, with its supporters viewing human beings as products shaped by ingrained habits.

is a function of agency and activity, whereas the material world does not have any spontaneity within it.<sup>8</sup> The philosophical lineage of Spiritualism, spanning from the seventeenth century onward, argued that in our daily encounters, we possess a direct consciousness of ourselves. This awareness serves as a foundational principle of agency, freedom, and self-determination, defying mechanical laws. Across various periods and through varied methods, the Spiritualist tradition has consistently juxtaposed the principle of freedom against the material world, but in the 1860s in France, a New Spiritualism gained prominence that does not rest content with juxtaposing mind against matter. New Spiritualism asserted a more radical perspective, contending that matter itself is an expression of mind.<sup>9</sup> Bergson and Poëte belong to this New Spiritualist tradition.

Poëte appropriates the Bergsonian notion that human beings are “intelligent and free” by nature. “Everything comes from within,”<sup>10</sup> he suggests. “It is from the latter that we must start.”<sup>11</sup> Copying Bergson, he couples the concept of “intuition” with that of “invention,” thus seeing urbanism as first and foremost a “creative,” “inventive” act. According to Bergson, imagination is the creative force that invents or provides rational faculties with the substance they require, offering solutions to their challenges. Even when a problem appears to be naturally progressing toward a solution with the assistance

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<sup>8</sup> Something happens in the material world only because something else makes it happen.

<sup>9</sup> The New Spiritualists advanced what is called a panpsychic position. Panpsychism is the view that all things have a mind or a mind-like quality. Italian philosopher Francesco Patrizi coined the word in the sixteenth century. Panpsychism derives from the two Greek words pan (all) and psyche (soul or mind). In *Time and Free Will* (1889), Bergson’s doctoral thesis that he eventually publishes into a book, Bergson offers a dualist philosophical thesis, opposing time to space, mind to world. Almost two decades later, Bergson wrote *Creative Evolution* (1907), in which he provides a much more full-blown panpsychic philosophical position according to which the mind is at the essence of everything that exists.

<sup>10</sup> Marcel Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” in *Mélanges pour Paul Negulesco* (Bucuresti: Monitorul oficial si imprimeriile statului, Imprimeria nationala, 1935), 576.

<sup>11</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 576.

of reason alone, imagination remains a constant presence.<sup>12</sup> Imposing Bergson's Spiritualist ideas of free will onto urbanism, Poëte saw the city as an evolved grouping of "essentially intelligent and partially free beings."<sup>13</sup> It is conditioned by "the bond of man's native sociability" and the "free play of intelligence," given to man to "use matter to satisfy his needs, to dominate things, to master events."<sup>14</sup>

Instinct is nothing more than the natural way in which an organism behaves as a result of its interaction with the environment. On the contrary, intelligence consists in the way of behaving, in accordance with the circumstances. In other words, to be intelligent is to bend to the circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

Poëte is most interested in the notion that human beings can determine their own fate by determining the fate of the city. It is extremely important for Poëte that urbanism is a Bergsonian invention of human beings,<sup>16</sup> marked by free will. And just as human beings have undergone divergence, so too has the acquisition of knowledge. Lower species primarily rely on instinct, in which their understanding of an object stems from a direct

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<sup>12</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, psychologists that adhered to the Spiritualist school of thought studied imagination and its role in invention. In the *Essay on the Creative Imagination* (1900), Théodule Ribot used formulations that would later inspire Bergson: "In every creation, big or small, there is a directive idea, an 'ideal' [...] or, more simply, a problem to be solved." See Théodule Ribot, *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice* (F. Alcan, 1900), 130. According to Ribot, reasoning is always led by a creative imagination. The capacity to discover a solution to a particular problem is not solely reliant on the objective elements presented in a passive manner. Instead, it is intricately tied to the mind's ability to actively "alter their positions" through the continuous intervention of imagination. See Théodule Ribot, *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice* (F. Alcan, 1900), 217. Furthermore, Henri Poincaré argues that "it is by logic that we prove, but by intuition that we discover," concluding that "to know how to criticize is good, but to know how to create is better." See Giuseppe Bianco, "Bergson and the Spiritualist Origins of the Ideology of Creativity in Philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28, no. 5 (2020), 1040.

<sup>13</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 576.

<sup>14</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 576.

<sup>15</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> The argument I am making here is what motivated the use of the term "invention" in the title of the dissertation. I use invention in this Bergsonian sense, as well as in a literal sense.

engagement with it, such as the transformation of a larva into an insect, a process Bergson calls “sympathy.” However, human knowledge has progressed to encompass intellection, which involves distancing oneself from the subject of knowledge, evaluating it, and reconstructing it. In addition to intellection, human beings possess the capacity for intuition—a form of knowledge that Bergson describes as “disinterested instinct” or “self-consciousness” that enables reflection. Bergson exemplifies intuition through the portrayal of an artist capturing the vitality of a living being. Instead of dissecting the subject, the artist “immerses himself in the object” through a form of sympathy, dismantling the barrier that separates him from his model. Through this detached yet participatory approach, the intuitive artist infuses the object with vitality or life force.

Poëte faithfully references Bergson’s ideas in this regard. “Intuition, by the sympathetic communication that it establishes between us and the rest of the living, introduces us to life’s own domain, which is reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation.”<sup>17</sup> Poëte’s urbanism centers around this concept. If our understanding is focused on ourselves, it is through intuition that we can actively generate our own evolving existence. By reconnecting with our past and incorporating it into our future, this form of knowledge operates on a spiritual level rather than a material one, unhindered by intellectual constraints. Through reflective awareness, it stimulates the perpetual transformation of life.

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<sup>17</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 187.

## *Urbanism and Spiritualism against Determinism*

As Bergson's philosophy turned on a Spiritualist interpretation of biological life, it resisted mechanistic and finalistic or teleological interpretations that, according to him, reduce organisms to artifacts.<sup>18</sup> In the domain of life as duration, "the idea of putting things back in their place at the end of a certain time involves a kind of absurdity."<sup>19</sup> For Bergson, the concept of a living being encompasses more than a mere collection of passive, self-identical particles that can be reorganized. Likewise, the Spiritualist and Poëteian doctrine of urbanism questions the notion that, at any specific moment, the fundamental particles of an urban organism could be reconfigured and restored to a previous state, like chess pieces on a board.

An absolute denier of environmentally deterministic ideas, Poëte's notion of *urbanisme* can be best understood when contrasted with the deterministic theories about time, history, and geography that Pierre Lavedan (1885–1982) laid out. An influential urban theorist and historian and the 1940s director of the *Institut d'Urbanisme*'s official journal, *La vie urbaine*, Lavedan published his theories in a book entitled *Geography of Cities* (1936). He discusses the ways in which French urbanism resisted what he called "geographical" and "historical fatalism." Through his clear narrative, we understand that the notion that the city represents a victory over nature had been developed by late nineteenth-century geographers and thinkers prior to the development of *urbanisme* by SFU. As Lavedan suggests, "there is a city when man dominates nature and succeeds in

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<sup>18</sup> Instead of adhering to strict mechanistic or teleological views, Bergson elaborates on the nineteenth-century Romantic concept that there is a genius inherent in the creative progression of nature.

<sup>19</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910), 116 and 153.



freeing himself from it.”<sup>20</sup> German historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) had made this argument, Lavedan reminds us, and SFU’s concept of urbanism aligns with it. However, *urbanisme* supplemented this theory with the very important premise that the practice of developing cities, while controlling nature, ought to keep a balance between it and the city. This knowledge that *urbanisme* embodies was established by geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache, who, I have showed, was just as influential as Bergson to Poëte and the *Société*. In the ethnographic and theoretical literature he wrote about France and the principles of human geography, Vidal de la Blache, an archaeologist turned geographer, emphasizes that the role of people is not passive, and that they can modify their environment to advance their own ends.

*Urbanisme*, as imagined by Poëte, resists historical determinism, which, as Lavedan informs us, characterizes the ideas of Spengler, as well as British social scientist, biologist, and urban planner Patrick Geddes (1854–1932). Prior to Poëte, Geddes wrote about the evolution of cities.<sup>21</sup> But, according to Lavedan, Geddes’s evolutionary ideas are deterministic. Subscribing to the theory of the organic order of things, Geddes believed that the city as a typical living being is born, then grows, and eventually dies, just like a child growing into an adolescent, and later an elderly person before ultimately passing away. This belief discounts cities that “have not had a childhood.”<sup>22</sup> Poëte reminds us that some cities, contrary to Geddes’s theory of

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<sup>20</sup> Pierre Lavedan, *Géographie des villes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 318. Lavedan also quotes Soviet Ukrainian political theorist and activist Mykhailo Petrovych Drahomanov (1842–1895): A city is where “physical geography has been corrected,” and “geography is a creation of man.” See Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 7–8.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and to the Study of Civics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1915).

<sup>22</sup> Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 14.

incremental urban evolution, appeared at the first moment in full strength, in possession of all their means. Poëte highlights cities such as Athens, created big and powerful by human beings. Unlike Rome, Athens was never a village. It is not the case, Poëte admits, that all cities began as cities, and not all villages became cities. Also, the case of Rome can be contrasted with that of Alexandria, the largest city in the early Mediterranean world, whose prestige outweighed that of Rome around the time of Christ's birth. Alexandria, the creation of Alexander, "a sudden and complete appearance,"<sup>23</sup> was never a village nor a small town. These examples establish Poëte's major argument that human beings are as powerful as nature in shaping cities.

For Poëte, *urbanisme* also defies geographical determinism. According to Lavedan, the historical determinists believed that the passage from the village to the big city occurs in opposition to nature, that is to say, in opposition to geography. Geographers take a different view. For them, the evolution of cities is the development of the possibilities included in their natural situation. But this explanation has appreciable nuances depending on the geographer. The geographical determinists or fatalists, Lavedan adds, affirm that the link between the city and the land is impossible to break. Within such a viewpoint, it is hardly possible for people to intervene and modify an existing city. Lavedan, in *Geography of Cities*, and Poëte, in *Introduction to Urbanism*, underscore the work of German geographer and ethnographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), who proposed that "a people must live on the soil that it has received from fate. It must die there and undergo its law."<sup>24</sup> Lavedan also mentions French geographer Raoul Blanchard (1877–1965), who similarly stated: "Always the same and always situated at

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<sup>23</sup> Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 16.

the same point of space, the soil serves as a rigid support to the moods and the chaining aspirations of men.”<sup>25</sup> Poëte read these scholars and disagreed with them, asserting that many cities have been born and effectively developed in deficient and even hostile physical environments, such as “Mexico City, Leningrad, and almost all the Dutch cities.”<sup>26</sup>

Emphasizing free will, Poëte places his faith in the Vidalian principle that human beings can interfere to stop or change the course of historical evolution and geographical chances. Vidal de la Blache admits that if nature provides possibilities, it is up to human beings to release them, and that human beings do not always do so. “Nature,” he proposes, “prepares the sites, but it is man who creates the organism.”<sup>27</sup> Among the forms of groupings, Vidal de la Blache recognizes that the city is the one in which the share of human beings is greater than in the village: “In this hierarchy, the city represents, to an eminent degree, the emancipation of the local environment: a stronger, broader hold of man on the land.”<sup>28</sup> All Poëte’s writings are an attempt to show how *urbanisme* embodies these principles.

### *Current Scholarship on Poëte*

As stated, despite Poëte’s significant contribution and lasting influence, very little has been written about him. Textbooks of modern urbanism have entirely overlooked Poëte, and, therefore, misconstrued urbanism as a positivist science. Adding to this

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Lavedan, *Géographie des villes*, 17.

oversight or misconception is that urban histories have mostly represented him in a biographical context only. In dictionaries and encyclopedias, urbanism has even been wrongly attributed to figures such as Spanish engineer-architect Ildefons Cerdá (1815–1876), instead of Poëte.<sup>29</sup> Scholars have not investigated urbanism as a unique neologism, but rather understood it as a spinoff of *urbanización*,<sup>30</sup> coined by Cerdá. Cerdá created this term to designate a new science of the spatial organization of cities, first discussed and published in his famous work *General Theory of Urbanization* (1867).<sup>31</sup> Indeed, and as Françoise Choay suggests, Cerdá granted, for the first time in history, a scientific status to the creation and planning of cities, conceived as an autonomous discipline in its own right.<sup>32</sup> The word *urbanización* referred to the process of urbanization and the laws that Cerdá believed underlie it, “generally attributed to chance,”<sup>33</sup> but that also “obey immutable principles, with fixed rules.”<sup>34</sup> The task of the planner or *urbanizador* consisted precisely in discovering these laws whose spontaneous operation had hitherto

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, see Françoise Choay and Pierre Merlin, *Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996), 816–823; and Roger W. Caves, *Encyclopedia of the City* (Routledge, 2005), 734.

<sup>30</sup> Urbanism has not been adopted in English-speaking countries until after the Second World War, but the Romance-language versions of the term (for instance, *urbanismo* in Spanish and *urbanismo* and *urbanistica* in Italian) entered common use in the 1910s. They were translated from the French term *urbanisme*. The English term varied in meaning according to the authors and covered, in a vague way, various notions linked to the city, such as landscape. In Germany and in the United Kingdom, the terms *Städtebau* and town planning were used for urban planning and development. Of course, all these terms did not carry the meaning that SFU developed for *urbanisme*.

<sup>31</sup> The book was translated and adapted into French in 1979 in Paris. Cerdá suggests: “I am going to introduce the reader to the study of a completely new, unexploited, and virgin subject. As everything I am saying is new, I had to look for and invent new words to express new ideas whose explanation was not found in any lexicon.” See Ildefonso Cerdá, *Teoría general de la urbanización, y aplicación de sus principios y doctrinas a la reforma y ensanche de Barcelona / Por Don Ildefonso Cerdá* (Madrid: Torya, 1867).

<sup>32</sup> Françoise Choay explicates that in her definition of urbanism in Choay and Merlin, *Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement*, 816–823.

<sup>33</sup> Ildefonso Cerdá, *Teoría general de la urbanización, y aplicación de sus principios y doctrinas a la reforma y ensanche de Barcelona* (Madrid: Torya, 1867), 32.

<sup>34</sup> Cerdá, *Teoría general de la urbanización*, 32.

remained hidden, in integrating them into a general theory, and in deliberately applying them in the design and organization of built space.<sup>35</sup> Confounding *urbanisme* and *urbanización*, however, Choay and other scholars have centered their definition of both terms on industrial science, which they claimed was the qualifying feature of the practice of urban development.

The existing literature on Poëte is limited to one book by Donatella Calabi,<sup>36</sup> which is mostly a biographical study, and a few articles by her and others.<sup>37</sup> As Calabi suggests in “Marcel Poëte: Pioneer of ‘l’urbanisme’ and Defender of ‘l’histoire des villes” (1996), the 1980s marked a rising interest in the work of Poëte. Works produced by scholars such as Choay, Marcel Roncayolo, Susanna Magri, Jean-Pierre Gaudin, Rémi Beaudoui, and Louis Bergeron were mostly interested in classifying and reorganizing the historiography of modern urbanism and in the history of the professionalization of the field in the early twentieth century. More recent scholarship, for instance articles by

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<sup>35</sup> The term *urbanización* referred both to the process of urbanization and to the laws that Cerdá believed underlie it. “The fact whose origin and development is generally attributed to chance, nevertheless obeys immutable principles, has fixed rules.” See Ildefonso Cerdá, *Teoría general de la urbanización*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> See Donatella Calabi, *Marcel Poëte et le Paris des années vingt: aux origines de “L’histoire des villes”* (L’Harmattan, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> The main reason for this scholarly gap, as suggested by Calabi, is Poëte’s unusual educational background and career path. Poëte’s interest in planning history derived not from practice in the field, but from his role as chief librarian of the *Bibliothèque Historique de Paris*. The library and its *Service historique* was reconstituted as a teaching and research institute dedicated to the study of urban transformation, or to what were deemed to be the primary components of the new science of “urbanism”: urban history, geography, and economics. In 1917, it became the *Institut d’Histoire, de Géographie et d’Économie Urbaines de la Ville de Paris*. In 1919, the *École des Hautes Études Urbaines* (EHEU) was founded there. In 1924, the EHEU became the *Institut d’Urbanisme de l’Université de Paris* and in 1970 the *Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris*. There is hardly any published work about the institute. One of the few unpublished theses that merit a citation is Rémi Baudoui’s work, written in 1988. See Rémi Baudoui, *La naissance de l’École des hautes études urbaines et le premier enseignement de l’urbanisme en France, des années 1910 aux années 1920* (Dissertation: Versailles: Ville recherche diffusion, 1988).

Charissa Terranova (2008) and Diana Periton (2018),<sup>38</sup> sheds light on Poëte's ideas of vitalism and creative evolution within the city, appropriated from biology and Bergson's philosophy of duration. But the two bodies of literature do not explain the key aspect of *urbanisme* that Poëte developed and circulated in his writings: spiritualism or mysticism and its relevance to urban evolution.

Contemporary scholars have also likened Poëte's work to Geddes's, as the two urban theorists shared an interest in the question of history and urban evolution. Both also read Bergson and borrowed some of his concepts.<sup>39</sup> However, the literature that compares the two fails to highlight the very important discrepancy between Poëte and Geddes. While Geddes's work springs from the positivistic social theory of scholars such as Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), Poëte's work denied scientific determinism and positivism. Scholarship produced in the late twentieth century has focused mostly on Geddes's role as a leading voice in the urban planning movement and the author of such notions as “conurbation,” to describe a conglomerate of very large cities, surrounded by extensive suburbs and forming a continuous urban and industrial built-up environment. More recent literature has begun to critically examine Geddes's general notion of cities as forms of life. In *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (2002), Volker Welter relates Geddes's theories to contemporaneous philosophical discussions and urban planning debates, exhuming the neglected significance of spiritual

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<sup>38</sup> Charissa Terranova, “Marcel Poëte's Bergsonian Urbanism: Vitalism, Time, and the City,” *Journal of Urban History* 34.6 (2008): 919–943; and Diana Periton, “Generative History: Marcel Poëte and the City As Urban Organism,” *Journal of Architecture* (2018): 580–594.

<sup>39</sup> Both also read scholars such as Jacques Élisée Reclus and Pierre Guillaume Frédéric Le Play. Donatella Calabi and Helen Elizabeth Meller mention the common references. See Donatella Calabi, “Marcel Poëte: Pioneer of ‘Urbanisme’ and Defender of ‘Histoire des villes’,” *Planning Perspectives* 11, no. 4 (1996): 420; Helen Elizabeth Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (Routledge, 1990), 113–117; Helen Elizabeth Meller, ed., *The Ideal City* (Leicester University Press, 1979).

and metaphysical thought to discussions regarding modern urban planning.<sup>40</sup> Welter shows how Geddes's city design operates on the geographical, historical, and spiritual spectrums, as well as his confidence in a teleology in which a city's future development is determined through a preemptive rereading of its past. However, Welter does not reveal that his protagonist's ideas are rooted in nineteenth-century deterministic biology, in which he received his academic training. Geddes's urban theory is informed by his lifelong interest in the nineteenth-century theories of evolution and ecology by Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Comte. While Geddes initiated his career as a biologist, Poëte was a librarian and a historian, prior to becoming a scholar of urbanism. The training that Geddes and Poëte received justify the varying frameworks in which the two based their conception of urban planning.

### *Poëte's Paris*

Mechanism and finalism, as we have seen, are the expression of a productivist metaphysics that considers life from the constrained point of view of the technician who can only represent organization as a process of fabrication.<sup>41</sup> Both illustrate living complexity, to use a Darwinian phrase, as merely an “engineering problem.”<sup>42</sup> Poëte and other urbanists from the *Société* theorized urbanism as more than an engineering problem, which is apparent also in SFU's actual urban reform schemes. According to

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<sup>40</sup> Volker Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life*. Cambridge (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Mark Sinclair outlines Bergson's critiques of mechanism. See Mark Sinclair, *Bergson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 202–227.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Sinclair, *Bergson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 208 and 217.

Poëte, for operating on a city, the urbanist needs to adhere to “a doctrine” and “a method.”<sup>43</sup> I have laid out the main principles of Poëte’s anti-positivist doctrine. As for the method, the French theorist provides only some theoretical guidelines, which members of the Société appropriated, translating them into practical techniques for their planning. The method involves studying the present, through a scientific process, and a spiritualist engagement with the past, “the school par excellence of the urbanist.”<sup>44</sup> It is an ongoing, imaginative process encompassing both tangible objects and intangible aspects of human experience. A true urbanist, deeply attuned to the essence of the city and mindful of the contributions made by past generations and present inhabitants, possesses the capacity to unearth enduring components vital for societal progress and to give them their full value. In “Twenty Years of Applied Urbanism in France,” a compilation of essays with which SFU developed a special edition of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* (1939), Gaston Bardet, Poëte’s son-in-law and student at the *Institut d’Urbanisme* who was highly inspired by his mentor,<sup>45</sup> went even so far as to say that it is not the urbanist who would make the city. It is rather the inhabitants, with their tastes and passions, who will build the residences. He adds that the municipalities would decide, after the inhabitants, if this or that monument must be built, or this or that promenade must be created.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See the foreword to his book, Marcel Poëte, *Introduction à l’urbanisme: l’évolution des villes, la leçon de l’antiquité* (Paris: Editions anthropos, 1967).

<sup>44</sup> Poëte, *Introduction à l’urbanisme*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Bardet produced illustrations for most of Poëte’s books and published several manuscripts that discuss urbanism based on his mentor’s ideas. Two of Bardet’s most significant works are *Pierre sur pierre: construction du nouvel urbanisme* (Paris: Éditions L.C.B, 1945); and *Le nouvel urbanisme* (Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1948). In his writings, Bardet reiterates most of Poëte’s major ideas.

<sup>46</sup> Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 19.



Both Bardet and Poëte consider that the city must, therefore, be observed in terms of the fact that life is “an effort to obtain certain things from raw matter.”<sup>47</sup> The science of urbanism, Poëte suggests, begins with observation, the basic tool for understanding a city. He states, in *Introduction to Urbanism*:

[The] science of observation [...] is based on facts that have been well observed, which are compared with each other in order to classify them and then to derive, if not laws—the word is too strong when applied to human phenomena—at least general data. The fact to be observed is what I will call the urban fact, that is the fact which reveals the state of the urban organism.<sup>48</sup>

In the writings of Poëte and Bardet, who restated most of his mentor’s ideas, we see that all empirical sciences are necessary for collecting data on the city: “Biology, psychology, and sociology contribute to the science of urbanism, as do history, physical and human geography, geology, meteorology, hygiene, legal science, and all economic and social sciences.”<sup>49</sup> The method of urbanism that Poëte is propagating is extremely interdisciplinary. It fuses empirical geographical methods with Bergson’s Spiritualist theories of time and space in order to devise tools for territorial development that could possibly mitigate the unfavorable effects of modern, industrial planning.

But before this conception of urbanism matured in his later works, including *Paris: Its Creative Evolution* and “Bergsonian Ideas and Urbanism,” Poëte, in *A City’s Life: Paris, from Its Birth to Today*, followed the lead of contemporaneous historians and geographers who were increasingly concerned to show that it is the relationship between the geological and geographical facts of a place and the actions of its people that lead to

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<sup>47</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 576.

<sup>48</sup> Poëte, *Introduction a l’urbanisme*, 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” 5.

the transformation of both. Poëte's work displays the Vidalian logic that the topography is physically modified by its occupants, whose future potentials and expectancies are then reformed. In his earlier writings, Poëte establishes the material topography of the city. In *Paris: Its Creative Evolution*, he opts to start with the people. In this book, his last, the urban theorist finally shows that it is in the human protagonist that the creative force of spirituality is revealed<sup>50</sup>—the argument that he had been attempting to build since he started writing.

As I have shown, Poëte, adhering to Bergson's philosophy, replaces mechanistic and teleological ideals of biological evolution with a "creative evolution(ary)" principle rooted in Spiritualism. However, I want to add here that, for Poëte, Spiritualism—a Bergsonian philosophical doctrine that emphasizes "free will"—also encompasses what he interprets as "religion."

Moral elements play a considerable part in urban destinies. The needs of man, through which civilization manifests itself, are not all material. We cannot understand the ancient city or the city of the Middle Ages if we ignore religious ideas.<sup>51</sup>

Poëte lays out the intrinsically human characteristics—elements that are "inherent" or "natural to men"—that contribute to the creation of cities: sociability, war, and, most decisively, religion. He believes that human beings are constituted in such a way that there is in them a propensity to command and obey, without which there can be no society. War, he proposes, is also natural to people; what triggers it is protection of property. He interprets religion as a means employed by the human imagination as a

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<sup>50</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 59, 79, 82, 90.

<sup>51</sup> Poëte, *Introduction à l'urbanisme*, 11.

defensive mechanism against anxiety about the future, unforeseen events, and the paralyzing thought of death.

Put simply, religion, according to Poëte, makes us not afraid to be creative. Poëte spends a long time elaborating on the role of religion in the life of human beings and the life of the urban organism. Informed by Bergson, he avers that religion is the product of a vital need. Rather than arbitrary, unmotivated inventions, religious beliefs have to be understood from the perspective of their function for both the individual and society. Our intelligence, Bergson argues, is a product of the *élan vital*, but the disassociation of intellect from instinct brings dangers that religion serves to protect our intelligence from. Poëte uses Paris as an example to display how the three features (sociability, war, and religion) contribute to building a city from scratch or to developing an existing urban agglomeration. He moves between successive time periods and shows how each grew from the previous one:

The remote past is included in the city today like the snowball that one begins to shape with the hands, and which keeps getting bigger as one rolls it on the radiant white ground. Simple duration has produced this effect on the urban grouping: the city has lived. It is imbued with movement and change.<sup>52</sup>

According to Poëte, we possess the power to not only physically reshape the urban environment, using our intellectual knowledge, but also connect with its essence, through intuition and will, breathing new life into the past and shaping the present. Poëte explores this creative involvement in *A City's Life: Paris, from Its Birth to Today*. In this book, he makes its function obvious. However, in his later work, *Paris: Its Creative Evolution*, his

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<sup>52</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 576.

analysis is more condensed and his Bergsonian thought much clearer. In his evolutionary narrative of the city, Poëte lays the groundwork by delineating the city's topography, subsequently introducing inhabitants whose needs and aspirations drive the urban landscape into a continuous "urban transformation," ultimately shaping the Paris we recognize today.

Seeking to "penetrate the mystery of the urban being"<sup>53</sup> and the transformative, vital force, Poëte commences his narrative of Paris with the unfolding of a sequence of islands emerging from the ancient waters of the Seine. It seems that as the river established its course, "the earth of Paris was constituted, and man appeared."<sup>54</sup> The *Île de la Cité* became a significant location due to the Seine being most easily crossed there. Positioned as a defensible point, it served as a natural juncture where the inclined flow of the river intersected with a direct route between the southern and northern hills, thus establishing the birthplace of the *Cité*, the collective entity that evolved into Paris. By providing this insight into the essence of Parisian life, Poëte aims to demonstrate the dual operation of the procreative force. It functions partially through the material requirements for ongoing survival and, simultaneously, through human will—specifically, the desire to instigate change.

Poëte incorporates into his texts historical-analytical map-diagrams to illustrate the city's transformations. These diagrams are an innovation, in their own right.<sup>55</sup> They were in fact sketched by Bardet, whose superior drawing skills as a practicing architect

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<sup>53</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 138.

<sup>54</sup> Marcel Poëte, *L'Enfance de Paris* (Paris, Armand Colin, 1908), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Jarzombek, my dissertation advisor, told me that his former architecture teacher at ETH Zürich, Paul Hofer, employed a similar drawing style. Evidently, Hofer is among the many followers of Bardet, adopting his approach.

and urbanist surpassed those of Poëte. The first diagram in the series highlights the topographical logic of the site, revealing an island nestled within a swamp and encircled by highlands (figure 3). The river acted as the spiritual nucleus, luring people to its shores and becoming the cradle of the city's inception. Bardet shows with arrows and digits that over time, inhabitants migrated from the Neolithic villages nestled on the surrounding mountains, Clamart, Fresnes-les-Rungis, Hautes-Bruyères, Orly, and Champigny, to settle on the *Île de la Cité*. A parallel pattern of migration that took place in both directions is illustrated, with people moving back and forth between the Montagne Saint-Geneviève and the island. The map indicates Rue Saint-Martin and Rue Saint-Jacques, showcasing how these streets linked the market, which was forming at the heart of the walled area, with the northern region.

In his protracted urban analysis, Poëte discerns and categorizes distinct manifestations of the spiritual force, labeling them as *mystiques*. According to his perspective, the Middle Ages witnessed the *mystique* of religion; the classical city was characterized by the idea of monarchy or the “royal *mystique*,” and the late eighteenth century embraced the *mystique* of the scientific outlook intertwined with sentiment or feeling, subsequently leading to democracy, described as “evangelical in essence.”<sup>56</sup> Poëte and Bardet draw attention to these mystical aspects in a comparable diagram, resembling figure 3, yet omitting any topographical specifics (figure 4). The diagram categorizes diverse monuments associated with the same *mystique* into separate groups and illustrates their specific locations on a mental city map. According to Poëte, each historical period, or stage in the development of the urban organism, is driven by a series

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<sup>56</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 581.

of such forces, as is each place. Also, each stage produces the subsequent one. For instance, the new “religion,” Poëte holds, borrowed from the Greek philosophers and from paganism:

Imagination intervenes to create, in man, at the very origin of the human species, the belief in magic, then, a little later, the belief in spirits, then the belief in gods, that is to say, “mythology around which grew a literature, an art, institutions, in short, all the essentials of ancient civilization.” This third belief, which thus closely associated social life with religion, was a great advance. The temple, in the ancient island city, is the very expression of human anxiety thus calmed.<sup>57</sup>

As “mankind only understands the new when it follows the old,”<sup>58</sup> it was on the site of the pagan temple that Notre Dame Cathedral was established, casting a protective shadow of heaven over the city, just as Athena, from the top of the Acropolis, or Jupiter, from the top of the Capitol, protected Athens or Rome.

As I have explained, change happens in the urban environment through *sauts brusques* or sudden leaps. From a small stronghold or refuge against enemy attacks, the *Île de la Cité* began to evolve into the city of Paris. According to Poëte, the establishment of the market was the first evolutionary step in the *Cité’s* social life, a *saut brusque*. A place of exchange in the calm of peace, the marketplace formed between the two bridges that link the island to the riverbanks. It connected the island to Rue Saint-Martin and Rue Saint-Jacques. Repeatedly elucidating developments in immaterial terms, Poëte highlights the market as “a significance that goes beyond its proper meaning: the economic aspect.”<sup>59</sup> It is the place where the idea of justice originated. It shows the

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<sup>57</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 576.

<sup>58</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 577.

<sup>59</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 32.

civilizing value of trade that was to maintain, through routes such as those for amber, salt, and spices, the long-distance communications essential to human progress. The *ius mercatorum* (right of merchants), the principle of urban emancipation that was developed in the Middle Ages, is a derivative of that earlier form of justice. With this understanding, Poëte is clearly trying to replace the standard history of modern Paris, written in terms of forms and material things, with a spiritual one, bringing the mystic reality to the interpretation of material phenomena.

The Roman conquest is for Poëte another abrupt leap that the phases of urban evolution are marked with (figures 5 and 6). When Emperor Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in the middle of the first century B.C., Poëte explains, he caused it to “enter the era of Roman peace.”<sup>60</sup> The change of environment caused by this conquest impacted the Gallo town, Lutetia. Now displaced, it appeared on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève slope. At the bottom of the hill lay Boulevard Saint-Michel and Place Maubert and, at the top, Rue Descartes and Rue Luxembourg. The town had a regular layout organized around the *Cardo* and *Decumanus* axes. The *palatium*, the seat first of the French royalty and later of the Justice Palace, was erected, in addition to baths, theaters, and arenas. All these edifices with a cultural value are for Poëte the “moral effect of the materiality of the [Roman] conquest.”<sup>61</sup> The new urban forms, he suggests, “mark the externalization or the outcome of an unforeseeable vital phenomenon that occurred within the urban being.”<sup>62</sup> Centered on Rue Saint-Jacques and Chemin d’Italie and bordered by tombs situated on the outskirts of the city, towards the Observatory, the new city, he claims, was the

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<sup>60</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 33.

<sup>62</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 34.

product of one of those sudden bursts of change that brought into play the whole of the past in order to create the present.

Poëte's assessment of the various "mystiques" that influence change remains normative throughout his texts. He does not make value judgments that hierarchize any of the mystiques, excepting the mystique of Christianity, which stands out in his narrative. Poëte explains that when Christianity, a sudden leap in urban evolution, was born, it was a real transformation. "The religious spirit [was] turned from the outside to the inside, from the static to the dynamic [...]. Progress was now made in the moral depths of man, in whom a whole range of new feelings resounded."<sup>63</sup> His view of Christianity was as a marvelous enrichment for humanity, a sudden spring of unsuspected fertile energies. No human progress has apparently been as great as that achieved with Christianity. He perceives Christianity as a pure form of mysticism that perfects the human race by continuing the work of nature, where nature left off.

Poëte merges religion with the vital creative impulse. The stronger the Christian spirit, he submits, the lesser "the natural spirit of invention that is given to man to subdue matter to the satisfaction of his physical needs."<sup>64</sup> He proposes that Christianity extends into Paris via the main road, from Lyon. Bardet's diagram effectively illustrates that Christianity originated outside the city limits. It began at a specific point and eventually extended to encompass the island (figure 7). As the map shows, the flatland is now a Christian city, and the villages have disappeared. "The ferment that entered the city to transform it"<sup>65</sup> was "an effect of the action of the roads on the city."<sup>66</sup> Before entering the

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<sup>63</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 577.

<sup>64</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 578.

<sup>65</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 578.

<sup>66</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 578.



*Île de la Cité*, Christianity had settled on the outskirts, in a poor corner of the countryside, which then became Faubourg Saint-Marcel. To the natural pressure on human beings of the simple morality, implied by life in society, was added, Poëte states, the aspiration created in them by absolute morality, made apparent by the church, the bishopric of the Hôtel-Dieu, conjoined at the eastern end of the island.<sup>67</sup> From the sixth century onwards, churches multiplied. In his own words, incandescent points of mystical life, enclosed in monasteries, glowed on both shores. As immaterial and material data are intertwined, a rural life, the germ in many cases of urban life, was born of these pious establishments: a hamlet that would become a village, then a town, and finally a district of the present Paris.

According to Poëte, anything that has the effect of opening up or broadening horizons such as Christianity is essentially a generator of progress for the city, because it tends to make a society less closed and more open.<sup>68</sup> Poëte is emphasizing here a point that Bergson makes in his last major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932). Bergson spent most of his career offering intrepid confirmations of our experiences of time, knowledge, and the permanence or transformations of objects and perceptions. However, in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, he turns to politics, arguing that a rhythm of opening and closing is the heartbeat of every society and every social institution and practice. Drawing on this, Poëte resumes his narrative with the proposition that, in the eleventh century, another sudden leap in evolution was brought about by the coming and going of pilgrimages on the great roads. Merchants and pilgrims lived side by side, with the Truce of God, the prodigious mysticism of the Crusade, and

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<sup>67</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 578.

<sup>68</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 579.

the Communes. This exchange gave rise to new relics and the “white dress of Romanesque churches.”<sup>69</sup> Linked to the action of the roads on the city, the abbey of Saint-Denis, a great religious center according to Poëte, exerted influence on the city. Poëte claims that due to this sudden evolutionary leap, the constitutive variation of Paris arose from the birth of the market. Situated on the right bank, opposite the *Île de la Cité*, the market shaped the character of the riverbank for centuries.

Poëte’s explanation of the market shows influences not only from Bergson’s ideas about time, but also from the philosopher’s political ideas about religion and morality. Taking inspiration from his former classmate Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Bergson maintains that society begins closed and cannot survive without predominantly remaining so. In Bergson’s understanding, a “closed society” both necessitates and prompts a “closed morality” among its inhabitants. A society and morality of this kind are as intrinsic to human beings as an anthill is to ants. However, the human anthill, where people are unconsciously bound to follow social norms, is distressed by the authority of individual thought. In order to function, society requires individuals to cooperate, make sacrifices, and defend the collective against its enemies. But the individual, as they contemplate worries in life and death, can develop a conscious, personal moral sense different from the one instilled in them by social pressure. Bergson contends that such contemplation inherently requires, at the very least, a temporary detachment from our connection to life and the values presumed to be shared with fellow members of our society. Thought and anxiety are individuating, pulling us away from the communal fabric of the social world. Religion shields society from these otherwise perilous breaches

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<sup>69</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 578.

of thought. This complex Bergsonian worldview, embraced by Poëte, might seem at times bifurcated, but it only attests to the reconciliatory socioeconomic doctrine that Poëte and fellow SFU members adopted: the “solidarist” or “social liberalist” principle which fuses socialist and liberalist ideals (and which I discuss in the Introduction).<sup>70</sup>

Recounting Poëte’s theory of Paris’s creative evolution, patriotism is another form of mysticism, marking the growth of Paris in the twelfth century. The king composed “the French nation, piece by piece,”<sup>71</sup> around the capital city. Poëte considers that a considerable undertaking, given that man’s natural sociability, based on Bergson’s principles in *The Two Sources*, only applies to small societies. Poëte stresses that for a nation to take shape, the initial external and overarching constraints ensuring the cohesion of the whole must progressively yield to “a principle of union that rises from the depths of each of the assembled elementary societies.”<sup>72</sup> In the same period, the palace became more important than it was. The king’s little castle, Châtelet, appeared on the right bank. Notre Dame Cathedral and other churches were rebuilt. The city’s schools became famous. Parisian goldsmiths became renowned. Paris was a “place of delight.”<sup>73</sup>

However, urban functions change, and, according to Poëte, the urban organism must adapt to more complex living conditions. After the eleventh century, the market,

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<sup>70</sup> Reform by SFU and the *Musée Social* was guided by thinkers such as Pierre Guillaume Frédéric le Play. Blending socialism and liberalism, solidarism emerged as intellectuals and policymakers began to scrutinize the liberal orthodoxy of laissez-faire, particularly concerning the involvement of the central government in social policy. Mutuality was perceived as the pinnacle of sociality, and a purportedly new mutualist social contract was envisioned as the path to social peace. By achieving a socialization of risk, guaranteed (though not originated) by the state, the groundwork for just conditions was laid. Insurance companies had set this precedent, and society was urged to emulate their model. Poëte’s adoption of Le Play’s solidarist doctrine stood in stark contrast to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s approach—while Rousseau commenced with a contract, the solidarists concluded with one. See Introduction.

<sup>71</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 579.

<sup>72</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 579.

<sup>73</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 579.

standing on the right bank and making up the city, broke away from the original location, where a group of merchants had first congregated, and settled along the main road to Saint-Denis, on the current site of the *Halles Centrales* (figure 8). Poëte depicts this transformation as “a reaction or a response [...] to external forces”<sup>74</sup> (figure 9). The detachment of the market “is only the solution, found by life, to the problem posed to it by the outside conditions.”<sup>75</sup> The same thing happened at the end of the twelfth century. Under the effect of the attraction caused by the center of studies in Paris, which is another external action on the city, the development of the schools pushed them out of the cathedral that had given them birth, to “make the left bank the University”<sup>76</sup> (figure 10). A special urban function was thus created. At the same time, the college detached itself from the Hôtel-Dieu, where it was born as a charitable organization. It invaded now the same left bank of the river.

What Poëte refers to as the “mystical dynamism” of Christianity never ceased to manifest itself. In the thirteenth century, we see the establishment of a Carthusian monastery and the convents of the four Mendicant Orders on the left bank, “the land of the Church.”<sup>77</sup> The Saint-Chapelle shines in its nascent glory. Christian mysticism flourishes in the city of King Saint Louis. The blossoming of Christian art accompanied this flowering. Poëte, especially in *Paris: Its Creative Evolution*, strives to highlight the spiritual outcome of economic or material endeavors, such as what he calls “road action,” meaning infrastructural advancements. On one hand, he elucidates the fact that the human intellect represents a diversion of the spirit towards the practical utilization of material

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<sup>74</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 579.

<sup>75</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 579.

<sup>76</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 580.

<sup>77</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 580.

resources, resulting in the creation of replicable objects designed for specific purposes. He, on the other hand, also recognizes that it is through human beings that genuine and dedicated spirituality can emerge, transcending the confines of induction and deduction, giving rise to unforeseen and unconstrained possibilities.

Throughout his published works, particularly in *A City's Life: Paris, from Its Birth to Today*, Poëte complements geological surveys, archaeological excavations, and historical maps with chronicles and archives that meticulously document the economic and artistic activities of the past, which give birth to new urban forms. These forms, preserved in memoirs, engravings, and, where they still exist, the very buildings themselves, become the foundational, topographical framework for the next transformative phase:

How can one not also feel deeply all that is expressed by a building like the Invalides, a sort of ray of royal glory, which was erected opposite, on the left bank, at the time of the Sun King? Here we reach the sublime. The distance of the building from the Seine, from which it is separated by a vast open space—once natural and all the more immense—adds to the austere grandeur of the line of buildings facing the river, from which the prodigious ideality of the church dome emerges in the background.<sup>78</sup>

It is important to note that Poëte's synthesis of documented facts does not adhere to deterministic rules, as his aim is to highlight evolutionary and progressive processes. The development of an urban organism lacks reliably repeatable laws of action and effect. Nevertheless, it remains feasible to discern patterns or sequences of similarity, even if not exact repeatability, and to illustrate that the future is intricately connected to the past. Poëte's approach does not seek strict cause-and-effect relationships but rather emphasizes

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<sup>78</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 148.

the dynamic nature of urban development. By examining the past, one can identify seeds of future developments, unveiling a nonlinear progression.

For Poëte, the end of the Middle Ages began with the fourteenth century (figure 11). He clearly adopts the archetypal periodization of the history books of the time, interweaving their context with Bergson's categories of knowledge and adopting the philosopher's ideas wholesale. The modern era, he argues, came out of the Renaissance. It is the result of the development of individualism, the cause of "moral malaise."<sup>79</sup> A shadow was cast over the reigning spirit of asceticism, and now, for man, "complete existence is mobility in individuality."<sup>80</sup> The end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century saw the great geographical discoveries that significantly broadened the world's horizons and opened new paths for human activity. Through these routes and those where the Italo-Antique ferment arrived, the action of the roads was once again exerted on the city. This sudden and immense expansion seemed to unbalance the human being who was, on the one hand, striving for a better material life, and, on the other hand, "waiting for an extra soul"<sup>81</sup> that the Protestant reform of the sixteenth century or the Catholic counter-reform would provide:

A surge of individualism, breaking up the former community of souls, loosening of the common religious embrace, the first ideas of tolerance, the desire to become richer and raise the standard of living, the setting in motion of the scientific spirit of research, the progress of artillery and the invention of printing, the rise of royal power that established itself in the rehabilitated Louvre, the development of functionarism, the nascent mystique of glory, the first features of the triumphal character of the royal capital, the creation of the first royal factories and the Collège Royal, the beginnings of patriotism, urban growth, the

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<sup>79</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 580.

<sup>80</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 580.

<sup>81</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 580.

manifestations of humanism, the renewal of literature and the arts, the appearance of modern theatre, and the birth of public assistance.<sup>82</sup>

It is the mystical, creative aspect of religion that Poëte wants to highlight, not the traditional, dogmatic categories of Catholicism or Protestantism. The resulting constitutive variation in the city caused by these evolutionary leaps displays multiple differences that emerge together and complement each other.

In the seventeenth century, the city was under the effect of yet another mystique, the royal mystique, shining brightly at the time of King Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715). The French nation formed by agglutinating around the figure and capital of the monarch and becoming aware of itself. The classical city of the eighteenth century is made up of this royal mysticism and the Catholic mysticism of the counter-reformation. A reflection of this last mysticism haloed worldly love, making women the center of Parisian society and of the salon, where they voiced their opinion.<sup>83</sup> The Catholic mysticism of the time found its full expression in the Church of the Invalides, just as royal mysticism was expressed in the unique forms of the Place des Victoires and Place Vendôme.

The “unpredictability of the forms that life creates, through discontinuous leaps, along its evolution,”<sup>84</sup> appears in the character and physiognomy of Paris. It is marked by the creation, from scratch, of new urban functions, such as the one fulfilled by the *Cours-la-Reine*, and the transformation of existing forms. For instance, the public garden has evolved from the royal garden of the Tuileries castle. Poëte repeatedly revisits the Tuileries Garden (figure 12). Originally laid out beyond Paris’s walls, the garden found

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<sup>82</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 79.

<sup>84</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 581.

itself later enclosed by walls, eventually yielding its space to transform into the Grands Boulevards. The garden is also integral to his recurrent depictions of various modes of walking—elegant and aristocratic within the formal garden, transitioning to a more rustic style in the eighteenth-century Champs-Élysées beyond the Place de la Concorde. Eventually, both settings underwent a process of “democratization,” transforming urban walking into an ostensibly accessible activity for all social classes.

When Poëte enters the modern period, in all his historical narratives, he considers the beginning of industrialization the commencement of a “decadent” period. That is allegedly because ascetic concerns, with industrialization, were replaced by material ones. The onset of mechanization, a nascent revolution in material life and a sudden political and social revolution, marked a sudden leap in urban development towards the end of the eighteenth century. Machinery and democracy appeared together in the urban context, and, like their origins, their destinies were also linked. Such a connection serves to explain the evolution of Paris since then.

Poëte traces the modern period back to the Enlightenment. The French civilization, “impregnated, for centuries, with the intoxicating perfume of the mysticism of Christianity,”<sup>85</sup> eventually produced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, articulating the idea of absolute justice. The French Revolution transpired in 1789 and, with it, another sudden leap occurred, related to “road action.” Poëte explains that if we observe the eighteenth century, we realize that it constituted, especially in its second half, a pathway to the Revolution: the *fait accompli* was projected into the past. The previous decades supposedly prepared the French society for democracy, which could only appear

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<sup>85</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 96.



later. Democracy, “a conception far removed from nature”<sup>86</sup> according to Poëte, a modern and industrial invention, goes beyond the closed city. It is evangelical in essence, but the mystique of feeling, triggered by figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, contributed to its dynamism.

According to Poëte, the distinction between religion and politics loses its intellectual coherence. He is showing that liberal democracy is fundamentally infused with an evangelical spirit, rooted in a spiritual understanding of humanity’s interconnectedness and inherent worth. Therefore, the protection of liberal democracy goes beyond mere legal definitions of rights and norms. It entails fostering and nurturing the spiritual or mystical aspect that encourages a constant exploration of novel ways to manifest its core belief in the equality of all human beings. This notion of equality can only be comprehended in relation to a transcendent entity, whether it is “God” or the concept of “life,” espoused by Bergson and Poëte. For Poëte, democracy is not simply one political system among many; it possesses a mystical, messianic quality and constitutes an open religion. It transcends conventional political categories, assuming a sacred and transformative nature.

As every mystique gives way to a new one, according to Poëte, a secularized gospel from the same source as the Galilean gospel arose in the part of the banks of the Seine where the royal residence once stood and where the National Assembly now sits, thus restoring the notion of justice to the absolute form that Christianity had previously given it (figure 13). This is opposite the *Île de la Cité*, where, in the earliest Gallic times, the primitive idea of relative justice was born of bartering at the market. Like the

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<sup>86</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 581.

Christian gospel, the gospel of human rights transformed the city, soul and body. The industrial, populous, and miserable suburbs of Saint-Antoine and Saint-Michel, Poëte considers, contributed to the establishment of this new gospel. Saint-Michel had already been, in the third century, the introducer of Christianity in Paris, and then, in the sixteenth century, the popular center of Protestantism. And in the next century, the suburbs of Saint-Jacques, Saint-Germain, and Saint-Honoré, where the convents of the Counter-Reformation were mainly established, were other centers of mystical dynamism. It was through these last three suburbs, in particular, as well as through the Le Marais district in Paris, that the mystical influences of the Catholic counter-reformation were exerted on Parisian society. Just as royal mysticism had created Place des Victoires and Place Vendôme under the reign of Louis XIV, as well as Place Louis XV and Place de la Concorde under the latter monarch, revolutionary mysticism erected the Altar of the Fatherland on the Champ-de-Mars, inaugurated on the great day of national fraternity (July 14, 1790). Associated with that of glory, the mystique of patriotism finds other expressions in the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile and in the Napoleonic Temple de la Gloire, which became the profane Madelaine Church.

Poëte highlights the elites' role in society, distinguishing between "men and great men,"<sup>87</sup> not unlike Bergson. Poëte suggests that the revolutionary movement that claimed democracy was led by "privileged souls, having expanded the social soul within them."<sup>88</sup> The great currents, he adds, come from "one or more men leading masses of others."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 96.

<sup>88</sup> Poëte is quoting Bergson. See Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 109. In all his texts, Poëte does not include any bibliographical references or citations. He includes many statements with quotation marks without mentioning the source.

<sup>89</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 96.

Progress is “always due to individual initiatives.”<sup>90</sup> Like Bergson, Poëte divides human beings into two categories characterized by two different types of morality: a closed morality and an open one. The open moral type is created by superior individuals and is more relevant to life, reflecting man’s continuously developing potential. When Poëte states that “in history, there is no such thing as unconsciousness,”<sup>91</sup> he is essentially arguing against the historicism of man: the idea that man is created through history.<sup>92</sup> Poëte is asserting the philosophical idea that we should aspire to serve history only insofar as it serves living. In doing so, he contests the historical scholarship of his era, characterized by its claim to objectivity and relentless pursuit of scientific facts. He suggests that this approach undermines life by eroding our confidence in our culture, instincts, and capacity to lead meaningful lives. We find ourselves acquiring comprehensive knowledge about our past, yet concurrently losing touch with the emotionally significant value embedded in that history. According to Poëte, the most effective resolution to this issue is to leverage history to unveil its perils and to reaffirm the priorities that promote life, ensuring that human beings take control of shaping history.

Poëte is calling for a return beyond historicism, to humanism. He is precisely arguing for the humanism of the Renaissance:

At first it is the freshness and enthusiasm of a young love that is born, the boundless admiration, the footsteps of the beloved, the fervent devotion of humanism to antiquity, the Italian-antique adornment of the buildings. Then, as

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<sup>90</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 96.

<sup>91</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 96.

<sup>92</sup> This idea was also developed by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) in *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* (1874). Within the essay, Nietzsche questions the idea that an objective concept of man is attainable, emphasizing that a significant facet of humanity lies in its subjectivity.

this initial ardor becomes less lively, love becomes more reasoned and no longer follows its object; the personality, which had dissolved in the latter, tends to be reclaimed; one is inspired by the ancient model, instead of slavishly imitating it. The city bears the reflection or imprint of all this. Under the effect of this sentimental adventure, it takes on the characteristics of the Hellenistic-Roman urban civilization or the Italian city of the prince.<sup>93</sup>

The industrial age supposedly perpetrated damage. By the inordinate increase of our means of bodily action, Poëte states, mechanism has placed an immense gap between the body, thus immensely enlarged, and the soul that has remained unchanged. But, as he acknowledges the disruption industrialization has caused, he attempts to find a reconciliation between the industrial and pre-industrial periods. A link exists between the moral renovation of man through mysticism, he suggests, and the development of mechanism. “Man will only rise above the earth if a powerful tool provides him with a fulcrum [...]. Mysticism calls for mechanics.”<sup>94</sup> The Eiffel Tower, which stands in Paris as a symbol of mechanism, is not the opposite of mysticism. What it expresses, on the contrary, in its own way and in the same way as the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Church of Les Invalides, is the *Sursum Corda*. High towards the sky, it seems to announce the future reign of the machine that liberates man.

The effort by which man has increasingly expanded his knowledge has led us to “the twilight of the gods.”<sup>95</sup> The area in which our mechanical action is exercised has expanded with civilization and faith in the supernatural has diminished accordingly. The whole universe has come to appear to human intelligence as a mechanism, which scientific progress has made better known and used more and more each day. Already

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<sup>93</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 113.

<sup>94</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>95</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 585.

Aristophanes, in the *Clouds*, has Socrates say that it is not Zeus the Olympian who produces rain and thunder, but that it is the clouds. How much progress has been made since then!<sup>96</sup>

The church, which represented the sovereign value in the Middle Ages, is no longer the vital element to which the whole population is closely attached. Contemporary developments have brought out other values that are related to the machine drive.<sup>97</sup>

The potential for urban dynamism, included in the mechanistic culture, he recounts, was expressed in the transformation of Paris under the Second Empire (r. 1852–1870). In particular, the city is connected by the railways. A sudden leap in evolution, linked to this “road action,”<sup>98</sup> gave rise to a new Paris, which the progress of science and technology had already surpassed. But the immense city, “which is now spreading out before our eyes,”<sup>99</sup> Poëte reports, if it contains nothing in itself that necessarily determines its future, is charged with all of its past. Poëte reminds us that the city is still characterized by the Palace and the Cathedral. The right bank has kept its character as a business center, which the merchant group had imprinted on in the eleventh century. The west bank has remained the luxurious side, as in the time when the sovereign’s residence was in the Louvre and the Tuileries. Finally, the center of studies is still on the left bank. “It is in the wake of this past, which is constantly growing with the fleeting moment, that the old Parisian nave sails towards a new dawn, which is whitening on the horizon.”<sup>100</sup> The

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<sup>96</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 585.

<sup>97</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 585.

<sup>98</sup> Poëte, *Introduction à l’urbanisme*, 44. See also Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 581 and 585.

<sup>99</sup> “Avertissement,” *La vie urbaine* 1–2 (1919), 1.

<sup>100</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 576.

“endless renovation and reinvention that are at the heart of things” bring out the undulant and varied aspects of Paris. They illuminate the city with their changing reflections across the ages. Poëte’s city is an eclectic city that he elevates to a level of mystical wonder.

### *Conclusion*

As the chapter has displayed, Poëte’s model of “creative urban evolution” emphasizes becoming, change, and novelty, and the idea that “man is free [and] intelligent.”<sup>101</sup> His conception of urbanism supplements positivistic methods of urban planning with Spiritualist, creative evolution. But while Bergson’s main contribution to the philosophy of life and history is “intuition”—a sympathetic “entering into what is observed,” rather than going around it from the outside—Poëte observed Paris from an external perspective, relying mostly on narratives about the city written by other scholars. He interjected insights from historical records and literary fragments, exploring plans and visual representations. Despite the importance he attributes to the exercise of free will and proactive endeavors, the processes he discusses are overshadowed, drawn into the background by the overwhelming gravitational force of an all-encompassing history.

In fact, one of the examples Bergson gives to emphasize the disparity between the process of analysis and intuition is experiencing a city. Examining photographs and images of a city, as Poëte does, even a collection taken from every viewpoint and perspective, one cannot reconstruct, according to the philosopher, what it is to be in the city. Only by entering the city and walking through it can you grasp what it is to be there.

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<sup>101</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 576.

As Bergson contrasts intuition with pure analysis, Poëte's study seems to be more "analytical" than "intuitive." Analysis has its own value and provides us with some understanding, but knowing the things themselves requires intuition's sympathetic "entering into," for it is by intuition, Bergson insists, that we can seize reality from within.

However, unlike all other members of the *Société*, Poëte never practiced planning or implemented his ideas, so expansive and creative, in an actual design problem. He was the guru of the group; the *Société* and the *Institut d'Urbanisme* became the bastions where his concepts eventually found resonance among his colleagues, who eagerly embraced and sought to implement them in various cities worldwide. The subsequent chapters in this dissertation illuminate numerous instances where these ideas were put into practice, serving as concrete examples of the application and efficacy of Poëte's wisdom.

Poëte's social views seem inconsistent at times, as they oscillate between an open and a closed society, individualism and socialism, tradition and the modern, industry and spiritualism, but Poëte's project is one of reconciling all these seeming contradictions. Poëte's account of Paris and of urban evolution acknowledges the Bergsonian conviction that religion and society must be closed in order to protect human life, vulnerable to the inner dangers of thought. But while religion and morality guard this enclosure, through routines and fables, they also provide, far more mightily than thought alone, the means of opening and expanding thought. Poëte sees religion and morality as having two essential dimensions. In their "closed" aspect, they protect society by instilling myths and moral duty. They also, however, provide exceptional individuals with intuitions that raise them

above the level of social convention to a glimpse of human unity, and beyond the human, to the divine. Mystics and prophets, as well as intellectual and social and political elites, constitute for Poëte some of those exceptional individuals who can cause major societal changes. Poëte would argue that the urbanist or the scientist and artist who makes cities is one such “exceptional individual” who ought to have such intuition.

The notion of life as duration that Poëte appropriates from Bergson to explain urban evolution is a superhuman call to recognize the potential of what human beings and their societies could aspire to become. Instead of leading us away from the artificial realm of conventions to ponder our individual destiny, it beckons us to forge a new world—one that aligns more closely with the abundant possibilities inherent in life. Poëte considers those who receive such intuitions “mystics,” but they are not the sort of mystics who withdraw enduringly into the wilderness or monastery to meditate in solitude. Without giving us practical tools for operating on a city, Poëte binds us to the cultural and historic values that have been handed down to us, as well as to the spirit that originally inspired them. We are summoned to navigate the precarious equilibrium of apparent contradictions, embracing a jagged rhythm of expansions and conflicts, rather than advocating for the superiority of openness over closure:

The contributions of France and of foreigners have had the greatest part in the formation of this population, either by the introduction of new inhabitants into the city, or by leaving their mark on its physiognomy or its soul. The natural path of men through the valleys or plateaus converging on Paris led the provincials to this city, where their local varieties entered into the composition of the Parisian, while the great roads of the world brought, according to the course of the ages, the Roman civilization, the Galilean gospel, the new blood of the Barbarians of the North, the epic breath of the prestigious rides against the Saracens of Spain and the Holy Land, the revelation of the Italian Renaissance and the new world reached by the adventurous ships, the influences of the Netherlands of the Dukes



of Burgundy, then of the Spanish sovereigns, those of Protestant Germany and Catholic Spain, conqueror of the riches of America, those of England, dominator of the seas in its turn, and the intoxicating perfume of young American freedom, while waiting for Paris to give itself freely to the world, in the prodigious impetus of the Revolution. The path acts through what passes and through what remains.<sup>102</sup>

According to Poëte, as liberals, and as members of cultural and religious traditions, we should not expect to arrive at a state of absolute and lasting openness. Rather, we must persist in the challenging endeavor of embracing the paradoxical coexistence of opposing forces, the necessity of both the closed and the open within our society and within ourselves.

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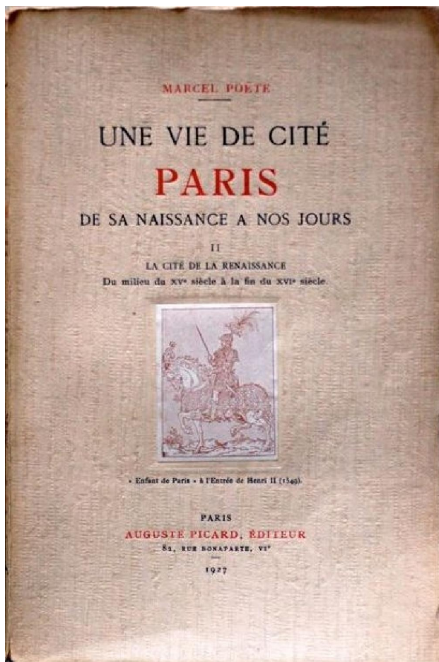
<sup>102</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 129.

**Images for Chapter One  
The Creative Evolution of Cities**

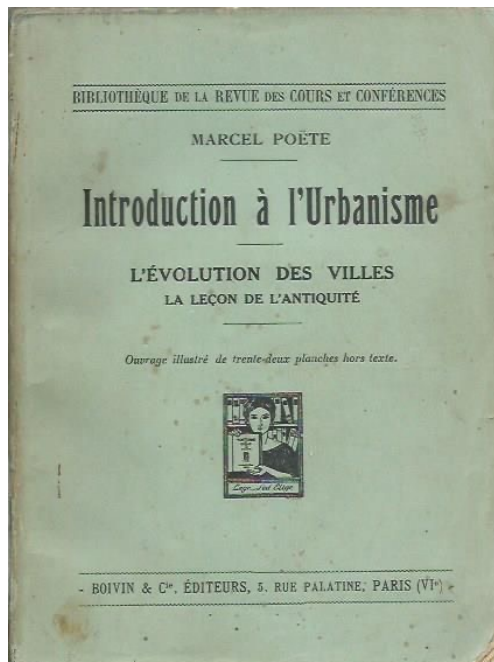


Figure 1 – Portrait of Marcel Poète (1866–1950), from Coudroy de Lille, Laurent, and Merlin, Pierre. “Les instituts d’urbanisme hier, aujourd’hui, demain, Vendredi 17 mai 2019.” *École d’Urbanisme de Paris*, 2019.

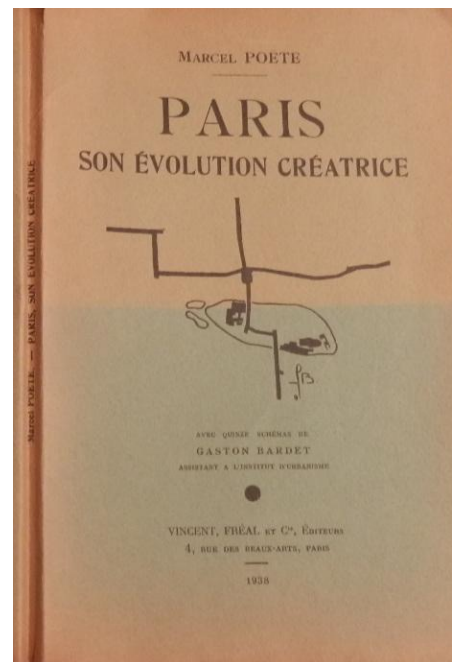
[https://www.eup.fr/fileadmin/redaction/EUP/Documents/Presentation\\_EUP/50\\_ANS\\_EUP-PANNEAUX-10\\_Marcel\\_Poete-750x1800mm-10mm\\_Fp-V4.pdf](https://www.eup.fr/fileadmin/redaction/EUP/Documents/Presentation_EUP/50_ANS_EUP-PANNEAUX-10_Marcel_Poete-750x1800mm-10mm_Fp-V4.pdf).



*A City Life: Paris, from Its Birth to the Present Day*, 1924



*Introduction to Urbanism: The Evolution of Cities, the Lesson of Antiquity*, 1929



*Paris: Its Creative Evolution*, 1938

Figure 2 – Some of Poète’s publications. Personal scans of the covers of *Une vie de cité: Paris de sa naissance à nos jours*. Paris: A. Picard, 1927; *Introduction à l’urbanisme: l’évolution des villes, la leçon de l’antiquité*. Paris: Boivin & Cie Éditeurs, 1929; and *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938.

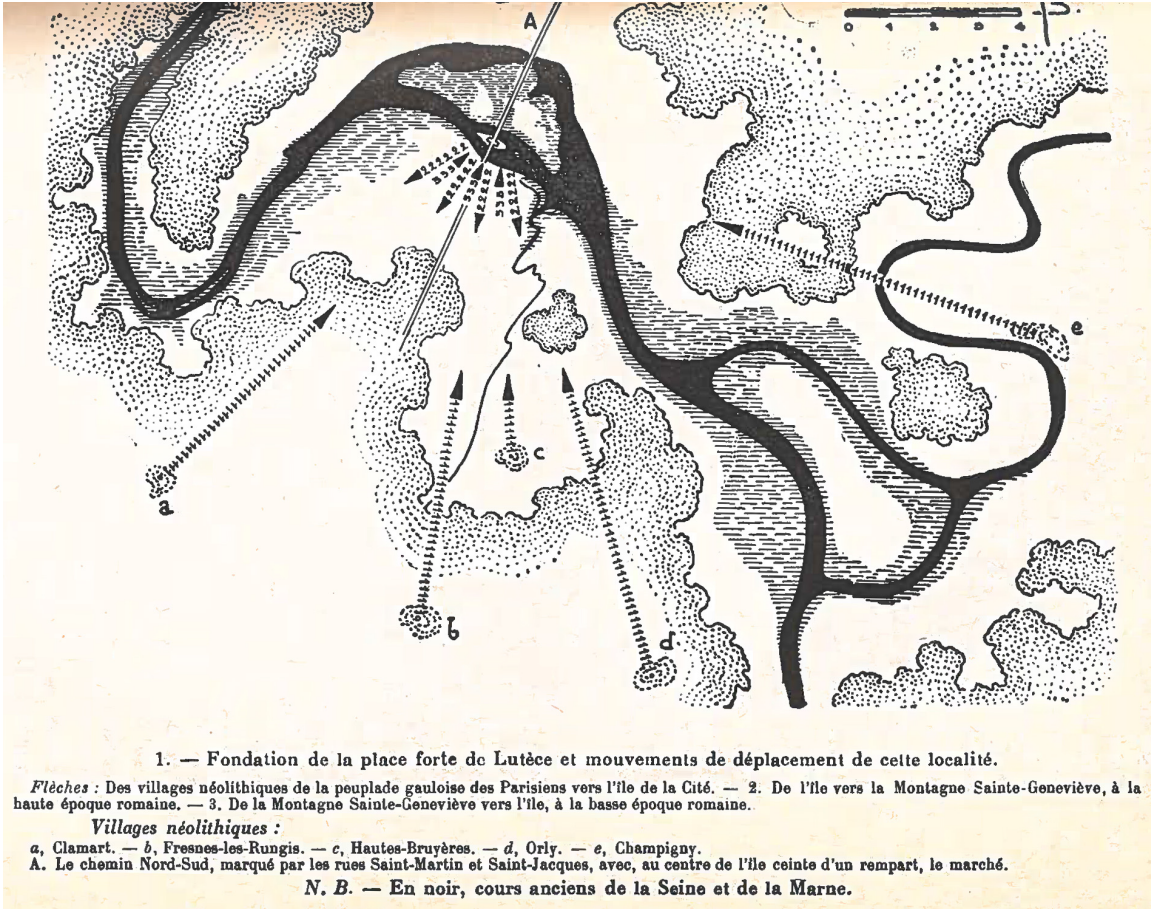
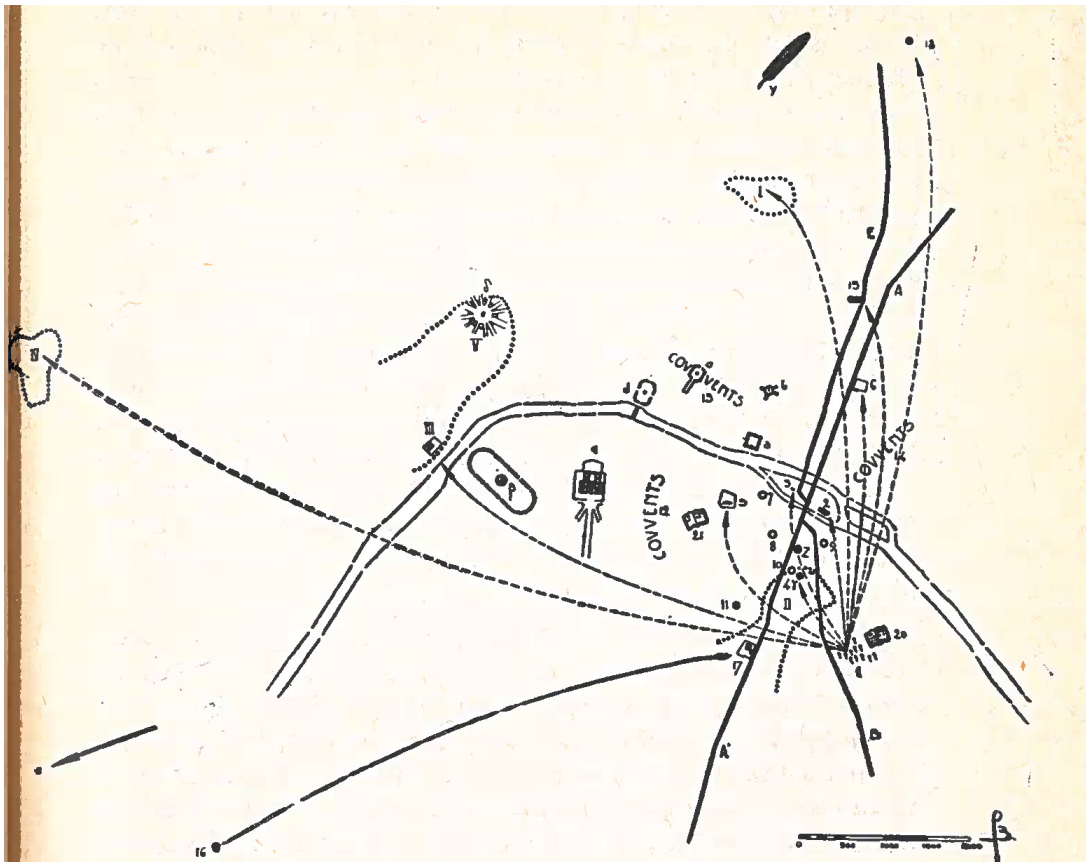


Figure 3 – Drawing by Gaston Bardet, showing the “foundation of the stronghold of Lutetia and its relocation movements,” from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 31.





5. — Foyers mystiques.

**Mystique chrétienne :**

1, Cimetière Saint-Marcel. — 2, Notre-Dame. — 3, Sainte-Chapelle. — 4, Sainte-Geneviève. — 5, Saint-Germain-des-Prés. — 6, Saint-Martin-des-Champs. — 7, Augustins. — 8, Franciscains. — 9, Carmes. — 10, Dominicains — soit les Quatre mendiants. — 11, Chartreux. — 12, 13, 14, Couvents de la Contre-Réforme. — 15, Saint-Lazare de saint Vincent de Paul. — 16, Port-Royal des Champs. — 17, Port-Royal de Paris. — 18, Abbaye de Saint-Denis.

**Mystique protestante :**

19, Localisation protestante populaire. — 21, Localisation protestante bourgeoise ou noble.

**Voies mystiques :**

17, rue Saint-Martin. — A', rue Saint-Jacques. — B, rue Mouffetard, chemin d'arrivée du christianisme. — E, rue Saint-Lazare.

**Lieux hauts mystiques :**

1, Montmartre. — II, Panthéon. — III, Bons Hommes de Chaillot. — IV, Mont Valérien. — V, Butte de l'Étoile.

**Mystique de la Renaissance :**

18, Collège de France.

**Mystique royale :**

17, Louvre. — b, Place des Victoires. — c, Place Vendôme. — d, Place de la Concorde. — e, Versailles.

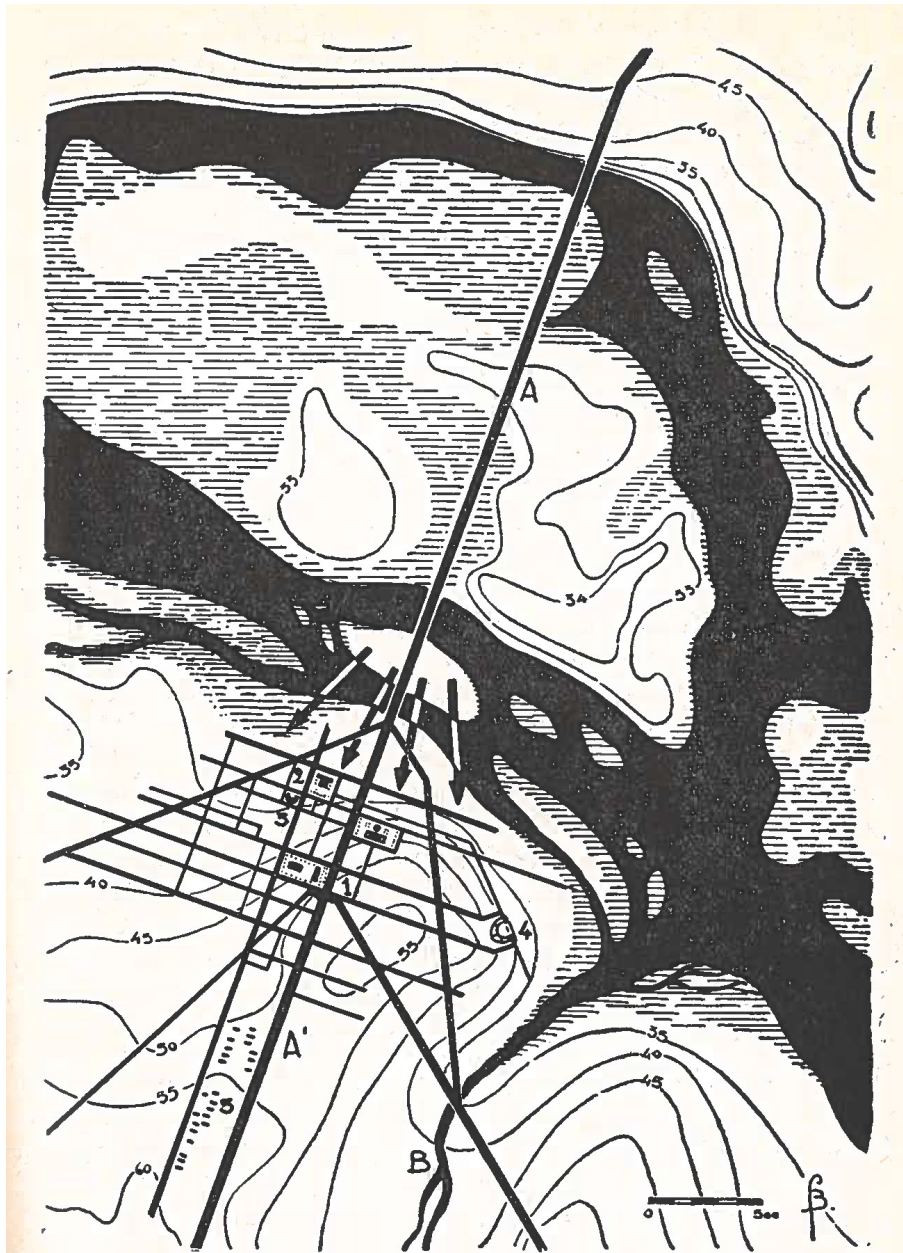
**Mystique patriotique :**

17, Invalides. — β, Autel de la Patrie au Champs-de-Mars. — γ, Panthéon. — δ, Arc de l'Étoile.

**Mystique du sentiment :**

17, Ermitage de Rousseau à Montmorency.

Figure 4 – Drawing entitled “Mystical Centers.” It includes the “Christian mystique,” the “Protestant mystique,” “mystical paths,” “high mystical places,” the “mystique of the Renaissance,” the “royal mystique,” the “mystique of patriotism,” and the “mystique of sentiment.” The drawing is from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 43.



2. — A la suite de la perturbation causée par la conquête romaine dans le milieu où vit l'organisme urbain, Lutèce abandonne l'île de la Cité et se reforme à la romaine sur la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève.

*Plan de la nouvelle ville. d'après Vacquer et Hochereau :*

A, rue Saint-Martin. — A', rue Saint-Jacques. — B, la Bièvre.

1. Capitole (?). — 2, Thermes de Cluny. — 3, Théâtre. — 4, Arènes. — 5, Cimetière païen.

*N. B.* — Sur ce schéma, comme sur les suivants, figurent les courbes de niveau du sol naturel de Paris, d'après la carte dressée par la Commission du Vieux Paris en 1910.

Figure 5 – Drawing with a caption that reads: “As a result of the disruption caused by the Roman conquest, Lutetia abandoned the *Île de la Cité*. Reformed in the Roman style, Lutetia relocated to Montagne Sainte-Geneviève.” The drawing is from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 33.

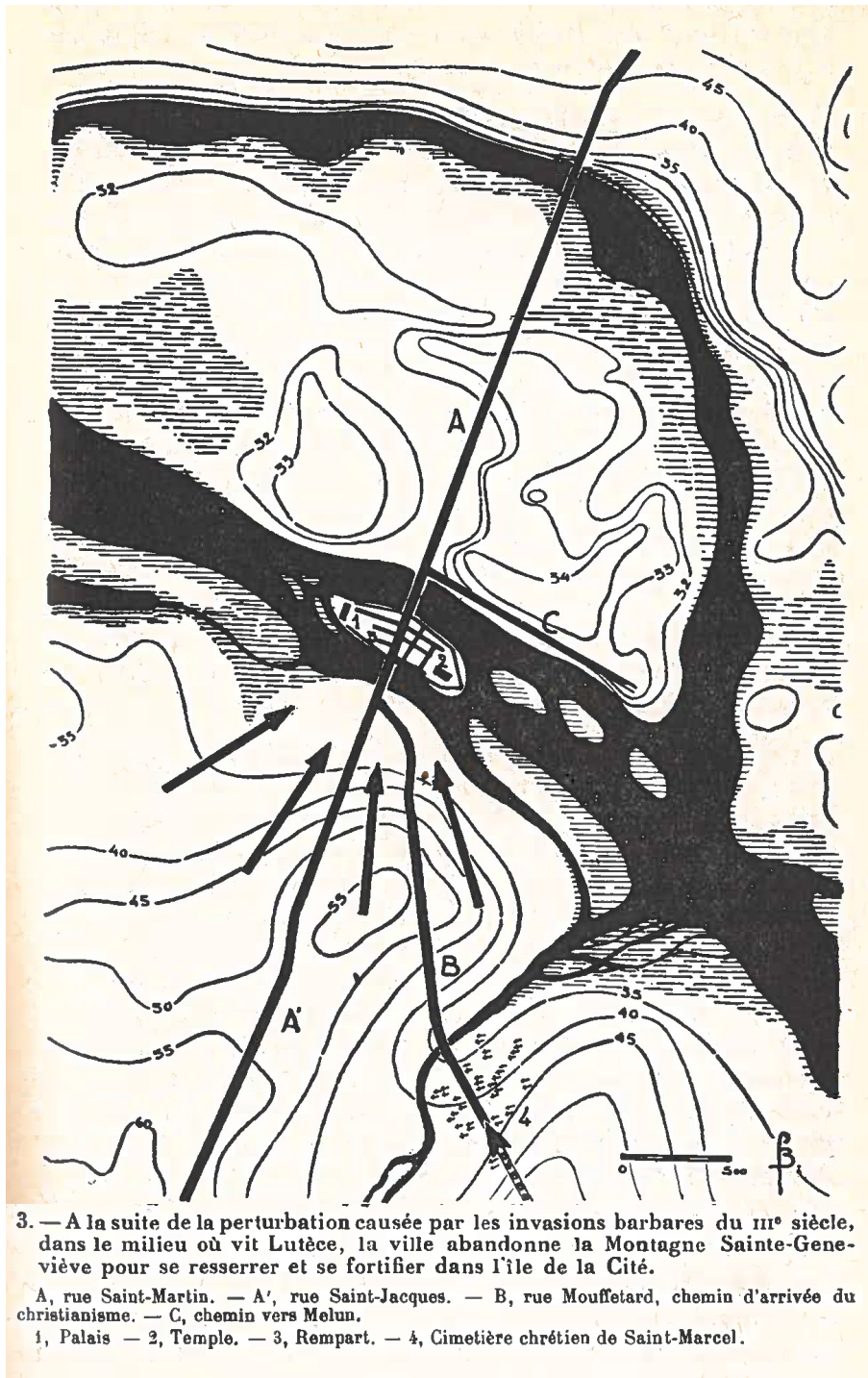
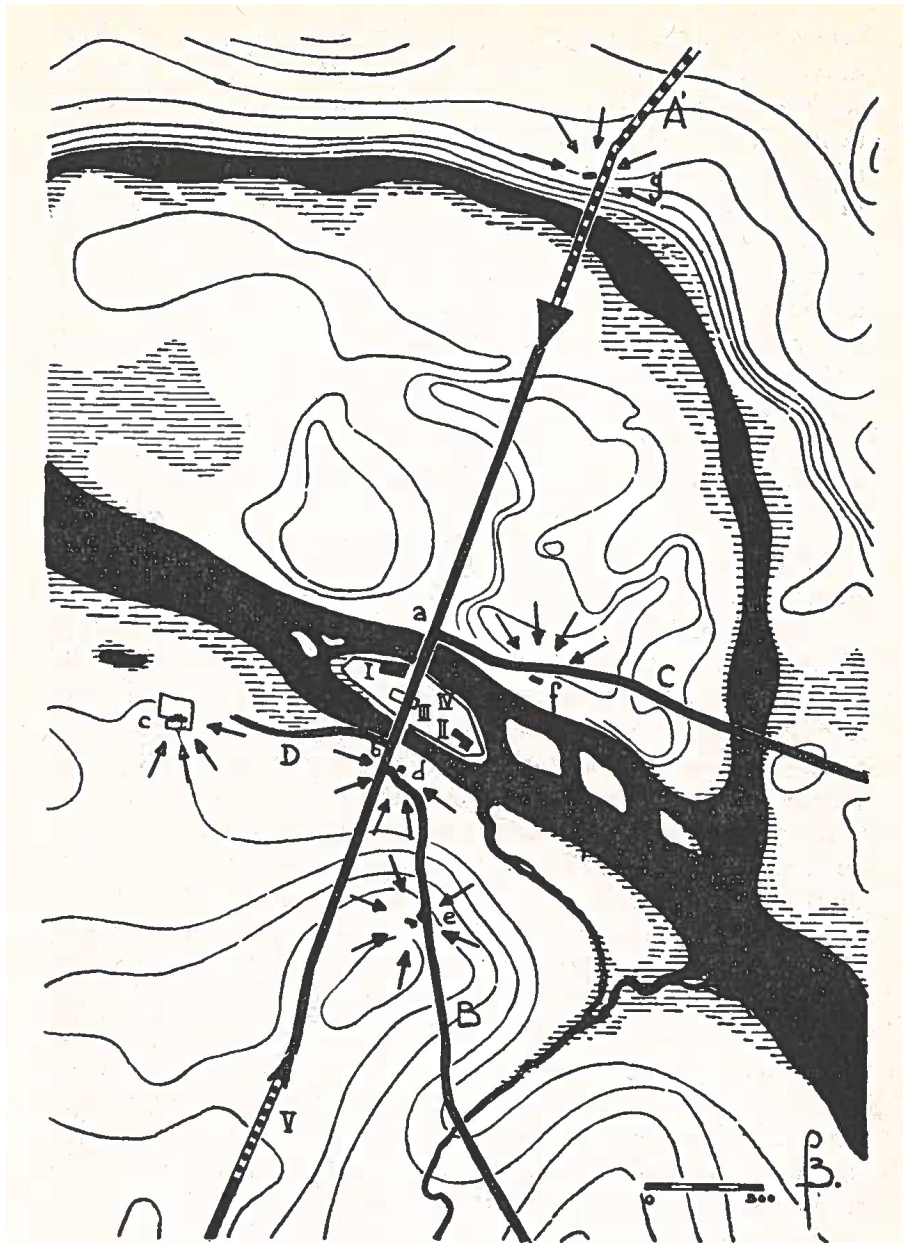


Figure 6 – Drawing captioned: “Following the disruption caused by the barbarian invasions of the third century, Lutetia abandoned Montagne Sainte-Geneviève and concentrated and fortified itself on the *Île de la Cité*.” The drawing is from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 35.





4. — Paris, au *vi*<sup>e</sup> siècle, à la suite de la perturbation causée, dans le milieu où il vivait, par la conquête franque et par la conversion des Francs au christianisme.

A', Arrivée des Francs au *v*<sup>e</sup> siècle par la rue Saint-Martin. — B, rue Mouffetard. — C, rue Saint-Antoine. — D, rues Saint-André-des-Arts et de la Huchette

I, Palais. — II, Eglise. — III, Marché. — IV, Rempart. — V, Clovis vient faire de Paris la capitale de son royaume.

a, Pont Notre-Dame. — b, Petit-Pont. — c, Saint-Germain-des-Prés. — d, Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre. — e, Sainte-Geneviève. — f, Saint-Gervais. — g, Saint-Laurent, églises suscitant, à des degrés divers, vers elles un peuplement que les petites flèches sorvent à figurer.

Figure 7 – Drawing entitled “Paris, in the sixth century, following the disruption caused to its environment by the Frankish conquest and the conversion of the Franks to Christianity,” from from Poëte, Marcel.

*Paris: son évolution créatrice.* Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 41.

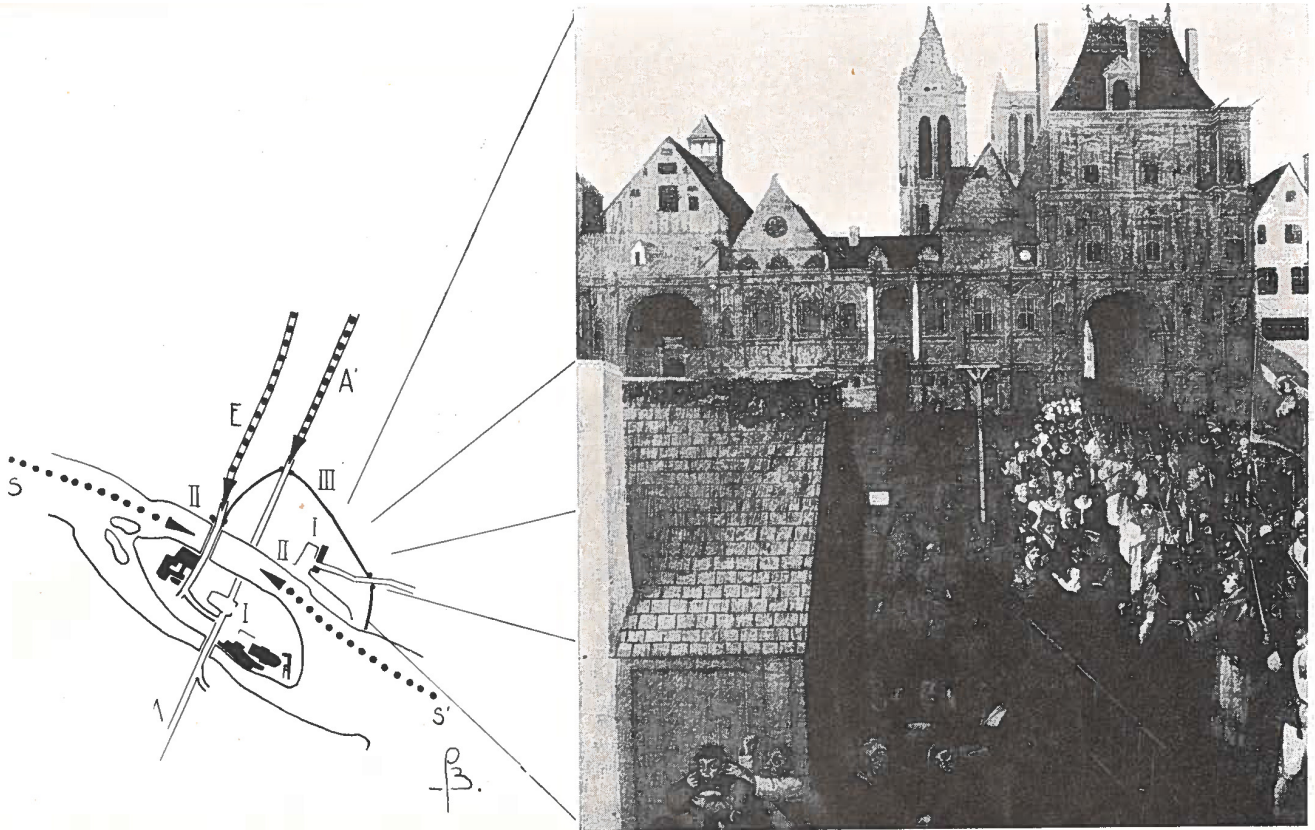


Photo Giraudon.

IV. — L'êtré urbain évoluant engendre une forme propre.

L'animation commerciale sur la Seine, dans le sens des flèches S et S', jointe aux courants de circulation des rues Saint-Martin (A') et Saint-Denis (E), suscite la formation, sur la rive droite, au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'une agglomération marchande (III), où le marché, primitivement dans l'île de la Cité (I), s'est établi (place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, J) et la création du port de Paris vers le pont au Change (II) et vers l'Hôtel de Ville (II). Du commerce est issu, au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le pouvoir municipal. Une forme nouvelle surgit : l'Hôtel de Ville, que voici — d'après un tableau du musée Carnavalet — au cours de sa reconstruction au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec la place qui le précède et où se déroule une procession de la Ligue.

Figure 8 – Sketch and photograph captioned: “The evolving urban being generates its own form,” from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 48.





8. — La croissance de Paris, sous l'effet des réactions de l'organisme urbain aux actions du milieu extérieur.

1, Rue Saint-Honoré ou chemin vers Rouen, la Manche et l'Atlantique. — 2, rue Saint-Denis ou chemin vers la Flandre, les Pays-Bas, l'Angleterre et, par Pontoise, vers Rouen. — 3, rue Saint-Martin ou chemin vers la Flandre, Anvers et les Pays-Bas. — 4, rue du Temple ou chemin vers l'Allemagne. — 5, rue Saint-Antoine ou chemin vers Genève ou Bâle et l'Europe Centrale ou vers Lyon et l'Italie. — 6, Rue Mouffetard ou grand chemin de Lyon et de l'Italie et du bassin méditerranéen. — 7, rue Saint-Jacques ou chemin vers Orléans, les châteaux de la Loire et l'Espagne ou vers Lyon et l'Italie. — 8, Seine ou voie vers la Manche et l'Atlantique.

I, Croissance au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle (rempart entourant la juxtaposition marchande à l'île de la Cité). — II, Croissance aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles (rempart de Philippe Auguste). — III, Croissance du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle (rempart de Philippe Auguste). — IV, Croissance aux XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles (rempart de Charles V). — V, Croissance aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles, marquée par l'annexion, en 1631, des faubourgs Saint-Honoré, Montmartre et Bonne-Nouvelle. — VI, Croissance du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (entre le rempart de Philippe Auguste et le Cours des Boulevards). — VII, Croissance au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (en liaison avec le Cours des Boulevards et au delà de l'ancien bras Nord de la Seine, dans la direction de l'enceinte des Fermiers généraux).

A, Ancien bras Nord de la Seine.

Figure 9 – Drawing entitled “the growth of Paris, resulting from the reactions of the urban organism to the external environment,” from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 65.

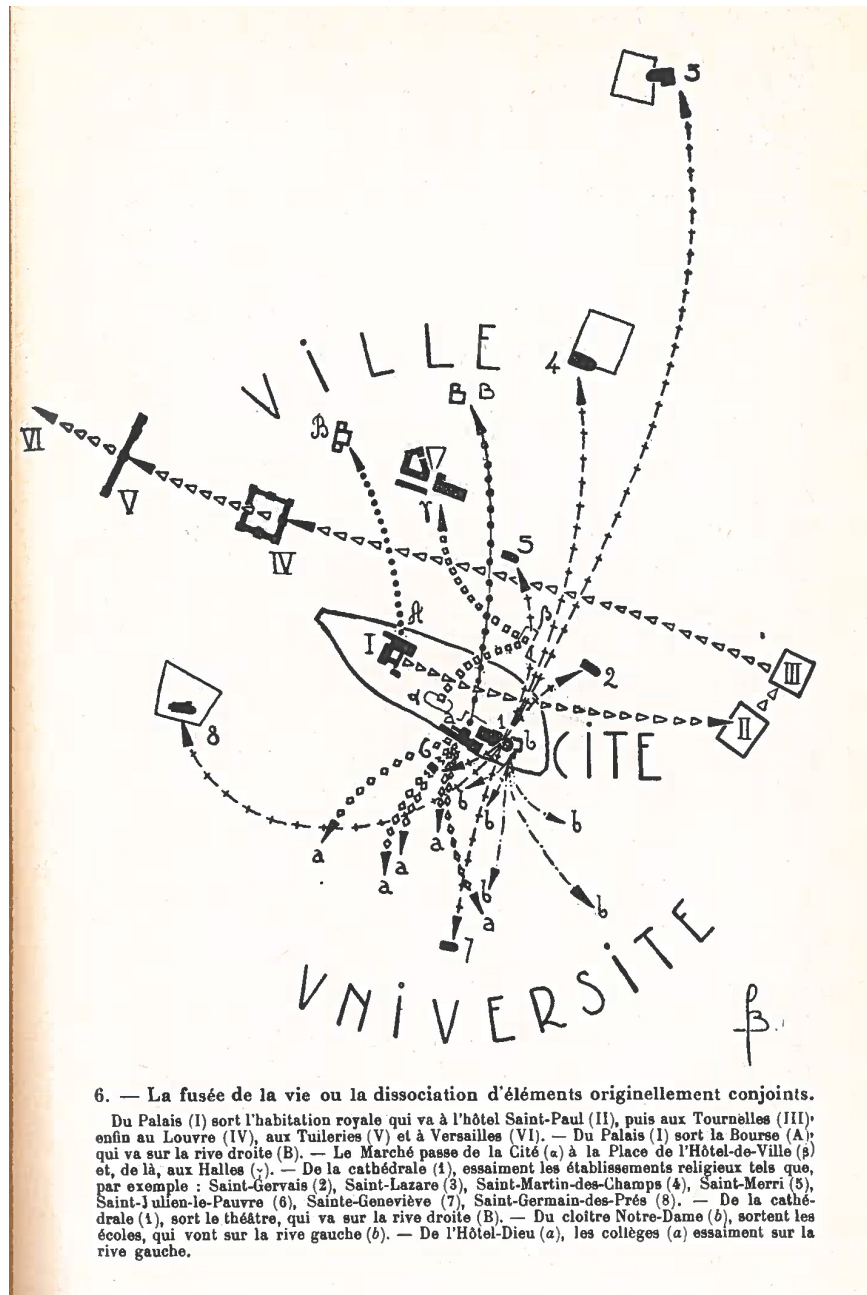
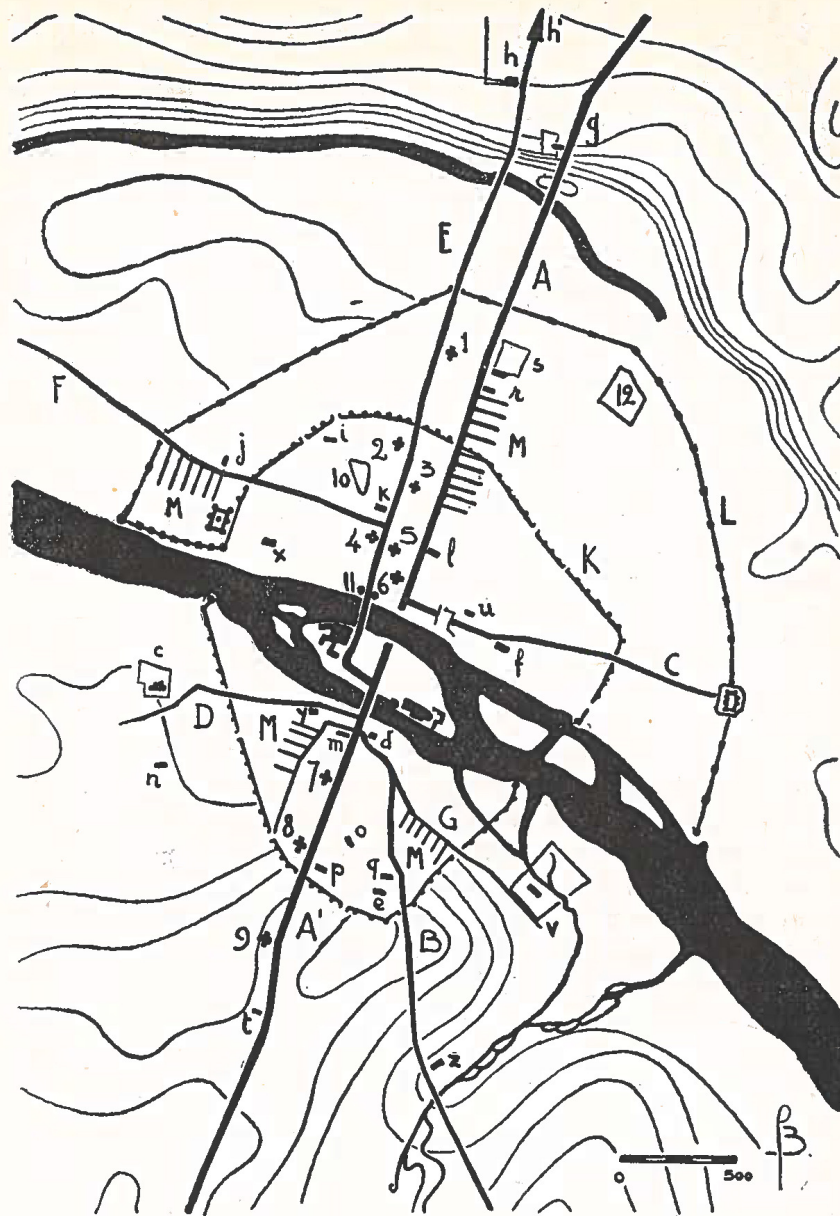


Figure 10 – Drawing entitled “the rocket of life or the dissociation of elements that were originally joined,” from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 49.



7. — La formation médiévale de Paris jusque vers le milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle.

A, rue Saint-Martin. — A', rue Saint-Jacques. — B, rue Mouffetard. — C, rue Saint-Antoine. — D, rues Saint-André-des-Arts et de la Huchette. — E, rue Saint-Denis. — F, rue Saint-Honoré. — G, rue Saint-Victor.

M, Croissance par accensements. — K, Rempart de 1200. — L, Rempart de 1360.

Hospices : 1, Trinité. — 2, Saint-Jacques-aux-Pèlerins. — 3, Le Sépulcre. — 4, Sainte-Opportune. — 5, Sainte-Catherine. — 7, Aumône de Saint-Benoît. — 8, Hospice Saint-Jacques. — 9, Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas. — h, Saint-Lazare.

Eglises ou monastères : c, Saint-Germain-des-Prés. — d, Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre. — e, Sainte-Geneviève. — f, Saint-Gervais. — g, Saint-Laurent. — i, Saint-Eustache. — j, Saint-Honoré. — k, Innocents. — l, Saint-Merri. — m, Saint-Séverin. — n, Saint-Sulpice. — o, Saint-Hilaire. — p, Saint-Etienne-des-Grez. — q, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont. — r, Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs. — s, Saint-Martin-des-Champs. — t, Notre-Dame-des-Champs. — u, Saint-Jean-en-Grève. — v, Saint-Victor. — x, Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. — y, Saint-André-des-Arts. — z, Saint-Médard. — 6, Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie. — 12, Temple.

Divers : 10, Halles. — 11, Châtelet. — h', Lendit.

Figure 11 – Drawing entitled “the medieval formation of Paris up to the middle of the fourteenth century,” from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 57.

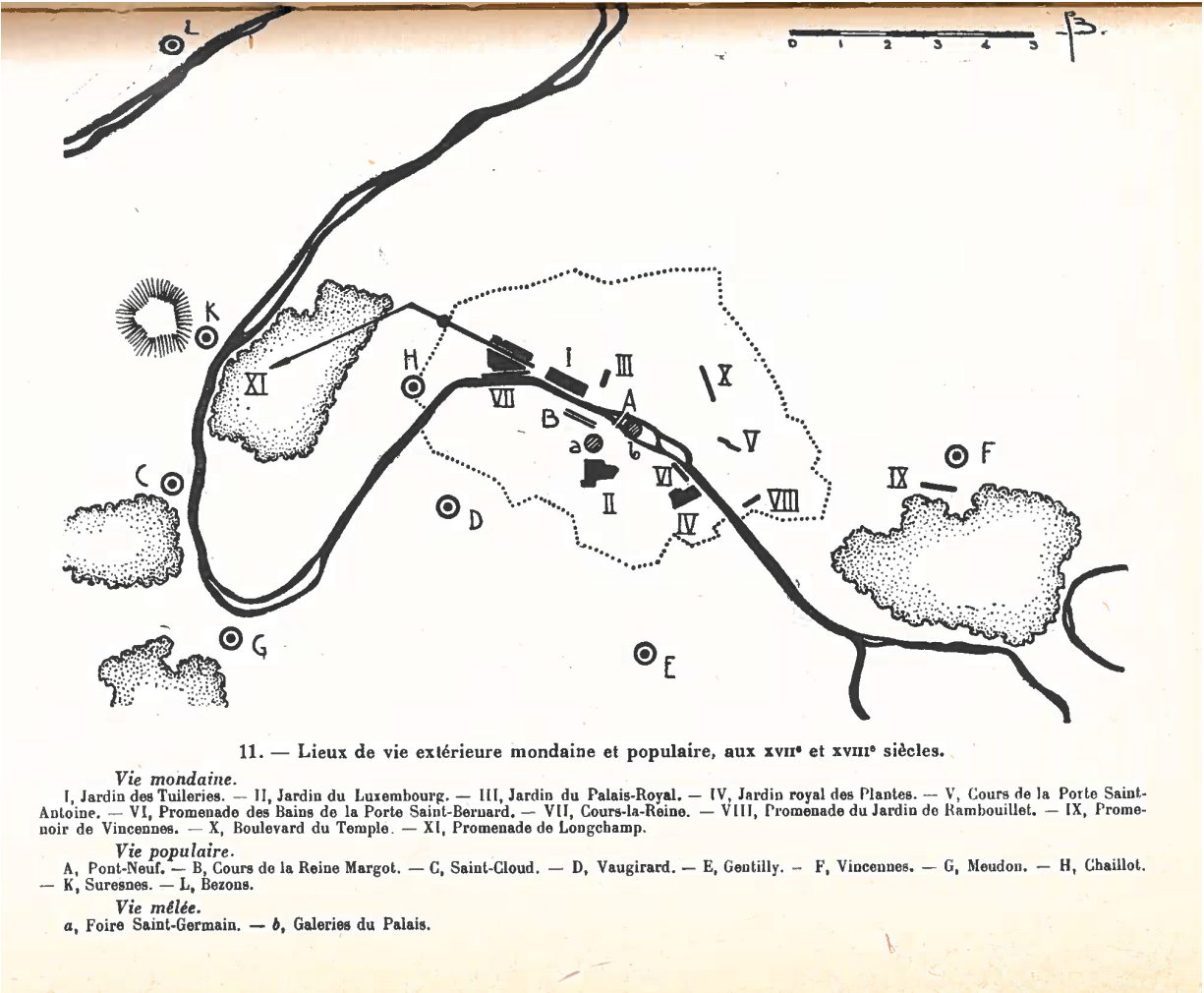


Figure 12 – Drawing entitled “places of social and popular outdoor life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” from from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 81.



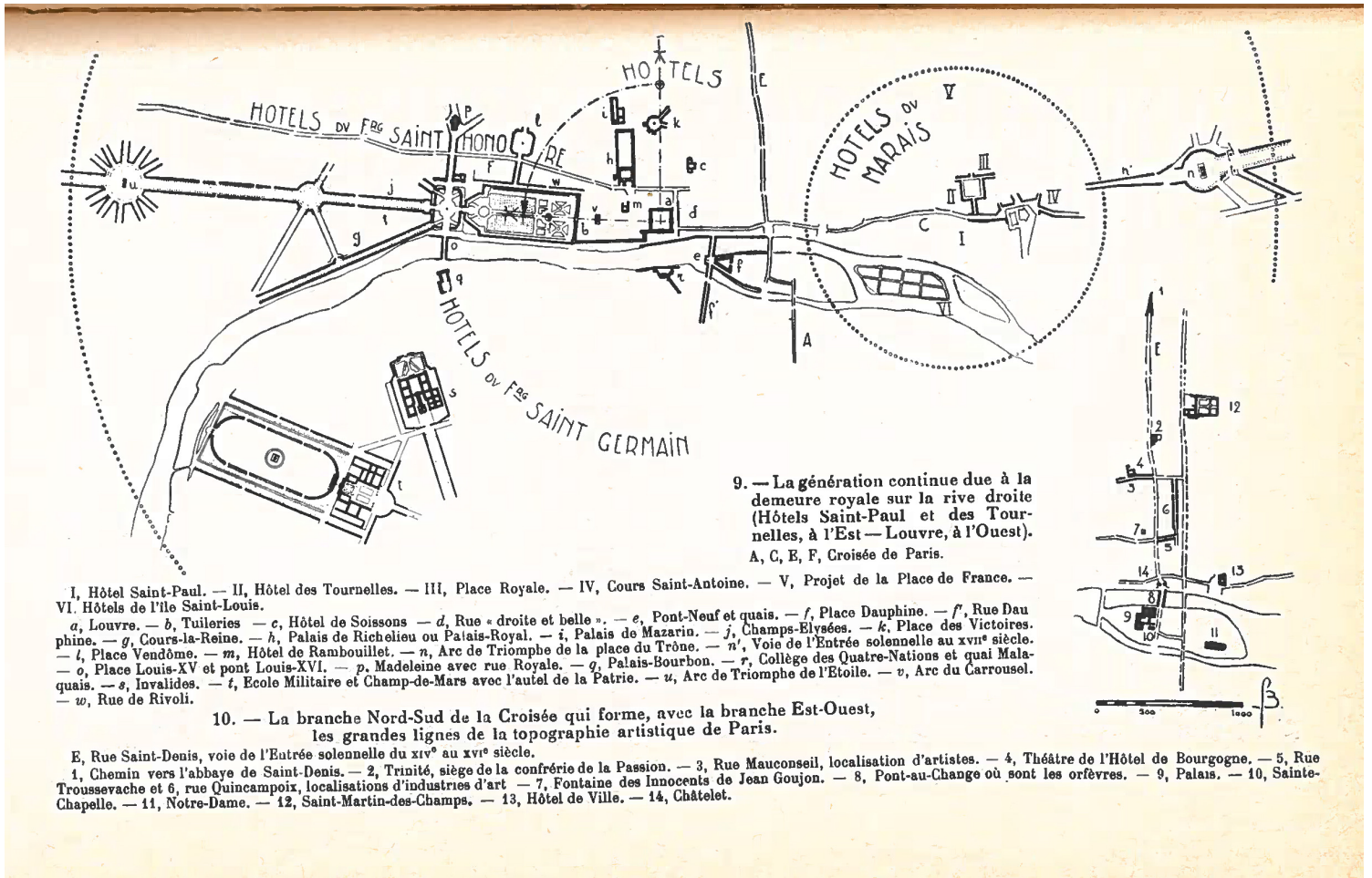


Figure 13 – Drawing entitled “the continued generation due to the royal residence on the right bank (Hôtels Saint-Paul and des Tournelles, to the east, and the Louvre, to the west),” from Poëte, Marcel. *Paris: son évolution créatrice*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938, p. 75.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Expansion of Cities

#### *The Ideological Roots of SFU's Regional Planning*

During the late nineteenth century, the rapid industrialization and urban expansion led most major cities in Europe to outgrow their medieval cores significantly. Planning these extensions had become increasingly normative and predictable, involving a grid system that facilitates convenient parcelization and development. The extensions typically featured a gridded network of streets and alleys, leading to spacious roundabouts or squares that connected the old and new parts of the city. The developments were frequently linked to a newly established train station, enhancing connectivity and accessibility. Haphazardly scattered throughout the urban landscape, several parks appeared with no deliberate order. Consider, for instance, Ildefons Cerdà's 1859 plan for Barcelona, which serves as a representative example. Designed by a civil engineer, and not backed up by theoretical speculation, the plan features a great diagonal that arbitrarily cuts through an otherwise relentless grid. The placement of public squares is rather capricious. This chapter shows how *urbanisme* by SFU sought to address the shortcomings of this utilitarian method of planning and urban expansion.

In an article on the twenty-year development of urbanism in France (1939), SFU member Georges Sébille sarcastically criticized the old and common conception that as urban planning involved little more than “a grand architectural composition, every

architect must be an urbanist,”<sup>1</sup> providing the city with “a few beautiful squares, or a few streets with well-ordered facades.”<sup>2</sup> Sébille protested that such a situation should not be allowed to prevail, as “the profession has become something entirely different.”<sup>3</sup> From “city planning, or the rational and aesthetic development of cities,” he suggested, “we have moved on to the planning of suburbs, then of the countryside, and of regions.”<sup>4</sup> Sébille sums up with the formidable declaration that urbanism has become “the art of instating, in the best way possible, men on Earth.”<sup>5</sup> In a book written six years later, Gaston Bardet reiterated Sébille’s definition, while indeed citing his colleague:

The etymology of the word Urbanism, born around 1910, has very rapidly evolved. Urbanism was originally a simple discipline of city planning, then it expanded so that it encompassed the planning of villages and regions, and subsequently the nation. Around 1930, rural urbanism, regional urbanism, and national urbanism were born.<sup>6</sup>

As Sébille and Bardet instruct us, *urbanisme* was not restricted to the development of cities. In 1919, the *Société* architects helped establish the first French urbanism law, Cornudet Law, which required a growth plan for cities with over 10,000 inhabitants. This new, enlarged geographical scope required urbanists, despite their name, to develop not only cities but also the countryside. However, while existing literature expounds regional planning only in terms of an increase in the scale of urban development, I argue that SFU’s method of expanding cities into the countryside was also grounded in a political

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<sup>1</sup> Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” 39.

<sup>3</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” 39.

<sup>4</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” 39.

<sup>5</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” 39.

<sup>6</sup> Gaston Bardet, *Pierre sur pierre: construction du nouvel urbanisme* (Paris: Éditions L.C.B, 1945), 257.



and social science movement that emphasized “regionalism,” “human geography,” and “decentralization.” SFU used these terms to assert the belief that human beings make cities rather than having cities thrust upon them.

The *Société* planners advanced an environmental approach to territorial development that sought to balance the needs of the industrial city with those of the countryside. This method was indebted to scholarship in geographical and political sciences established by scholars such as geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache<sup>7</sup> (1845–1918), economist and historian Charles Gide (1847–1932), and founder of the French Regionalist Federation (1901) Jean Charles-Brun (1870–1946).<sup>8</sup> These roots of regional geography have been neglected by scholars, and so have been the roots of urbanism tied to regional geography.

Vidal de la Blache devised the concept of *genre de vie*, the notion that the lifestyle of a particular region reflects the social, political, economic, and psychological identities imprinted on the landscape. From 1870 onwards, geography sought to comprehend the rapport between people and their environment, the origin and evolution of landscapes, and the function of social and economic apparatuses in the organization of space. Vidal de la Blache, one of the founders of modern geography and a pioneer of human geography, emphasized that the role of people is operative in the evolution of life on Earth, as, within certain parameters, human beings can alter their environment to achieve

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<sup>7</sup> Influenced by German thinkers, especially Friedrich Ratzel, whom he had met in Germany, Paul Vidal de la Blache has been associated with “possibilism,” a term he never explicitly employed but which succinctly encapsulated his resistance to the determinism advocated by certain geographers of the nineteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> For a good source on the contribution and legacy of *Jean Charles-Brun*, see Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890–1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

their own goals. Vidal de la Blache challenged the traditional geographical methods and environmental determinism, which regarded all facets of human activity as fully determined in character by the natural environmental context of a place.<sup>9</sup> A highly instrumental and prolific scholar,<sup>10</sup> Vidal de la Blache produced a series of coherent regional monographs on France and other parts of the world and influenced contemporaneous and subsequent scholars to produce similar studies. In his work, he aimed to classify the collective characteristics of “regional personality,” which is supposed to emerge through a self-reinforcing cycle of individual tendencies and environmental characteristics.

SFU adopted these Vidalian regionalist ideas, as well as the notion that social and geographic boundaries are more important than artificially constructed national and administrative boundaries, influenced by the geography of Vidal de la Blache and Jacques Élisée Reclus. The latter gave to Vidal de la Blache’s geography, which concentrated on physical characteristics, a sociological dimension. Against the political manipulation of academic geography that emerged under Vidal de la Blache,<sup>11</sup> Reclus

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<sup>9</sup> In other words, human activities like farming are determined by things like climate, soils, and topography. However, according to Vidal de la Blache, the relationship between human activity and the environment is not a one-way road, but a mutual relationship in which both influence one another. Vidal de la Blache refers to this as an ongoing dialogue between the natural environment and the human communities they support.

<sup>10</sup> Vidal de la Blache was a historian before he turned to geography. Originally a historian of antiquity before becoming a geographer, Vidal de la Blache had immersed himself in the history of the Mediterranean, traveling widely along its shores and spending time in the Balkan Peninsula and in Greater Syria. In his travels, he aimed to classify the collective characteristics of what constituted the regional personality of a place. He focused on the *longue durée*, on lasting qualities rather than the short-term dynamics of economic and social change.

<sup>11</sup> Vidal de la Blache’s ideas formed the main paradigm for the geographical science of the epoch, controlling the universities and research centers, and the granting of degrees. They became especially triumphant in France during the Third Republic (1870–1940), which was dominated by nationalism that provided a means of controlling populations. History was given the role of showing how nations emerged. Geography was a substitute for politics. It crafted a method for thinking about national identity through regional difference. “Bringing geography into close relationship with history, the

argued that “social geography”—a term that he coined—should reveal three orders of facts: class struggle, the quest for equilibrium, and the sovereign struggle of the individual.<sup>12</sup>

Besides Vidal de la Blache, SFU’s environmental ideas also stemmed from figures such as Jules Méline, who wrote *The Return to the Land and Industrial Overproduction* (1905), which Donat Alfred Agache cites in his book, *Our Rural Settlements, How to Develop Them* (1918). Méline highlights in his work that one of the benefits that come from “the return to the land” is the relief of overcrowded cities, which would find its best and readiest means of accomplishment by the opening up of new occupation for workers on the land. Thus, Méline adds, there ought to be no serious antagonism between town and country concerning this great movement for the re-occupation of the land. They who help the one cause help the other.<sup>13</sup> Méline regards this movement as inevitable.<sup>14</sup>

Regionalism was not only a social and geographical doctrine, but also a political and economic movement, with a resonant appeal across France’s provinces. Since the late nineteenth century, a few political leaders had commenced to recognize the weak sense of national unity, remarkably outside Paris. Unequal economic, educational, and cultural opportunities, meager communication systems, undeveloped transportation services, and regional dialects had produced in France a situation several historians would later brand

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national and the local were mutually constitutive rather than oppositional realms.” See Kenny Cupers, “*Géographie Volontaire* and the Territorial Logic of Architecture,” *Architectural Histories*. 4.1 (2016).

<sup>12</sup> For a good source on Jacques-Élisée Reclus’s social thought, see John P. Clark and Camille Martin, *Anarchy Geography: Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisée Reclus* (Lanham Md: Lexington Books, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Jules Méline, *The Return to the Land* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907), XIX.

<sup>14</sup> Méline, *The Return to the Land*, XXII.

“internal colonialism.”<sup>15</sup> As a result of that, political and intellectual leaders such as Gide and Charles-Brun led a campaign for “regionalism,” “particularism,” and “patriotism” during the early twentieth century. Their action is distinguished by themes of evolution and conciliation, a departure from the sentimental nostalgia commonly attributed to this period by most historians.<sup>16</sup> As Charles-Brun elucidates, “stability and change” and “tradition and progress” are terms that seem so obviously contradictory, but need not be, for regionalism brings them together.<sup>17</sup> Uniting the intellectual and the peasant in a cheerful embrace of local cultural nuances, their form of regionalism highlights the importance of economic decentralization.<sup>18</sup>

At the core of the concept of regionalism was the imperative to propel France beyond the divisions spawned by the Revolution. Adherents of the movement condemned Enlightenment universalism, believing these notions were based on abstract rationalist thinking. They favored instead a philosophy based on the appreciation of individual differences. Charles-Brun holds that divisions should be centered on concrete realities. Artificial divisions produced by abstract thought, he understands, had wounded French society. He argues that France’s political instability stemmed from an obsession with reforms that followed *a priori* political models, and that politicians who seek to rethink

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 46.

<sup>16</sup> For a good source on “nostalgic modernism,” see Rosemary Wakeman, “Nostalgic Modernism and the Invention of Paris in the Twentieth Century,” *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>17</sup> For a good source on Charles-Brun, see Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890–1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Vidal de la Blache underlined the importance of decentralization. Requested by France’s prime minister, Aristide Briand, to create regional groupings with representative organs, he published a visionary article on the regions of France in 1910. He proposed cutting France into regions organized around a metropolis. Contemplating the economic dynamics of the contemporary world, marked by global competition and the rapid contraction of the planet facilitated by enhanced communications, he advocated for organizational structures that are less centralized and more adaptable.

the shape of the Republic need to attend to the cultural and economic realities expressed in France's regions. Regionalism became ingrained in the political discussions of the era, serving as a common thread in Republican discourse regarding state reform in France. Its echoes endure in present-day discussions on decentralization in the country.

The appeal of regionalism and regional urban forms and architectural styles, for SFU, rests on an appreciation of cultural diversity and an acknowledgement of the limits of modern expertise. In the conferences and exhibitions that the *Société* urbanists organized and partook in, the urbanists often discourse their regionalist manifesto. At the “*La Cité Moderne*” exhibition, held in Nancy shortly before the Great War, Agache frames a clear set of primacies for the urbanist. The urbanist, Agache stresses, must always put the public interest before any private interest. That public interest, he continues, meant, in large part, the responsibility to protect local styles and traditions, even as the urbanist helps improve municipal development and public health. In other words, despite all the pragmatic aspects of planning needed for modernizing an urban landscape, the urbanist should prioritize preserving the local character.

The regionalist credo is also well articulated by Belgian and French architects, including members of SFU, who organized the “*La Cité Reconstituée*” exhibit at the Jeu de Paume in 1916. The French contingency included several members of SFU. The exposition considered future rebuilding in areas largely destroyed by German invasion in the north and east of France. Speaking on behalf of the group, Agache states that “French and foreign cities were represented with their past, present, and future physiognomy.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Donat Alfred Agache and Georges Risler, *Nos agglomérations rurales, comment les aménager: étude monographique analytique, comparée d'un concours de plans de bourgs et villages* (Paris: Librairie de la Construction Moderne, 1918), XXVII.

Plans of big and small cities, he added, preserved the treasures of the past and scrupulously respected the regional originality, while accommodating the needs of modern life.<sup>20</sup> Agache affirms that urbanism is not a matter of proposing “omnibus plans that could be laid out here or there, irrespective of the specific conditions of a setting. The physiognomy of the rural agglomerations of our old France,”<sup>21</sup> he continues, “is diverse.”<sup>22</sup> Restoring and resuscitating it would “evoke, if not the souvenirs of a destroyed past, at least the charm of the territory.”<sup>23</sup> In his introduction to the 1922 French version of Raymond Unwin’s manual of garden-city design, Léon Jaussely reiterates the same stand:

We do not think it would be particularly desirable to create from scratch—no matter how joyous, how seductive they might be—totally new cities, by which we mean true garden cities, completely self-sufficient and isolated from the older centers of our actual cities, with their histories and their traditions.<sup>24</sup>

Other members of SFU articulated a similar agenda. What they are emphasizing is basically the notion that the rural personality of a place and of a nation is even more important than the character of the city, and that is because the urban physiognomy is shaped by the various rural environments that make urban life possible and structure the spaces beyond city walls.

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<sup>20</sup> Agache and Risler, *Nos agglomérations rurales, comment les aménager*, XXVII.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 45–46.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 45–46.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 45–46.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 38–39.

*1919 Paris and the Establishment of the Plan d'Extension*

In *Paris, Its Creative Evolution*, Marcel Poëte celebrates regionalism. As he emphasizes the importance of history in his work, he demonstrates that geography and history are interwoven. Each social agglomeration, he believes, has its own “spirit,” “soul,” or “nature,” which can be distilled from its cultural expressions. In this case, the modern population of Paris, according to Poëte, is in fact the consolidation of its people, and hence the regions, that historically existed around the city. Citing social historian Gaston Roupnel, who “conforms to Bergson’s ideas,”<sup>25</sup> Poëte suggests:

It is with a soul filled with all the old lives that each of us crosses the world with a new life. The North and South have made the Parisian, as they have made Paris. There is in the Parisian the Celtic, the Latin, and the French. He is, like his city, the confluence of the provincial varieties of the French.<sup>26</sup>

The guiding principle behind this mode of social thinking for Poëte is that, besides the family, our being takes root from the soil.<sup>27</sup> The roots of many cities are villages, just as the origins of many urbanites are villagers. Such is the case of Paris, Poëte reminds us: “The Parisian is a farmer and a winegrower.”<sup>28</sup> The village, in the Parisian context, he recounts, was born before the small stronghold of the *Île de la Cité*, which “could only have appeared at a relatively late date.”<sup>29</sup> The idea Poëte is accentuating is that belonging

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<sup>25</sup> Marcel Poëte quotes Gaston Roupnel. See Marcel Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice* (Paris: Vincent, Fréal et cie, éditeurs, 1938), 127.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel Poëte quotes Gaston Roupnel. See Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 127.

<sup>27</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 121.

<sup>28</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 121.

<sup>29</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 121.

and being attached to the land, which existed before the establishment of Paris, will persist and shape the lifestyle of the Parisian, eternally.

Agricultural life, Poëte contends, has shaped the Parisians for thousands of years. Their original territory was made up of fields and meadows against a background of forests “full of game and where pigs went to graze.”<sup>30</sup> In the middle of the fifteenth century, vines of Mediterranean roots eventually supplemented the local landscape. The agrarian system was that of long, narrow, unfenced fields, spread throughout the whole area. Families of farmers practiced crop rotation and opened the land, after the harvest, to the grazing of the village’s herd of animals. This system, which began in the vast silty plains of the North, bears witness to a social discipline and a community spirit in keeping with the needs of the first cultivation of virgin soil. It has persisted and imposed itself on the succession of clearings that have extended, over the ages, the cultivated surface. Poëte insists that the imprint of agricultural life, to which the Parisian is ancestrally attached, is deeply marked on him,<sup>31</sup> no matter how urban his setting has become.

Poëte’s statement is a counterpoint to Haussmann’s eradication of history in his demolition of Paris’s urban fabric in the nineteenth century. In Haussmann’s restructuring of the city, neither Paris’s urban fabric nor its domestic architecture qualifies as sufficiently historical to be preserved or even documented for inclusion in a museum. Haussmann attempted to isolate Parisian monuments from their urban context. Although his approach prioritizes connectivity, maximizing the circulation of people, money, and goods, the French baron did not consider the social construct of the city in his development scheme.

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<sup>30</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 121.

<sup>31</sup> Poëte, *Paris: son évolution créatrice*, 121.



To speak of an “extension plan” today often leads to citing Paris and the early twentieth-century debate about its regional development as references. The contribution of Poëte, who headed the Paris Extension Commission, and was one of the first Parisian intellectuals involved in the question of the expansion of the city, was significant.<sup>32</sup> Poëte co-directed the commission with *Musée Social* member Louis Bonnier.<sup>33</sup> The commission, studying the development of the Parisian metropolitan region, set up the program for the “Greater Paris” competition.

The work of this commission was to form the documentary basis for the development of a plan for a new extension of Paris. Established by order of the prefect Marcel Delanney on June 26, 1911, Poëte’s commission did not meet until 1912. The bulk of its output is contained in a two-volume report (1913): *Historical Overview* and *Preliminary Technical Considerations*. The division of the report into two parts reflects the importance of historical precedents in the thinking of Poëte and Bonnier, especially since the second volume, which is more future-oriented, is still strongly based on historical analyses. The *Historical Overview*, in which Poëte and Bonnier asserted that “Paris, being par excellence a city of historical evolution, has its future intimately linked to its past,”<sup>34</sup> was divided into two parts. The first was devoted to the extension of Paris and the general development of the city from the origins to the end of the Second Empire. The second part was committed to the immediate precedent of the planned extension, the

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<sup>32</sup> Some SFU members also played a significant role. They put forward schemes for the development of Paris and the zone of the fortifications in 1919 and the 1930s, including Hénard, Forestier, Jaussely, Agache, and Prost.

<sup>33</sup> The same year, Poëte and Bonnier also co-founded the *École des hautes études urbaines* (EHEU) and the journal *La vie urbaine*.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, “Les plans d’extension et d’aménagement de Paris avant le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *La vie urbaine* 2 (1920), 3.

annexation that happened in 1859. Paris was divided into 12 arrondissements in 1795, 9 on the right bank of the Seine River and 3 on the left bank. Through a law established on June 16, 1859, 11 municipalities and 13 fractions of municipalities were annexed to Paris, doubling the area of the capital to 7,082 hectares, for 1,667,841 inhabitants. The annexation gave Paris its current administrative face. The 20 arrondissements were created, with their demarcations generally following the boulevards or the limits of the former communes. Paris was delimited by the enclosure of Thiers, surrounded by a non-building zone. Known colloquially as *fortifs*, the wall was built between 1841 and 1844. It is 33 kilometers in length and comprises 94 bastions, 17 gates, 26 barriers, 8 railway crossings, 5 river or canal crossings, and 8 posterns. Its ditch and counterscarp are a 250-meter-wide strip of land, constituting the military easement zone. Over time, however, it became home to caravans and light constructions, itinerant traders' markets, the flea markets of Saint-Ouen and Montreuil, fairs, circuses, and businesses no longer able to pay taxes or store their goods inside the city. In 1913, it was home to around 30,000 people. For a development scheme tackling the peripheral urban growth, urban planning had to grapple with the fate of the wall.

As fin-de-siècle Paris retained its wall, it featured an extremely troubled suburban reality. Its development needed to fuse all the banlieues together, while finding ways to make the expansion of the city into them coherent. Its Haussmannization had sent the working class towards the outskirts of the city, marking a physical and social marginalization. Contemporaneous statistics showed that the population of the suburbs of the Seine department increased fivefold, from about 260,000 residents in 1861 to 1,200,000 in 1911. Paris lagged noticeably behind the other important and big European

cities such as Berlin, London, and Vienna, which it had often been compared to.<sup>35</sup> Its urban economy was inactive, although there was some potential in the new production of automobiles and machine parts on the city's fringes. Mortality percentages for all ages exceeded those of other European nations. Class hostilities continued to grow with mounting volumes of strikes.<sup>36</sup> As the housing available to urban families within the working class waned in magnitude and swelled steeply in cost, overcrowding became an evident problem, with over half the city's population living in congested or inadequate dwellings, as documented in a 1910 census. In the 1900s, the first Parisian attempts to elaborate a policy of urban expansion appeared. The idea had been in the air, preoccupying the congresses of urban planners and hygienists in France and abroad. In Germany, for instance, organized planning and expansion of cities had already become popular. In England, the first "garden city" experiment, Letchworth, was being carried out.<sup>37</sup> But unlike most important European cities, Paris had preserved its wall.

Analyzing Poëte's historical study in 1920 in *La vie urbaine*, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs noted that the fear of the monarchical power with regard to too great an extension of Paris dates back to the sixteenth century. The same problems, he thinks, will arise for those who wish to enlarge the present limits, but the difficulty of the solution will increase in direct proportion to the material and moral development of Paris. After so

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<sup>35</sup> In almost every publication, SFU architects and planners lamented the regression of Paris and contrasted it with the progress of other European and world capitals and cities. This realization necessitated providing Paris with a development and extension plan so that Société and *urbanisme* would "contribute, for their part, to the splendid influence that [France] had exerted on the whole world" and the country would "take back the place of avant-garde that it should never have allowed itself to lose." See Agache and Risler, *Nos agglomérations rurales, comment les aménager*, XXXVI.

<sup>36</sup> The strikes were amplified by the growing political dominance of the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) and various left-wing parties.

<sup>37</sup> It was adopted due to the Housing Town Planning Act, established in 1909.

much work, expenditure, demolitions, upheavals, and breakthroughs, the end is not reached. The promenades and streets are insufficient. But to consider them within the narrow limits of the city's administrative territory would be to ignore reality.

Poëte's report thus proposed the creation of vast green spaces on the former military zone. It took up the idea put forward at the *Musée Social* of a double network of parks and communication routes structuring the Paris region. The law of decommissioning the fortified enclosure of the city was passed on April 19, 1919, preceded by the Cornudet law on the development and extension of cities, which was established the same year. To prevent Paris from being encumbered by new constructions, a development plan for the enclosure was discussed. The rapporteur of the law, Arthur Rozier, declared in the Chamber on March 13, 1919 that the building of the wall was a mistake:

If the demolition of the enclosure wall could contain this first symbol of a kind of mutual disarmament of parties and classes and of the bringing together of men in the common national work, this would be a first result that we would be happy to welcome.<sup>38</sup>

With this law and the Cornudet law, the conditions necessary for the establishment of a project for the extension of the capital and the development of the metropolitan region were therefore met. The Greater Paris competition was organized for this purpose, just a few weeks after the adoption of the two laws, revealing a change in the attitude of specialists towards a territory whose allocation had now been decided in its broad outline. The program of the 1919 competition for the Paris extension plan was informed by

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<sup>38</sup> Pierre Brisset, *La zone de Paris et la loi du 10 Avril 1930, thèse de doctorat en sciences politiques et économiques, Université de Paris* (Melun: Imprimerie administrative, 1932), 79.

Poëte's commission report, emphasizing the "community of relations and interests" between Paris and the suburbs. It was recommended that the competitors undertake the requested study with the broadest views, without worrying about administrative districts. The fortifications, initially perceived as a simple obstacle to expansion, become a possible place of decentering and a place of transferring equipment located within the city walls, which can consequently free up land allocated to open spaces. The process relieves the pressure exerted on the center of the metropolis.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, the issue of the decommissioning of the fortifications from their military function and expanding the city was being studied by geographers and other thinkers at the time as not just a functional problem, but also a philosophical one, influenced by Bergson's and Vidal de la Blache's ideas. In an article in *La vie urbaine* entitled "The Concept of the City Then and Now," geographer and president of the Statistical Society of Paris, Paul Meuriot, explains that what defines a modern city is its core and human activity, rather than its walls. The city of old, he elucidates, is a fortified city. Urbs is in fact the same as orbs, meaning enclosure. The Middle Ages, he suggests, saw only fortified towns.<sup>40</sup> The city had walls that were like the keep for the lord, both a mark of sovereignty and a necessity for defense. It was obliged, by virtue of its charter, to maintain its walls. If a city lost its charter, it lost its walls. The term *ville* (city) originally meant agricultural estate. As the city was fortified, important books such as

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<sup>39</sup> For a comprehensive book on the fortifications and the 1919 developments in Paris, see Jean-Louis Cohen and André Lortie, *Des fortifs au périif: Paris, les seuils de la ville* (Paris: Picard éditeur, 1991). See also the collection of essays in Florence Bourillon and Annie Fourcaut, *Agrandir Paris, 1860–1970* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Paul Meuriot, "Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd'hui," *La vie urbaine* 1–2 (1919), 147.

*Sachsenspiegel*<sup>41</sup> started defining the word *ville* as “fortified village:” a stronghold. In some countries, a distinction was even made between *villes rurales* (rural cities) and *villes murales* (mural or walled cities). The name city was ultimately exclusively reserved to the latter. Cities began to lose their walls in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thus losing their exclusive character as fortified towns. In France, the Thiers fortifications were, “from the point of view of the population,”<sup>42</sup> Meuriot contends, “no longer anything more than an administrative fiction.”<sup>43</sup> What Meuriot is trying to explain is that the new walls were no longer an obstacle for the growth of the agglomeration, which is stimulated by human growth. In his reasoning, there is a shift in the definition of the city, from a formal and legal one to a Vidalian “human geographic” one, related to people. Meuriot forcefully concludes with the Bergsonian idea that:

In the contemporary era, our large urban centers take on the aspect that now fixes them in our minds, that of agglomerations extending indefinitely, without precise limits—of demographic groupings in ‘perpetual becoming’ [...]. The modern urban agglomeration is [...] nothing other than a continuous dynamism through the indefinite growth of its population and the equally indefinite extension of its area.<sup>44</sup>

With the progress of artillery that has, in modern times, become limitless, fortifications have become useless and rather disappeared almost everywhere. Among the European metropolises, Meuriot deliberates on the fact that only Paris and Rome have preserved

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<sup>41</sup> Meuriot cites *Sachsenspiegel*, describing it as “a great German constitutional document of the Middle Ages.”

<sup>42</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 148.

<sup>43</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 148.

<sup>44</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 148 and 152.

them. In Paris, the enclosure “has no demographic reality,”<sup>45</sup> and in Rome, the *cinta Aureliana* (Aurelian wall) is “only respected on a purely archaeological basis.”<sup>46</sup>

Meuriot asserts that this perpetual movement, which takes an increasingly large part of the population out of the center, establishes a living link between the various regions of the agglomeration and a solidarity that “Parisianizes” the suburbs. Similarly, the newcomers, brought in by immigration and established in the suburban area, feel their economic dependence on the capital and are attracted by it:

What inhabitant of the suburbs, even if they are far away, is not a bit of a citizen of Paris? The suburbs are therefore no longer made up of isolated localities that are independent of the city, as they were before. They are no longer distinct from it; they extend it in space and their development depends on that of the city itself.<sup>47</sup>

Meuriot’s point, that the suburban resident is a Parisian, supplements and completes Poëte’s argument that the city was shaped by the people, or the “villagers,” as he labels them, who lived in the regions around Paris. This shows how this movement is perpetual. However, modern transport systems allow cities to be supplied on an unprecedented scale, and as the modern urban agglomeration is a continuous dynamism through the indefinite growth of its population and the equally indefinite extension of its area, there is always a permanent, stable element in it, identical through the ages: the heart of it, which, in various forms, transmits the tradition to the new generations, which the growth of the population incessantly presses into the city and around it.

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<sup>45</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 148.

<sup>46</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 148.

<sup>47</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 150.

For Poëte, correspondingly, the urbanism of Paris—and, he would argue, any city—is more the outcome of human action upon the land, over time, than the work of experts prodding a city upon the people. As I have shown in the previous chapter, for Poëte, the French capital had developed according to an evident terrestrial—geographical and historical—logic that should be respected. The life of the city has been shaped by various mystical, economic, and social activities, generating urban structures that survived the ages and constituted twentieth-century Paris: *beaux* quartiers in the west, working-class districts in the east, and industrial suburbs in the north. The intellectual heartbeat of the city resided on the Left Bank, while the Right Bank endured as its bustling business core. As Chapter One demonstrated, the ancient soul of Paris found its dwelling on the *Île de la Cité*, with its boundaries extending outward as railroad lines reaching into the provinces. With the planned extension of the city, we are supposed to rediscover its urban heritage, the particularity of its neighborhoods, and its vernacular spaces and architecture. With this rediscovery, the fundamental virtues of Frenchness are revived. This was a validation of patriotism and retrenchment that typified the postwar years. A new expansionist circulatory system was the mechanism for restoring the *élan vital* in the Parisian landscape.

In his writings, Poëte recounts Paris's historical development in order to display how it relates to the development of the land. He categorizes the different neighborhoods of Paris that originated as villages and, together, constitute the cotemporary city:

Village of source, village of summit, village of ford like Saint-Marcel, village of valley, such as the one whose origin is linked to the Couture-Saint-Martin, in the



rue Saint-Martin, mark the places where, like spring shoots, the Paris of our days is born here and there.<sup>48</sup>

That Paris grew out of a village is decisive for Poëte, particularly in contrast to cities established *ex novo*, which he, other members of the *Société*, and geographers and urban historians who resisted environmentally deterministic theories, such as Pierre Lavedan, have highlighted. Paris, according to Poëte, is a middle-ground case in which people carry forward the role that nature started, across the centuries, and in which capitalism and technology apparently slowly developed. In the last century, however, industrialization ensued. It was the biggest rupture, “push[ing] the past into the distance,”<sup>49</sup> with “the prodigious development of machinery, by which man, in his continuous creation of himself, almost suddenly reaches the superhuman.”<sup>50</sup> Poëte challenges the pessimistic teleological Marxist viewpoint stressing the passivity of human beings in the face of technological advancement. For him, defiantly, human beings with technology had to become superhumans, further modifying their environment to advance their own ends. “It is this continuous creation, in which both the spirit and the intelligence come into play,”<sup>51</sup> Poëte pontificates, “that we must consider in the religious, moral, and social formation of the Parisian.”<sup>52</sup> In examining the program he devised for the city’s expansion, we see how he deployed his theories in an actual design problem.

Although the Greater Paris competition did not result in a comprehensive plan straightaway, it constituted a turning point in French planning history. Scholarship has

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<sup>48</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 123.

<sup>49</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 132.

<sup>50</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 132.

<sup>51</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 132.

<sup>52</sup> Meuriot, “Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd’hui,” 132.

usually considered the competition to have been an isolated event, or even a failure. However, it does mark a bridge between two episodes in Paris's planning history: Haussmann's great transformations and the 1930s regional planning. In the manual for the Greater Paris competition, Bonnier constructed a series of maps that ignored administrative and military boundaries and designated instead traditional population nodes throughout the Paris *agglomération*.<sup>53</sup> Organizing regionally meant distributing dense or open urban areas, green spaces, and industrial zones within the perimeter of the region, based on human or economic geography, not municipal boundaries.<sup>54</sup> We see this conviction in both the 1919 Greater Paris competition and, slightly over a decade later, in the development plan for Marseille by Jacques Gréber (1932) (figures 1 and 2).

### *1930s Marseille and Regional Planning by Jacques Gréber*

Gréber opened his book on the scheme he put forward for the expansion of Marseille, *City of Marseille: Development and Extension Plan, Descriptive Memorandum* (1933), with a frontispiece that showed a small engraving of Marseille in the seventeenth century (figure 3). At the end of his expansive report, he included an aerial view of Marseille (figure 4) that was supposed to display "the immense and magnificent development of the city around its Old Port."<sup>55</sup> Gréber highlighted "the striking contrast between the two images."<sup>56</sup> According to him, "nothing seems to have been done, or even

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<sup>53</sup> Wakeman, "Nostalgic Modernism and the Invention of Paris in the Twentieth Century," 123.

<sup>54</sup> André Morizet, "Les plans régionaux," in Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France," 6.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Gréber, *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension, mémoire descriptif* (Vincent, Fréal, 1933), 110.

<sup>56</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

prepared, to bring the urban organism into line with the progress of the port.”<sup>57</sup> The modest but eloquent photograph, “a testimony of grandeur, but a grandeur full of dangers,”<sup>58</sup> optically concretizes the urgency of remedies to be applied (figure 5). Because of “the danger that appears to all, particularly in the form of circulatory congestion,”<sup>59</sup> Gréber proclaimed “the psychological moment seems to have been reached to successfully propose the most indispensable remedies.”<sup>60</sup> A program of essential accesses, he recommends, must be carried out, to ensure that the flagrant imbalance between the city and its trade, worsening every day, will not ruin both.

The city that Gréber was commissioned to restructure boasted a surface area of about 23,000 hectares for the municipal territory, 5,000 hectares for the total agglomeration, encompassing the city and its suburbs, and 1,200 hectares for the dense central agglomeration. The 18,000 hectares forming the suburbs and the rural and forest belt of the city were occupied by scattered settlements, mainly along the roads, but of a density too irregular to include them within the limits of the urban area proper. In fifty years, the population of Marseilles was estimated to increase by 50%, or a minimum of 1,200,000 inhabitants. “The increase in the population of Marseilles”<sup>61</sup> was, as Gréber asserts, “entirely due to immigration.”<sup>62</sup>

Gréber studied the movement of people into Marseille across the Mediterranean Sea. Using a very Poëteian term, he titled this section of his report “Evolution.” Since ancient times, Marseille had thrived, due to its maritime communication throughout the

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<sup>57</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

<sup>59</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 49.

<sup>62</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 49.

Mediterranean basin. The port and its trading posts brought business and people to the city (figure 6).<sup>63</sup> That the port and its associated trades relied on a large, transient workforce had significant consequences for the city's population and urban landscape. By the 1920s, the first wave of Italian immigrants, who had come to Marseille in search of work at the end of the nineteenth century, was well installed and had noticeably altered the city. Although the decades following the Great War saw a regression in new immigrants, this period witnessed successive waves of refugees arriving from Spain, Turkey, and Armenia, who were joined by a new influx of workers from North Africa, West Africa, and Southeast Asia. Images and textual accounts of Marseille from the late 1920s and early 1930s emphasized the diverse origins of its inhabitants. Marseille's unique cosmopolitanism, hectic activity, and ceaseless movement is celebrated by Gréber. His plan eventually equipped the diverse population with the necessary living spaces. Gréber specifically saw the old port as embodying these historical traces of Provençal culture, emerging owing to immigration. The development and expansion of Marseille, therefore, needed to preserve the aquatic core, from which the life of the city took off, and tie it to the entire territory.

In addition to studying the historical movement of people from and into the city, Gréber examined the geographic and historical conditions that, in confluence with the force of human migration, shaped the life of Marseille and determined its evolution. In his report, Gréber recounts that the oldest city in France, Marseille—or Massalia, as it was originally named—was founded in 600 BC by Ionian Greek settlers from Phocaea, in

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<sup>63</sup> Sheila Crane wrote a book about Marseille. She lays out the history of immigration into the city and the factors that made Marseille a crossroad of Mediterranean cultures. See *Mediterranean Crossroads: Marseille and Modern Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Western Anatolia. The Ionian group landed in Lacydon, a rocky Mediterranean cove, east of the Rhône River, now the site of the old port. In the masterly setting of the Estaque and Etoile ranges to the north, the Calanque of Marseilleveyre (figure 7), Saint-Cyr, and Carpiagne to the south, supported inland by the Allauch ridge, the Huveaune valley once led, through a wide estuary into the Mediterranean Sea, to the spot where we see the Old Port today. Just like Poëte, in his analysis of Paris, Gréber articulates how these topographical conditions in Marseille, particularly favorable to their continuous growth, prepared the successive plans on which were established, first, the small Phocaeen colony, bordering the ancient Lacydon, later the city of the Middle Ages, and finally the great modern metropolis. Several large natural routes opened communications with the port, “admirably sheltered from the winds and attacks by the hills that dominate it.”<sup>64</sup>

In his scheme, Gréber aimed to maintain Marseille’s role as “the great gateway from Africa, the East, and the Far East to Western Europe, while ensuring, first of all, the economic link of a more particularly French nature, between the metropolis and the majority of its colonies.”<sup>65</sup> In a true Poëteian fashion, Gréber hoped for an expansion of the city that would connect it with its territory beyond the traditional urban boundary, as well as with its history. Poëte was influential for Gréber. They were fellow professors at the *Institut d’Urbanisme*.<sup>66</sup> Gréber cogitates Marseille’s deep history. His analytical method is indebted to Poëte, especially to the latter’s account of the French capital in *Paris: Its Creative Evolution*. Gréber noted that the commercial importance of the port

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<sup>64</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 18.

<sup>66</sup> As a professor at the Parisian school, Gréber also followed in the footsteps of his colleague Jaussely. Gréber replaced Jaussely at the *Institut d’Urbanisme* and took over the course on “urban aesthetics” that the latter used to teach. See Léon Jaussely, *Cours d’art urbain n°1,2,3: École d’Hautes Etudes Urbaines* (Paris: Fonds Ancien. Institut d’urbanisme de Paris, 1920).

during the Roman Empire was coupled with its strategic value. Julius Caesar (r. 64–44 BC) laid siege to the port in 49 BC, without, however, depriving the city of its economic activity. Then, after the obscure period of the barbarian invasions, Gréber considers, the city resumed the “role that its geographical location had assigned to it,”<sup>67</sup> and that the “great movements resulting from the crusades had definitively established.”<sup>68</sup> Marseille thus acquired its status as the port of the Gauls towards the Levant. Here, Gréber appropriates the Poëteian idea that Christianity is a form of mysticism that continues the work of nature. It merges with the vital “creative impulse,” which I discuss in Chapter One.

Consistently adhering to Poëte’s principles, particularly his notion of royal mysticism, Gréber adds that King Louis XIV definitively annexed Marseille to France, causing it to lose the commercial freedoms it had enjoyed until then, but at the same time, giving it a boost as a national port of which it still bears a powerful trace. The Minister of Finances in France under Louis VIX (r. 1643–1715), Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), already wanted to make Marseille “the most beautiful city in the world.”<sup>69</sup> Intendants of the Galleys Nicolas Arnoul and Pierre Puget drew up plans for its embellishment, of which only a part was then realized. Gréber proudly asserts that Marseille was classed among the great modern cities.

The era of the Revolution was, for Gréber, as for Poëte and all the *Société* thinkers, a “decadent” period. The Plague of 1720, Gréber recounts, dealt a terrible blow to Marseille’s population. Half of its residents died. In a short time, the city was

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<sup>67</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 4.

repopulated, thanks to the constant influx of new inhabitants and the activity of the merchants, to whom the French colonial empire owed much of its expansion. The troubled period of the Revolution, Gréber informs us, did not slow down Marseille's development, but the French Empire's struggles against England completely paralyzed its trade, which soon resumed, and, with the instigation of French colonialism in Algeria, saw an almost unlimited future open up. The nineteenth century, and even more so the twentieth, brought Marseille the consecration of its power. The development of Marseille had been concentrated around the old Lacydon until the seventeenth century, but following the work carried out by Louis XIV in the second half, the agglomeration expanded rapidly.

In Marseille, as in Lille, also restructured by Gréber, the architect followed an outside-in strategy, consisting of focusing first on the periphery and subsequently the city. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, there has been a dissociation between the port and urban logics. But the task, for Gréber, was not reconciling the two but rather tackling the problem in reverse. For the urbanist, the conditions for a new harmony between city and port would emerge from the re-articulation, on the fringe, between city and hinterland:

We see no better solution to the tidying up or renovation of the old parts of an old city than that which consists of starting with the rational development of its *banlieues* and still sparsely populated *faubourgs*.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 22.

The port of Marseille, with its ten basins and area of 312 hectares,<sup>71</sup> was the largest in France. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, it grew and extended over 5 kilometers of shoreline, occupying an area of 320 hectares, and over another 5 kilometers, as far as the entrance to the Rove Tunnel, bringing the sheltered area to 430 hectares. However, “the town remained as if unaware of this magnificent expansion, despite an increase in population, unique in France.”<sup>72</sup> The traffic, an indication of prosperity, was paralyzed in a labyrinth of streets, insufficient in number and width. The stagnation of the urban traffic equipment risked jeopardizing the immense effort of the Chamber of Commerce in its remarkable port installations. Gréber highlighted the work that had been accomplished by the Chamber in terms of port development. The works undertaken allowed the great Mediterranean port to not only maintain its superiority, but also increase it. In addition to the port facilities included in the municipal territory of Marseille, the Chamber of Commerce broke the suburban Chaîne de l’Estaque, putting Marseille’s port in direct contact, through the underground Rove Tunnel, with the Étang de Berre and its outlet to the Mediterranean at Caronte, and with the interior of the country, through the Rhône Canal. When Gréber arrived in the city, a second modern outer harbor was also in the process of being developed, around the Étang de Berre and at Caronte and Port-de-Bouc, with a harbor perimeter that was at least quadruple the size of the current urban harbor, including the enlargements that were underway.<sup>73</sup>

In his scheme for Marseille, Gréber carefully incorporated these planned works.

“But these grandiose port facilities will only be complete and fully exploited,” he insists,

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<sup>71</sup> 212 of which were water. 100 were quays.

<sup>72</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

<sup>73</sup> This equipment, Gréber noted, unlocks industrial and commercial perspectives that only situations like Hamburg and New York can afford.



“when the hinterland has opened up the major waterways of which Marseille is the natural outlet.”<sup>74</sup> This, he further suggests, “is not a matter of urban or regional planning, but of national planning.”<sup>75</sup>

The two operations, municipal and regional, should, to ensure their maximum coordination and consequently efficiency, without costly duplication, be treated as a whole and according to the same concept.<sup>76</sup>

Gréber contends that the purely urban study with which the city’s municipality charged him cannot be undertaken only for the municipal needs of the territory. His scheme for the city incorporated networks of circular, radiating, and main access roads, which converged on the vital center of the city, La Canebière and the Old Port (figure 8).

The triple belt of external boulevards completed its loop with a coastal road between the Estaque and Montredon. This network of circular roads allowed an intercommunication from main road to main road and from district to district, preventing traffic from converging all in the center. To the Boulevard de Plombières, the Cours du Jarret, and the east-west branch of Avenue de Prado, which formed the framework of the first belt of the city, Gréber proposed two curved boulevards, bordering the territory and running from the port to the beach. The “inner boulevard” passed through the Jarret valley and the “outward boulevard” through the plateau. With a length of 13 kilometers and a profile oscillating between 25 and 40 meters, the inner boulevard started from the north of the dry dock and crossed, through an overpass, the National Road towards Aix-en-Provence and Marignane, north of the Canet Station, which was under construction. It

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<sup>74</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 18.

then crossed, through another overpass, the railway line from Paris to Petit-Canet and joined the Jarret Valley at Saint-Just. From this point, the inner circular boulevard followed the course of the canalized Jarret River and served as a planted walkway the districts of Chartreux, Visitation, and Saint-Pierre, which were already well advanced in renovation. The boulevard continued up to the railway establishments of the Prado Station, at the point where the Rabataut Boulevard passes under the railway line. The inner boulevard ended by taking the course of the Rabataut Boulevard and Prado Avenue as far as the Corniche promenade. Originating on the Quai du Port and heading east, the outer boulevard, with a total length of 21 kilometers and profile of 30 meters, first crossed the National Road from Marseille to Marignane, through an overpass, then the railway line, the station of Saint-Joseph, the Sainte-Marthe agglomeration, and the Route d'Italie, to the west of Boyeux-Saint-Jérôme. At the meeting point between the outer boulevard and Route de Château Gombert, Gréber proposed a bypass road that split towards the east, doubling the National Road until after the town of Saint-Jérôme. Then, taking the widened Chemin des Olives, the road joined the Route de Toulon. After crossing the National Road, the outer boulevard passed above Montalivet, forming the central framework of the residential areas to be developed on the whole plateau that separates the valleys of Jarret and Huveaune. At Saint-Barnabé, a new bypass was supposed to branch towards the south-east of the outer boulevard and join, at La Pomme, via Saint-Dominique, the main road from Marseille to Aubagne. Gréber recommended straightening the main road and widening it to double the road to Toulon on the right bank of the Huveaune River. The outer boulevard, after crossing Saint-Jean-du-Désert, was supposed to pass under the railway line and cross the Huveaune River, in the

neighborhood of Saint-Loup. From there, the outer boulevard would join the Mazargues Roundabout and eventually the Boulevard de la Corniche at La Madrague. On each side of the outer boulevard, Gréber created a non-building zone of 10 meters.

In addition to these concentric routes, Gréber fashioned four strategic radial routes. One was intended to regularize traffic circulation in the center of the city, from the new northern *autostrade* to the extension of the Boulevard Michelet beyond Mazargues. Another formed a continuous shoreline road along the entire front of the city. A third connected the city with Italy. Through a fourth road, Gréber systematized the double link (road No. 8 and CD No. 2) from Marseille to Toulon via the Huveaune Valley. Through the radial routes, Gréber developed connections between the stations, and between the stations and the port. The Blancarde and Prado stations would be connected with the whole city, thanks to the routes I just described. With regard to the Saint-Charles station, Gréber took into account the advantageous topography of Marseille. As the station was perched on a hill, dominating Boulevard Dugommier by about 12 meters, it was possible to widen the railway accesses at the back, but impossible to give it the same ease of access for public arrival and departure. The problem was resolved by doubling the capacity of the station without increasing its horizontal surface (figures 9 and 10).

To further reinforce his strategy for decentralization, Gréber proposed treating Route Nationale No. 8 (the National Road), the only gateway to Marseille by road, as an *autostrade* (parkway),<sup>77</sup> over a large part of its course, and doubling it. The National

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<sup>77</sup> Greber's implementation of the parkway owes much to his experiences in the United States, where he collaborated closely with American planners. In the late nineteenth century, landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux pioneered the development of the first parkways in the United States. These roads were purposefully crafted for leisurely and scenic drives, providing a

Road connected Marseille with the Rhône valley in Lyon, putting it in natural communication with the northern and western regions.<sup>78</sup> Gréber replaced the National Road, now clogged and insufficient, by a parallel motorway, equipped with two-level crossings and three carriageways, ensuring fast traffic and local traffic without conflict. In a word, it was transformed into a modern road between Marseille and Aix-en-Provence, on the one hand, and between Marseille and its airport of Marignane, on the other hand. In a section of the National Road between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, Gréber proposed a supply route added to the National Road, joining Marseille to its airport in Marignane (figures 11 and 12). When entering the territory of Marseille, coming from Aix-en-Provence or Marignane, this new motorway would leave the route of the National Road (south of Septièmes). It would pass under the railroad line from Aix-en-Provence to Marseille, east of the Saint-Antoine Station, thus avoiding the level crossing, and then again under the railroad line west of the Aygalades station, after having roughly followed the course of the Aygalades stream. It would then run alongside the new Canet Station and enter the city directly at the Place Marceau. From the

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recreational experience for travelers. They were resourcefully designed to separate pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, and horse carriages. Notable examples include the Eastern Parkway, recognized as the world's inaugural parkway, and Ocean Parkway, situated in Brooklyn, New York City. The term parkway was coined by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted themselves when they proposed the idea of linking city and suburban parks with "pleasure roads." The parkway concept shaped the future of road design and urban planning, and the exchanges between American and French urban planners form a significant theme that warrants comprehensive exploration. Here are a few relevant references: Jean-Louis Cohen and Hubert Damisch, *Américanisme et modernité: l'idéal américain dans l'architecture* (Paris, EHESS: Flammarion, 1993); Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scènes de la vie future: l'architecture européenne et la tentation de l'Amérique, 1893–1960* (Paris, Centre canadien d'architecture, Flammarion, 1995); Susanna Magri and Christian Topalov, *Architecture et politique sociale, Europe-États-Unis, 1914–1925* (Centre de sociologie urbaine, Bureau de la Recherche architecturale, 1987); André Corboz, "L'urbanisme du XXe siècle: esquisse d'un profil," *Faces, journal d'architectures*, 1992, no. 24: 53–55.

<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the radiating roads that linked Marseille with the east and south-east (namely Toulon, Nice, and Italy) were insufficient and congested, with a risk of bringing loss of land value to the city.

roundabout, one would be in direct communication with the main points of the city by star-shaped roads, some existing, some new. In the section between Marseille and Toulon, Gréber widened the National Road and improved its route as far as the Petit-Saint-Marcel. He also widened the existing road north of the Huveaune and connected the two at the point where they are closest to each other, to the east of Saint-Marcel, by two twin tracks, with communication under the railway. The National Road was supposed to follow a new path to the north of Saint-Loup, crossing the Huveaune and taking the road that runs alongside the Saint-Pierre cemetery, which had been widened (vicinal road No. 27). It would end at Place Castellane, with two forked tracks: one through Boulevard du Jarret and Boulevard Bailie, and the other via a partly new track to the south of the Beauvau barracks and Cours Gouffet. On its side, the doubling track (Chemin de Grande Communication No. 2 from Marseille to Aubagne), straightened and improved in its course north of the Huveaune, would join the Blancarde Station, cross diagonally the new square in the Madeleine district, run alongside the Longchamp Palace, and, through a new opening, would reach Boulevard Saint Charles and Saint Charles Station, thus providing direct access from the south and east of Marseille to the two stations. In the section between Marseille and Italy, the National Road would follow the only possible route between the two mountainous slopes. It would be improved and widened up to the eastern exit of La Rose and, from this point, doubled in width, crossing the outer ring of circular boulevards, and ending up in the inner ring at its meeting with the Boulevard du Jarret. The concern for a coherent integration of scales that Gréber engages is clearly illustrated by the northern *autostrade*. In the principal drawing provided in his study, we see how the *autostrade* enters Marseille naturally, following the course of the Aygalades

stream, in a valley that was not yet urbanized. It is a “siding with superimposed crossings,” Gréber advises, “with no speed restrictions and no danger of accidents,”<sup>79</sup> whose central track is dissociated from the ordinary network of tracks. However, this track is lined on both sides with carriageways that are part of the street system and accessible at each crossing.<sup>80</sup>

Gréber’s approach negotiated the association of various scales of the large territory and the city into a single plan that is spatially and functionally coherent, with an effective translation between the schematic abstraction and the reality of the routes and roadways. Regional and national routes are superimposed in their territorial logic on urban sites, from which they are largely dissociated. Gréber introduced the principle of the planted boulevard with a central median, the *autostrade* with a fast track, and the doubling of platforms by superimposing the lanes. In the connection of the port to the city, the topography of Marseilles provided Gréber with an organic solution, consisting in doubling the traffic capacity of the quays without widening them, but by providing them with an upper viaduct that connects naturally to the neighboring districts higher than the quays: to the cathedral, to the town hall, to the stations, and to the center of Marseille, and successively, in the northern direction, as far as the Arenc station, which a viaduct will cross without hindering it to define the autoroute of Aix-en-Provence and Marignane.

Gréber’s project of restorative circulation solidified a new understanding of the Old Port as the representational heart of Marseille, despite its actual increasing

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<sup>79</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 25.

<sup>80</sup> That reproduces the principle of hierarchy implemented in the Bois de Boulogne Avenue in Paris: counter-alleys isolated from the central lane, except for the central crossroads and the two ends.

marginalization within the rapidly growing metropolis. Unlike similar economically flourishing port cities, such as Barcelona and Genoa, to which Gréber compared the southern French city, Marseille, for him, was a terminus city rather than as a transit station, which impacted its function, development, and prosperity. Positioning the Old Port as an anchor, the logic of Gréber's plan is based on a centripetal model in which the city is organized around a clearly defined scenic and symbolic core.

Gréber's conceptual logic for the city's expansion and resolving the problem of geographic connectivity was further theorized by Meuriot, who was also a proponent of human geography. Meuriot insists that what defines a city today is the human force. Whether or not the suburb is populated as a "city," Meuriot explains, it is nonetheless the zone of urban development. Its settlement is the result and the very condition of the progress of the human agglomeration. For one of the characteristics of the development of the large modern city, he asserts, is the depopulation of its central parts and the progressive settlement of its periphery. In Paris, the four purely central arrondissements are less populated in the first decade of the twentieth century, in comparison to 1861. It is the progress of the means of transport that provokes and accentuates this, what Meuriot calls "revolution in the mode of urban settlement,"<sup>81</sup> just as this progress multiplies the settlement of the whole by the immigration of inhabitants from outside. In Marseille, the city went from 132,000 to 803,000 inhabitants in a century, entirely through immigration, "the civil registry giving an average population movement of almost zero"<sup>82</sup> (figure 13).

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<sup>81</sup> Meuriot, "Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd'hui," 150.

<sup>82</sup> Jacques Gréber, "Une leçon d'urbanisme: l'aménagement et l'extension de Marseille," *La vie urbaine* 17 (1933), 319.

Unlike Paris, an inland city, the demography of fin-de-siècle Marseille was entirely shaped by foreign influence.

Gréber's vision assures the urban center that commands the region a circulatory, residential, industrial, and commercial equipment sufficient "to allow it to assume the role of capital of the South that Marseille must play in the whole nation."<sup>83</sup> However, the relocation from the center to the periphery that was occurring at the time of the organization of the plan and predicted to continue and accelerate in the future necessitated a program for housing. Painstakingly examining the demographic structure of the city over the past few decades revealed to Gréber that the increase in population density is directly related to the distance of the neighborhoods from the center of the city. Within the limits of the belt, the increase in population tends to stabilize, while outside the belt, the increase happens much faster.

Taking up the documented report of the Director of Works, Gréber showed that to house the 30,000 new annual inhabitants in addition to those living in overcrowded buildings, dilapidated dwellings, insalubrious houses, and temporary slums, the City of Marseilles can, without danger, engage in a policy of building either multi-story dwellings in appropriate locations such as the Madeleine, or several groups of houses on land already incorporated into the city's property, along Boulevard Bernabo, Rue de Ruffi, Rue Urbain V, Rue Chanterac, Rue Mires, Rue Aldebert, Boulevard du Prado, and Boulevard de la Glacière, or family residences situated within garden cities on the magnificent plateaus surrounding the main agglomeration. One garden city would be located above the Saint-Joseph Station, gradually rising towards the slopes of the plateau

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<sup>83</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 17–18.



of La Mure. It would be particularly situated for the housing of workers near the northern ports and the industrial and railway installations that accompany them. Another garden city would be located at Bois Lemaître, in connection with the already populated suburbs of Montolivet, La Rose, and Saint-Julien, and a third further to the south, constituting the normal extension of the suburb of Saint-Barnabé.

As we see, “the problem of renovating neighborhoods that were unfit for habitation”<sup>84</sup> is, for Gréber, “a problem of creating new neighborhoods.”<sup>85</sup> The new housing strategies would allegedly constitute healthy, sunny peripheral districts, surrounded by gardens, to facilitate all the better, through the natural exodus of the inhabitants, the desertion and expropriation of existing buildings deemed unfit for habitation. Many squares, tree-lined centers, as varied in form as possible, reserve the future of the planned suburbs for the creation of centers of commercial or administrative activity, distributed at reasonable distances, to avoid unnecessary comings and goings and to prepare for the possibility of a decentralization that would sooner or later prove advantageous. The general traffic, circular or radiating roads, serves these various centers, avoiding the physical disruption of the purely residential areas. The organization, as soon as possible, of the peripheral districts would put an end to the chaos of scattered housing estates, by incorporating them as best as possible into the organic network of large circular boulevards, which will serve as their framework. And only then, asserts Gréber, can the decentralization and the eventual division of Marseille into districts be envisaged, because, in advance, suburban centers will have been created at judiciously

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<sup>84</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 54.

<sup>85</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 54.

drawn crossroads, and the new town halls will be able, if necessary, to be established there almost automatically.

Like many aspects of the plan, Gréber's vision of housing is partially provisional, rather than definite. It offers scenarios for the future, contingent on the realization or evolution of other elements, a strategy that adheres to Bergson's ideas about time and Poëte's principles of urban evolution:

Contradictory as it may seem, we believe that a major urbanism project such as the one entrusted to us by the Marseilles City Council must combine opportunism with the absolute, a difficult but exciting task. The development and extension plan called for by the laws of 1919 and 1924 is only the prelude to this work as a whole: the charter of principles that time will improve, complete, revise and fine-tune in detail as the plans for implementation are prepared [...]. This new task is one for the years to come.<sup>86</sup>

As his plan for the city demonstrates, wherever Gréber found the field open, he applied a practical solution, but in cases where local difficulties could arise, he was satisfied with a provisional measure. As time evolves, the plan develops with it.

Zoning is the fundamental planning tool with which Gréber completed his plan, particularly the traffic and housing framework (figure 14). Of Marseille's 23,000 hectares of immense municipal territory, only one quarter was occupied by the city and its suburbs. As a first measure of prudence, Gréber limited the territory to be urbanized to only half of the 23,000 hectares. He maintained all the rest of the municipal territory as a rural, forestry, and tourism zone, where the restrictions on housing developments and construction in general are such that they protect the town from undesirable extensions

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<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Gréber, "Une leçon d'urbanisme: l'aménagement et l'extension de Marseille," 340. For the original quotation, see Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 109.

and from developments detrimental to land value. The urban zones developed by Gréber included a “commercial and dense residential area,” a “residential area,” and an “industrial and port area.” The residential area, as shown, was subdivided into three sections: group housing, family housing, and suburban housing.

The diagram of zones that Gréber drew up was based on the cartogram of population density that Gréber provided in support of his analysis (figures 15 & 16). The commercial zone coincides approximately with the zone of highest density. Its center is the new business district of the Bourse, with small 12 to 14-story skyscrapers. This central area is bordered at the margins by a residential zone reserved for dense collective housing, barring the north side, where it is extended by the deep industrial zone adjacent to the port. Beyond this compact area, the extent of the glacis was reserved for “open family housing” and “open suburban housing.”

Adhering to his method of Bergsonian provisional planning, Gréber created what he labelled as “reserves.” Specifying the modes of occupation of the parcels by the indications “dense” and “open,” he created a highly fragmented network of open spaces, depending on opportunities (figure 17). This was a means of controlling the landscape that the dissolution of the city into its periphery would generate.<sup>87</sup> Marseille was moving towards a million inhabitants and had only 150 hectares of open space (officially 182 hectares, but many of them were only squares or crossroads without any quality of open space). Gréber’s scheme provided for a total of 1,100 hectares. Within the city itself, he

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<sup>87</sup> These prescriptions would anticipate the land values the project is supposed to establish (the highest values would eventually be those of the central commercial zone, which was still largely occupied by insalubrious blocks). Conversely, in the United States, for instance in Philadelphia, whose development Gréber was involved in, the planning approach first favored land use and then determined an integrated plan for transportation, involving cars, buses, trams, railways, planes, and boats. In France, the planning laws of 1919 and 1924 tend to reverse these priorities.

proposed 33 new public gardens, covering 53 hectares, and 50 school playgrounds, covering 27 hectares. In the entire extension, an area of 840 hectares for a system of free spaces would be reserved for future planning, guaranteeing a wide distribution of air and greenery for the districts that were to be built. Gréber thus proposed 920 hectares of new open spaces, adding those to the existing 182 hectares. The network of open spaces contributes to the fluidity of circulation and helps to manage the continuity between the historic town, with its associated fabric, and the periphery.

Gréber's tactical choice of the splintering and scattering of free spaces is conceived in relation to its complement, the maintenance of immense natural areas outside the urbanization system, to the south and east. These constituted, as I have stated, nearly half the surface area of the commune and displayed the urbanist's ecological concern of balancing the ratio of built to unbuilt space. Gréber's SFU fellow, Robert de Souza, warns that urbanism is first and foremost about "knowing where not to build."<sup>88</sup> He asserts that, although "urbs," the root of the term urbanism, implies a preponderance of the built over the unbuilt, it is necessary to "ruralize the city and not urbanize the countryside."<sup>89</sup> Gréber celebrated Marseille's "incomparable situation between the mountains and the sea, and the beneficial action of the winds that blow through it."<sup>90</sup> He wanted to ensure that sites with such natural beauty and potential be first classified and preserved, rather than mechanically urbanized. But constantly employing his Vidalian logic of aiding nature, he cautions that,

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<sup>88</sup> Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France," 3.

<sup>89</sup> Robert de Souza, "Savoir d'abord où ne pas construire," in Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France," 56.

<sup>90</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 61.

To trust in elements whose action is, by nature, most capricious, is not a solution to ensure a constant and normal ventilation, and especially a purification of the air more and more vitiated by an over-saturated automobile traffic, and by the smoke and various emanations of the intensified industry.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore, for the rehabilitation of the natural areas, Gréber proposed recuperating waterways such as the Huveaune and the Jarret rivers, which were in a disorderly state, serving as open sewers with banks cluttered with rubbish and residues of all kinds. Gréber suggested cleaning up the waters by creating lateral sewers under the new roads running alongside the rivers. He also recommended constituting, wherever possible on both banks, a strip of municipal land reserved for planting and walking as soon as the state of progress of the urban development of the surrounding districts allows it. This was land that had fallen into disrepair and of no contemporary value, and that the city would be able to recover, at almost no cost, and dedicate, for the future, to the vital role of sanitation and recreation. As for the water supply canal that encircled the city and was exposed, in the open air, to pollution, Gréber developed it into a green belt. He isolated it and planted its edges. Wherever it could be freed up, a protective cover was provided. The belt was supposed to bring to the whole of the suburbs of Marseille a new element of definite added value, through greenery, over an enormous perimeter of 50 kilometers, without however immobilizing much space, given the narrowness of the strip.

Gréber also called for saving the virgin southern suburbs, while at the same time carefully developing them, with judicious restrictions on housing developments. The region covered an area of about 8,000 hectares, as large as Paris. Limited by a water supply canal and an attractive series of cliffs and creeks from the Île Maire to Cassis,

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<sup>91</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 61.

only La Gineste Road crossed this wild and beautiful territory, where rocky crests emerged from the forests. Its southern shore, barely accessible, was a place of enchantment and great character. Gréber first recommended that it be included in the classification for sites to be preserved, at least in its coastal part. He then wanted to open it up to walking, through a ridge road that would come close enough to the viewpoints and the coves to allow access to walkers and pedestrians. Construction would eventually and necessarily come, especially for justifying the expense of the road and the engineering work the project requires, but it would be channeled, contained, and ordered. Repeatedly, Gréber, in a Poëteian and Bergsonian manner, demonstrates that life and prosperity can be brought in without necessarily destroying the site or fully transforming it. Through similar measures, he also preserved, for Marseille and Provence, a natural park that the Avenue de Prado and the extended Boulevard Michelet led to, within a few minutes from the Canebière.

The following chapter will expound SFU's principles of aesthetics and conservation, clearly integrated in the reform plans put forward by Henri Prost for Rabat and Istanbul. It is important nonetheless to acknowledge here Gréber's aesthetic concerns. The urbanist wanted aesthetics above all for protection, specifically the conservation of nature or the natural topography. He made suggestions in the monumental or picturesque order, adding a few more "deserving" names to the list of classified historical monuments and picturesque sites, which he denounced as insufficiently protected. However, again, his main contribution lies in organizing the natural land in and around the city, including the Old Port, which he perceived as both a

natural geographic site crucial for trade and a living vestige of Marseille's folklife. The port is also a "picture" arousing "deserved enthusiasm."<sup>92</sup> Gréber declares:

Let us take the example of the Old Port again: it is not only the foreground that must be protected, but everything that makes up the picture; therefore, not only the water level and the quay already mentioned, but also the facades bordering this quay, and even, above these facades, all the points where new constructions could rise whose silhouette would risk significantly modifying the picture constituted by the Old Port<sup>93</sup> (figure 18).

Thus, "the Old Port needs to keep its character as a basin for pleasure, boating, and fishing"<sup>94</sup> (figure 19). Why, he thought, classify the water of the Old Port, if the protection of the general character of this incomparable, unforgettable site does not extend to the buildings that surround it? Not that he is calling for a strict classification of facades, which in themselves are sometimes devoid of architectural interest, but in a few regulations, he recommended preserving, in the case of necessary reconstruction, their masses and their silhouette. He did the same for the façades along the Quai de la Tourette and the Corniche, which had been badly damaged by the same cause of insufficient classification. He also proposed the removal of a ferry bridge which only works when the mistral wind allows it, but which crushes and ruins the silhouette, supposedly full of Hellenic grace, of the port's entrance and the two forts which watch over it (figure 20). In place of this allegedly obsolete structure, he proposed a simple, modern ferryboat.

Gréber also addressed the aesthetic aspect linked to heights, projections, and roof inclinations. A *Commission d'esthétique*, closely related to the American Art Juries that

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<sup>92</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 79–81.

<sup>93</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 79–80.

<sup>94</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 34.

Gréber frequented and to the *Commission d'Ornato* in Nice, was created on July 12, 1932, by order of the mayor, with the power to give directives to builders. Here we can see the urbanist's concern to consolidate his plan by all the legislative means at his disposal, a guarantee of the maintenance of a landscape whose essence he appreciated:

The beauty of all these Mediterranean agglomerations clinging to the rocky shore lies in the clear, luminous, and simple stain of its masses, terminated by roofs with a constant angle and nuanced coloring<sup>95</sup> (figure 21).

From the point of view of the mystical beauty of Marseilles, once framed by superb pine forests, the urbanist called for the maintenance of the main beautiful foliage which, from the sea, from the Château d'If, for instance, makes Marseille its green crown (figure 22). The shadows of the Pharo, despite its exposure to the wind, prove that the reforestation of the hill of Notre-Dame de la Garde is possible, and the pines of the Anse de la Fausse-Monnaie and the Roucas Blanc preserve for the mutilated Corniche a remnant of its past glory (figures 23 and 24). The road that winds over the rocks and leads to the Prado was to be continued, after the Goudes, as a corniche, then as a ridge road to Cassis. It would be improved and widened along its entire present course. Gréber gives the regulations so that it does not spoil the landscape it crosses by utilitarian overhangs. For its extension through the creeks, he shows us some photographs of the site it would dominate and that would open up to public admiration.

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<sup>95</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 103.



## *Conclusion*

Gréber wanted to “develop” the city: put it in order and renovate it, reducing unhealthy blocks and enhancing the value of its sites and monuments. He also, more importantly, wanted to “extend” Marseille, thanks to zoning regulations, a network of open spaces, and a coherent circulatory framework. Entitled “City of Marseille: Development, Embellishment, and Extension Plan,” his scheme incorporated all these aspects, which are at the core of *urbanisme*, as developed by SFU.<sup>96</sup>

Gréber’s extension plan for Marseille combines two registers: the first is attentive to topography, and the second relies on the academic tool of neoclassical planning, favoring the formalization and aestheticization of public space, which is characteristic of SFU’s work and which I explicate in Chapter Three. The major routes, designed to provide uniform continuity, incorporate themselves into the urban density by borrowing the lines of force of the natural terrain or the breaks in the topography. Valleys, ridges, cornices, and thalwegs are taken up by the segments of the main traffic pattern, connected to each other or supplemented by existing roads that are sometimes diverted, widened, or extended. The neoclassical register intervenes at the interconnection of the circulation networks. The arrival of the northern *autostrade* in the city is thus an opportunity to formalize a roundabout in the form of a square and, from there, to pierce a new diagonal towards a second strategic point, through the mass of blocks. If there is an obvious search for harmony in the plan, the conception of the network is never controlled by strict graphic formalism.

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<sup>96</sup> “Embellishment” was ultimately dropped from the title, as the plan became more about expansion than anything else.

Gréber early on in his urban report specified that it was through redeployment to the outside that the disentanglement of Marseille's center should occur. From the historic city to the periphery, there is a progressive contemporaneity that is assumed and supported by a reflection on open spaces, whose network contributes to the fluidity of circulation. The social and economic importance that Gréber attaches to the center is confirmed by geographers:

Whatever the size of our major cities, whatever their development, the center always remains the same, or almost the same, and this permanence is all the more characteristic as the city expands. In Paris, the main shrine, the Notre-Dame Cathedral, the judicial and administrative centers, the Palais and the town hall, are still at the heart of the city. The Bourse and its surroundings have never ceased to be the center of business, and the Halles still supply the city, like the old Champeaux market.<sup>97</sup>

Élisée Reclus had already paved the way in this direction, offering urban planners and city councilors guidelines for action when he proposed, on the subject of regularization, a sort of "improved Haussmannism."<sup>98</sup>:

By the attraction that every center exerts on its immediate neighborhood, it tries to survive [...]. The city must widen its streets and squares, rebuild its walls and replace its old buildings, now useless, with constructions that meet the needs of the moment. While the American city emerged fully armed and perfectly adapted to its environment, Paris, aged, cluttered, and clogged, had to keep up a harassing program of reconstruction.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Meuriot, "Du concept de ville autrefois et aujourd'hui," 152.

<sup>98</sup> Gaston Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué," in Gaston Bardet, "Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 3.

<sup>99</sup> Élisée Reclus, "L'évolution des villes," in *Villes et civilisations urbaines, XVIIIe–XXe siècles*, eds. Marcel Roncayolo and Thierry Pacot (Paris: Larousse, 1994), 167. Quoted in André Lortie, *Jacques Gréber (1882–1962) et l'urbanisme: le temps et l'espace de la ville* (Mémoire de DEA en Urbanisme: Université Paris XII Val-de-Marne, 1997), 111–112.

“A great maritime city,”<sup>100</sup> Gréber asserts, “cannot live on docks, quays, and railways established without a direct, complete, and reasoned link with the essential parts of the urban framework.”<sup>101</sup> The port and the city are indisputably interdependent. Gréber tries, by all means, to re-establish, with modern equipment, this solidarity, “so perfect and so simple in the past centuries.”<sup>102</sup> The Old Port, the only central basin, was then the very heart of the city, illuminated and brightened by this mirror with its living lights, framed by wide quays flush with the water, from which radiated in all directions picturesque and noisy streets, narrow but numerous, in the happy prosperity of constantly growing exchanges.

Today, conditions are entirely different. Progress has brutally upset the balance of the Old Port and the city. Utilitarian developments have invaded the whole of the old northern suburbs, from Arenc to Estaque, and, in the absence of a master plan, the large port and the accompanying working districts have blocked urban development in the whole northern part of the city. Gréber proclaims that it is still possible to save the beauty of the Old Port, of the old quarters, and of the 30 kilometers of the Corniche and the Calanques, as far as Cassis. However, on the other hand, he adds, it is also possible to equip the modern city of work and transport, at the giant pace that science brings every day. It is in this fertile contrast, Gréber considers, that an urbanist can, once again, achieve harmony, different from the old one, but restored to the scale of our time. This harmony will ensure prosperity, leaving to life its joys, without which no progress matters.

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<sup>100</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

<sup>101</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

<sup>102</sup> Gréber, *Ville de Marseille*, 110.

The Vidalian and Poëteian regionalist idea that each community of people has its own “spirit” that could be mined from its cultural norms lay at the foundation of the historicism that dominated many aspects of nineteenth-century society and was extensively used in the early phases of national identity building. In the latter half of the century, the prominence of this concept diminished in the wake of the burgeoning success of the natural sciences. However, rejuvenated by organic and biological concepts, the discourse known in German as “Volksggeist” experienced a resurgence at the dawn of the twentieth century. Numerous intellectuals began drawing parallels between the nation and an organism, asserting that the wellbeing of its individual components played a crucial role in determining its overall health. In the early nineteenth century, the focus rested on the entirety of the nation, validating the *ancien régime*. However, a shift occurred, and emphasis was now placed on the region to highlight the close connection between everyone’s community and the nation. The identity of each region was shaped by the enduring interaction between the local population and its natural environment. The region could only contribute to the wellbeing of the entire nation by remaining true to its own character. Regionalist sentiments did not, in any way, contradict nationalistic fervor.

The sanguinity of this worldview was certainly challenged during the First World War, given the mass destruction of cultural heritage that the war brought. The poignancy is manifest in Jaussely’s words in *La vie urbaine*:

What anguish! [...] Is it possible that we will see life returning, that these regions, now deserted, will be repopulated, that trees will grow and turn green again on these lands that have been turned upside down from top to bottom. Is it true that we will see families return and, as in the past, love each other and perpetuate themselves, that houses will be rebuilt, that fields will be cultivated, that factories

will once again throw the symbolic plume of their activity into the sky, that joy will be reborn at last on the back of so much immeasurable despair?<sup>103</sup>

However, the Bergsonian hope in resurrection is always present among the *Société* thinkers. After lamenting the loss in the “value of the destroyed artistic heritage”<sup>104</sup> that “cannot be quantified in cash,”<sup>105</sup> Jaussely reassures us that “this country can and wants to renew.”<sup>106</sup> It would be “a civic miracle of an extraordinary resurrection, following the military miracle”<sup>107</sup> of destruction. With a “prodigious vitality, in the ruins,”<sup>108</sup> Jaussely observes, “life has already begun to reappear.”<sup>109</sup>

As Gréber’s work demonstrates, the city, no longer limited by national boundaries, was reimagined as its own expansive country. Although the chapter traced the history of a largely unrealized urban-planning proposal, this grand scheme had lasting effects on how Marseille was understood and represented. In turn, it fostered a new conception of cities not as bounded, autonomous entities but as important nodes within broader global networks of movement and exchange. This vision was enabled by new technologies of transit and by grandiose dreams of transcontinental integration that are still very much with us today.

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<sup>103</sup> Léon Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre: Études de reconstitution,” *La vie urbaine* 1–2 (1919), 109.

<sup>104</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 109.

<sup>105</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 109.

<sup>106</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 112.

<sup>107</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 112.

<sup>108</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 111.

<sup>109</sup> Jaussely, “Les cités dévastées par la guerre,” 111.



Images for Chapter Two  
The Expansion of Cities

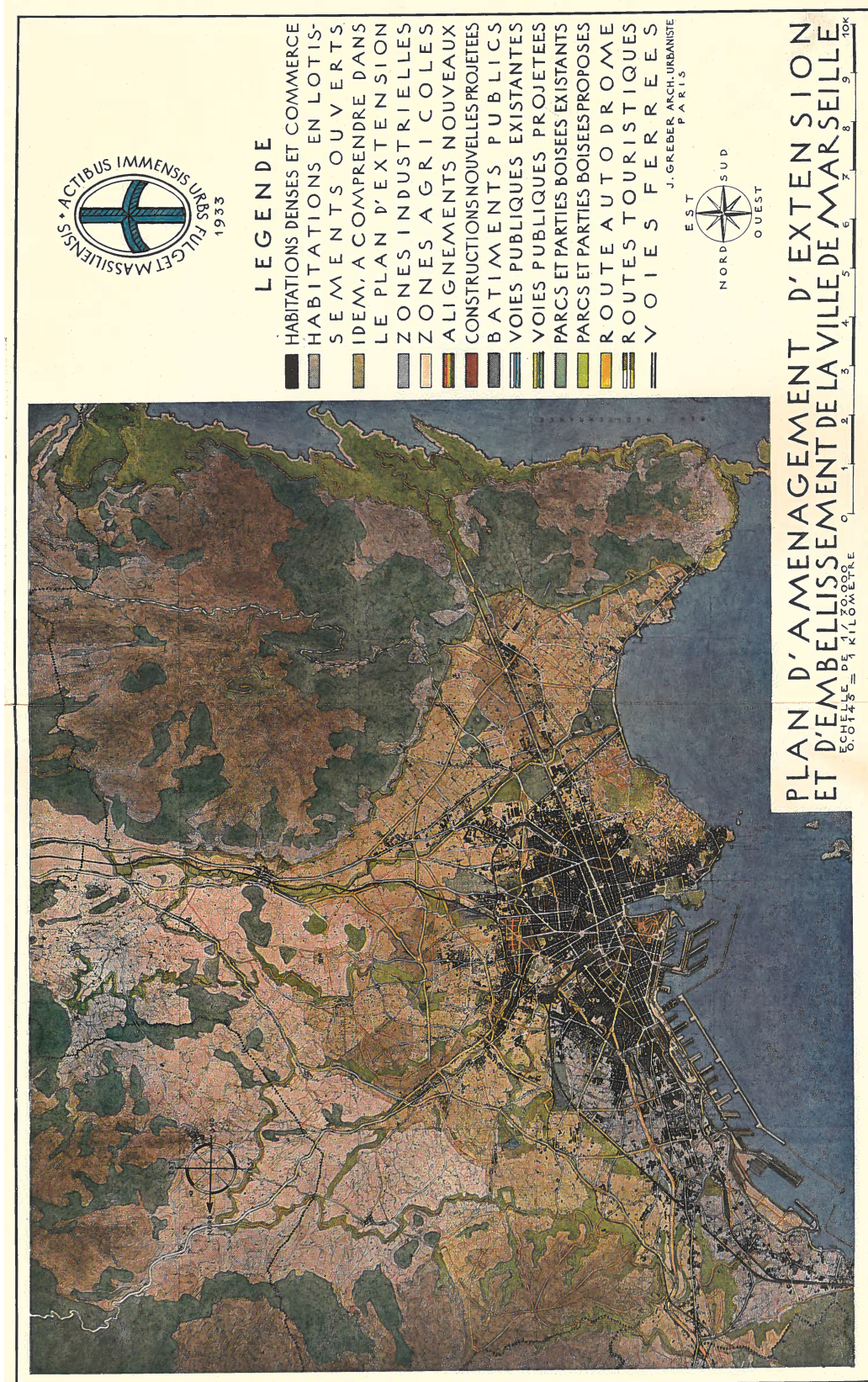


Figure 1 - City of Marseille: Development, Embellishment, and Extension Plan, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 112.





Figure 2 – Plan for the development of the center of Marseille by Jacques Gréber, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 35.



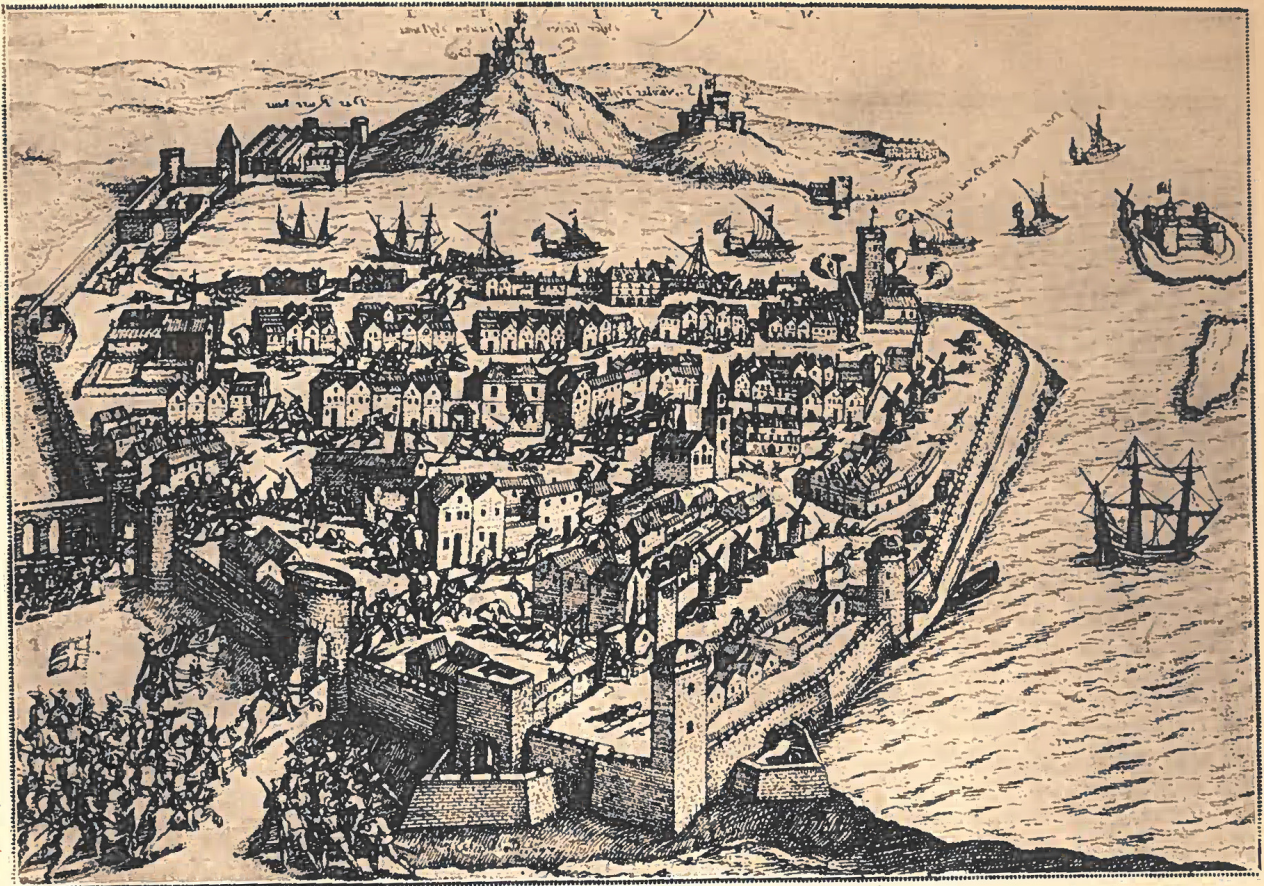


Figure 3 – Engraving of Marseille from the seventeenth century: frontispiece to Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933.





Figure 4 – Early twentieth-century aerial view of Marseille and its port, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 110.

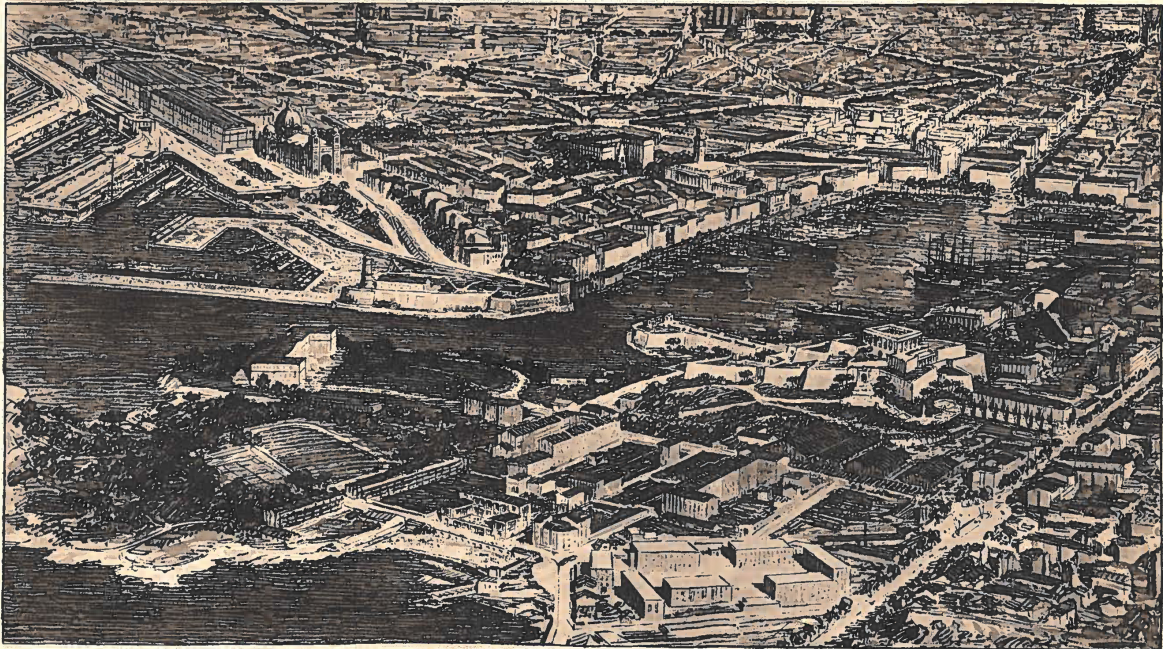


Figure 5 – Early twentieth-century aerial view of the Old Port, showing the development of the adjacent areas, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 110.





Photo C. A. F.

Figure 6 – Aerial view of the Old Port and the Fort of Saint-Jean, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 48.



Figure 7 – Marseilleveyre, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 84–85.



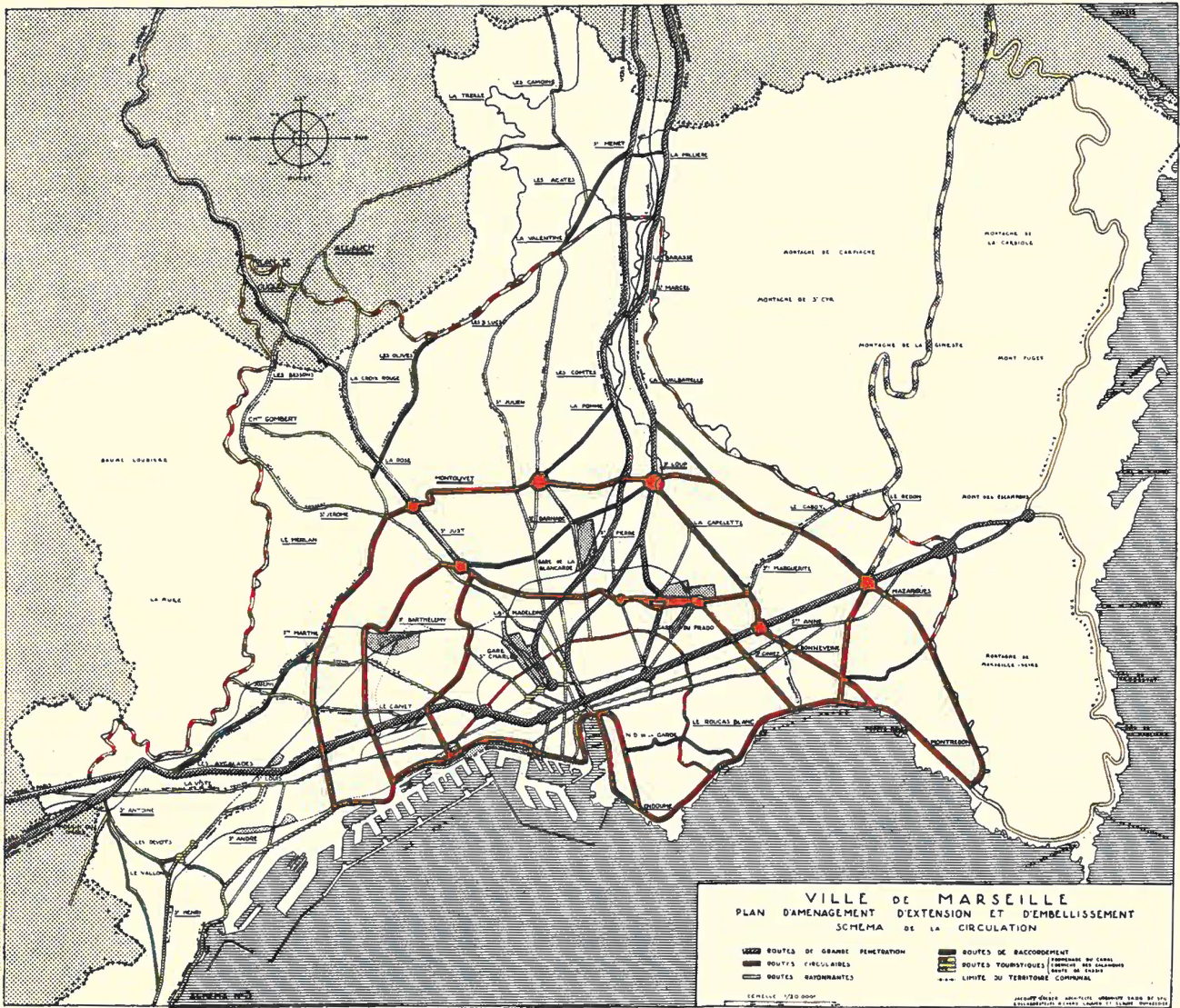


Figure 8 – Gréber’s circulation scheme for Marseille, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 24–25.



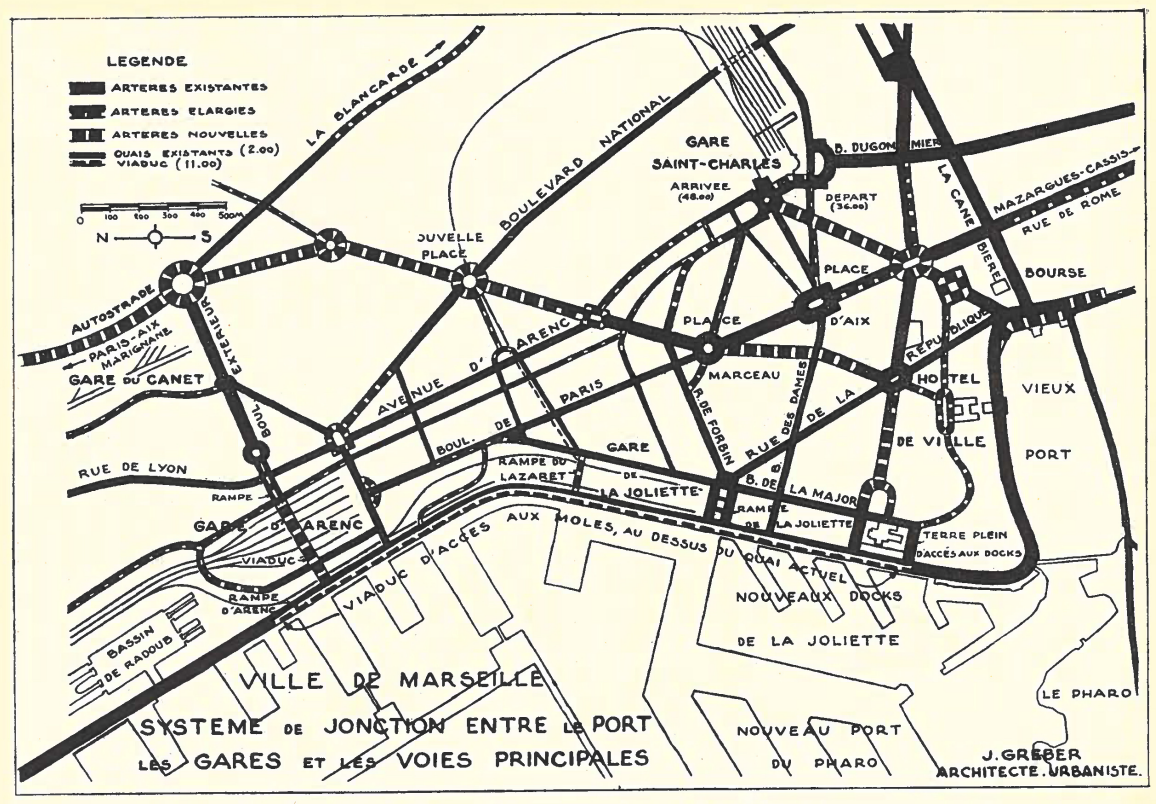


Figure 9 – System of links between the port and the city, including the stations and the main roads, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 33.



Figure 10 – Aerial view of the center of Marseille, showing the stations, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 34-35.



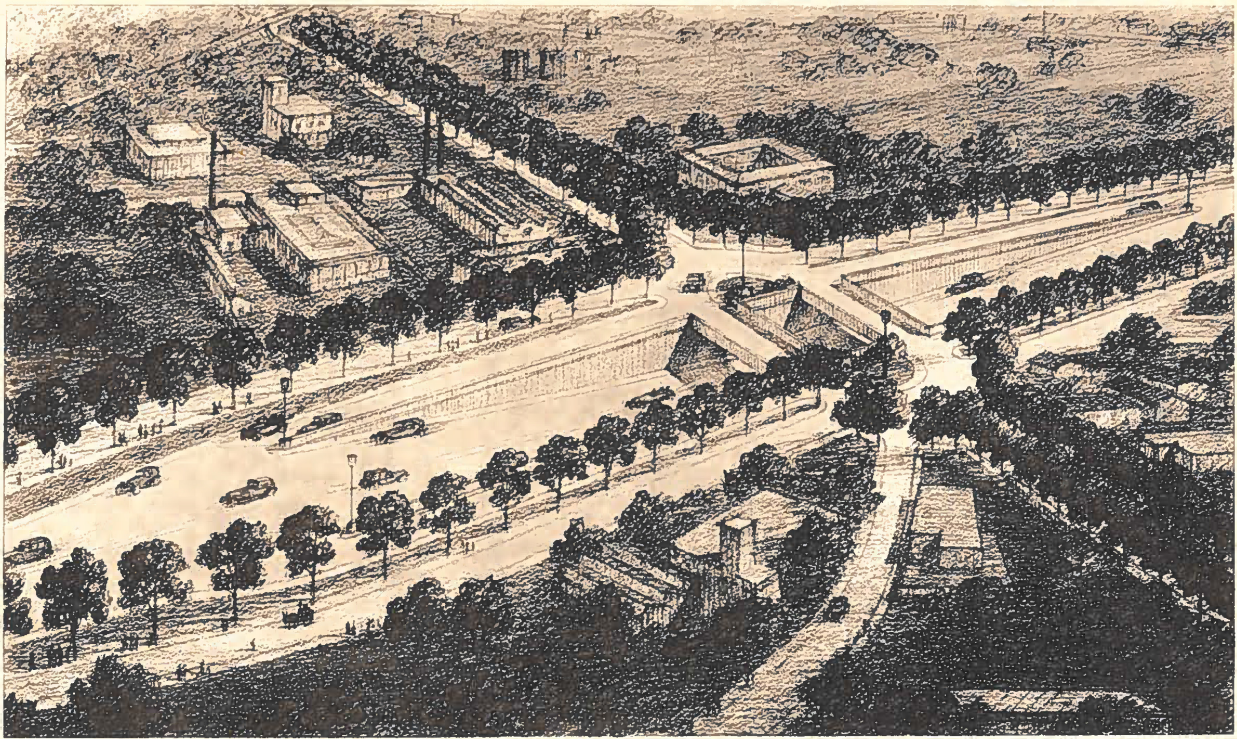


Figure 11 – Sketch of a junction in the National Road, showing links connecting Marseille with Aix-en-Provence and with Marignane, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 26.

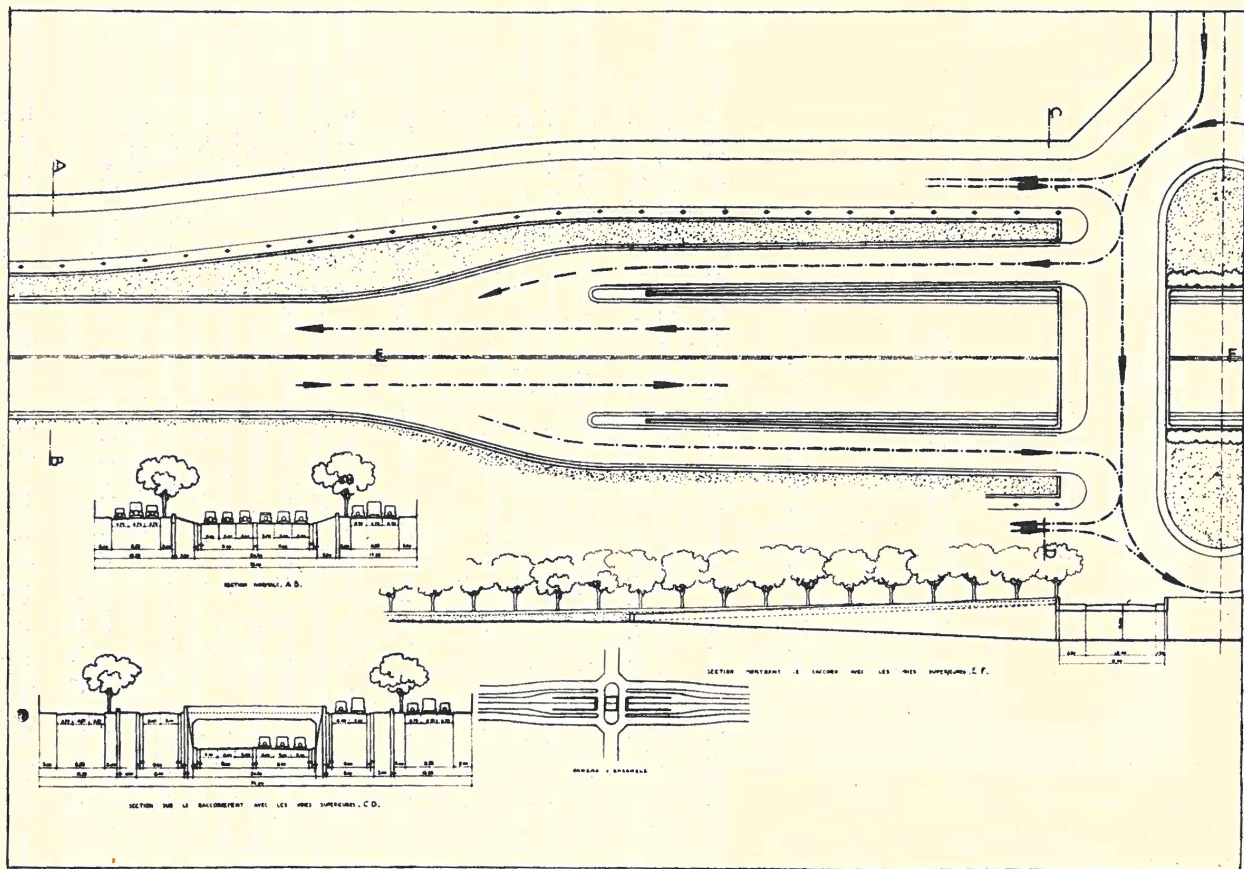


Figure 12 – Plan and sections of the junction, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 26.



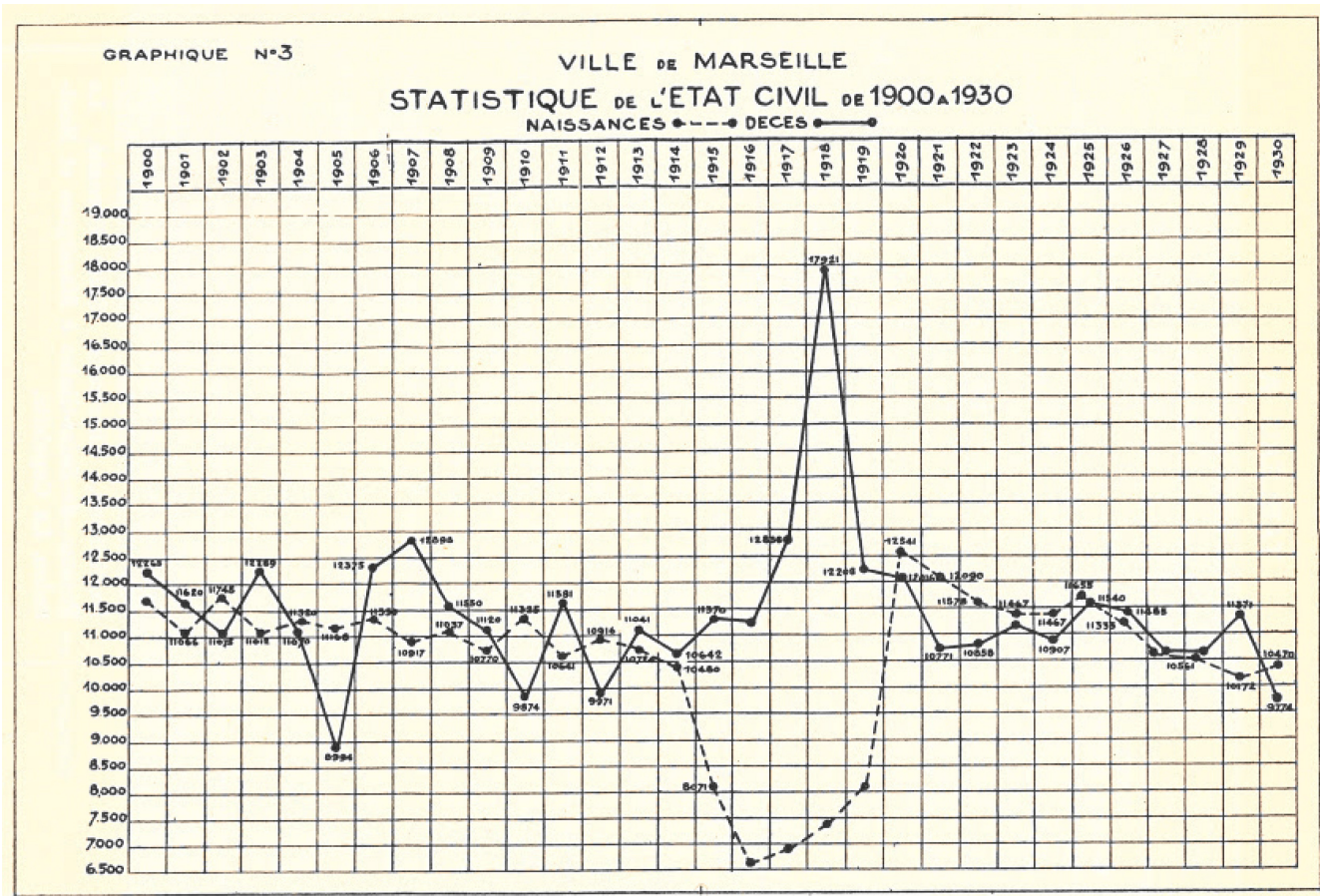


Figure 13 – Civil registry statistics in Marseille, 1900–1930, published in Gréber’s urban report, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 11.



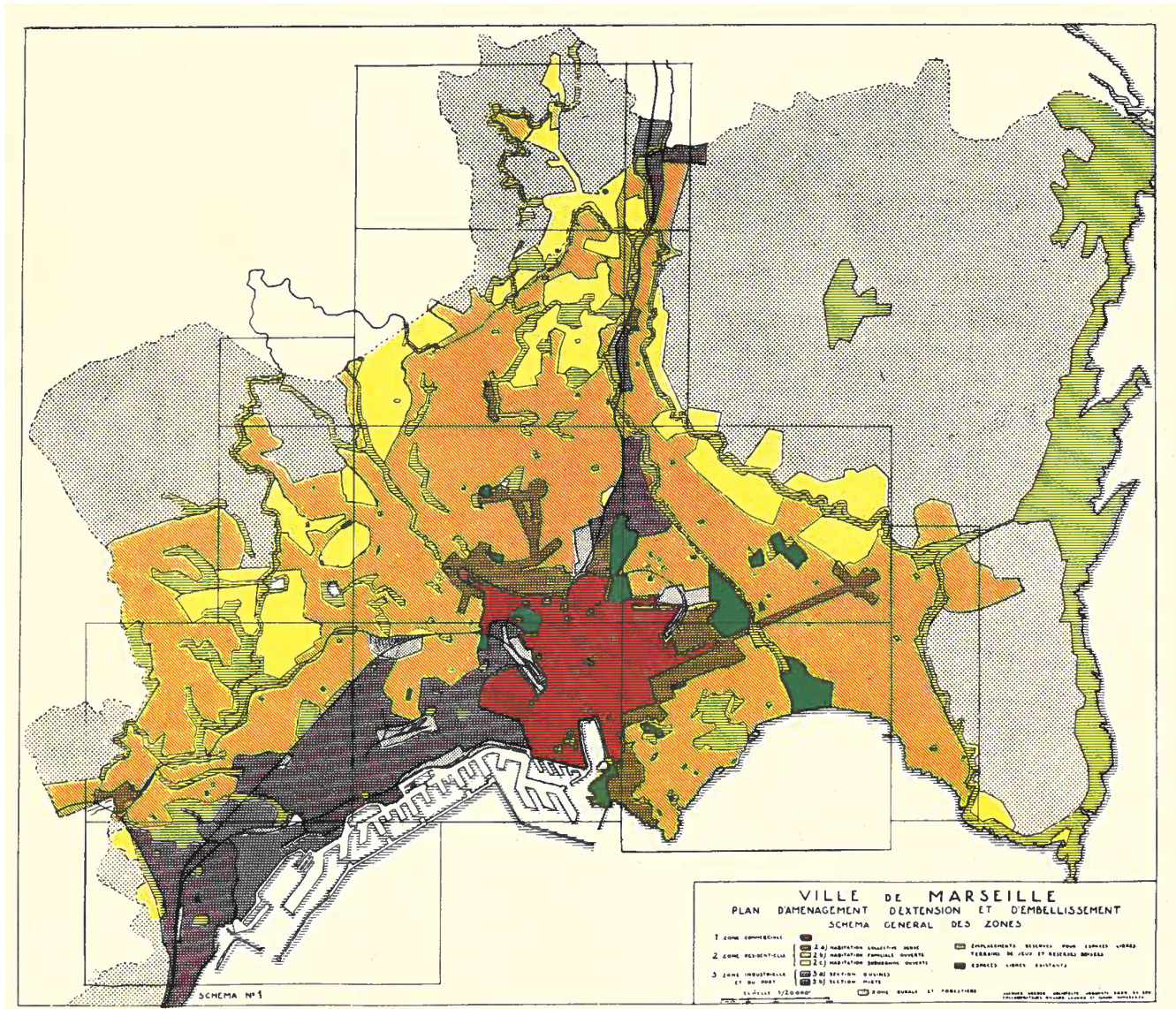


Figure 14 – Gréber’s zoning scheme for Marseille, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 24–25.



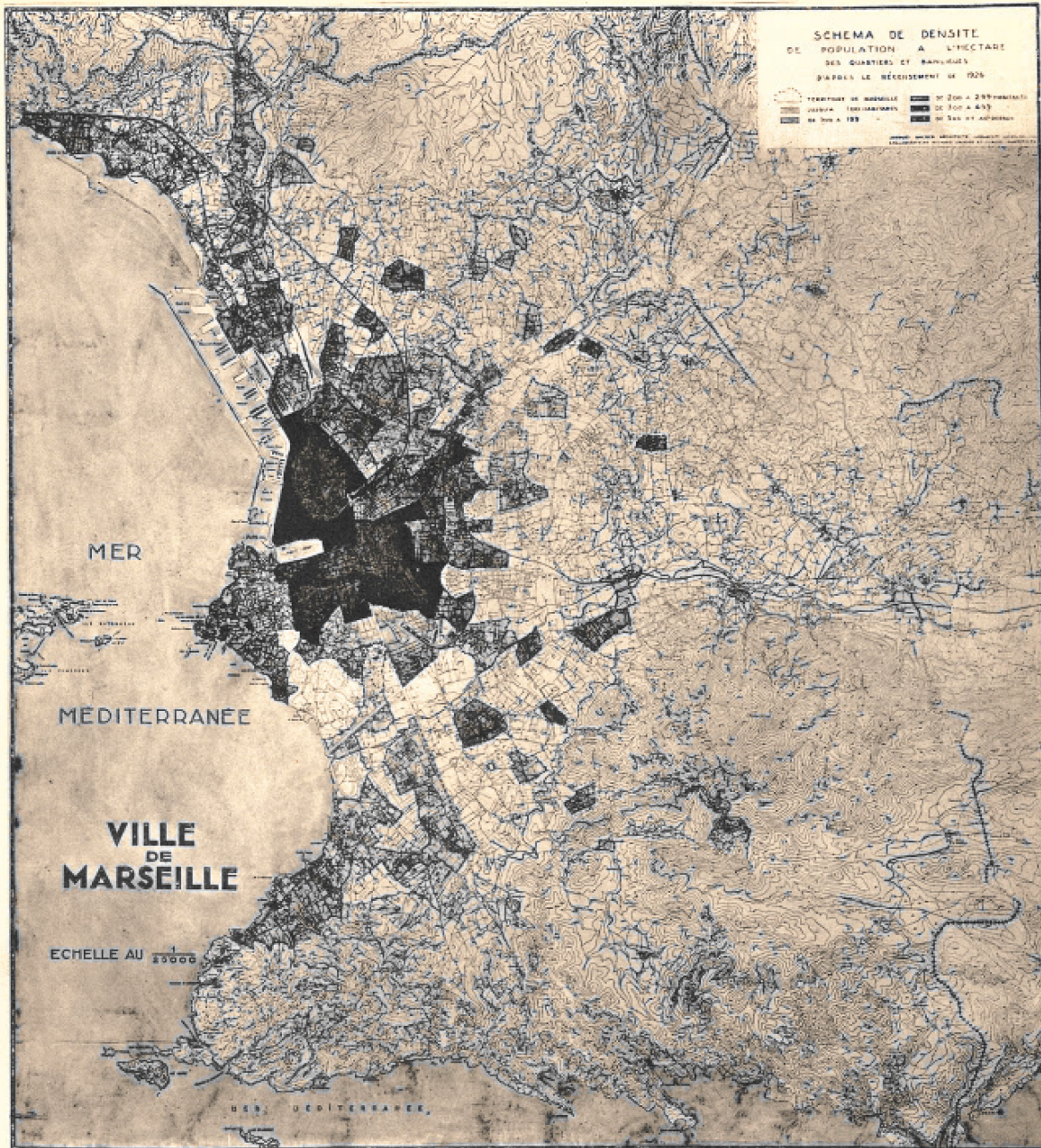


Figure 15 – Cartogram of Marseille’s population density, based on the 1926 census, produced by Gréber, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 12–13.



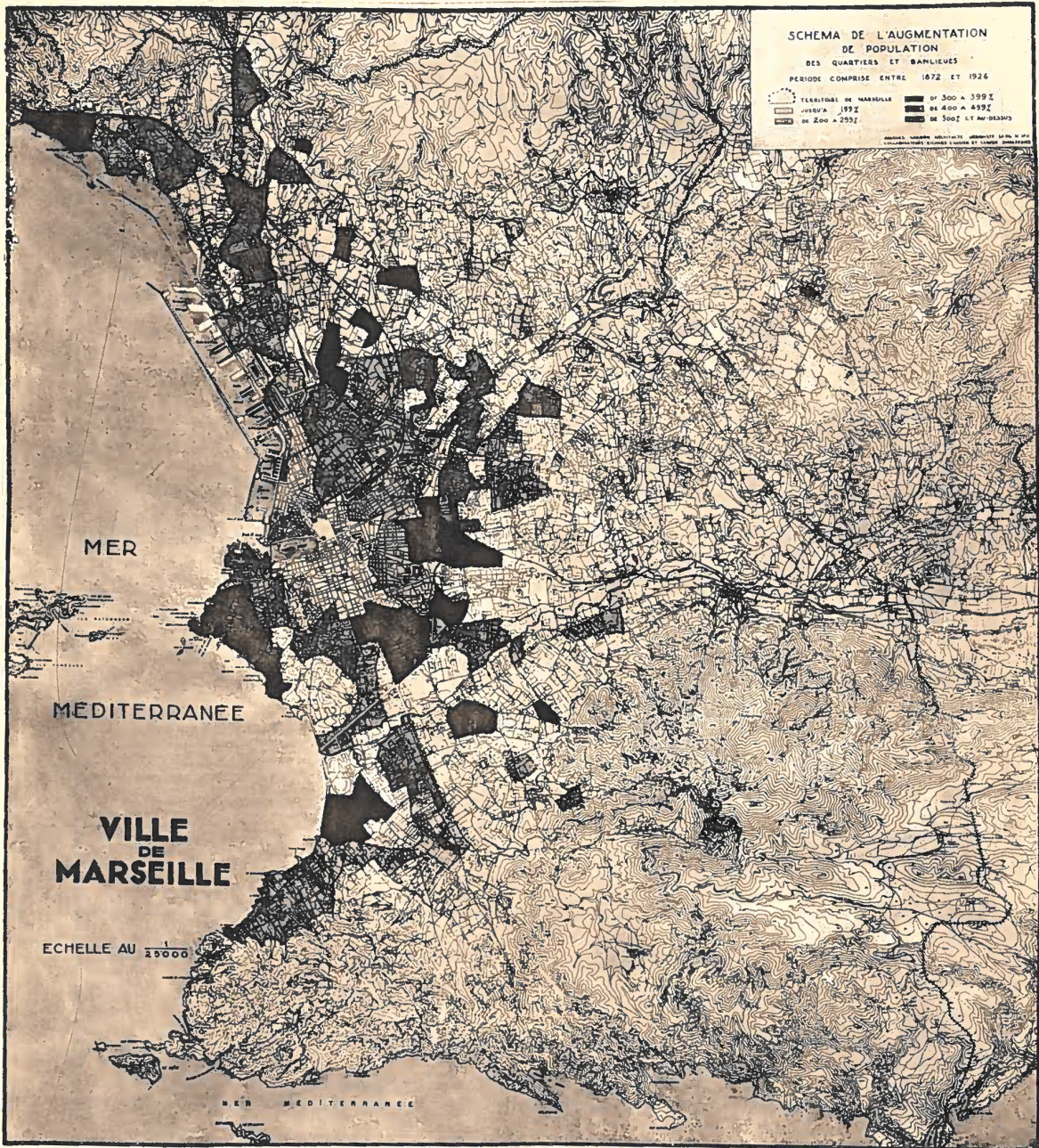


Figure 16 – Cartogram of the increase in Marseille’s population between 1872 and 1926, produced by Jacques Gréber, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 12–13.



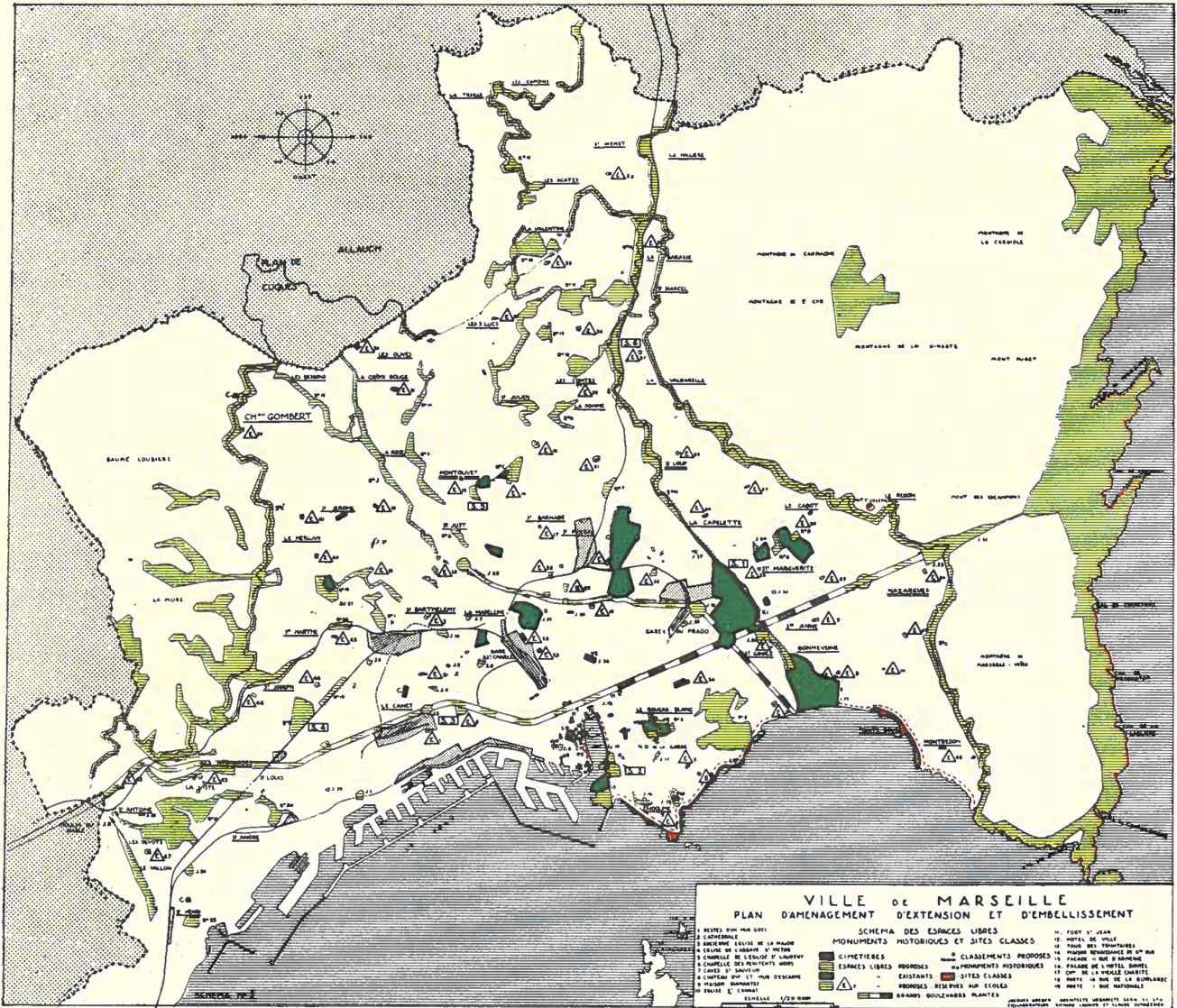


Figure 17 – Plan of the open spaces, historic monuments, and classified sites, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 62.



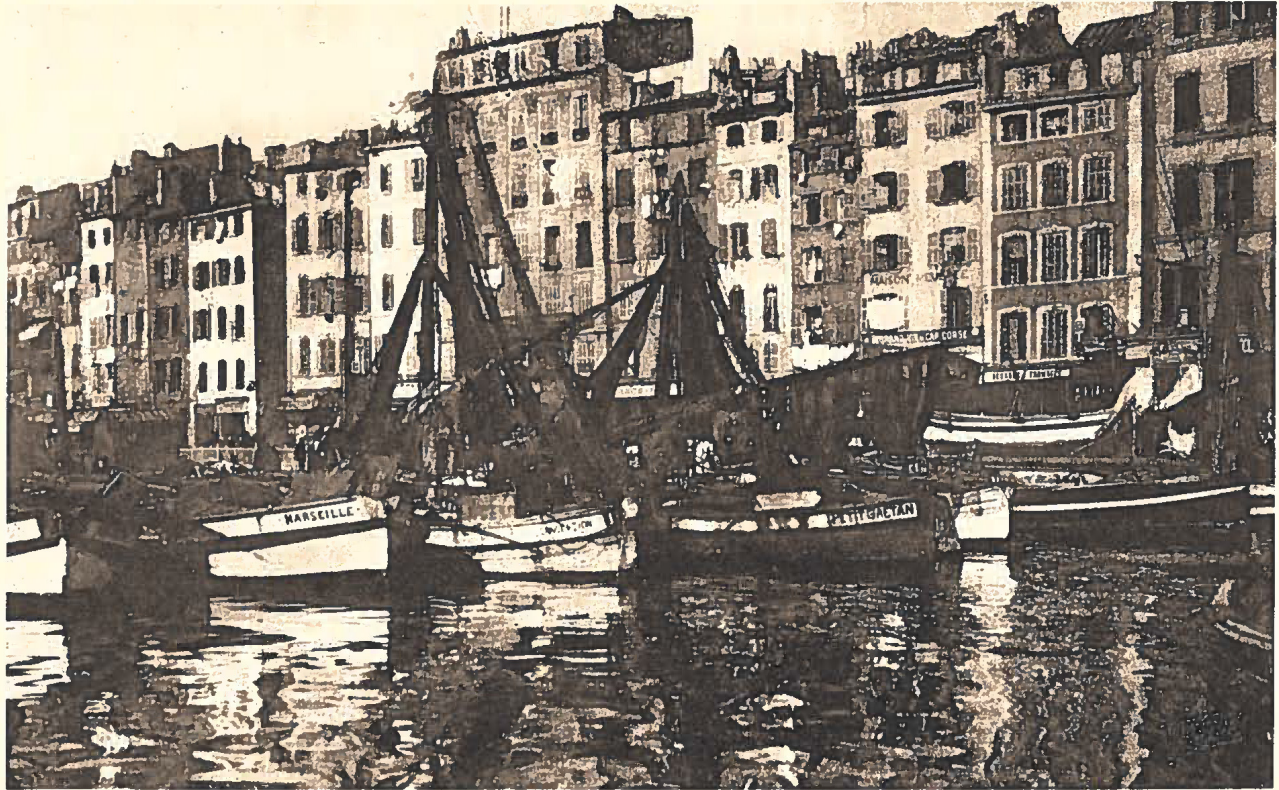


Photo Tardieu

Figure 18 – Photo Gréber took to show the “character of the façades of the Old Port,” from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 80–81.



Figure 19 – The Old Port’s quay, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d’aménagement et d’extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 80–81.





*Cliché Ville de Marseille*

Figure 20 – View of the ferry bridge from Pharo, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 82–83.





Figure 21 – View of the roofs of the old neighborhoods, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 82–83.



Figure 22 – View of Marseille from Château d'If, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 80–81.





Figure 23 – The unscathed parts of the Corniche, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 82–83.





Figure 24 – The denatured parts of the Corniche, from Gréber, Jacques. *Ville de Marseille: plan d'aménagement et d'extension: mémoire descriptive*. Paris: Vincent, Fréal, 1933, p. 82–83.





### CHAPTER THREE The Conservation of Cities

#### *“Urban Art”*

In the late nineteenth century, the dominant theories of urban aesthetics showed little regard for context or diverse perspectives. The art-historical interest in the urban past seemed only interested in a limited number of buildings, valuing them solely for their architectural or historical significance, without considering their context within the larger urban landscape. The streets, squares, and other surrounding structures were not attributed with inherent value. There was a prevailing inclination to remove or modify them to ensure unobstructed visibility of recognized monuments. This approach sought to grant these monuments the space they needed to be appreciated in their complete form, a practice that was known as “disencumberment.”<sup>1</sup> However, *urbanisme* by SFU fully endorsed urban conservation: the preservation, that is, of not just individual monuments but entire cities or urban ensembles.

In this last chapter, I challenge the common scholarly viewpoint that twentieth-century city planning was a movement towards a scientific field, away from aesthetic concerns. This scholarly position is best characterized in architecture historian François Choay’s work. In her definition of “urbanism” in the *Dictionary of Urbanism and Development* (1996), Choay suggests that “with the exception of Camillo Sitte (1843–1903), all the theoreticians of urbanism consider the desire for ‘embellishment’ to be

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<sup>1</sup> The French term is *dégagement*, and the German *Freilegung*.

secondary, if not simply absent.”<sup>2</sup> However, I contend that historic conservation, embellishment, and scientific renovation, for SFU, went hand in hand.

As the *Société* planners established *urbanisme* as a new discipline of territorial development integrating modern sciences, they argued for its artistic roots. Marcel Poëte asserts that “urbanism is indeed a synthesis: a science as well as an art... From science, one passes to art. In other words, to applied urbanism,”<sup>3</sup> and Henri Prost assures us that “while urbanism is a new word, art is an old one.”<sup>4</sup> SFU’s *urbanisme*, I propose, fused modern science and “urban art” or “urban aesthetics”—the terms the *Société* used to denote urbanism’s aesthetic goals. I argue that “urban art” was linked to pre-industrial methods of urban planning and was embedded in a discourse of conservation. Art, an ancient practice according to the *Société*, allowed the urbanist to apply the new science on the ground. Geographer Jules Scrive-Loyer, invited to deliver a talk at “The Current State of Urbanism in France and Abroad” conference that SFU organized in Strasbourg (1923), explains that the “art of architecture and engineering arms [the urbanist] with the appropriate working tools”<sup>5</sup> for the “aesthetic and technical realization of their creative conceptions.”<sup>6</sup>

SFU planners preserved historic sites that then evolve into the guiding framework that shapes the development of the new city or urban expansions. Examining two urban

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<sup>2</sup> Françoise Choay and Pierre Merlin, *Dictionnaire de l’urbanisme et de l’aménagement* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996), 818. For more of her writings on urbanism, check her significant work: Françoise Choay, *L’Urbanisme, utopies et réalités: une anthologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Poëte, “L’esprit de l’urbanisme français,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Prost, *L’Urbanisme en Afrique du Nord et sur la Côte d’Azur, 30 juin 1958, document dactylographi.*, *Fonds Prost, loc. cit.*, 343 AA 1/3, 18, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Jules Scrive-Loyer, “L’Urbanisme dans ses rapports avec la géographie humaine,” in *Où en est l’Urbanisme en France et à l’étranger: à l’occasion du Congrès International d’Urbanisme et d’Hygiène Municipale (Strasbourg, 1923)*, ed. Société Française des Urbanistes (Paris: Léon Eyrolles, 1923), 119.

<sup>6</sup> Scrive-Loyer, “L’Urbanisme dans ses rapports avec la géographie humaine,” 119.

reform schemes put forward by Prost for the historic cities of Rabat (1913) and Istanbul (1936) (figures 1 and 2), I demonstrate how the French urbanist positioned Bergsonian ideals of creative evolution alongside neoclassical techniques of spatial organization—both deemed by the *Société* to be “valid for all times and all countries”<sup>7</sup>—to create a visually organized plan where local historical urban forms are incorporated into the architecture of the present. Hubert Lyautey (r. 1912–1925), French Governor General in Morocco who commissioned Prost for the restructuring of Rabat, suggests in a bombastic speech delivered at the Congress of Moroccan Higher Education in 1921: “In Morocco, and it is to our honor, we conserve. We conserve Beauty, and it is not a negligible thing.”<sup>8</sup>

SFU’s contribution to modern planning was the attempted reconciliation of aesthetic goals with practical and scientific planning needs—what I call practical aesthetics—and promoting aesthetics as a way to stimulate a harmonious social order and better the inhabitants’ quality of life. SFU’s notion of “urban art” condemned “the uselessness of luxury, with which aesthetics has been tainted,”<sup>9</sup> and asserts the inseparability of aesthetics and utility. The most revealing clue to SFU’s ideology of “urban art” and conservation can be located in a 1932 article written by Robert de Souza. In “Public Utility and Aesthetics,” De Souza expounds that without “embellishment,” which is included in the title of the Urban Plans Act of 1919, “planning becomes an

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<sup>7</sup> Poëte, “L’esprit de l’urbanisme français,” 4.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Hubert Lyautey, *Paroles d’action* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale Editions, 1995), 340–341. Quoted in Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 142.

<sup>9</sup> Robert de Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” in Société Française des Urbanistes, “Rapports, Vœux et Compte-Rendu Général de la ‘Journée de l’urbanisme,’” *Urbanisme* 1, Numéro Hors-Série (1932), XXXIII.

empty word.”<sup>10</sup> The beauty of a city, the author suggests, should be sought for its own sake and should not be equated with “uselessness.” In other words, beauty should not be placed outside the scope of public utility. De Souza is trying to complement the modernist discourse on the contemporary city, which promoted “the simplest, most naked, and most radical solutions, without any national or regional influence.”<sup>11</sup> He aims to convince the public that beauty and utility are not mutually exclusive.

As I show, SFU tried to prove that a conservationist, historicist, and aesthetically conscientious approach to developing cities and the spatial environment was still possible and indeed necessary. With a cynical tone, De Souza strongly denounces the contemporary “transformative urbanism,” advocated by what he called the “ultramodernists, with exclusive systems not aesthetically based on regional conservation.”<sup>12</sup> According to the *Société* fellow, this approach to urban planning “paralyses a whole part of the life of the city and its surroundings that it claims to develop.”<sup>13</sup> This “ultramodern way of planning, with its harmful, intransigent formulas,”<sup>14</sup> he corroborates, “deliberately slays the local character and kills the elements of tourism, already being consumed by their own exploitation.”<sup>15</sup> In saying this, De Souza emphasizes that the two are indispensable points of attachment to the individual conscience and to the daily setting of life and our need for change. SFU’s aesthetic aims are most revealingly encapsulated in his concluding statement, infused with the essence of Bergsonian and Poëteian philosophy:

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<sup>10</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>11</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXII.

<sup>12</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>13</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>14</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>15</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

Whether it is a question of conserving nature, which is inseparable for our periodic rest in its truly natural aspects, or of conserving ancient monuments, which are indispensable for the whole scope of our life with its chain with the past, urbanism must maintain harmony and balance where they still endure and re-establish them where they have been lost. This aesthetic basis alone ensures a solid foundation for urbanism.<sup>16</sup>

As revealed in the previous chapters, the *Société* urbanists were convinced that capitalism and industrialization had allowed people a better standard of living but wreaked havoc with the social environment and the relationship between human beings and nature.<sup>17</sup>

SFU aimed to both study and disentangle this crisis and believed that the solutions should be derived from nature and sought empirically. Eugène Hénard criticized planners who “speculate upon mere hypotheses,” as that would “necessarily lead to hazardous, and sometimes entirely erroneous, conclusions.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, while urbanism is manmade or unnatural, it should, by no means, destroy or defy nature.<sup>19</sup>

“Urban art,” as conceived by SFU, glorified what these planners called the “regional picturesque”<sup>20</sup> as a way to counteract the “haughty routines” and the “ugliness of standard urban models,”<sup>21</sup> which industrial planning tends to produce. “Urban art” was

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<sup>16</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>17</sup> I am borrowing here ideas from Karl Polanyi’s brilliant work on the political economy of the post-industrial world and applying them to questions related to urbanism. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Eugène Hénard, “*The Cities of the Future*,” in *Transactions*, ed. Royal Institute of British Architects, Town Planning Conference London, 10–15 October 1910 (London: The Royal Institute of British Architects, 1911), 345.

<sup>19</sup> As the analysis of Prost’s work will show, SFU’s conservation efforts revealed *urbanisme* to be an art that permits the perception of sensory beauty, which reflects the *Société*’s overarching Bergsonian philosophy that science, on its own, is insufficient to address human emotions and Poëte’s notion that a city’s historical development must be thoroughly understood before embarking on its planning endeavors.

<sup>20</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>21</sup> Hubert Lyautey, “Preface,” in *L’Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, ed. Jean Royer (Paris: Selbstverlag, 1935), 7–8.

a means through which SFU attempted to reconcile the rationality of an urban master plan, founded on scientifically controlled social principles, with the regional character of the place. As SFU president Jean Marcel Auburtin declared in the speech he delivered at “The Current State of Urbanism in France and Abroad” conference, “to the light-filled streets, to the abundant greenery, to the orderly squares, to the monumental perspectives, we want to add today the picturesque, the unusual, and the varied, what was formerly considered as a disorder.”<sup>22</sup> The terms “picturesque,”<sup>23</sup> “liberty,” and “disorder,” implying a free artistic expression, are invoked as a means of conveying prejudice against the homogenization and standardization of the social environment.

In its alleged derivation from nature and aspiration to generate picturesque spaces, SFU’s “urban art” invokes seventeenth- and eighteenth-century neoclassical ideals that differed from the neoclassicism espoused by Haussmann in his restructuring of Paris.<sup>24</sup> Equally technical in its attempt at modernizing the conditions of hygiene and traffic circulation in old cities but aspiring to cultivate the psychological wellbeing of the city dweller, SFU’s neoclassicism denies the strictly geometric method and the dominance of the straight pathway and asserts instead the aesthetic superiority of the regional

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<sup>22</sup> Jean Marcel Auburtin, “Le part de l’Urbanisme dans l’esthétique des grandes villes,” in *Où en est l’Urbanisme en France et à l’étranger: à l’occasion du Congrès International d’Urbanisme et d’Hygiène Municipale (Strasbourg, 1923)*, ed. Société Française des Urbanistes (Paris: Léon Eyrolles, 1923), 153.

<sup>23</sup> The French term the urbanists use is *pittoresque*.

<sup>24</sup> Architectural historian Françoise Choay deliberates the latter’s distinct characteristics which separate it from its predecessors: its gigantic scale, out of proportion with baroque sensibilities; its strict regularity and uniformity which opposed classical conceptions of order; its privileging of autonomous, individual monuments; and finally its systematic use of urban parks as both aesthetic and hygienic instruments. See Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 76–84. See also Françoise Choay, “Pensées sur la ville, arts de la ville,” in *Histoire de la France Urbaine*, vol. 4, ed. Georges Duby (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 198; and Marcel Roncayolo, “Logiques Urbaines,” *Histoire de la France urbaine*, vol. 4, ed. Agulhon (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 103.

picturesque.<sup>25</sup> It endorses perspectival alongside planometric planning and the use of a variety of street forms, including curves, based on the terrain.<sup>26</sup>

### *Prost in Rabat*

As the *Société* planners adopted aesthetic principles that were practiced in the pre-industrial age, their work has been increasingly associated with the anti-modern. They have been typically dismissed as being “backward,” “conservative,” or “nostalgic moderns.” Correspondingly, as the two cities that this chapter examines are non-Western and Islamic, additionally under French colonial rule in the case of Rabat, this popular viewpoint has further been sustained by arguments reducing Prost’s urban operations to fit the well-established Orientalism framework.<sup>27</sup> Scholars of colonial urbanism, while perhaps right about the elitist attitude with which Prost advanced his planning in Moroccan cities, have allowed their preoccupation with colonialism and the uneven power relationship between the ruling elites and the locals to shroud the very

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<sup>25</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>26</sup> As evidenced in Gréber’s plan for Marseille, the said approach pervades all proposals crafted by planners affiliated with the Société.

<sup>27</sup> Sociologist Janet Abu-Lughod, whose work I mention earlier, argues that the French colonial policies adopted by Prost in Moroccan cities essentially segregated Moroccans from Europeans. The new cities that were created there, she suggests, were not side-by-side or equal but above and subordinating the historic Arab city. Architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright, who has written about colonial architecture in Morocco, claims that Prost’s regionalist approach to modern architecture in Morocco was “a tactic to stabilize colonial domination.” See Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 85. I discuss the work of both scholars in the Introduction, in which I also highlight the work of Paul Rabinow, who reasonably suggests that these planners’ “regionalist” work was not a nostalgic and backward movement, but rather based on “a rational appreciation and contemporary evaluation of the historical and social elements of the environment.” See Rabinow, *French Modern*, 48 and 72.



philosophical contributions that are at the basis of Prost's planning and his understanding of history and space.<sup>28</sup> In what follows, I will illustrate the typical colonial argument.

In "The Development of Urbanism in the Protectorate of Morocco, 1914–1923,"<sup>29</sup> Prost wrote of his "desire to preserve the particular aesthetics of the indigenous cities of a country that entered the twentieth century without having been influenced by modern civilization."<sup>30</sup> The common argument—made by scholars influenced by the ideas of scholar of literature and culture Edward Said about Western "Orientalization" of non-Western societies—posits that French bureaucrats and experts, like Prost, viewed the non-Western, colonial, or Islamic city as "primitive" and fixed in time. European colonizers, these scholars would argue, regarded the Judeo-Christian calendar as absolute, and all people in the world ought to be on the same trajectory. To this Saidian interpretation of Prost's work, I will provide a supplementary reading that aligns with the

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to mention here the work of scholar Laurent Hodebert, who has written a laborious dissertation about Prost's work in Rabat and Istanbul, among other cities for which the architect-urbanist put forward reform schemes. Entitled *Henri Prost and the Urban Soil Architecture Project*, Hodebert's dissertation argues that Prost advanced an art of designing urban spaces and territorial frameworks informed by "a specific culture of the soil and the way in which projects are sustainably inscribed in it." However, the dissertation studies Prost's work in isolation of intellectual sources. It also scarcely touches upon SFU and Prost's role within it. Hodebert states: "[...] Prost's relationship with professional networks should be mentioned, in particular his relationship with the *Société Française des Urbanistes* (of which he was a founding member in 1914) and the journal *Urbanisme*, of which he was editor-in-chief for many years. In this work, we have preferred to focus on the *Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale* of the *Musée Social*, which played a key role in Prost's career, and was even the origin of the SFU." The majority of scholars fail to make a clear distinction between these distinct groups, which, I must reiterate, were by no means synonymous. See Laurent Hodebert, *Henri Prost et le projet d'architecture du sol urbain, 1910–1959*, (Doctoral Dissertation: *Communauté Université Grenoble Alpes*, 2018), 522.

<sup>29</sup> The article was published in an edited volume of the proceedings of a conference organized by the French state in 1931 and entitled "Urbanism in the Colonies and the Tropics."

<sup>30</sup> Henri Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc, de 1914 à 1923," in *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, ed. Jean Royer (Paris: Selbstverlag, 1935), 60. The same article is published in another book, under a different title; see Henri Prost, "L'urbanisme au Maroc," in *La Renaissance du Maroc: dix ans de protectorat (1912–1922)*, ed. Henri Avelot (Rabat: Résidence Générale de la République Française au Maroc, 1920), 361–393.

larger dissertation framework: Bergson's theories of evolution and their translation into urban theories by Poëte.

Prost, I argue, was a conservationist rather than a conservative modern. As I will show, his reform scheme for Rabat involved a *terrestrial* approach, which I elucidated in the Introduction.<sup>31</sup> Reforming the *terrestre* encapsulates both history and geography in an inseparable embrace. History represents the vital thread of cultural continuity, entailing the crucial acquisition of local cultural knowledge by urban planners. Geography, on the other hand, encompasses the physical topography and the spirit of the people inhabiting the land.

In his *terrestrial* approach, Prost embraced temporal Bergsonian notions and spatial neoclassical principles reasoned by SFU to be universally applicable.<sup>32</sup> As such, they were applied across various Western and non-Western geographies. In what follows, and before examining Prost's urban renewal schemes for Rabat and Istanbul, I will illustrate the ways in which he and SFU understood Bergsonism and neoclassicism to be universal tools for planning cities.

In Bergson's work, the durational aspect of time is universal. Physicist Albert Einstein (1879–1955) had conceptualized a notion of time that is dependent on one's frame of reference, which implied that there is no universe-wide now moment or universe-wide simultaneity. Bergson, in response to Einstein's relativity theory, defended

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<sup>31</sup> As I explain in the Introduction, SFU believed that “the natural object, which urbanism tends to modify, is an extended portion of the surface of the Earth (*Globe terrestre*) [...]. Any alteration of the natural state of such a site is a matter of human geography.” See Scrive-Loyer, “L'Urbanisme dans ses rapports avec la géographie humaine,” 109.

<sup>32</sup> Attributing universal applicability to these two notions does not, in fact, suggest that SFU aimed to standardize its urbanism methods or assert that global territories share identical properties.

an alternative conception of universal time: regardless of one's frame of reference, time, considered seriously as an experience, has a durational dimension to it.

For SFU planners, classicism was equally universal. In "Twenty Years of Applied Urbanism in France," Poëte explains that the beauty of the classical urban layout springs from the perfect agreement realized between form and content, and between the urban social aggregate and the psychic framework of a society. It is thus in essence ubiquitously relevant. "The sumptuous layouts of open spaces reflecting royal majesty"<sup>33</sup> that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century classicism had produced, Poëte suggests, are now placed on the scale of our "machine-oriented civilization."<sup>34</sup> Before industrialization, "classical lines organized access roads to beautiful residences or served as road radiations in hunting forests."<sup>35</sup> Today, "these lines can offer contemporary cities both rational lines of circulation and expressive features of beauty."<sup>36</sup> With the supposedly universal Bergsonian and neoclassical spatial and temporal tools, SFU's urbanism sanctioned an agreement between the physical form of the city and the human senses. Urban form, for the *Société*, sought to follow people's psychic needs:

It is to the cities where we would like to live, not only for the ease and comfort that we would find there, but also for the charm and the pleasure of life, that the expression 'urban aesthetics' will be more readily applied. Aesthetics that depends on us: that we can create, modify, and adapt to our needs, tastes, and current sense of beauty.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Poëte, "L'esprit de l'urbanisme français," in Gaston Bardet, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Poëte, "L'esprit de l'urbanisme français," 4.

<sup>35</sup> Poëte, "L'esprit de l'urbanisme français," 4.

<sup>36</sup> Poëte, "L'esprit de l'urbanisme français," 4.

<sup>37</sup> Auburtin, "Le part de l'Urbanisme dans l'esthétique des grandes villes," 152.

Prost's modification of Rabat had to adhere to Lyautey's political agenda and planning framework. The two eventually devised comprehensive plans for restructuring the major historic cities of Morocco, including Rabat, Casablanca, Fez, Meknes, and Marrakesh. Lyautey's planning program involved creating in each of these cities a "*ville nouvelle*," a modern city for the European settlers detached from the indigenous Arab city, the *medina* (figures 3 and 4).

Prost's spatial scheme for Rabat called for a new city to be laid out on vast open spaces and "following a plan aimed at realizing the most modern conditions: large boulevards, conduits for water and electricity, squares and gardens, buses and tramways,"<sup>38</sup> and the old one to be "touched as little as possible."<sup>39</sup> This program may be interpreted through Poëte's ideas about topography and history, influential indeed for all his colleagues at the *Société*, especially Prost. Besides being SFU fellows, Prost and Poëte taught together at the *Institut d'Urbanisme*.<sup>40</sup> Embracing the separationist schema imposed by Lyautey, Prost envisioned the modern city as an offshoot of the indigenous city: a *terrestrial* extension of it. He argued for "the necessity to provide the new city with roads and quick and easy means of communication with the indigenous center, of which it is rather a parasite."<sup>41</sup> The old city emits the new one.

According to Poëte, the city or "urban agglomeration" is a living being whose different manifestations are like the successive ages of life, from childhood to adulthood. Being a living entity, it undergoes evolution not only in the dimension of time but also in

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<sup>38</sup> Lyautey, *Paroles d'action*, 340–341. Quoted in Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 142.

<sup>39</sup> Lyautey, *Paroles d'action*, 340–341. Quoted in Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 142.

<sup>40</sup> Check this master's thesis for information about the *Institut's* curriculum: Matus Carrasco, *La thèse en urbanisme de 1922 à 1937: les étudiants et les sources bibliographiques* (Master thesis: Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2009), 19.

<sup>41</sup> Royer, *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, 60.

space. History serves as a lens through which we can comprehend the state and progress of this organism. Meanwhile, geography sheds light on its inherent connection with the very earth that sustains its existence. By forging a connection between these two sciences, the city, sprawling before our eyes, gains an awareness of its significance and discovers its path towards the future.<sup>42</sup> According to this Poëteian principle, the future of Rabat must be linked to its past, and the design of the new agglomeration, the *ville nouvelle*, to the historical portion of Rabat.

When Prost arrived in Rabat, situated on the Atlantic coast and at the mouth of the Bou Regreg River, the city had no suburbs. The urban population consisted of about 25,000 inhabitants living within the perimeters of the ancient city walls.<sup>43</sup> The intramural city consisted of quarters bound by two sets of defensive walls. The inner walls, shaped like a trapezoid, included three protective walls with gates and a western riverside equipped with sharp stone cliffs forming a natural fortification (figure 5). The outer walls were simple mud brick ramparts, five or six meters high, located about one kilometer from the main walls. The space between the two sets of walls included three palace military outposts and “fine gardens, abounding in orange and pomegranate trees,”<sup>44</sup> as per British traveler Sir John Drummond Hay’s 1896 account of the city. France invaded

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<sup>42</sup> Marcel Poëte, “Avertissement,” *La vie urbaine* 1–2, no. 1 (1919), 1.

<sup>43</sup> Rabat was founded by the Islamic Berber Almoravid dynasty (r. 1040–1147) in the twelfth century. After its establishment, the city steadily grew until it experienced a prolonged period of decline following the collapse of the Almohad dynasty (r. 1121–1269), which had defeated the Almoravids and controlled most of North Africa, including Morocco, through the mid-thirteenth century. Following the collapse of the Almohads, Rabat was run by Berber corsairs, until it and the neighboring town, Salé, founded in about 1030 by the Zenata Berber tribe Banu Ifran, united to form the Republic of Bou Regreg in 1627. The newly established Alaouite Dynasty (1631) united Morocco in 1666 and continued to have autonomous control over the country until 1907, when France invaded Morocco.

<sup>44</sup> Louisa Brooks, *A Memoir of Sir John Drummond Hay: Sometime Minister at the Court of Morocco Based on His Journals and Correspondence* (London: J. Murray, 1896), 92.

Morocco in 1907. The French army first captured the city of Oujda in the east, then Casablanca. With the Treaty of Fes (March 30, 1912), the French protectorate was established. Lyautey, acting as French administrator of Morocco, relocated the country's capital from Fes to Rabat, following the Fes treaty. The Alaouites, who were ruling the country at that time, were retained as symbolic sultans under the French colonial rule.

Contrary to prevailing Saidian interpretations, Prost did not conceive of the trapezoidal medina as a stagnant ruin, but as a living entity that could generate a new life. In "Bergsonian Ideas and Urbanism" (1939), Poète wrote: "Everything comes from within. It is from the latter that we must start."<sup>45</sup> Correspondingly, it is from the core of Rabat's *medina* that Prost wants to instigate his *ville nouvelle*. A comparison between the two maps illustrating the pre-1913 arrangement of pathways and the 1913 circulation plan designed by Prost reveals that the routes originating from the medina gates were utilized as the blueprint for the new city's circulation system (figures 5 and 6).

Prost established this connection by first creating a non-building zone of 250 meters around the *medina* where construction was forbidden. In this open space,<sup>46</sup> a major boulevard, Joffre and Gallieni, separated the old city from the *ville nouvelle*, running east and west parallel to the Andalusian wall. It was expanded by means of a park, which reached into the new city's core. The commercial district was concentrated just west of the park, and on the eastern side of the outer western wall, south of the Andalusian wall, Prost developed a mixed residential and commercial zone. While the

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<sup>45</sup> Poète, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 576.

<sup>46</sup> It was meant to be a greenbelt but was not established as such because foreigners had already moved in, buying up the land just outside the city walls before Prost arrived in the city and began to develop his master plan.

center of the city integrated housing and retail facilities, industrial zones were positioned on the outskirts.

Two perpendicular circulation tracks constituted the structure of the new city. The first east-west road was superimposed on the national Agadir-Casablanca-Tunis piste and branched off into two arteries at the western entrance to the new town. One of them ran along the walls of the native city; the other passed through the center of the European agglomeration. The two arteries converged at a bridge over the river. Running north-south, the second road is a wide ceremonial street following the path of the earlier piste from the Bab al-Tibin gate all the way up to the Sunna Mosque and the gate to the palace complex (figures 7, 8 and 9). There, the plan outlined a dual governance structure for the nation, incorporating both the traditional Moroccan rule and the emerging French administration. At the elevated grounds east of the Moroccan imperial palace, and on the opposite side of the ceremonial road, precisely parallel in scale and position, lay the newly established administrative zone of the French protectorate<sup>47</sup> (figures 10, 11, and 12). All administrative activity was grouped along the second road. In the middle of it, Prost placed a train station, connecting Rabat with other cities in the region: Marrakech, Casablanca, Fez, Tangier, Algiers, and Tunis. Extended southward, the road led to an airport linking Morocco and Toulouse. Between Bab al-Tibin and the station, Prost placed the post office, banks, and the main trading houses. Offices for the railway administration and civil and military services were spread out between the station and the General Residence.

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<sup>47</sup> Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 157.



The dual system crafted between the *medina* and the *ville nouvelle* can be construed as a manifestation of Prost's prime concern to separate a novel modern development from its supposed counter-model, the traditional city. If industrialization is inevitable, Prost thought, preserving the past is still possible, only in the *medina*. There, in his words, he "maintained an intact civilization within its framework for centuries: heritage forming an incomparable subject of study and a tourist capital of considerable importance."<sup>48</sup>

The French colonial Arab *terrestre* (land), corresponding with Bergson's theory, did not align with modern times, and that is not necessarily an indication of primitiveness or backwardness. For the French planners, this was a fortunate opportunity for preserving the *medina*, as well as many valuable monuments and vestiges of the past around the old city. Applying Bergsonian thought to the urban question, Poëte was able to show that cities have formal memory, and monuments embody it. "Spirituality is in fact essentially creative,"<sup>49</sup> writes Poëte. "Its creations," he adds, "are in souls and on urban soil, in the form of monuments such as Les Invalides and the Champs-Élysées."<sup>50</sup> Prost called for the conservation of historic monuments and the *medina* as one larger historic monument itself. "Each city has become, as a whole, a historical monument,"<sup>51</sup> suggests an article in *The Renaissance of Morocco: Ten Years of Protectorate (1912–1922)*, published alongside Prost's "Urbanism in Morocco." In France, Prost noted, the protection of landscapes and monuments has been the subject of laws "the application of which

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<sup>48</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 60.

<sup>49</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 583.

<sup>50</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 583.

<sup>51</sup> Unknown author, "Les monuments historiques," in *La Renaissance du Maroc: dix ans de protectorat (1912–1922)*, ed. Henri Avelot (Rabat: Résidence Générale de la République Française au Maroc, 1920), 209.

unfortunately came only after real disasters that demonstrated the necessity for conservation.”<sup>52</sup> Whereas in Morocco, “it was possible to take active measures for the protection of monuments before planning started.”<sup>53</sup>

All plans for Moroccan cities programmed by Lyautey contained a *ville nouvelle*, which typically included an open land around the *medina* where new construction was prohibited. Beyond this area (termed *cordon sanitaire*), with a military, protective function, the architect laid out a radial network of streets interlaced with a smaller rectilinear one. The dual road system was arranged around public and historic monuments, which were often landscaped or attached to existing parks.<sup>54</sup> While the city center blended residential and commercial sectors, industrial zones were strategically clustered on the periphery or near ports and transportation hubs. Peripheral ring roads connected the industrial zones with the core of the city (figure 3).

Standardizing the layout of the *ville nouvelle* rendered the old *medina* more artistically unique and picturesque. “Each city has its own character that is interesting and curious [...]. Rabat is nothing like Fez, which is as different from Marrakech or Meknes as these two cities are from each other; each one has a clearly marked artistic dominance.”<sup>55</sup> As the article in *The Renaissance of Morocco* states, “a stay in one of them cannot give an idea of what the others are, and who wants to know Morocco must have seen them all.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 60.

<sup>53</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 60.

<sup>54</sup> Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 146.

<sup>55</sup> Unknown author, “Les monuments historiques,” 209.

<sup>56</sup> Unknown author, “Les monuments historiques,” 209.

Prost's conservationist planning in Rabat involved not only preserving the historic sites but also creating points of view from which they "could be admired and contemplated with the freedom of the field of view,"<sup>57</sup> as he specified. In addition to Rabat's *medina*, Prost preserved the Hassan Tower and the ruins of the Hassan Mosque, both commissioned, at the end of the twelfth century, by Abu Yusuf Yacoub El Mansour (r. 1184–1199), the third caliph of the Almohad Caliphate which controlled much of the Iberian Peninsula (*Al Andalus*) and North Africa. The open space surrounding the complex was planted "in keeping with the beauty and grandeur of the imposing remains."<sup>58</sup> The neighboring buildings of this "pictorial complex," according to Prost, were treated as villas with greenery and height limitations. The ramparts of the Yacoub El Mansour Mosque were shielded from any construction by non-building zones, forming "a long line of old red walls picturesquely framed by greenery"<sup>59</sup> (figure 13). The kasbah (citadel), an extension by Yacoub El Mansour of a former kasbah built in 1150 by the Almohad caliph Abd al-Mu'min (r. 1133–1163), with new walls extending over a vast area beyond the old construction, "was protected by exceptional measures."<sup>60</sup> Around the ruins of the Chellah necropolis,<sup>61</sup> all construction was prohibited.<sup>62</sup>

Another way to understand Prost's planning that emphasized the regional picturesque is to look at the various sites that he selected in the *ville nouvelle* from which

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<sup>57</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 68.

<sup>58</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 70.

<sup>59</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 70.

<sup>60</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 70.

<sup>61</sup> The Chellah was originally a trading emporium established by the Phoenicians on the south side of the Bou Regreg estuary. It became the site of a Roman colony in the province of Mauretania Tingitana (after year 44) and was afterwards used as a royal burial ground during the reign of the Almohad dynasty (r. 1121–1269).

<sup>62</sup> Prost, "Le développement de l'urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc," 70.

the panorama of the *medina* is the most impressive and characteristic. Prost developed those into parks. One overlooked the Bou Regreg estuary from the magnificent Hassan Tower, another Rabat and Salé from the imperial palace, and a third the enclosure of the old walls from the platform of the Aguedal. Land was acquired by way of exchange or expropriation to create gardens forming a “foreground from which the admirable white silhouette would always emerge,”<sup>63</sup> and laws were placed limiting the height of buildings in certain neighborhoods to prevent the native cities of Rabat and Salé from being obscured from view. Instead, they appear as “a silhouette on the ocean, as seen from the new French residence”<sup>64</sup> (figure 14).

Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier’s contributions have wielded significant influence in shaping SFU’s landscape concepts.<sup>65</sup> Many of Prost’s landscape design ideas are indebted to Forestier. The two worked together in Morocco.<sup>66</sup> Forestier’s belief in integrating vegetation into urban areas to establish spaces for leisure and strolling was a central tenet. Outside the cities, nurseries would create reserves for the future. The garden and, on a larger scale, the park are places where we rediscover contact with the natural soil, a privileged form of experience according to SFU. Attention to topographical

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<sup>63</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 70.

<sup>64</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 70.

<sup>65</sup> As I craft the next iteration of this project, I plan to allocate a dedicated chapter to explore Forestier’s contributions thoroughly. Forestier’s curiosity was piqued by the distinctive features of regional landscape design in South America and North Africa. He sought to capture the essence of these elements and translate them into contemporary expressions. He was fascinated by the *riads* (gardens) in Morocco, whose main features, as he noted, are the gridded layout and the horizontal terraces, which facilitate simple gravity-fed irrigation, followed by paths projecting from the ground. Those served as both circulation tracks and channels to contain and direct water. Forestier’s plea resonates strongly: rather than simply replicating these arrangements, he encouraged urbanists to draw valuable lessons from them, incorporating those insights into the design of gardens specifically suited to Morocco’s climate.

<sup>66</sup> See Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier, “Rapport des réserves à constituer au dedans et aux abords des villes capitales du Maroc,” in *Grandes villes et systèmes de parcs*, ed. Bénédicte Leclerc (Paris: Picard, 1994).

leveling is important. In his seminal work, *Large Cities and Park Systems* (1908), Forestier describes the elements that make up a park system: large reserves and protected parks, suburban parks, large urban parks, small parks, neighborhood gardens, recreation grounds, which may include kindergartens and avenues and promenades. Some of these categories can be distinguished in Prost's practice in Morocco.<sup>67</sup> Prost writes in 1923:

I will not dwell too much on open spaces. Everywhere we have tried to achieve the maximum. All our cities are well provided for in this respect, with the exception of Casablanca, where the high price of land and the aridity of the soil have led us to concentrate all our efforts on a vast park arising in the belly of the city near the Place Administrative. On this site, the municipality must endeavor to create a large green and shaded area abundantly supplied with water, so rare in this country, which is the indispensable basis for all vegetation.<sup>68</sup>

In the same text, Prost depicts the departments of the municipality in Rabat as “grouped in a garden.” His drawings for the General Residence show the relationship he tried to establish between the western entrance courtyard and the main façade with the garden beds. Outside the city, Prost refers to the Aguedal as “woodlands, marvelously created by the Forestry Department.”<sup>69</sup> They constitute “the Bois de Boulogne of Rabat. Those who have known the barren wasteland of Rabat,”<sup>70</sup> Prost adds, “will be amazed of the

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<sup>67</sup> These ideas also manifest in the work of Gréber, as we saw in Chapter Two.

<sup>68</sup> Henri Prost, *L'urbanisme au Maroc, Notice pour le congrès de Strasbourg, Juin 1923*, Fonds Prost, loc. cit., 343 AA 3/3, 22, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Henri Prost, *Rabat à l'étude, Protectorat du Maroc, Avril 1932 (HP ARC 15/2)*, Fonds Prost, loc. cit., 343 AA 4/1, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Henri Prost, *Rabat à l'étude, Protectorat du Maroc, Avril 1932 (HP ARC 15/2)*, Fonds Prost, loc. cit., 343 AA 4/1, 1.

transformation achieved in so few years. These wooded areas should be carefully guarded against any attempt to damage their integrity.”<sup>71</sup>

At the core of Poëte’s Bergsonian philosophy of memory lay a fear that the spirit of a city could be profoundly disturbed by the potential of disfigurement. Despite his commitment to studying change, he unswervingly resisted change. With unwavering determination, he tirelessly advocated for the preservation of subtle historical traces, firmly opposing any form of “evolution” that could lead to the obliteration of the past. Nothing is more Poëteian than Prost’s resistance to change in Rabat’s *medina*. Prost proclaimed, “in themselves, these indigenous cities are now preserved; we no longer have to fear, for many years, that they will change.”<sup>72</sup>

Prost’s preservation of the *medina* in its entirety exhibits an understanding that not only individual monuments but also the everyday fabric of the city was “historic” and worthy of conservation. This new perception, as already explained, draws its inspiration from both Bergson’s theories of historical evolution and Poëte’s interpretation of them, expanding ideas about conservation that were put forward in the nineteenth century by theorists such as John Ruskin (1819–1900). While Ruskin focused on the individual monument, SFU thought of the city as monument. Ruskin suggests that restoration is:

[...] the most total destruction that a building can suffer [...]. Another spirit may be given by another time, but it is then a new building [...]. It is impossible, as impossible to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture [...]. Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end [...]. We have no right whatever to touch [the

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<sup>71</sup> Henri Prost, *Rabat à l'étude, Protectorat du Maroc, Avril 1932 (HP ARC 15/2)*, Fonds Prost, loc. cit., 343 AA 4/1, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 68.

buildings of the past]. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to the generations of mankind who are to follow us.<sup>73</sup>

Prost's preservation of the *medina* evokes the Ruskinian concept that forms produced in a particular era are the unique expression of that era and reconditioning or even just touching them falsifies the past.

Prost acted as an art historian, placing history at the service of an imagined historiography with an invented spatial reality. He grouped the country's monuments according to supposedly "three great historic periods."<sup>74</sup> All art that predated the modern, industrial period was deemed to be valuable and hence worthy of conservation. What came after is considered insipid and "decadent." In what follows, I will recapitulate Prost's narrative.

The first period, according to Prost, begins with the introduction of Islam in Berber North Africa in the seventh century.<sup>75</sup> Calling it "archaic and heroic," Prost considered this period as encompassing the constructions carried out during the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties. He noted that, as the Sultans fought to conquer and maintain their empire, the palaces were "real fortresses," and the cities surrounded by "high walls flanked by bastions and pierced by monumental doors, easy to close and defend." For the contemporary French urbanist, planning then was apparently a question of rapidly sheltering the city against turbulent and plundering tribes. The walls appear "powerful," the plans "simple and vigorous," and the "decoration sober and stylistically

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<sup>73</sup> John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory," in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, eds. John Ruskin and Bruce Rogers (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 65 Cornhill, 1849), 18–20.

<sup>74</sup> Unknown author, "Les monuments historiques," 208.

<sup>75</sup> Unknown author, "Les monuments historiques," 208.

intricate.” Samples of this architecture include the Chellah necropolis and the Hassan Mosque in Rabat.

The second historical period, based on Prost’s account, begins with the Muslim conquest of Andalusia at the turn of the eighth century. The Moors’ victorious leader, Yacoub el Mansour, brought artists with him from Spain to Morocco to erect the Hassan Tower in Rabat and the Koutoubia Minaret in Marrakech. Moroccan art had by then undergone “a very clear evolution.” It was, as suggested by Prost, no longer essentially military. “Its productions were ample, and the majestic sets well balanced.” This period is characterized by an art with “extreme expression.”

Driven out of Spain, the Moors arrived in great numbers to settle in Rabat and Fez, with their “taste for sumptuous palaces and luxurious and complex decorations,” and that is when the third “exuberant, distinguished, and voluptuous” period opens. The Marinid Sultanate reigned then, with prolific architectural production, Prost informs us. All the madrasas and Muslim colleges, which still exist, were constructed or restored by the Marinids, according to Prost’s report. The Marinids built hammams, fountains, and funduks, in addition to “wonderful palaces.” In general, the monuments of this period are “of small but beautiful proportions,” where “ornament, always subordinate to architecture, is infinitely rich.” The palaces, Prost advocates, have many rooms and are superbly decorated. The luxurious gardens, he adds, are out of this world, especially in Marrakech. They are “numerous, immense, and enchanting.” According to the French architect, Moroccan art is purportedly, until the eighteenth century, at its peak. But as industrialization set in, Prost believes, this reality started shifting. In Morocco and beyond, the *Société* urbanists saw the beginning of the industrial age as a downfall: a



period of decadence in the scientific, artistic, and economic realms,<sup>76</sup> where “construction and decoration were carried out according to formulas.”<sup>77</sup> The original geometric combinations, which seemed to develop infinitely, were supposedly “reduced to figures classified in an insipidly precise way, impersonal, cold, and monotonous.”<sup>78</sup>

It is notable that Poëte had elucidated in his writings the reasons for the apparent deterioration of art in the modern period. As Chapter One has shown, Poëte links the decadence to the decline of spiritualism as a result of capitalism. Poëte’s contextual reference is the French capital, but the motives for the decadence are for him the same everywhere. *Le machinisme* (mechanization) made its appearance in the urban setting, he narrates, causing a *saut brusque* (an abrupt leap) that corresponded with the emerging revolution in material life and the precipitous political and social revolution. For him, the pre-modern world was mystical, whereas the latter is lacking this supposedly necessary spiritualist quality, important for the wellbeing of human beings.<sup>79</sup> With industrialization and capitalism, “the mind is less free,”<sup>80</sup> he protests. Machinery created “an immense void between the body, now enormously enlarged by it, and the soul, which stayed constant.”<sup>81</sup> Prost’s preservation of the entire old city evokes this Poëteian anxiety about losing any urban fragment from the pre-industrial past.

Remaining loyal, however, to his task of reconciling the present and the past and mysticism and mechanization, as the first chapter has revealed, Poëte claimed that there are ways through which the conflict between the “moral makeover of human beings

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<sup>76</sup> Unknown author, “Les monuments historiques,” 209.

<sup>77</sup> Unknown author, “Les monuments historiques,” 209.

<sup>78</sup> Unknown author, “Les monuments historiques,” 209.

<sup>79</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>80</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>81</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

through mysticism”<sup>82</sup> and the “development of machinery”<sup>83</sup> can be resolved. “Man,” he stated, “will only rise above the Earth if a powerful tool provided him with a point of support... Mysticism calls for mechanization.”<sup>84</sup> This exaltation of machinery by Poëte justifies the development of the modern city by Prost. The latter enjoyed the installation of modern amenities such as plumbing and electricity, regularization of roadways, whitewashing of facades, and many demolitions to make new infrastructure and architecture possible, while the *medina* looked to the past. Prost perceived the *ville nouvelle* in Rabat as Poëte saw the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The second, which “stands in Paris as a symbol of machinery,” Poëte proclaims, “is not antithetical to mysticism.”<sup>85</sup> Implanted within Paris’s historic fabric, “it expresses, like the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Church of the Invalides, the *sursum corda*.”<sup>86</sup> Poëte explains that technology gave rise to a new Paris during the Second Empire, but the modern city is still “loaded with all its past.”<sup>87</sup> In Rabat, Prost’s reconciliation of the old and the new was accomplished through a similar act of juxtaposition, in which the past interpenetrates the present.

Prost’s separation of the *medina* and *ville nouvelle* conjures theories by Roman engineer-architect and historian Gustavo Giovannoni, a key figure in urban planning and conservation during the first half of the twentieth century in Italy.<sup>88</sup> In his book *New Building in Old Cities* (1913), Giovannoni posits that the modern city and the historic city

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<sup>82</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>83</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>84</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>85</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>86</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 584.

<sup>87</sup> Poëte, “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme,” 585.

<sup>88</sup> Gustavo Giovannoni’s article, “Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova” (1913), is widely acknowledged as one of the initial critical contributions concerning the relationship among historic buildings, town centers, and urban expansion.

fundamentally operate on distinct principles. Instead of following the conventional approach of superimposing the modern city onto the old, as exemplified by Haussmann's methods in France and widespread in Germany and Austria under Joseph Stübben's influence, the modern city should be relocated. It should evolve beyond the confines of the historic nucleus, adhering to its own inherent rationale. However, according to Giovannoni, the historic core would still retain specific functions that align with its architectural character and size. It would undergo precise surgical alterations to accommodate the demands of contemporary living.<sup>89</sup> Prost did not do so. By sustaining the old city, by denying it contemporaneity, he viewed this act as one of bringing the past into the present in a Bergsonian fashion. However, isolating the *medina* and cutting it off from the new French-conceived city freezes it and museumifies it. The past is still the present, rather than becoming, or coming into, the present.

Prost's expansion scheme for Rabat, which preceded the Cornudet Law and the theories of urban growth that SFU began to develop and codify in 1919, was limited to new residents and colonial settlers. Developed solely for the incoming French and European communities, the *ville nouvelle* did not include Rabatian or Moroccan people. In Rabat, whether Prost was aware or not, a "parasite" of the original, as the urbanist called the new city, indeed means that the latter is both dependent upon, and harmful to, the pre-colonial city. The urbanist declared that the goal of planning is "to create a modern city outside of the Muslim city, but to connect the two by major arteries, guided by their mutual interests."<sup>90</sup> The "mutual interests," which Prost did not actually specify,

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<sup>89</sup> See Michele Lamprakos, "The Idea of the Historic City," *Change Over Time* 4, no. 1 (2014): 19. In this article, Lamprakos examines the development of the notion of the historic city and how it has been defined in contradistinction to the modern, oftentimes colonial, city.

<sup>90</sup> Royer, *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, 60.

were injudiciously hierarchical and exploitative, benefitting the former at the expense of the latter.

Prost in fact revealed the conventional assumption of the age when he stated that “the complete separation of the European and indigenous communities [in Rabat] was an essential condition [...] for political, economic, hygienic, military, and aesthetic reasons.”<sup>91</sup> The old Islamic city, Prost declared, quoting Lyautey, cannot accommodate Europeans with demands for modern amenities. Likewise, French people cannot adapt to Islamic customs, including gender segregation. “We have come to Morocco,” he added, “to bring a collaboration that should in no way disturb the living conditions of its inhabitants.”<sup>92</sup> Prost and Lyautey’s planned extension encircled the *medina* and preempted all possible avenues of expansion.<sup>93</sup>

### *Prost in Istanbul*

Prost’s operations in Morocco constituted the beginning of his professional career and the introduction of *urbanisme* in French colonial North Africa.<sup>94</sup> But the architect had begun to conceptually develop his thoughts on urbanism at the Villa Medici in Rome.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 60.

<sup>92</sup> Prost, “Le développement de l’urbanisme dans le protectorat du Maroc,” 60.

<sup>93</sup> Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 155.

<sup>94</sup> “We embarked in 1914 in Casablanca,” wrote Joseph Marrast, former president of the Architecture Academy and general inspector of public buildings. He added: “Prost opened the era of contemporary French urbanism. It is in his work in Morocco that all the bases of healthy and efficient urbanism are to be found.” See Joseph Marrast, “Fez,” in *L’œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme*, ed. Henri Prost and Louis Hauteœur (Paris: Académie d’architecture, 1960), 103.

<sup>95</sup> Jean-Louis Cohen, “Les architectes français et l’art urbain,” in *Les Premiers urbanistes et l’art urbain*, ed. Jean-Pierre Gaudin and Rémi Baudouï (Paris: Ecole d’Architecture Paris-Villemin, 1987), 80. The Beaux-Arts student had won the prize in 1902. In Rome, he was accompanied by other SFU members including Léon Jaussely (1875–1932) and Ernest Hébrard (1875–1933). This was before the establishment of SFU.

The research he conducted in the Italian capital city, upon winning the *Grand Prix de Rome*, had played a crucial role in the development of his ideals about not only urbanism, but also history, archaeology, and conservation.<sup>96</sup> Rome was also the place where Prost's interest in Roman architecture and its revival began to mature. His urban restructuring plan for Istanbul, developed twenty years after Rabat's plan, reveals the urbanist's full-fledged classical principles. At the academy in Rome, students originally studied classical buildings. In the early nineteenth-century, the architectural study developed by the scholars shifted from a straightforward survey of the ruin to an imagined restoration of it as it ostensibly stood in Roman times, activating new archaeological rigor and design curiosities.

The Rome Prize was established in 1663 in France and awarded to students in painting and sculpture. In 1720, it was extended to architecture students. The French state endowed the winners with money to sponsor their stay in Rome for three to five years at the Villa Medici. The victors were asked to produce representations of ancient architecture to be sent to Paris and serve as a pedagogical model for educating students at the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. After 1824, the institute began to recommend drawings that offer possibilities for restoring the ruins.<sup>97</sup> Roman buildings, considered the most

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<sup>96</sup> Hauteœur's article about Prost's work at the Villa Medici in Rome suggests that extensive study should be made of the life, events, teaching, and attitudes that developed among the Beaux-Arts residents in Rome. It is seldom acknowledged that careers of Bérard, Lefèvre, Janin, Guérin, Prost, Jaussely, Besnard, Garnier, and Girault as urbanists began there between 1901 and 1914. See Louis Hauteœur, "Henri Prost à la Villa Médicis," in *L'œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme*, ed. Henri Prost and Louis Hauteœur (Paris: Académie d'architecture, 1960), 18. Check also Peter M. Wolf, *Eugène Hénard and the Beginning of Urbanism in Paris, 1900–1914* (The Hague: International Federation for Housing and Planning, 1968), 85.

<sup>97</sup> The institute required "the most probable conjuncture, supported by authorities, of the form, figure, and proportions of the monument, today in ruins." The restoration was supposed to show "what the monument could have looked like at the time of its splendor." Quoted in Jean-Louis Cohen, "Les envois de Rome au début du XXe siècle et l'invention de l'urbanisme en France," in *Figurations de la cité*, ed. Jean-Pierre Péneau et al. (Paris: Académie d'Architecture, 2016), 11. On the

important of all ancient monuments, were typically chosen, and, over the course of the nineteenth century, the geographical focus was enlarged to encompass also Greek architecture.<sup>98</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, there was a noticeable shift of interest from the architectural to the urban scale. Undoubtedly, and not the result of an institutional change at the *Académie* or the *École des Beaux-Arts*, the change was mostly brought about by a cohort of students who were concerned with urban art and city planning that promoted historic conservation before the term urbanism was coined and popularized by SFU in the second decade of the century. The Istanbul studies that Prost conducted in Rome would influence his reform scheme for the city, put forward three decades later.

At the French Academy in Rome, Prost was required to develop a reconstruction scheme for Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, along with the Emperor's Palace, the Great Circus, and the Forum. But the young French architect preoccupied himself with the total urban site, investigating the relationship between the Byzantine cathedral and the contemporary city. His representation of the ancient site, developed between 1905 and 1908, was inseparable from his reflection on the topography of the city that surrounded the site (figure 15).

In 1936, when Prost was commissioned by Turkey's first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (r. 1923–1938), to design a reform scheme for the city, which had lost its position as the country's capital to Ankara, the French urbanist's proposed master plan

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rules of the Académie, see Pierre Pinon and François-Xavier Amprimoz, *Les envois de Rome (1778–1968): architecture et archéologie* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988), 15–70.

<sup>98</sup> This change happened around 1829, when architect and Rome Prize winner Henri Labrousse (1801–1875) became interested in the Greek temples of Paestum and Agrigento. See Cohen, "Les envois de Rome au début du XXe siècle et l'invention de l'urbanisme en France," 11.

recuperated the Ottoman city with the ancient Roman version of it as the archaeological base. While in Rabat, the Islamic Almoravid and Almohad sites were the most prominent vestiges of the past within the urban landscape renewed by Prost, in Istanbul, the former capital of the Roman (330–1204 and 1261–1453) and Ottoman Empires (1453–1922), the French architect put much emphasis on preserving the two legacies. He integrated old Ottoman buildings within pedestrian promenades, turning them into picturesque sites to be contemplated together with the green setting that was developed around them for embellishing and completing the pictorial composition, and, with his Bergsonian urge to bring almost a comprehensive historical time into the present, he also incorporated whatever Roman remains he could trace on the surface of the land and also under it. Prost's urban archaeological scheme connected the newly founded republic of Turkey with its universal history, beginning with Byzantium.

Occupying the outskirts of the Topkapı Palace and a burnt-down district bordering the Hagia Sophia, Little Hagia Sophia, and the sea, the “Archaeological Park” was one of the main features of the architect's master plan (figures 16, 17 and 18). The Archaeological Park made the historical layering or the *longue durée* of the city's evolution manifest in the present. Prost developed the park on the site of the Great Palace of Constantinople, built by Constantine the Great (r. 306–337) in 330, when he re-established the city as the new capital of the Roman Empire. The French architect proposed a detailed program for archaeological excavations that would hopefully bring to light the remains of the Imperial Palace, and “perhaps also the remains of older

civilizations.”<sup>99</sup> He banned construction on the historic site. He reserved two zones for the growth of the archaeological research, one at the site of Hagia Sophia’s atrium and another northeast of Saints-Serge-et-Bacchus. He hoped that “Hagia Sophia, Sultan Ahmet Mosque, Hagia Irene, and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha Mosque would emerge from this area after the release of the Great Circus, and after the archaeological research will have brought to light the remains of the ancient Acropolis, Forum, and Palace of the Emperors with all its outbuildings.”<sup>100</sup> As it sprang from the ancient Byzantine site, the park was supposed to evolve with the evolution of the archaeological sightings. Prost constituted between Hagia Sophia and Sultan Ahmet Mosque a free zone where the revealed remains would be presented by connecting them with clusters of trees and gardens. Alongside the ancient Byzantine walls, terraced gardens would be laid out, where one would “enjoy an extended panorama towards the Marmara Sea”<sup>101</sup> and which, seen from the sea, would “accentuate the harmonious unity of the region.”<sup>102</sup>

Prost’s vision for Istanbul as a “resurrected ancient Rome”<sup>103</sup> was not limited to the site of the park. In a sketch he drew up, he presented the Byzantine fortifications along the Marmara Sea and the Golden Horn as sites to be protected. He defined a non-building zone covering an area of 500 meters outside and 50 meters inside the walls for conserving the remains of the wall in their integrity and emphasizing their monumental effect. He sketched out arteries that crossed the historic city from east to west following

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Pierre Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique,” *Henri Prost et le plan directeur d’Istanbul, 1936–1951*. Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Original publication May, 2010, <https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/03-CHAPITRE-03.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”

<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”

<sup>103</sup> Quoted Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”



the supposed trajectory of the Byzantine axes. Chasing the crests of the seven hills, the arteries radiated and branched off from the Mese, the first principal axis of the ancient Byzantine city, towards the gates on the western walls.

Prost's initial plan for Hagia Sophia, when he resided in Rome, invokes Bergson's notion of flux and matter in motion, namely the quality of "becoming." "The purpose of the study," he stated, "was to establish a plan of the current state of ancient Constantinople from Hagia Sophia to the hippodrome along the seashore..., hence creating the first milestone of a plan that does not exist."<sup>104</sup> From Rome, Prost delivered to Paris a plan (figure 15) and two perspectival views of Hagia Sophia with its complete surroundings (figures 19 and 20). In his extraordinary plan, where he understood nothing about the ancient buildings barring the architecture of the cathedral and the general form of the Hippodrome,<sup>105</sup> Prost invented a complex urban fabric connecting the monument with its neighboring natural and built environments. The cathedral, the Baths of Zeuxippe, the Forum, the Imperial Palace, and the Hippodrome occupied the center of the two-dimensional drawing. The imperial gardens bordered the building complex on the northeastern side leading up to the Marmara Sea. To the southwest, Prost drew up an urban web of buildings and pistes adjoining the cathedral with the city. He designed a square-shaped imperial palace with a large central courtyard surrounded by ceremonial rooms separated by peristyles. The palace is preceded by two barracks with a porticoed

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<sup>104</sup> Pierre Pinon, "La formation d'Henri Prost," *Henri Prost et le plan directeur d'Istanbul, 1936–1951*. Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Original publication May, 2010, <https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/00-ACCUEIL-CHAP-01.html>.

<sup>105</sup> There was then only the restitution of the palaces by J. Labarte (1861), based on just a few archaeological remains. The archaeological excavations themselves only began in this area after the fires of 1912 and 1913, by German archaeologists first, until 1919, then by French archaeologists from 1921 onward.

alley in between. The alley opens onto the Augustaion. The urban fabric, located south of the palace and the Hippodrome, featured curved streets, defining irregular islets in which the architect arranged houses with square peristyle courtyards. The composition, with its large avenues and porticoes, evokes classical urban design, while the distortions in the layout of the *pistes* give the viewer a sense of naturalness as if the outlined city were a byproduct of the accidents of history, over the course of centuries.

The architect wanted to establish a document on Hagia Sophia that is complete both from a practical and aesthetic point of view. Architecture and buildings are seen as elements of beauty and the picturesque. The possibilities for reforming the topography were tied to a process of excavating and reviving the past. In Rome, while working on Hagia Sophia, the architect wondered:

Without the elders of the [Medici] Villa, and others like Nénot, Tournaire, Pontremoli, and Defrasse, I would not have suffered with such intensity this mirage of the Eastern Mediterranean where Constantine realized with one jet this immense sketch that was the new Rome on the banks of the Bosphorus... When I saw Bigot's model, with the Palatine Palace surrounded by infamous alleys, it was a revelation. I understood one of the essential reasons for the Empire's displacement to the shores of the Bosphorus, in a wonderful situation. So, from the first days, I tried to research what could be the city of Constantine, but this dreadful problem could not be treated lightly.<sup>106</sup>

In his early reflections on Istanbul when he was a student in Rome, Prost had underlined the extraordinary view of the Marmara Sea enjoyed by the historic peninsula. When he subsequently devised a restructuring plan for the city, he insisted on the need to develop the region according to this strategic particularity (figure 21). As in Rabat, Prost's planning of Istanbul validates SFU's trust in classical planning and relentless

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<sup>106</sup> Pinon, "La formation d'Henri Prost."

attempt to preserve the regional urban form, as a means to moderate the new infrastructural transformations. In both cities, Prost engaged an art of planning in which picturesque views were fashioned around historical landscapes that were conserved and reorganized with new infrastructural networks. As he deployed Beaux-Arts re-alignments and modern zoning techniques, he re-oriented contemporary urban life around historic architecture.

However, unlike Rabat, Istanbul was a noncolonial city, with no settler community to accommodate. While Prost built a new city juxtaposed with the old *medina* in the Moroccan capital city, leaving the latter intact, the master plan he put forward for Istanbul only incidentally includes the formation of new districts. It emphasizes instead bringing order to the existing city, particularly in the historic quarters.<sup>107</sup> While in Rabat, Prost juxtaposed the new city and road networks alongside the *medina*, in Istanbul, he superimposed a new program onto the existing city. Proclaiming with a touch of Poëteian flair, Prost extols the concept of “social evolution,” weaving the tapestry of human progress and transformation:

Modernizing Istanbul can be compared to a most delicate surgery. It is not a question of creating a new city on virgin land, but of orienting an ancient capital in full social evolution towards a future where the mechanics and perhaps the leveling of fortunes will transform the conditions of existence.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Pierre Pinon, “L’urbanisme d’Henri Prost et les transformations d’Istanbul,” *Henri Prost et le plan directeur d’Istanbul, 1936–1951*. Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Original publication Month Day, Year, <https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/00-ACCUEIL-CHAP-03.html>.

<sup>108</sup> This quotation is from “Les transformations d’Istanbul,” the title of a speech Henri Prost gave at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in September 1947. Cited in Candaş Bilse, “Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d’Istanbul, 1937,” *Henri Prost et le plan directeur d’Istanbul, 1936–1951*. Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Original publication May, 2010, <https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/02-CHAPITRE-02.html>.

Compared to Rabat, Prost's approach in Istanbul was certainly more invasive, but the architect, in both places, adhered to his conservationist ethos. Like Rabat's *medina*, Prost envisaged the historical peninsula as "an unparalleled landscape dominated by glorious buildings."<sup>109</sup>

In Istanbul, Prost particularly focused on the creation of large public spaces that made certain monumental structures visible from great distances. His provisions for the creation of the squares emphasized the practical need for circulation at the same time that they endorsed the accompanying aesthetics of visibility. More specifically, he proposed rearranging the square in front of Sultan Ahmet Mosque, former site of the Roman hippodrome, into a plaza crowned with a monument dedicated to the Republic (figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27). Prost planned for the Sultan Ahmet Square to be in line with the proposed conservation and demolition of many Ottoman edifices there. To open up the view from the plaza to the Marmara Sea, he arranged to tear down the late-Ottoman buildings, located on the southern edge of the Hippodrome. In Prost's words, this would create "a symbolic monument, very high,"<sup>110</sup> to be "visible to any traveler through the Bosphorus and Marmara Sea."<sup>111</sup> He also proposed other changes. The Industrial School, a late nineteenth-century building designed by Italian architect Raimondo D'Aronco, situated in the south, would be demolished. The Business and Arts and Crafts schools were to be relocated, and the entire end of the ancient hippodrome was to be cleared to form a "splendid belvedere."<sup>112</sup> The Sultan Ahmet Mosque, dutifully preserved by Prost, would be sited on the east side of the square with gardens to "enhance the archaeological

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<sup>109</sup> Cited in Bilsel, "Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d'Istanbul, 1937."

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Bilsel, "Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d'Istanbul, 1937."

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Bilsel, "Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d'Istanbul, 1937."

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Pinon, "At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique."

findings” and, if necessary, “help free the mosque from all the parasitic constructions which might alter the silhouette of this marvelous building.”<sup>113</sup> Defter-i Hakani, built by Vedat Bey in 1908, and the sixteenth-century Ibrahim Paşa Palace, now in ruins, would bound the square on the west side. In the north, a height limit would regulate the elevations of the buildings located between Divan Yolu and the Basilica Cistern. In the northwest corner, where an old penitentiary was located, the construction of a courthouse was planned to occupy that side entirely. The Land Registry building was to be demolished, the steps of the Hippodrome excavated, and the remains of Ibrahim Paşa Palace “preserved and enhanced by the composition of the judicial building.”<sup>114</sup>

With similar strategies of conservation and demolition applied in the Sultan Ahmet district, Prost deliberated the construction of another square, Eminönü, where he proposed the demolition of Hasırcılar Street, an old and narrow bazaar street, replacing it by a new road (V7) which ran along the back of the Spice Market and the Golden Horn (figures 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37). In the center of the composition, isolated in a green space planted with trees, Rustem Paşa Mosque and Küçük Çukur Han were to be conserved. Four urban blocks were created, each containing a vast building. The outline of each of the four blocks was determined by the contour of the existing roads and buildings. A new boulevard, V4, starting at Galata Bridge, with a monumental entrance, ascended towards the Grand Bazaar. From the Spice Bazaar, it ran westwards to form a loop negotiating the natural slope of the site and terminating at Uzunçarısı Street. Between the loop, adjoining the hill on which the Süleymaniye Mosque stood, and the two madrasas built into the slope, Prost created a green area that formed the base of the

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<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “At Meydani, palais de justice et parc archéologique.”

Süleymaniye Mosque. V4 was mapped out to open a perspective towards the Süleymaniye Mosque. It continued south and united with the widened Uzunçarşılı Street. It then split like a fork. One branch framed the western part of the Grand Bazaar, isolating Beyazıt Mosque and penetrating through Beyazıt Square. Another branch, V5, also constructed with a colossal entrance gate, forced its way between the Nuruosmaniye Mosque and the Grand Bazaar. A wide avenue cut through the northern part of V5, abutting an existing madrasa on the eastern side. Opposite the eastern entrance to Nuruosmaniye Mosque, Prost proposed demolishing the blocks between the parallel Nuruosmaniye and Seref Efendi streets to form a wide avenue. He extended the latter up to Bab-i-Ali Street. Prost drew up a very wide street to be opened parallel to Hamidiye Street, with a triangular open space in front of the Grand Post Office. The Mahmut Paşa Hammam was now located at the center of a crossroads and the Rustem Paşa Madrasa isolated in a public garden.

Beyazıt Mosque was another building that Prost thought deserved greater visibility. He proposed another public plaza, Beyazıt Square, there. This one, as the other squares, was founded on the simultaneous presence of Byzantine and Ottoman heritage. Prost enlarged the area around Beyazıt Mosque, erected in the late fifteenth century and located on the former site of Forum Tauri, in the direction of this ancient Byzantine forum, reconstructing a triumphal arch that stood there. As in the Archeological Park, Prost not only preserved the ancient remains that he located on the ground, he also had a plan for the conservation of what lay beneath the surface of the earth. Next to the arch, he made provisions for conducting excavation works and including the remains within the scheme of the square.

Espousing Poëte's views that the city of today comprises the remote past while "imbued with movement and change,"<sup>115</sup> Prost merged his conservation techniques with other hygienic, zoning, and infrastructural procedures. He was the first planner to integrate large industrial services into the city's fabric. Since 1839, Istanbul, upon the institution of the Ottoman municipal reorganization program (*tanzimat*), had undergone multiple piecemeal renovation works, including the opening of wide avenues, plazas, and squares, and the regularization of old winding streets in some neighborhoods. With the founding of the republican rule and the adoption of a secularist doctrine, religious schools (medreses) and centers of religious orders (*tekkes* and *zaviyes*) were closed down in 1925, and the properties of the religious foundations (*vakıfs*) were taken under state control. The edifices belonging to these establishments, profuse in the ancient part of the city, were abandoned and eventually many of them succumbed to decay. Upon assuming the leadership of Istanbul's planning office in the mid-1930s, Prost encountered a city grappling with economic downturn and a deceleration in population growth, despite the ongoing expansion of its urban geography. Istanbul's population extended over two continents and three distinct geographic areas: Old Istanbul and Beyoğlu on the European side, separated by the Golden Horn, and Üsküdar-Kadıköy on the Asian side. The two sides are separated by the Bosphorus. Higher income groups had left Old Istanbul, relocating to newly developed residential areas in the northern part of the European side or to the Asian coast of Marmara. The migration sparked an expansion of the city towards its outskirts, as the general population was diminishing. The central business districts persisted in their development within the historical peninsula and the Galata district,

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<sup>115</sup> Poëte, "Les idées bergsoniennes et l'urbanisme," 576.

which formed the old European quarter north of the Golden Horn. The Grand Bazaar and its surroundings retained their status as the primary commercial center of the city. The dispersion of Istanbul's population across two continents gave rise to a significant transportation challenge in a city with a population of less than a million people.

Prost initiated his urban program by improving the ports, the bridges on the Golden Horn, and the industrial areas. He redefined the role of the existing Sirkeci Station by developing a ferry-boat connection between European and Anatolian railways (figures 38, 39, 40 and 41). He extended the Galata port to reach the *École des Beaux-arts*. The new larger port would be served by automobile traffic only. He moved the Galata Bridge slightly upstream to enable the creation of two large squares at the two heads. He recommended keeping the industrial areas limited to the west side of Atatürk Bridge in order to reduce the negative industrial impact on the city. The most polluting industries were moved as far west of the Golden Horn as possible. He created two major automobile arteries along the two banks of the Golden Horn, in order to provide access to the industrial equipment located west of Atatürk Bridge, and reorganized the industrial infrastructures along these two ways. On the right bank of the Golden Horn, Prost proposed developing the food sector, extension of the halls, and creation of a fishmonger, and, on the left, construction of a large public quay along the entire length of the bank between the two bridges. Considering that the heart of the city's commercial activity was in and around the Grand Bazaar, and that it was going to grow, Prost suggested that the bazaar be "completely modernized, but kept almost entirely in its general arrangements,"<sup>116</sup> and served externally within its perimeter by wide roads with car parks

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<sup>116</sup> Cited in Bilsel, "Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d'Istanbul, 1937."



near the entrances. Besides conserving the city's past, Prost's main goal, as he emphasized, was to connect the new development zones in the north with the historic city and business district through a "backbone."<sup>117</sup> It is obvious that the infrastructural support and upgrading of amenities that the old city in Istanbul received were denied to the *medina* in Rabat. Prost's Istanbul plan reinforced the old city fabric with a heavy circulation network, which comprised, in his words, "necessary operations to vertebrate the city,"<sup>118</sup> all completed with a sense of practical aesthetics that improved circulation and hygienic conditions and made certain settings picturesque while subordinating their surroundings.

Following this program, Prost proposed an urban circulation network organized around two major thoroughfares which traversed the city from north to south (figures 42 and 43). They both started at Taksim Square, which was enlarged. The first, Atatürk Boulevard, linked the newly developing settlement in the north to the historic city. Passing through the old quarters west of Pera, it then traversed the Golden Horn via Atatürk Bridge and continued from there following the valley between two hills in the historic peninsula and terminated at Yenikapı, a new central station at the Marmara Sea that Prost sketched out in his plan. The second spine circulated through Pera and Galata through tunnels and viaducts before crossing the Golden Horn, via Galata Bridge. As it reached the historic peninsula, it sliced through the central business district of Eminönü, then Beyazıt Square, where the University of Istanbul was created. Atatürk Boulevard, a spacious avenue extending over three kilometers, included two causeways separated by a

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<sup>117</sup> Quoted in Bilsel, "Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d'Istanbul, 1937."

<sup>118</sup> Candaş Bilsel and Pierre Pinon, *From the Imperial Capital to the Republican Modern City: Henri Prost's Planning of Istanbul, 1936–1951* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010), 246.

wide green area planted with trees. Each of the arteries crossed through the lower arches of the Aqueduct of Valens (figure 44). “This typical [Roman] construction founded by Constantine and completed by Valens,” Prost stated, “was preserved from any damage.”<sup>119</sup> Old quarters with winding streets and decrepit houses, deemed to be unhealthy, were demolished to establish the avenue (figure 45). Prost added:

When you walk along Atatürk Boulevard, you successively discover famous monuments, cleared from the cluster of houses that once surrounded them: the Molla Zeyrek mosque (former Church of the Pantocrator) dominated by the overwhelming power of the Fatih Mosque, the Suleymaniye Mosque with its multiple domes and minarets, and beyond the aqueduct the Chahzade Mosque, the Valide Mosque, and the Tulip Mosque.<sup>120</sup>

Prost created another important route that started at Sarayburnu and extended all the way along the coast of the Marmara Sea. The architect wrote in his design report, “with its panoramic view of the sea and the outlook over the Bosphorus from Sarayburnu, this waterfront boulevard was to become an exceptional walk in Istanbul.”<sup>121</sup> The coastal road culminated in an esplanade created in front of Yenikapı Station, at the intersection with Atatürk Boulevard. Yenikapı-Yedikule Road, designed as a corniche boulevard, was to follow the coast and provide transport to the suburbs, the airport, and beaches in Florya along the Marmara Sea.

In all his operations in Istanbul, Prost emphasizes the landscape, whether to offer views of the monuments or to release vistas towards the Marmara Sea and the Golden

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<sup>119</sup> Quoted in Pierre Pinon, “Boulevard Atatürk et place de Fatih,” *Henri Prost et le plan directeur d’Istanbul, 1936–1951*. Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Original publication May, 2010, <https://expositions-virtuelles.citedelarchitecture.fr/prost/04-CHAPITRE-04.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Pinon, “Boulevard Atatürk et place de Fatih.”

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Bilsel, “Le plan directeur de la rive européenne d’Istanbul, 1937.”

Horn. Even the slightly winding path of Atatürk Boulevard also has the advantage of providing various points of view. In the development of the port, Prost states: “The landscape of Istanbul creates an illusion by making the waters of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus sparkle like those of a natural port.”<sup>122</sup> As he also suggests, “appropriate measures should be taken to safeguard the beauties of the Bosphorus. In particular, good architects should be encouraged with the help of grants awarded by the municipality, as has been done in Paris, where the owners of the winning buildings benefit from tax reductions.”<sup>123</sup> As mentioned earlier, the interest in the picturesque among Prost and his contemporaries came from an appreciation of nature and natural settings. The *Société*, in almost every lecture and conference it organized, declared that “real urbanism, more than anything else, cannot go against nature.”<sup>124</sup>

In his conservation planning, Prost’s goal is to realize in a contemporary setting the level of naturalness that traditional cities attained as a result of their evolution over time. Typically, as the city endures the passage of time, urban settings become picturesque through the incompleteness and paradoxes of their creation, and through their wear and tear, through something that is linked to their inner history. Prost’s conservationist urbanism engaged an exaggerated artlessness, attempting to invent *de novo* the accidents of history over the course of centuries: a studied naturalness, a fabricated evolution.

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<sup>122</sup> Pinon, “L’urbanisme d’Henri Prost et les transformations d’Istanbul.”

<sup>123</sup> Pinon, “L’urbanisme d’Henri Prost et les transformations d’Istanbul.”

<sup>124</sup> Joseph Marrast, “Fez,” in *L’œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme*, ed. Louis Hauteccœur (Paris: Académie d’architecture, 1960), 101.

## *Conclusion*

Urbanism by SFU developed alongside the disciplines of art history and archaeology. Adhering to the documentary techniques employed by both disciplines, Prost's categorization and periodization of monuments aligned with universal notions of aesthetics. These classification methods were grounded in assumptions about art and authorship inherited from the Renaissance. In reviving the supposedly classical beauty of the city, Beaux-arts planners from SFU compared themselves to “masters of the Renaissance.” In a public address delivered in Morocco, Governor General Lyautey stated: “The art and science of urbanism, so flourishing during the Classical Age seems to have suffered a total eclipse since the Second Empire. Urbanism, the art and science of developing human agglomerations, under Prost’s hand, is coming back to life. Prost is the guardian, in this mechanical age, of humanism.”<sup>125</sup>

The *Société* urbanists were not the first planners to develop the aesthetic dimension of modern planning. Their interest in urban aesthetics was shared by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European thinkers who endeavored to restore the practice of urban design from engineers to architects and therefore championed a vision of the city deeply embedded in the artistic heritage of the past, rejecting the principles of utilitarian rationalism. Most notable among this group of thinkers was Austrian architect and urban theorist Camillo Sitte (1843–1903), whom Choay highlights and who famously wrote *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889). However, SFU’s

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<sup>125</sup> Rabinow, *French Modern*, 288–289.

contribution to the Sittian urban art discourse was the attempted reconciliation of planning's aesthetic objectives with the necessary technical requirements.

Sitte had reacted against Haussmann's exceptionally technical approach in the latter's restructuring of the French capital city. At the turn of the twentieth century, concerned thinkers like Sitte acknowledged the drawbacks of Haussmann's drastic simplification of traffic patterns, which heavily relied on two-dimensional paper plans, and strongly argued that the aesthetic experience of urban spaces should take precedence as the guiding principle in city planning. But focusing mostly on the creative quality of urban space and harking back to the urbanism of pre-industrial times, including Medieval and Renaissance Europe, as well as the Classical Greek and Roman era, Sitte disregarded the scientific industrial necessities of developing cities. *Urbanisme*, as developed by SFU, wanted to merge the scientific regulation of urban space with aesthetic and social and psychological concerns.

The *Société* saw *urbanisme* as “improved Haussmannism.”<sup>126</sup> Haussmann's planning, Bardet suggests, governed the landscape with “diagonals, stars, and rigid alignments of compact blocks: formulas of the École des Beaux-Arts.”<sup>127</sup> But urbanism, he adds, “consists not only of drawing axes.”<sup>128</sup> “Urban art, which is the application of the science of urbanism, begins to emerge from what we have called ‘improved Haussmannism’.”<sup>129</sup> SFU denounced the abstractness of the Haussmannian model and asserted that aesthetics and beauty should be seen “only as a consequence of the

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<sup>126</sup> Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 3.

<sup>127</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué,” 3.

<sup>128</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué,” 3.

<sup>129</sup> Bardet, “Vingt ans d'urbanisme appliqué,” 3.

useful.”<sup>130</sup> This was, I suggest, the *Société*’s way to counterweight modernism’s strong claim for functionalism and to fashion a place for aesthetics within the dominant discourse of scientism in the practice of urban planning.

The concept of the regional picturesque that SFU promoted implied, more than anything, aesthetic variety and multiplicity of forms. In Rabat and in Istanbul, Prost and his team had encountered complex urban settings in which they found themselves challenged by a rich historical palimpsest: a product of preceding multifarious cultural practices including Byzantine, Berber, Islamic, and Arab, among other pre-modern heritages, each with its distinctive social, economic, and historical features. Prost had sought to create a new urban matrix, supposedly derived from nature and noncompliant with standard models, one that would produce a healthy, efficient, and productive social order. His artistic approach, reliant on picturesque planning, helped him bring traditional indigenous environments into a joint modern frame. It is important to recognize that the multiplicity of forms in the picturesque views that Prost created can be best understood through the notion of multiplicity in Bergson’s theories of time and history. Bergson confers a qualitative multiplicity consisting in a temporal heterogeneity in which “several conscious states are organized into a whole, permeate one another, [and] gradually gain a richer content.”<sup>131</sup>

The multiplicity of forms that *urbanisme* by SFU supported conjures the fin-de-siècle formal eclecticism, where all historical layers were conserved and juxtaposed. In the nineteenth century, in France and other European nations and their colonies, many

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<sup>130</sup> De Souza, “L’utilité publique et l’Esthétique,” XXXIV.

<sup>131</sup> Henri Bergson and Frank L. Pogson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1990), 122.

architects had restored in historical styles, and also built architecture in those same styles. Historical documentation provided the basis for both. As the twentieth century unfolded, the pursuit of “pure” and archaeologically precise styles gave way to eclecticism and the skillful juxtaposition of forms drawn from diverse styles and periods. The method of conservation and urban archaeology that SFU adopted, and as demonstrated in Prost’s planning in Rabat and Istanbul, invokes this eclecticism. Just as architects shifted away from the inclination to restore architecture to its original form, to strip away later accretions, and to rebuild according to purportedly “correct” period styles, *urbanisme* by SFU treated historic buildings and urban quarters as documents of the past, their original form and materials carefully conserved. In formal terms, the regional picturesque notion that the *Société* adopted embraced variety in aesthetics, unexpected contrasts, and eclectic motifs. This eclecticism was especially enriched by the multiplicity of forms that these planners discovered through historical studies and colonial conquest. It is extremely important to recognize that *urbanisme*, while initially conceived in Paris, grew and acquired new conceptual and practical features as it was exported by its inventors overseas.

As this chapter shows, the eclectic picturesque that SFU advanced in their work emerged as a response to the alterations imposed on the natural environment during the Industrial Revolution, and against the standardization of the urban environment that modernization supposedly brought about.<sup>132</sup> Tradition was “the solid base on which all

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<sup>132</sup> It was essentially a reaction against the transformation of the countryside during the agricultural and industrial revolutions, which I discuss in the second chapter of this dissertation, “The Expansion of Cities.” For an article that expounds the notion of the eclectic picturesque, see Malcolm Andrews, “The Metropolitan Picturesque,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics Since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 282–298.

art rests.”<sup>133</sup> The formula was to “intervene everywhere but change nothing.”<sup>134</sup> In SFU’s empirical understanding of topography, history is conceived as the single superior will against the emptiness of life caused by materialism. “The sense of tradition is more valuable in our eyes today, as it is a new acquisition in material history,”<sup>135</sup> member of the Council of State Jean Hourticq suggests in an article on “Urbanism and Aesthetics.” Another statement in the same article reads: “France has had numerous experiences in politics, literature, and arts in the nineteenth century. We may ask ourselves today if the most sustainable and most-difficult-to-conquer element in all domains is not the meaning of history.”<sup>136</sup> In their work, the *Société* planners hoped to make tradition—the preservation of history—a visible, material thing. For SFU, history appears to be the anti-rational, anti-materialist, and the non-standard. “This generation of urbanists understands better than any other the sweetness of life,” Hourticq adds. “We affirm all the historical testimonials, the written and oral ones.”<sup>137</sup>

SFU planners were among the first urbanists to integrate history into their work in the post-industrial era. The process of historical conservation they promulgated and practiced had paradoxically begun with Haussmann. The French baron, while destroying buildings, conserved graphical recollections of them. Haussmann founded a series of

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<sup>133</sup> Maurice Tranchant de Lunel, “L’art et les monuments du Maroc,” *Conférence franco-marocaines*, vol. 1, *L’Oeuvre du protectorat* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1916), 269–270. This publication comprises the speeches given at the 1916 *Exposition franco-marocaine* at Casablanca. Also quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 130.

<sup>134</sup> Maurice Tranchant de Lunel, “L’Art et les monuments du Maroc,” *Conférence franco-marocaines*, vol. 1, *L’Oeuvre du protectorat* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1916), 269–270. Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 130.

<sup>135</sup> Jean Hourticq, “L’Urbanisme et l’esthétique,” in *Les projets d’aménagement des villes et des régions: problèmes juridiques, administratifs et financiers*, ed. Institut International des Sciences Administratives (Melun: Imprimerie Administrative, 1937), 39.

<sup>136</sup> Hourticq, “L’Urbanisme et l’esthétique,” 39.

<sup>137</sup> Hourticq, “L’Urbanisme et l’esthétique,” 40.



publications entitled “General History of Paris.” The series, housed in Hôtel de Carnavalet, ultimately became a historical museum of Paris. An archaeological and historical department was established, alongside the museum, at Hôtel de Ville, where new methods of photographic documentation were used. Independent scholars conducted research aiming to reconstruct the history of the city’s topography.<sup>138</sup> Through this establishment, a narrative of material history found its place, weaved alongside the traditional accounts of written history.<sup>139</sup> Operating as a center of documentation, the museum played a role in supporting and facilitating Haussmann’s overhaul of the city. His transformation of Paris led to the obliteration of its historical heritage, concurrently generating a material reproduction of it. Poëte continued the process of documenting the city’s past, mainly through his work at the Historical Library of the City of Paris, which he converted, in 1916, into the Institute of History, Geography, and Urban Economy of the City of Paris. The documents that Poëte preserved and generated assisted his fellow SFU colleagues, such as Prost, in understanding the meaning of history and historical conservation. They tried to apply what they have learned on the ground.

In select European locations and even more profusely in the non-Western colonial world, pre-industrial cities provided fertile ground for the urbanists of SFU to export their planning. Within these settings, an opportunity arose to ponder the essence of the capitalist condition and to explore alternative pathways to Western values, lifestyles, and methods of production. Understanding various forms of human habitation was important

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<sup>138</sup> They underwrote a major project to complete a block-by-block documentary reconstruction of the whole city.

<sup>139</sup> Neither Paris’ urban fabric nor its domestic architecture qualified as sufficiently historical to be included in the museum or identified as a target of preservation. Haussmann attempted to isolate Parisian monuments from their urban context. He was supported by the Historical Monuments Office, which was inspired by Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc. See Rabinow, *French Modern*, 78–79.

to French geographers and planners for comparing social conditions on a global level. Urbanism by SFU was born out of these connections.<sup>140</sup> In a book entitled *Nice: Winter Capital, the Future of Our Cities, Practical Studies of Urban Aesthetics*<sup>141</sup> and written by de Souza, the author claims that the colonies were “the greatest embodying hope for planning.”<sup>142</sup> Beyond being a localized document about Nice, the book synthesizes crucial perspectives by SFU on urbanism, and especially on aesthetics. De Souza writes:

In the colonial lands especially, the very old and the very new, outside of all civilization, or in conflict with our own by reason of its overly archaic and inassimilable civilization, it is the only solution that will satisfy both modern progress and the picturesque.<sup>143</sup>

Against the dominant scholarship endorsing Orientalist and essentialist views of non-Western territories, pre-industrial cities for SFU planners were more fortunate than the French industrial cities. Architecture in the pre-industrial, pre-modern world “is for us, like music and dance, an antidote to the sadness and the emptiness that our triumphant materialism gives us in excess,”<sup>144</sup> declares architect Albert Laprade, who worked with Prost in Morocco. These places—supposedly natural, unexploited, and uncontaminated by the ills brought about by extreme modernization and now just on the verge of industrialization—seemed tailor-made for contemplating architectural visions that were

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<sup>140</sup> For more views related to this argument, consult the following edited volume: Vincent Berdoulay and Paul Claval, *Aux Débuts de l'Urbanisme Français: Regards Croisés de Scientifiques et de Professionnels - fin XIX<sup>e</sup>–début XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), especially pages 6 and 19.

<sup>141</sup> The full book citation: Robert de Souza, *Nice: capital d'hiver, l'avenir de nos villes, études pratiques d'esthétiques urbaine* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1913).

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Rabinow, *French Modern*, 272–273.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in Rabinow, *French Modern*, 272–273.

<sup>144</sup> See Albert Cadet, *Le mahakema de Casablanca* (Paris: Paul Hartman, 1935), n.p. Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 112.

simply unattainable in the heavily industrialized urban landscapes of France and the Western world. In SFU's view, non-industrial territories, corresponding with Bergson's theory, did not align with modern times. They did not belong to the industrial present. Laprade adds: "So much had traditions remained stable in these countries situated outside the grand currents of Europe."<sup>145</sup> That was, for SFU, an opportunity for thinking freely.

Thus, it is inaccurate to denote Prost and planners from SFU as "nostalgic" or "backward" moderns. In the same way that Poëte and Prost believed in a Bergsonian time that did not fit tightly into a linear chronology of development, so these planners as historical actors cannot be understood by us today as fitting neatly into uniform conceptions of modernism. SFU's urbanism was a possibility for a modern that is not unilinear, a modern that is historically continuous.

During the early stages of modernization, in the nineteenth century, it was necessary to push changes in the social structure, allowing for a competitive capitalist economy to emerge. These changes meant a more optimized and rationalized urban environment. Mid-nineteenth-century rational urban planning is well manifested in Haussmann's restructuring of Paris. The method of urbanization was mechanical and abstract. Social relations were submerged in economic affairs.<sup>146</sup> In the work of planners from SFU, there is an attempt to re-embed the economic within the social. The following citation by De Souza is most pertinent to this claim:

It is thus becoming increasingly clear that the aesthetic site itself must remain in control of the situation. Contrary to common belief, aesthetics almost always takes precedence over economics, because beauty is linked to a permanent utility

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<sup>145</sup> Albert Laprade, *Croquis: Portugal, Espagne, Maroc* (Ivry: Editions Serg, n.d.). Quoted in Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 111.

<sup>146</sup> That is the reversal of the pre-capitalist condition. But the capitalist condition, political economist Karl Polanyi argues, is hardly stable. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

that economics almost never has... I cannot recall a case where the exploitation of the site against itself has not ended up being a bad deal.<sup>147</sup>

Urbanism, the new “science” of urban development, was indeed not only a scientific problem but also an aesthetic one.

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<sup>147</sup> Robert de Souza, “Savoir d’abord où ne pas construire,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 56.

**Images for Chapter Three  
The Conservation of Cities**



Figure 1 – Henri Prost presenting his master plan for Istanbul, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 60/9.

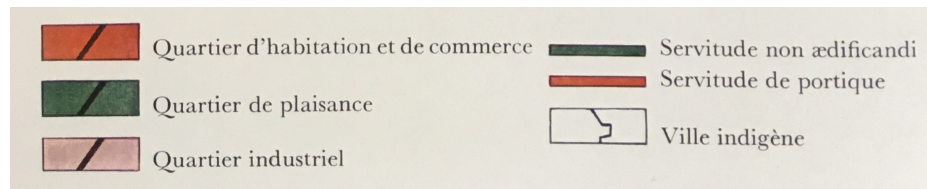


Figure 2 – Henri Prost, in the center, with a group of people in Istanbul, discussing the city’s transformation scheme, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 60/9.





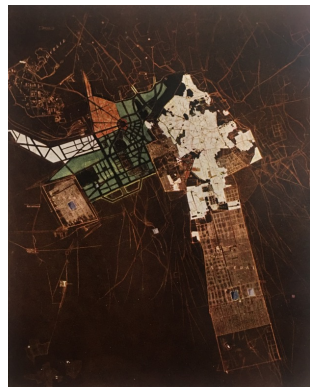
Figure 3 – Aerial photograph of the *ville nouvelle* and historic medina in Casablanca, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 1926 343 AA 21/2.



Rabat



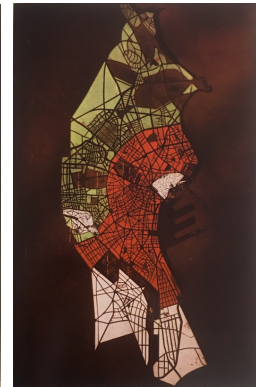
Meknes



Marrakesh



Fes



Casablanca

Figure 4 – *Villes nouvelles* designed by Henri Prost alongside the medina in Rabat, Meknes, Fez, Marrakesh, and Casablanca, from Louis Hauteceour, ed. *L'œuvre de Henri Prost: architecture et urbanisme*. Paris: Académie d'architecture, 1960, pp. 60, 76, 90, 98, and 106.



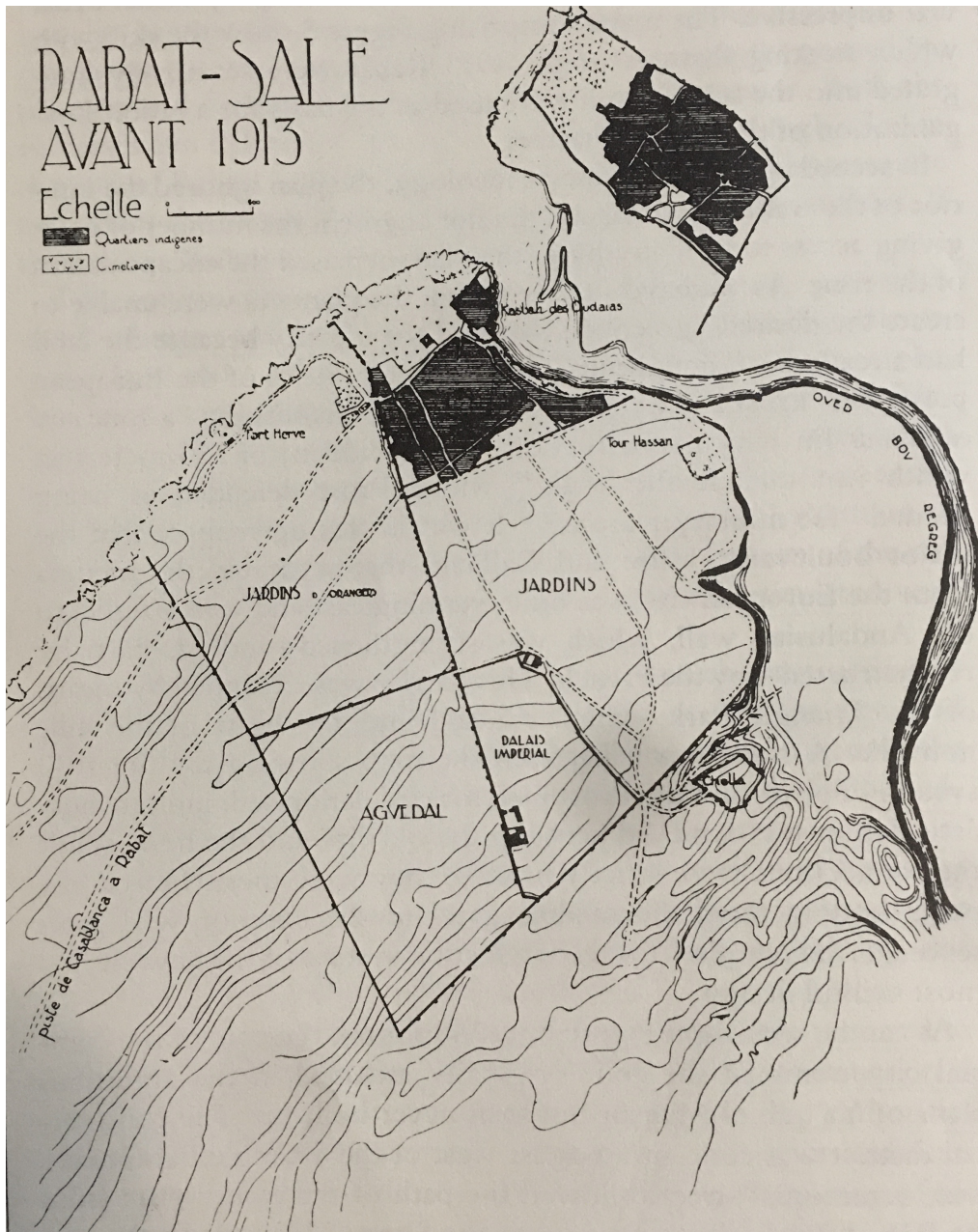


Figure 5 – Plan of the existing city of Rabat, 1913, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/1.

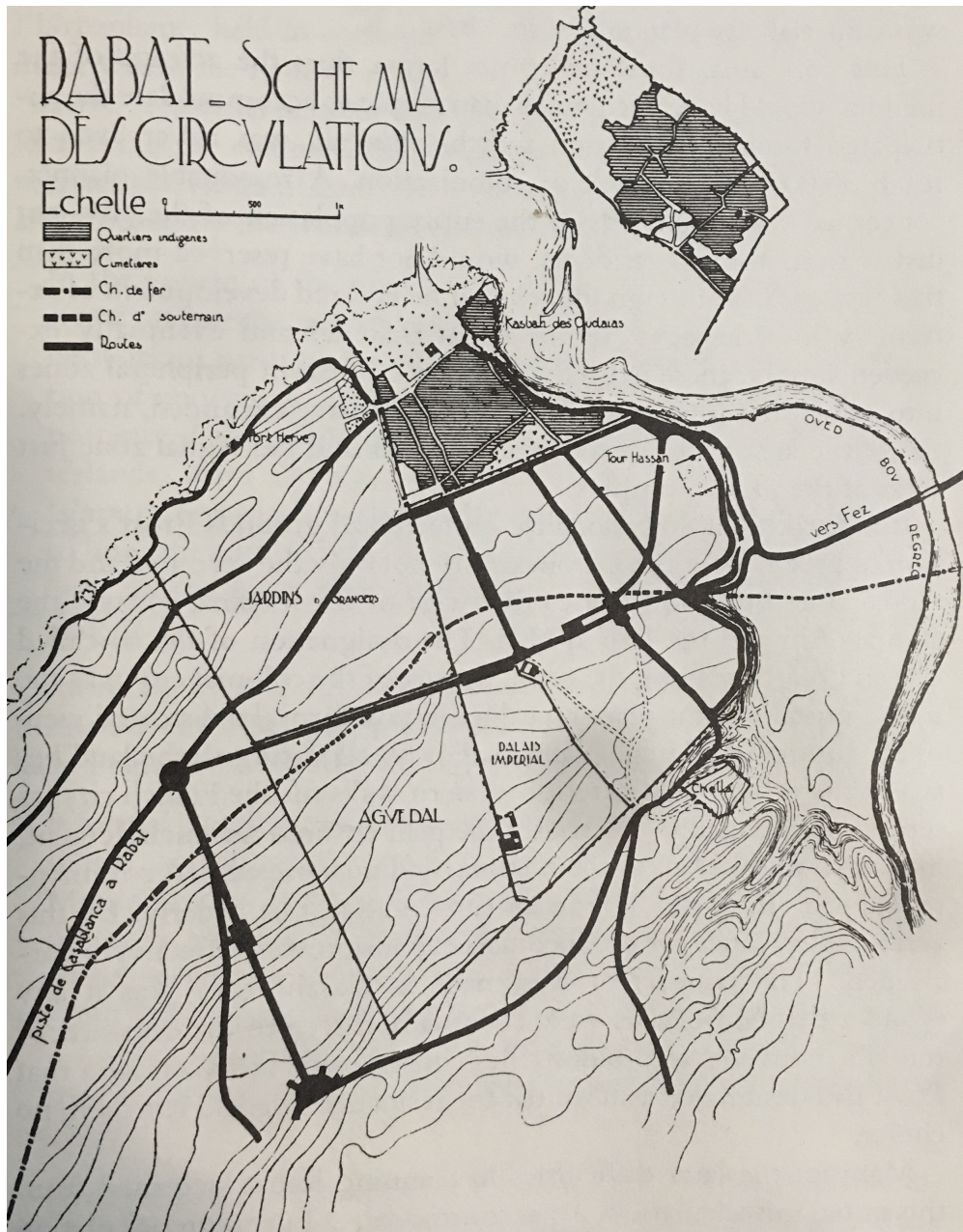


Figure 6 – Rabat’s new circulation system that Henri Prost devised, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 202/5.



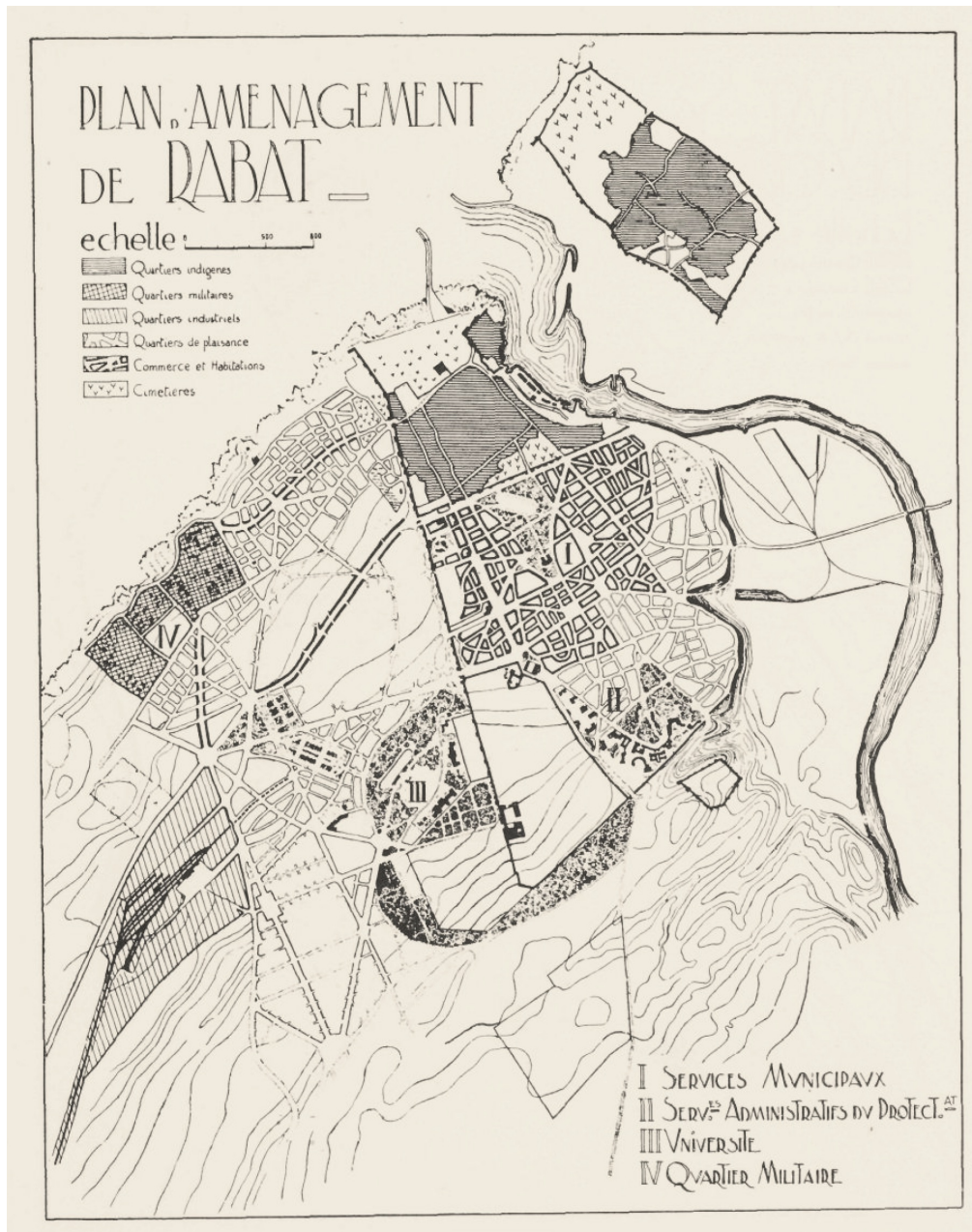


Figure 7 – The general master plan that Henri Prost put forward for Rabat, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/1.





LÉGENDES



- |   |                                      |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Quartier d'habitation et de commerce |  | Servitude non ædificandi |
|  | Quartier de plaisance                |  | Servitude de portique    |
|  | Quartier industriel                  |  | Ville indigène           |

Figure 8 – Henri Prost’s master plan for Rabat, 1913, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/1.



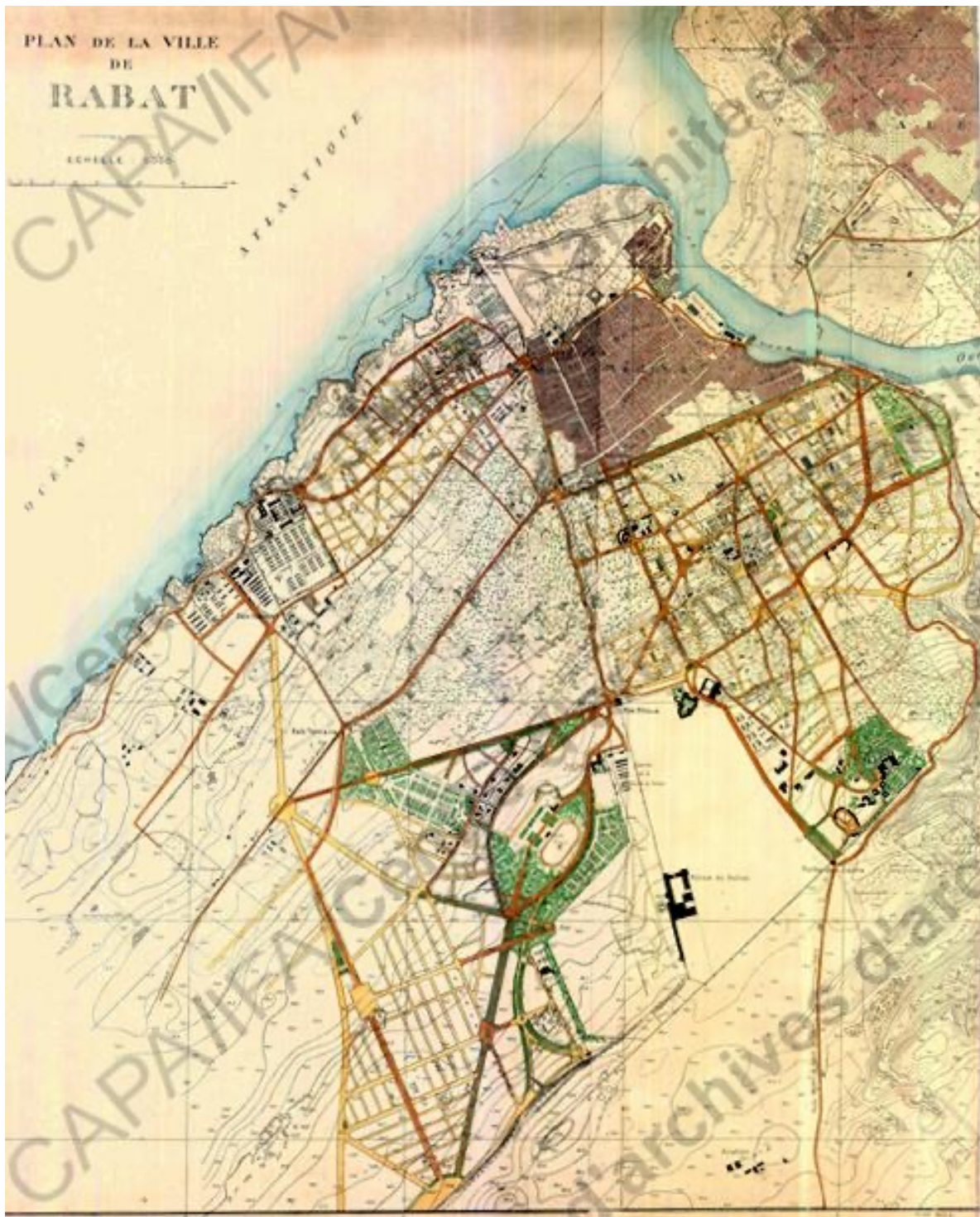


Figure 9 – Development plan for the four main zones drawn on a topographic map, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/1.





Fig. 10 – View towards the French administrative complex, 1916–1921, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 21/4.

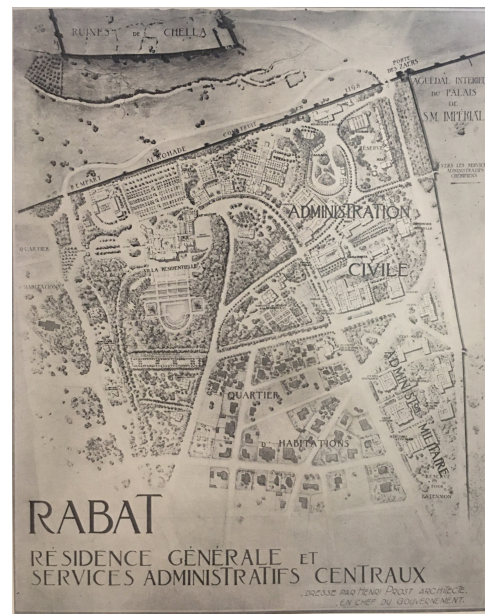
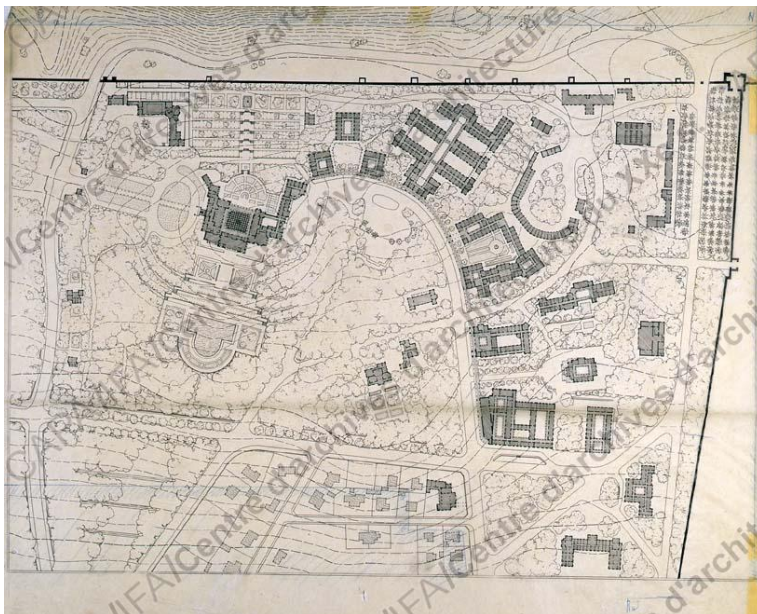


Figure 11 – Layout of the French protectorate’s administrative services and the residence of the French governor, 1916–1921, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 21/4.



Figure 12 – Aerial photograph of the General's Residence, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 21/4.





Figure 13 – “Sketches for planting” along the ramparts of the Yacoub El Mansour Mosque, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 21/4.



Figure 14 (see next page also) – Plans of major traffic arteries and sites offering remarkable panoramic views, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 21/4.





“Chellah and ramparts”



View of the Bou Regreg estuary



View of “the Chellah and the enclosure of the old walls towards the main gate”



“View of the gardens and the Oudaïas kasbah”



“Aerial view of Rabat and Salé”

Figure 14 (continued) – All photos from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 54.



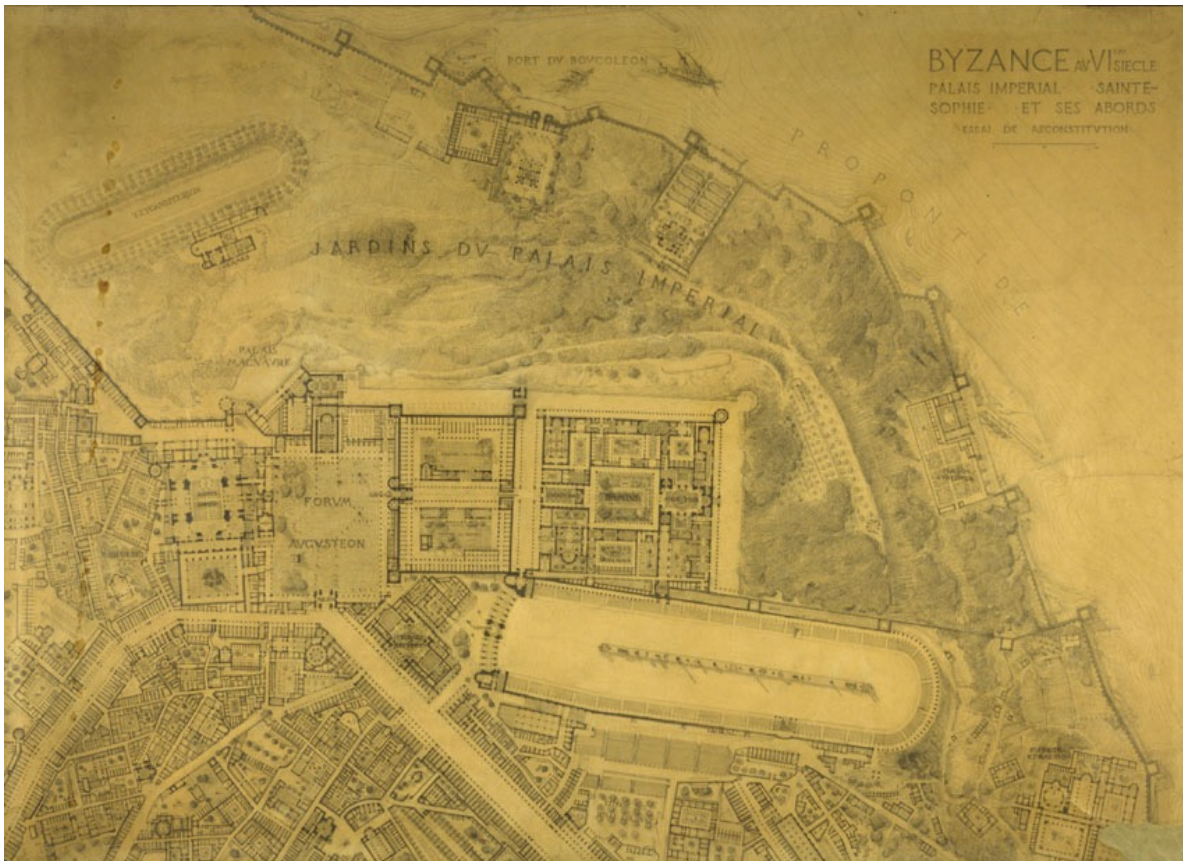


Figure 15 – Plan of the Hagia Sophia complex by Henri Prost. The plan is entitled “Byzantium in the sixth century: Hagia Sophia, the Imperial Palace, and their surroundings, reconstruction attempt,” from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 302.





Figure 16 – “The Transformation of Istanbul” master plan by Henri Prost, showing the Sirkeci harbor and the Archaeological Park, undated image, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/13.





Figure 17 – Aerial view of the site of the Archaeological Park with handwritten captions, 1947, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 47/3.



# ISTANBUL

EXTRAIT DU PLAN D'URBANISME DRESSÉ PAR HENRI PROST AVEC LA COLLABORATION DES INGÉNIEURS ET ARCHITECTES DE L'IMAA SÉDENS À ISTANBUL - 1936 - 1947

*LE PARC ARCHEOLOGIQUE occupe les débris de TOP KAPU SARAY et s'étend sur un QUARTIER au nord-est, limité par S<sup>W</sup>SOPHIE, LA MER et la PETITE S<sup>W</sup>SOPHIE. Les principaux monuments S<sup>W</sup>SOPHIE - SELATY ARMYET - S<sup>W</sup>GRAND-SOPHIE - MEHMET PAÇA - ont émergé au cours de la démolition de GRAND CIRQUE et de ses reconstructions ARCHÉOLOGIQUES. Elles ont été construites sur les ruines de l'ANTIQUE ACROPOLE de FORAUM et de PALAIS des EMPEREURS - ont été restaurés.*

- 1. TOP KAPU SARAY - PALAIS DES SULTANS.
- 2. AYR SÜPHİ - S<sup>W</sup>SOPHİ - MUSEE D'ART BYZANTIN.
- 3. MOSQUE SELATY ARMYET.
- 4. S<sup>W</sup>GRAND - MUSEE MILITARE.
- 5. KÜÇÜK AYR SÜPHİ - S<sup>W</sup>GRAND ET MOSQUE.
- 6. MOSQUE SÜLEYMANIYE PAÇA.
- 7. MOSQUE YAZIR.
- 8. CİNEK MÜSE - MUSEE DES TURQUES.
- 9. AT MEYDANI - GRAND CIRQUE.
- 10. SONDAGEMENT DE GRAND CIRQUE - SPONDONE.
- 11. RESTES DE PALAIS D'EMPEREUR PAÇA.
- 12. CITERNE DE S<sup>W</sup> SÜPHİ - WALLS ET SUI COLOMBES.
- 13. CITERNE YEŞİL SÜPHİ SARAY.
- 14. SARKIN DE SİHAR.
- 15. PORTIQUE SÜLEYMANIYE.
- 16. MUSEE DES ANTIQUES.
- 17. MOUSÉES.

PARC

ACROPOLE

QUARTIER

Figure 18 – Development plan of the Archaeological Park, 1947, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 47/3.



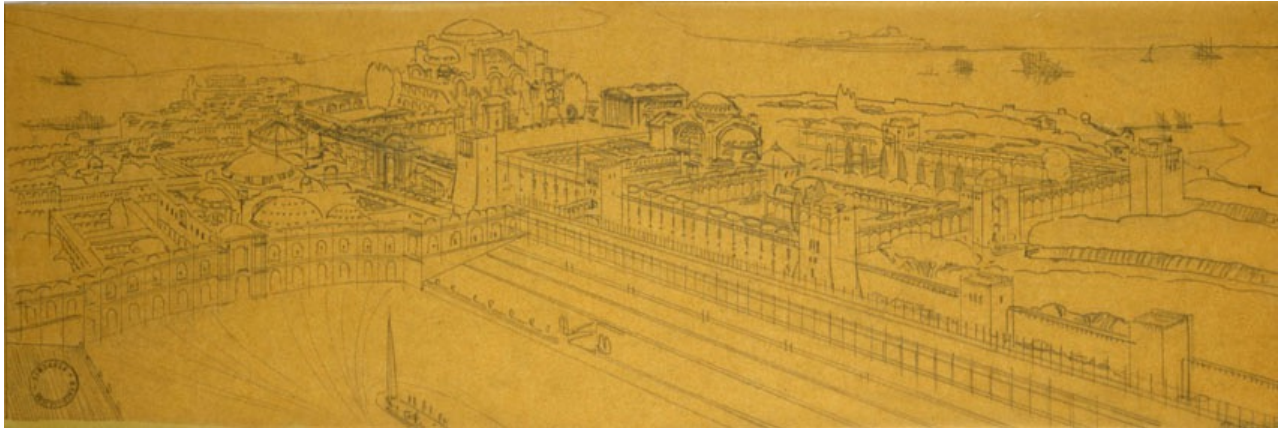


Figure 19 – Perspectival view of the complex, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 144.

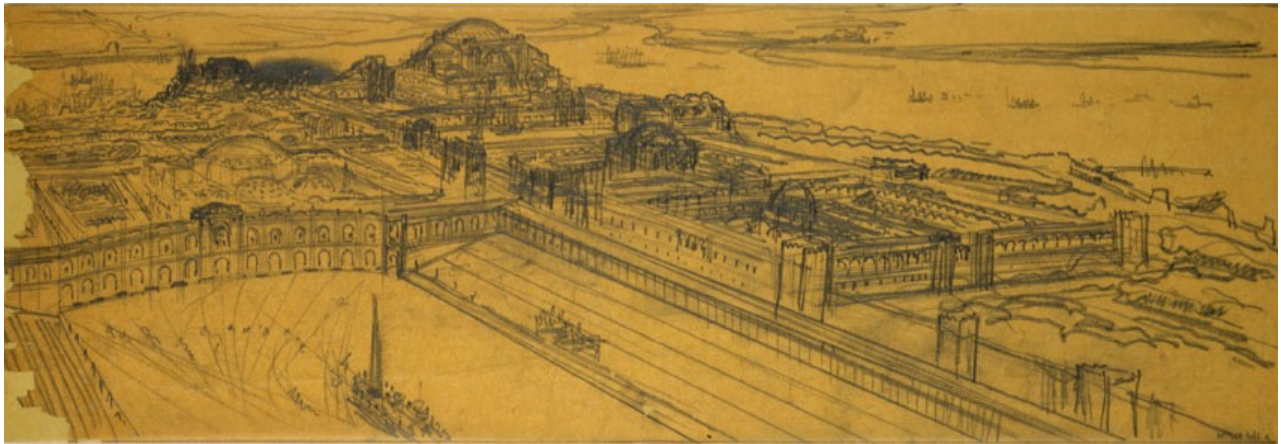


Figure 20 – The same perspectival view of the complex, with different graphical details, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 144.



Figure 21 – Photograph included in Henri Prost’s report, entitled “view of the historic peninsula from the Golden Horn,” 1935–1949, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 65/1.

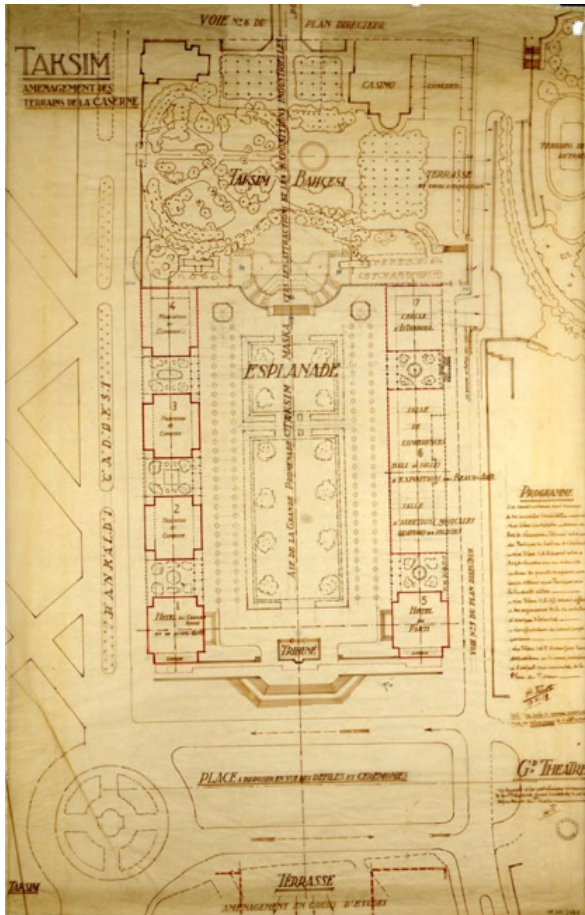


Figure 22 – Development plan for the barracks in Taksim Square, 1939, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 123.

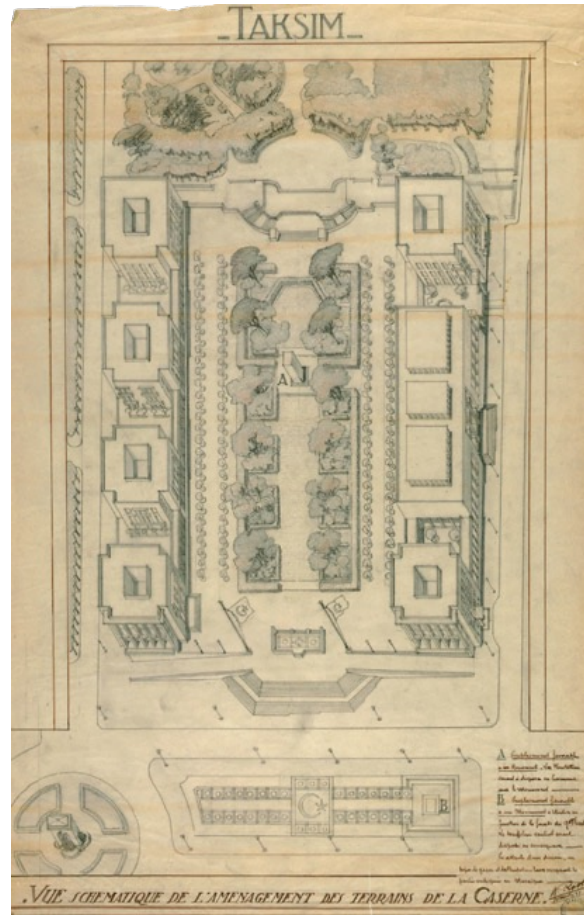


Figure 23 – Axonometric view of the barracks, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 123.





Figure 24 – Axonometry of the esplanade in Taksim Square, 1942, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 123.



Figure 25 – View of Taksim Square under construction, undated photograph, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 70.



Figure 26 – View of Taksim Square during a ceremony after its redevelopment, undated photograph, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 65/2.





Figure 27 – View of Taksim Square and the Taksim Municipal Club, undated photograph, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 65/2.



Figure 28 – Neighborhood between the Sultan Ahmed Mosque and Hagia Sophia, from *Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 68.*



Figure 29 – View of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque from the Hagia Sophia Minaret, from *Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 68.*



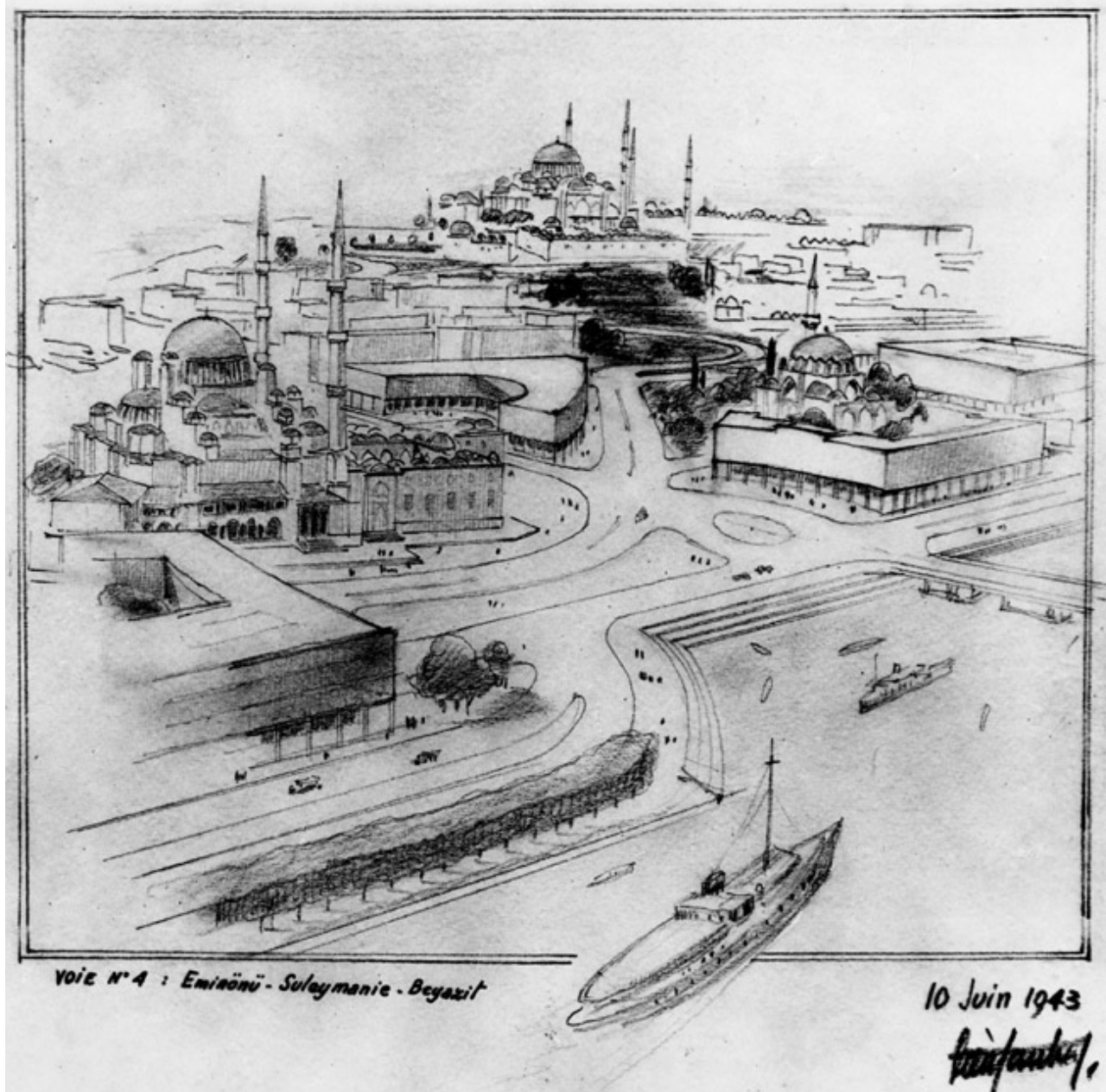


Figure 30 – Development of Eminönü Square and the Golden Horn Crossing, 1943, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/10.



Figure 31 – Development plan for the Eminönü – Mahmut-Paşa – Divan Yolu area, 1943–1944, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 305.



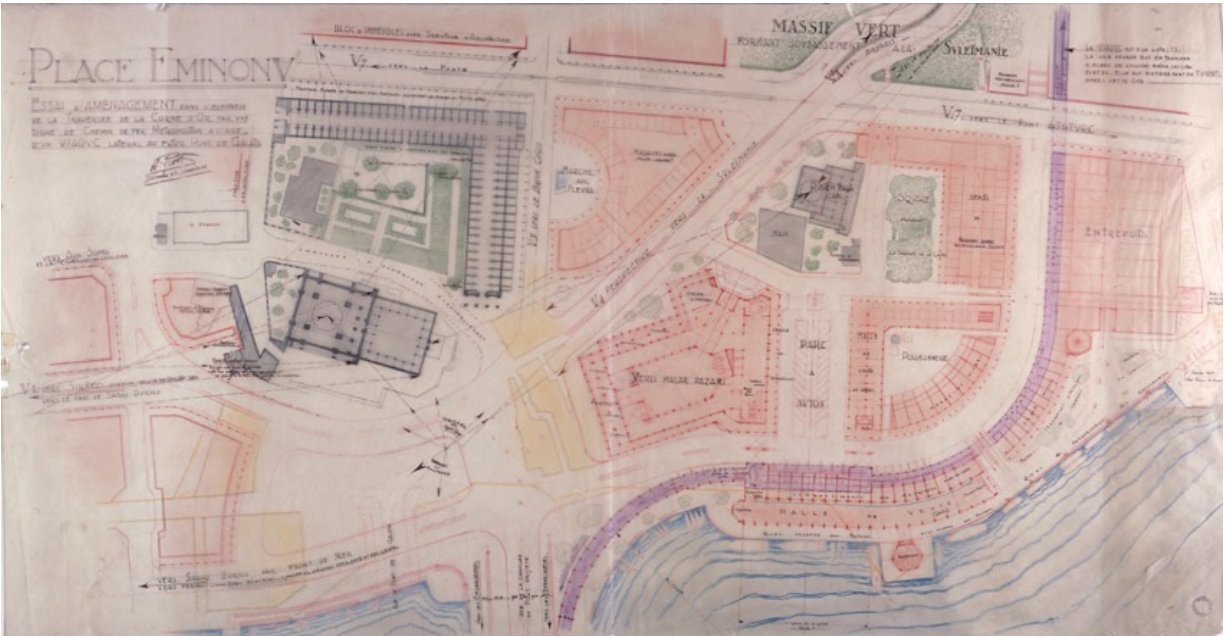


Figure 32 – Development plan for Eminönü Square and the Golden Horn Crossing, 1943–1944, Development plan for the Eminönü – Mahmut-Paşa – Divan Yolu area, 1943–1944, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 136.



Figure 33 – View of the demolition work on Eminönü Yenikapı, undated photograph, Development plan for the Eminönü – Mahmut-Paşa – Divan Yolu area, 1943–1944, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 66/12.



Figure 34 – View of the Eminönü Square site being demolished, undated photograph, Development plan for the Eminönü – Mahmut-Paşa – Divan Yolu area, 1943–1944, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 67/1.





Figure 35 – View of Eminönü Square site being demolished, undated photograph, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 67/1.



Figure 36 – View of Eminönü Square site being demolished, undated photograph, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 67/1.





Figure 37 – Looking down on Eminönü Square, undated photograph, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 47/10.



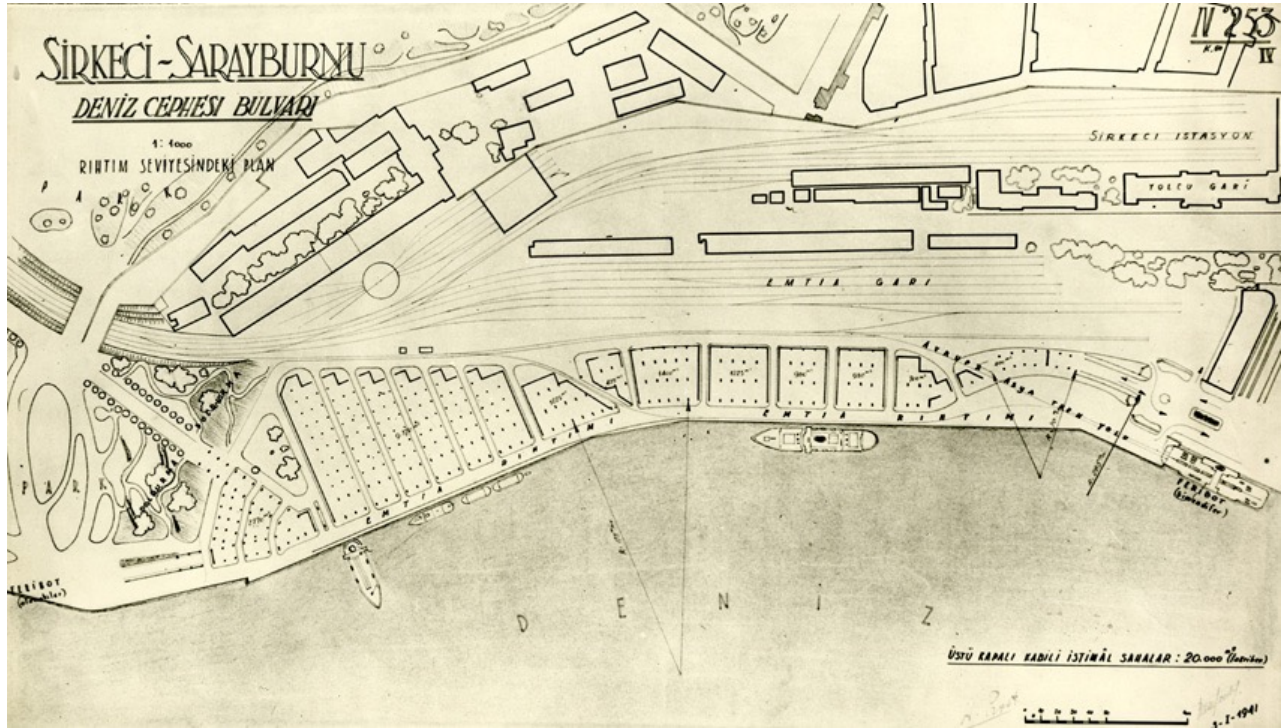


Figure 38 – Development of the Sirkeci-Sarahayburnu port area, plan view of the development of the warehouses, 1941, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 45/17.

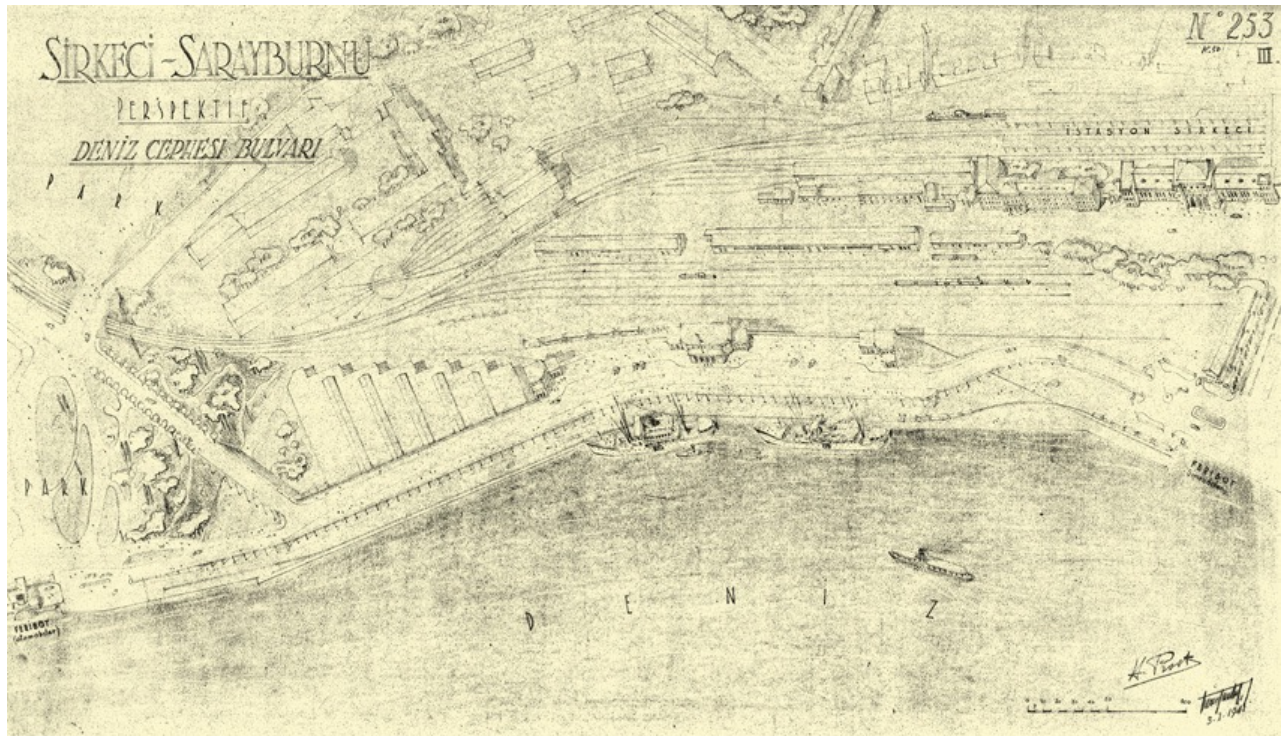


Figure 39 – Development of the Sirkeci-Sarahayburnu port area, axonometric drawing of the seaside boulevard, 1941, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 134.



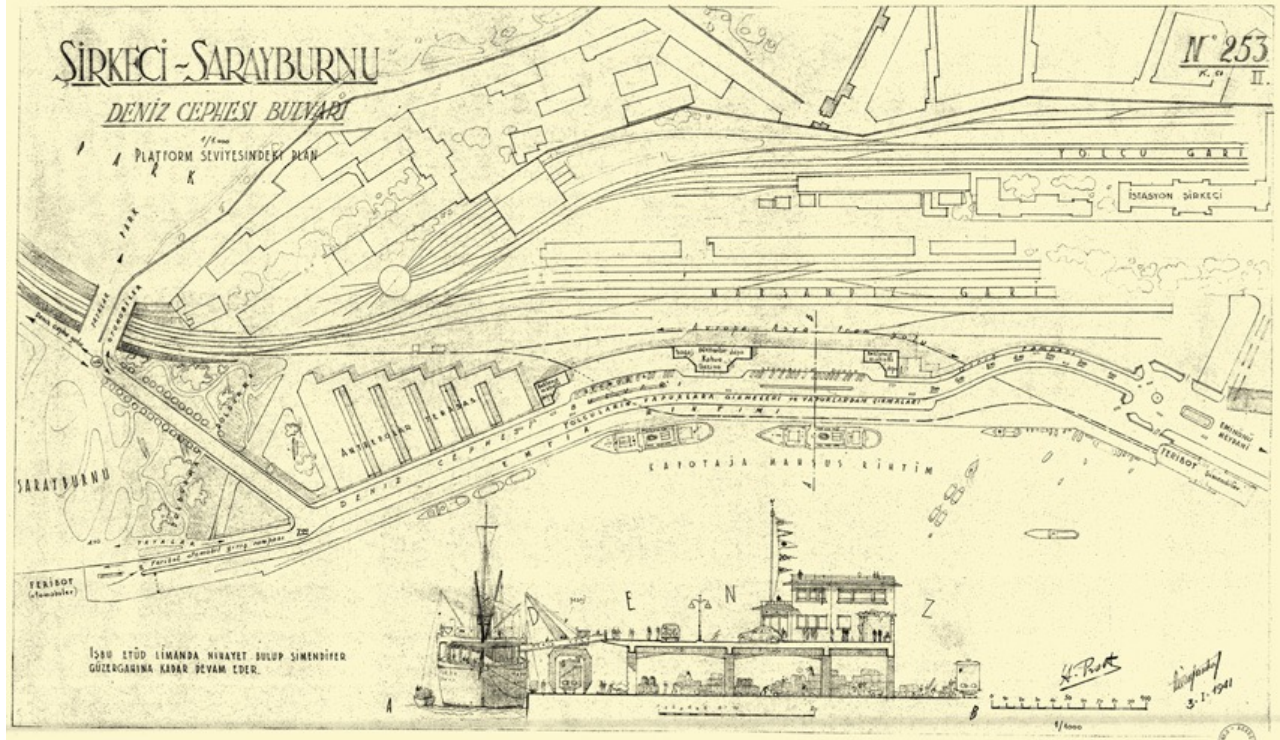


Figure 40 – Development of the Sirkeci-Sarahayburnu port area, layout plan and cross-section of the upper-level platform, 1941, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 134.



Figure 41 – Development of the Sirkeci-Sarahayburnu port area, panoramic view of the Pointe du Sérail and the port facilities with the viaduct extending over the quays, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 47/6.



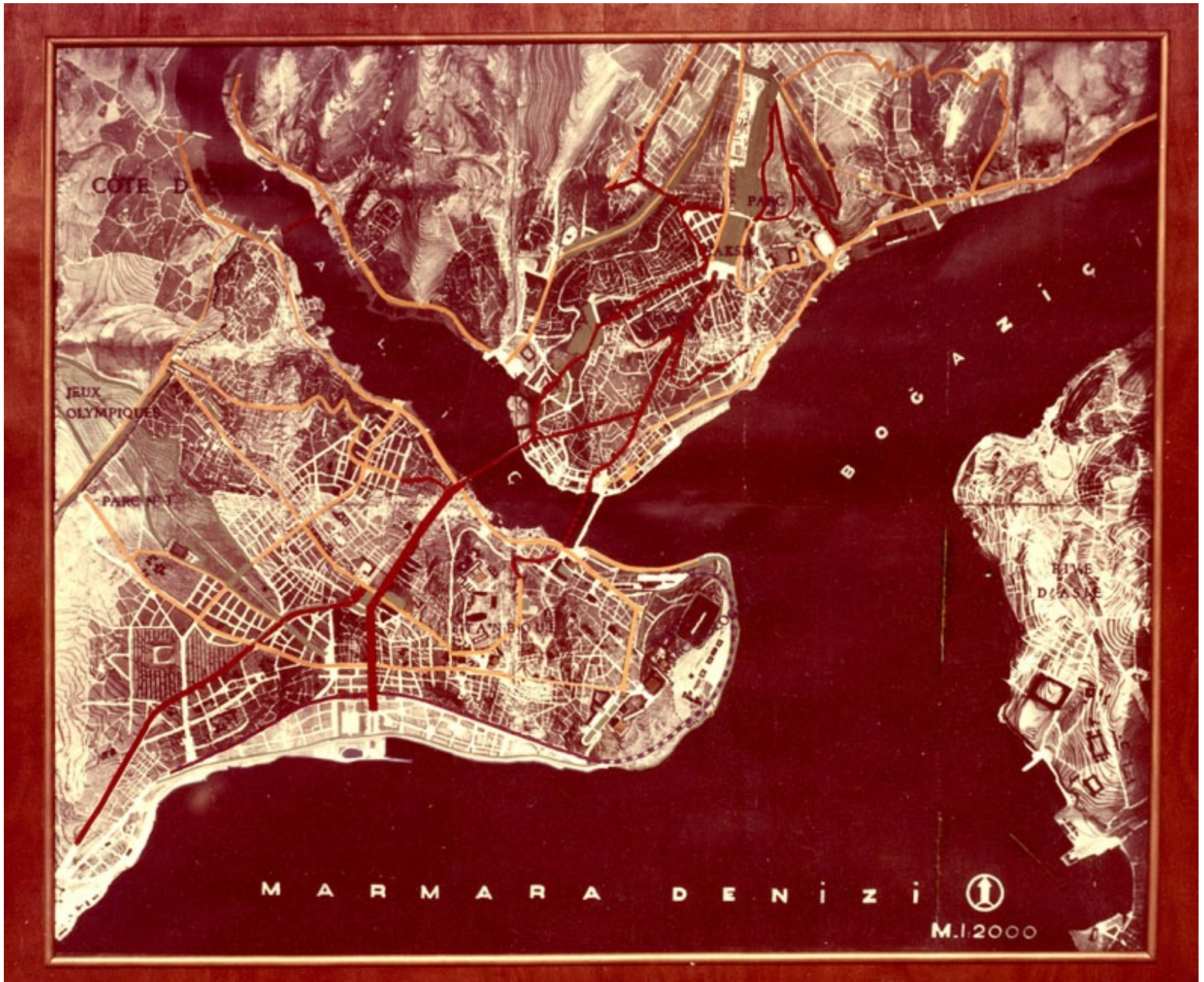


Figure 42 – Plan of the traffic routes, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 66/11.



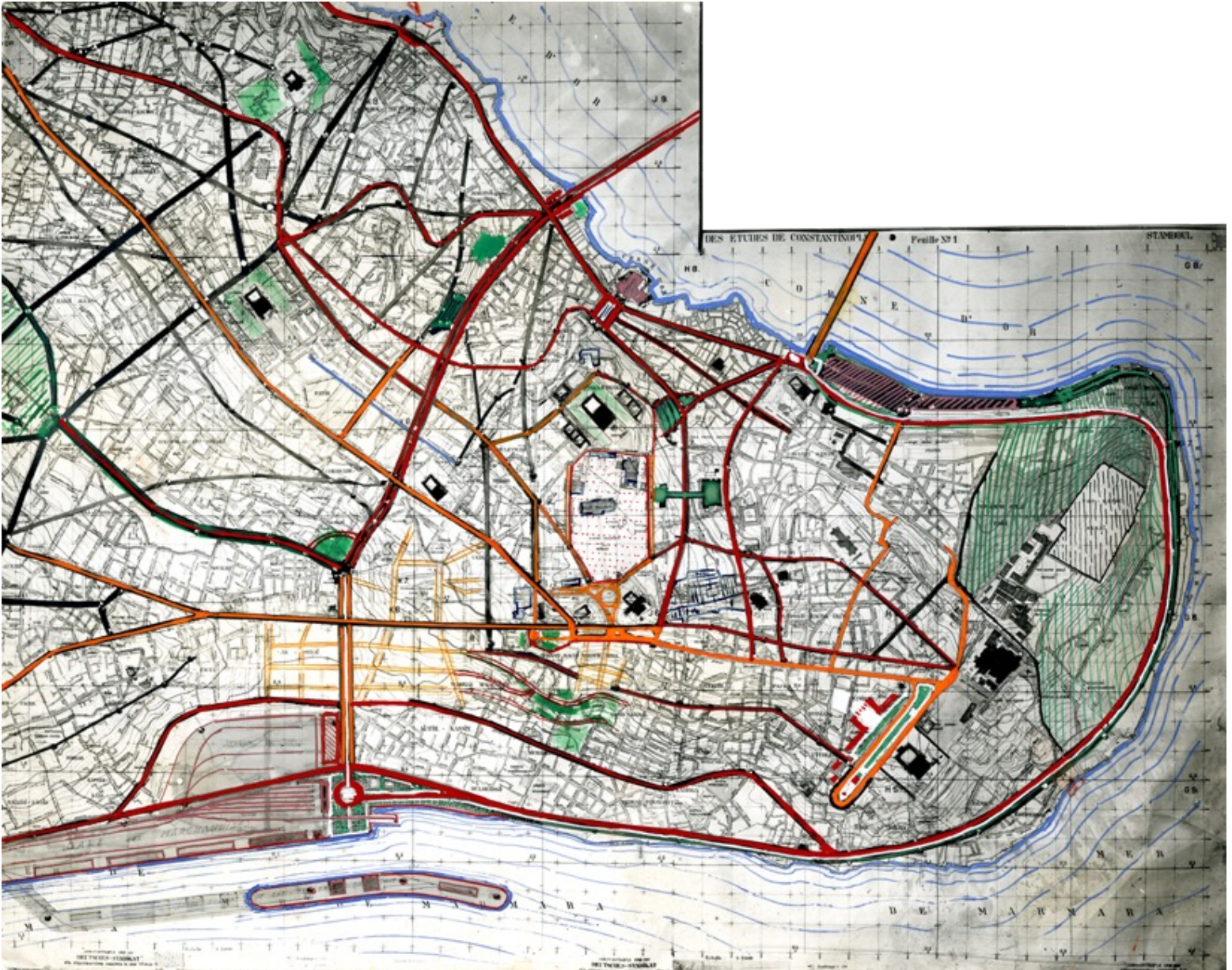


Figure 43 – An enlarged part of the circulation plan, from Académie d'architecture, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 66/11.



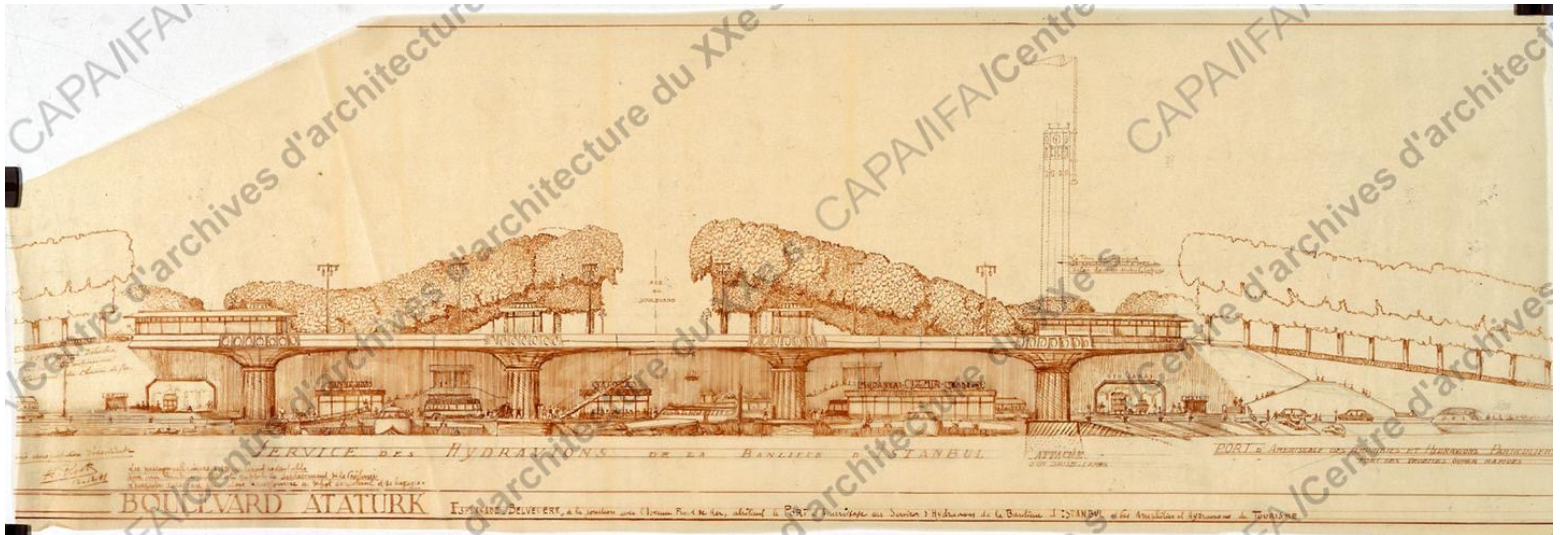


Figure 44 – Elevation of Atatürk Boulevard from the sea, 1949, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 306.



Figure 45 – Atatürk Boulevard and the Aqueeduct of Valens, undated photograph, from Académie d’architecture, Cité de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine, Archives d’architecture du XXe siècle, Fonds Henri Prost, 343 AA 65/1.



## CONCLUSION

Scholarship on city planning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been overwhelmingly focused on questions of public hygiene and a whole battery of other “rational” modernization techniques that were allegedly developed to control society. By exploring the nonconforming ideology and global history of the *Société Française des Urbanistes*, this dissertation reveals a new and necessary interpretation of urbanism. It shows how SFU urbanists, as they resisted a full endorsement of capitalistic principles, were outliers in the overstated linear genealogy of modern, rational urbanism that took “science and technology” as the fundamental tools for urban development and supposedly bridged mid-nineteenth-century Haussmannianism with mid-twentieth-century High Modernism without interruptions.

In the early twentieth century, while urban planning was rapidly becoming a professional, technical field, across the globe, SFU adopted the most recent of philosophical studies—Bergson’s creative evolution—as the basis of their version of the discipline. Throughout the dissertation, I showed how these ideologically driven architects realized that urban development needs to engage with the sciences and the dialogue among the sciences, but it also needs to find its own sources of non-technical knowledge. Reviewing Marcel Poëte’s scholarship in Chapter One, I showed how SFU interrogated the assumption made at the time that the model of the physical sciences can be simply automatically applied to the psychological realm of human experience and attempted instead an interpretive process requesting the city to articulate its preferences without providing a structured or codified method to interpret these expressions. In the



subsequent chapters, in which I analyze some of SFU's urban reform schemes, we saw how SFU's *urbanisme* reveals the mingling of the anti-positivist amelioration of industrial development with the actual geographic and biometric regulation of space. The principles of *urbanisme* are most palpable through the writings of members of SFU, predominantly in Poëte's work, but, even within these planners' most utilitarian spatial schemes, this form of interpretive methodology is consistently evident.

I give significant attention to the work of Poëte; he features in all the chapters. This is because the novelty of SFU's urban discourse is so evident in his work. Throughout his texts, we see how SFU's articulation lies not just in the freshness of the Bergsonian metaphors, but also in the pioneering effort to transform them into a research ethos, establishing a structured approach to urban history, wherein archival endeavors become deliberate forms of recollection, analysis, and action. Driven by a deep fascination with the culture of cities and urban planning, this philosopher-librarian embarked on a mission to democratize access to knowledge typically limited to a privileged, highly educated few. However, as he delved deeper into his endeavor—building an expansive repository for Paris, resolutely scrutinizing each subtle transformation in its urban fabric as tangible proof of the inherent essence of Parisian identity—something transformative occurred. His passion and innovative spirit led him to reshape the conventional structures of the library, turning it into a cohesive and creative discipline, far removed from its traditional curatorial science. *Urbanisme* by Poëte was born out of this effort to modernize and revolutionize the library system.

Early twentieth-century rationalists who understood time as an abstract entity regarded Bergson's theory of time as “soft, psychological, and irreconcilable with the

quantitative realities of [science]” (namely physics). Historical writing today, still influenced by the scientific understanding of time, equally regards SFU’s work as dated and regressive. I maintain the debate over SFU today has to do with the actual history of the urban planning profession and with the history of the modern. As science won the debate in real time, today, the historiography of the modern (the study of the history of the modern) is being overshadowed by the dominant narrative of science. The debate is aligned with the divide between the rational and anti-rational philosophies of time (the Einsteinian versus the Bergsonian)—a topic that has recently intrigued some historians of science. Architectural history, on the other hand, still needs to study the implications of this divide in relation to modern urbanism.

Confronting this concern, the dissertation, therefore, contributes to recent scholarship on the history of urban geography, regionalism, and Spiritualist metaphysics. It raises novel questions about the debate that arose in the early twentieth century and persists to this day between science and Bergsonian metaphysics of memory and duration, within the context of a global French project of territorial planning. It sheds light on an understudied group that birthed an interdisciplinary science of urbanism with a new understanding of history, space, and society, influential for subsequent generations of thinkers and planners grappling with the issue of industry and moderating its harmful social outcomes.

Urbanism, as conceived by SFU, was, I have insisted, both a practical and intellectual field. By analyzing the urbanists’ textual and visual works, the dissertation has unveiled the way they transferred the knowledge from various empirical studies to urban history. This process contributed to the initial development of interdisciplinary

approaches in urban planning. “Biology, psychology, and sociology contribute to the science of urbanism,” Poëte suggests, “as do history, physical and human geography, geology, meteorology, hygiene, legal science, and all economic and social sciences. In no other field,” he adds, “this universalism is so required.”<sup>1</sup> Through the interweaving of these disciplines and their integration with Bergson’s metaphysics, I bring to light the emergence of a potent and prolific integration of the humanities and sciences. Also,

[...] to this synthesis of various sciences must be added that which implies the natural incorporation of the rural or urban agglomeration to a region and of the latter to the nation. By that is completed, in the image of life, which does not comprise any watertight partition, the work, so difficult by its complexity but at the same time so enthralling, that it belongs to the French urbanist, in agreement with the genius of his country, more than to any other, to realize.<sup>2</sup>

Besides linking the sciences and metaphysics, SFU’s *urbanisme*, as Chapter Two has displayed, also linked urban and rural development forces along a continuum. It simply prescribed planning according to a geographic context that is much larger than the city.<sup>3</sup>

In order for the *Société* urbanists to facilitate this ongoing process of creative synthesis, it becomes imperative for them to amass and arrange a comprehensive collection of past knowledge, encompassing both the physical landscape and the essence of existence itself. These insights are compiled into an extensive archive, where facts are organized and juxtaposed, influencing and shaping one another. The present, within this

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Poëte, “L’esprit de l’urbanisme français,” in Gaston Bardet, “Vingt ans d’urbanisme appliqué en France,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 10, no. 3 (1939), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Poëte, “L’esprit de l’urbanisme français,” 5.

<sup>3</sup> This idea of uniting, rather than separating, town and country was shared with Patrick Geddes, as well as with members of the Regional Planning Association of America (established in 1932), for instance Clarence Stein (1882–1975) and Lewis Mumford (1895–1990).

framework, assumes significance solely when it substantiates the accumulation of historical understanding.

Additionally, I show that SFU refuted the abstractness of the Haussmannian model and any, in De Souza's words, "ultramodern way of planning, with its harmful, intransigent formulas,"<sup>4</sup> that transpired after Haussmann. Fighting against a system driven by material interests and unsustainable consumption patterns, and causing exacerbating environmental degradation, these urbanists, I have argued, sought interventions that were rather moderate, mediated by a conservationist attitude vis-à-vis the existing town. They strived to educate and raise awareness about the consequences of excessive consumerism, promoting alternative models that prioritize wellbeing and sustainability over material accumulation. They preoccupied themselves with Bergson's philosophy and Vidalian geography as a way to counter the positivistic developmental culture that took over urban planning. These ideological obsessions heightened their sensitivity for the urban landscape. In the restructuring and expansion schemes put forward for Marseille, Rabat, and Istanbul, I show how Jacques Gréber and Henri Prost endeavored to integrate nature into the urban project, engaging aquatic and vegetal forms to achieve pleasing visual effects, echoing the principles of pre-industrial, especially seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, architects.<sup>5</sup> In their preliminary studies of cities—what they called an "analytical report of the city" (*rapport d'enquête sur la ville*)—SFU

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<sup>4</sup> Robert de Souza, "L'utilité publique et l'Esthétique," in "Rapports, Vœux et Compte-Rendu Général de la 'Journée de l'urbanisme'," Société Française des Urbanistes, ed. *Urbanisme* 1, Numéro Hors-Série (1932), XXXIV.

<sup>5</sup> Check, for instance, R. Danger and R. Danger, *Ville de Beyrouth, Dossier du Plan d'Aménagement, Embellissement et Extension. Rapport d'Enquête et Justificatif* (1932); and R. Danger and others, *Rapport Justificatif* (1936), both found in SIAF/Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe Siècle, Fonds Danger Frères et Fils.

urbanists communicated their pragmatic approach towards planning. It involved a methodical examination and evaluation of the urban environment, providing a basis to justify the necessary “sacrifices” mandated by planning.

The transition in urban development practices from the surgical strictness mastered by Haussmann to aesthetic modes characterized the onset of the twentieth century, in France and most of Europe. As Chapter Three shows, the advent of urban theorists such as Camillo Sitte ushered in a line of thinking that underscored the aesthetic and cultural satisfaction derived from historical urban environments.<sup>6</sup> Urban development in the following decades became increasingly entwined with conservation of urban heritage, especially as the impulse of nationalism surfaced following the Great War. Sitte endeavored to shift the focus of urban development from engineers to architects, advocating for a vision of the city as the outcome of three-dimensional relationships within public spaces. In his renowned critique opposing what he saw as a sterile and utilitarian rationalism in Vienna’s *Ringstrasse*, the Austrian scholar and architect championed a picturesque and emotionally satisfying spatial organization deeply connected to the artistic legacy of the past. His classification of the architect as the upholder of beauty over functionality, along with his staunch belief that urban planning must be regarded as more than just a technical predicament but also as an aesthetic matter in its purest form, was fated to exert a profound impact on the exploration and implementation of urban spatial design. Scholars and practitioners such as Thomas Mawson (1861–1933) and Raymond Unwin (1863–1940) in England; Hermann Jansen (1869–1945), Werner Hegemann (1881–1936), and Albert Brinckmann (1881–1958) in

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<sup>6</sup> Camillo Sitte, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (New York: Random House, 1965).

Germany; and Charles Buls (1837–1914) in Belgium actively participated in this debate, emphasizing the crucial need to embrace artistic principles in the field of urban planning.

SFU, I have argued, brought this debate to France and shaped it into an applicable science, especially after recognizing that Sitte’s book, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889), is “so penetrating in itself, but so dangerous in its attempts at application.”<sup>7</sup> In Prost’s reform schemes for Istanbul and Rabat, we saw how SFU synthesized ideas by Sitte and other European theorists and fused them with geographical Vidalian principles and Bergsonian ideals. *Urbanisme* was a French invention, indeed influenced by the importation of international ideas. Once developed in France, it was exported to the rest of the world, where it acquired yet new social, geographical, and aesthetic dimensions.

With science taking center stage and the obsession with quantitative time, due to the now ubiquitous presence of clocks across Europe and beyond,<sup>8</sup> SFU cleverly integrated scientific discourse into their urbanistic vision, aiming to captivate and persuade the masses. Recognizing the significance of art alongside science and engineering in city-building, SFU purposefully labeled urbanism as a “synthesis of science and art” or a “scientific art,” effectively demonstrating the harmonious coexistence of these two realms. Chapter Three has showed how De Souza endeavored to

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<sup>7</sup> Gaston Bardet, *Pierre sur pierre: construction du nouvel urbanisme* (Paris: Éditions L.C.B, 1945), 3.

<sup>8</sup> By 1900, the concept of global time zones emerged, marking the point at which we could determine that Amsterdam, for instance, was one hour ahead of London. This development was driven in part by concerns arising from the expanding railway networks. Ensuring that trains departed and arrived punctually while avoiding collisions with other trains necessitated precise timekeeping. As a result, clocks became increasingly prevalent, adorning the towers of churches across the landscape, and individuals began carrying watches more extensively than ever before. This widespread adoption of timekeeping devices coincided with the rise of chronophotography, a technique that emerged in the 1860s, enabling the capture of photographs that could track the movement of objects such as birds in flight with unprecedented accuracy.



enrich the discourse of modernism regarding the present-day urban landscape and persuade the general populace that aesthetic appeal and practicality need not be conflicting entities.

SFU was one of the first large-scale attempts at overcoming the stagnation in modern planning in early twentieth-century France, mainly through exporting its orders overseas. After the renovation of Paris under Haussmann and the Great War,<sup>9</sup> there was a strong proclivity among some of the city's intelligentsia, experts, and bureaucrats to conserve the city's meandering web of streets and historical edifices, in reaction against Haussmann's severe modernization. They advocated against any clearance agenda that posed a threat to the destruction of historical Paris. For them, any sort of renovation was to preserve the city's beauty. Urban historian Anthony Sutcliffe argues that, by 1918, the municipal council had already largely conceded a conservationist policy in the city center, and the conservationists had become increasingly intrepid.<sup>10</sup> But, as I have explained in Chapter Two, no major urban renewal projects took place in the interwar period in Paris or France. Urban restoration projects were limited. The war and events leading to it had severely distressed French society and territory. However, SFU's enormous production of both theories of urbanism and practical schemes for urban renewal intersected, advantageously, with a tremendous want for urban development in many a global city, in the Western and Eastern worlds, and within colonial and

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<sup>9</sup> The impact of the Great War on the Paris region was minimal, leaving it largely untouched. However, the post-war reconstruction efforts were deemed responsible for the unsightly suburbs encircling the city. Considering only the picturesque historical central districts as a priority was recognized as a grave mistake. See Rosemary Wakeman, "Nostalgic Modernism and the Invention of Paris in the Twentieth Century," *French Historical Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004), 136.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850–1970* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970), 211. Chapter 7 provides a satisfying explanation of the conservation movement.

independent post-WWI nations:

[France's] urbanists were numerous and active; we see them doing abroad what they cannot do at home. During the war of 1914, [France] was the first to provide education in urbanism with a synthetic program that bears the specific mark of the French spirit.<sup>11</sup>

In the decades following the Great War, as these architects-turned-urbanists sought improvements to the physical environment as a means to improve social relations, they found in the homeland no adequate space for fulfilling their mission. Venturing across geographical borders, SFU thinkers and planners saw urbanism as a global project whose outcome should never be the same, but instead relate to the specific geographic site.

In the initial two decades of its establishment, SFU's practical plans for restructuring cities were shifted to Latin America and the French colonies in the Mediterranean region and Southeast Asia. During the nascent phase of urbanism's development, particularly in the 1910s as exemplified by the plan crafted by Prost for Rabat, the resulting designs displayed a distinct minimalistic approach. The old city is seen as "the home of the community" and "the expression of urban life,"<sup>12</sup> embodying Poëte's theoretical principles. The city is the concern of urban art. But this art is not the Sittian art of building cities, the rules of which the Austrian scholar tried to spell out in 1889: irregular, limited, and enclosed arrangements of architectural figures, designed to arouse emotions. It is also not the search for an urban aesthetic that was oriented towards the picturesque, as defended later (1894) by Charles Buls, who, like Sitte, was critical of

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<sup>11</sup> Poëte, "L'esprit de l'urbanisme français," 5.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Gréber, "Art & technique de la construction des villes," Cours théorique de 1ère année (Paris, Institut d'Urbanisme de l'Université de Paris, Année Scolaire 1926–1927), 3.

the effects of ruthless modernization. SFU's urban art is much more encompassing. It concerns the big city, achieving that leap of scale that Sitte was calling for without managing to formalize in anything other than a dreamy discourse.

Later, in the 1930s, as Gréber's plan for Marseille and Prost's scheme for Istanbul display, *urbanisme* tackled an even larger scale. With its attentiveness to the existing topography, it displayed advanced techniques for managing vehicular circulation and for regulating land into residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and mixed-use zones, within and beyond municipal boundaries. These regulations also outlined specific requirements and restrictions regarding building heights, setbacks, and provisions for green or open spaces. Gréber's and Prost's plans skillfully integrated themselves within the existing urban fabric by utilizing the natural contours of the terrain or leveraging the natural breaks and variations in the topography. It is important to indicate that over the course of the three interwar decades, SFU's ideals concerning industry and its connection to mysticism, nature, tradition, and art endured steadfastly, even as technologies advanced, and urbanism expanded on a larger scale.

While SFU's ideas are morally acceptable, and even honorable, the application of design ideas is always not exactly equal to the projected theory. The practical realm in which SFU operated showed some inevitable failures. For instance, in Rabat, and as Janet Abu-Lughod claims in her book, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (1980), Prost's plan allocated all the land between the interior and exterior western walls, as well as the land to the south, for the French city, the *ville nouvelle*. However, the central area, encompassing about five times the acreage of the *medina*, would have been more than

sufficient to accommodate the expansion of the foreign population.<sup>13</sup> Facing a scarcity of land, Moroccans found themselves compelled to the outskirts of the *ville nouvelle*, residing primarily in *bidonvilles* constructed on land that Prost had designated as unsuitable for habitation.<sup>14</sup>

It is indecorous to discount such political implications of architecture and urban planning, but at the same time—and as I mentioned in the Introduction—while these architects relied on colonial authorities for the chance to pursue their work and often received material assistance from them, they cannot be seen as active proponents of colonialism. Despite asserting their apolitical stance and focusing solely on aesthetic or technical aspects, these professionals working in colonial environments inevitably found themselves entangled in the political sphere. Prost, in Morocco, had to adhere to Lyautey's agenda.

However, politics is just a mere fragment of the broader image we observe in this scenario, merely one thread in the storyline. Within any urban planning endeavor, a multitude of interpretations always coexist. The equilibrium between these interpretations constantly fluctuates. The formal objectives pursued by the urbanist hold considerable significance, yet even they are not devoid of subjectivity. It would be unfair to belittle the urbanist's concerns as superficial; however, we must also refrain from singling out these intentions as the definitive essence of an urban project. The same principle applies, naturally, to the programmatic and symbolic intentions that preoccupied the clients, who, in this instance, happened to be colonial administrators.

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<sup>13</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 160.

<sup>14</sup> Abu-Lughod, *Rabat*, 160.

The weight of this experiment was further amplified by the tensions and vulnerabilities prevalent in French Third Republic politics. Governmental factions and instability, disputes between Paris and the provinces, the painful loss of Alsace-Lorraine to the Germans, and a general sense of diminished national self-esteem, particularly when juxtaposed with the glorious historical legacy. All these factors added significance to the premises of SFU's global urban campaign. The social reform movement aimed to not only bring stability to the colonies and pre-industrial territories and enhance their productivity, but also rejuvenate metropolitan France itself. It promised to inject new vitality into politics and culture through the emergence of innovative ideas and tried-and-tested methodologies. While planners from SFU, along with their counterparts who embarked on overseas ventures, emphasized the broader and theoretical significance of their research and policies, they were simultaneously seeking to garner approval from their colleagues in the metropolis. This is evident in the conferences they organized or participated in, such as *Urbanism in the Colonies and Tropical Countries*, the proceedings of which were published in 1932.

Undoubtedly, urbanism emerged as a result of this extensive global research. It is that experiment, arising from the theories formulated in Paris and in Rome, at the French *Académie*, as well as in all the cities restructured by these planners, that warrants our attention. The development in urban planning that SFU generated—although it anteceded the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*, or CIAM (founded in 1928 and disbanded in 1959)—was almost entirely obscured by the latter and the dominance of the Modern Movement. Overlooking SFU, historians once regarded the principles of modernist urban planning that were established by CIAM as the foundation of the urban

planning field. However, this dissertation has clearly demonstrated that urbanism predates CIAM and is based on entirely different principles. In contrast to CIAM's deliberate neglect of history or the Modern Movement's collective rejection of historicist architecture, urbanists associated with SFU have incorporated Bergson's concept of time into a distinct urban philosophy that fully embraces history and strives to integrate the past with the present. I show that the historical narrative of planning carried out by CIAM members in Europe and around the world has cast a shadow over SFU's terrestrial, geographic approach to planning.

CIAM architects diverged from traditional approaches to urban reform, embracing a predominantly functionalist mindset when it came to cities. Marked by abstraction and a sense of liberation, their emerging ideology carried an air of superiority owing to its novelty. As a result, ideas were frequently pushed to their furthest limits; principles were distilled to their most abstract forms; and traditional methods of place-making were cast aside. Architects, operating within this newfound realm of expressive freedom, were acknowledged for their supposed capacity to bring about positive societal change. For instance, Le Corbusier maintained the belief that Taylorist production strategies were inherently "natural" and, consequently, transcended the realm of politics. This perspective stood in stark contrast to the human-centered thinking of the *Société* planners, who sought individual liberation through collective efforts. While CIAM also claimed to be concerned with this pursuit, they arrived at it through an entirely different urban logic. CIAM's positivist approach involved treating the material elements of urbanism as chess pieces on board that can be arranged and combined in a calculated manner.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (2000), Eric Mumford highlights how CIAM's concept of urbanism was, in essence, an extension of long-standing ideas that had gained traction by



Similar to how the history of twentieth-century modern architecture has been shaped by political and ideological underpinnings centered around the idea of the machine, functionalism, and advancements in technology and materials, the trajectory of twentieth-century urbanism has been systematically guided by a linear and progressive positivism.<sup>16</sup> This positivism tends to associate progress with radical shifts in the technological conception of cities, leading to consequential transformations in the formal arrangement of urban and suburban spaces. The prevailing narrative within twentieth-century urbanism perpetuates the notion that progress is intrinsically tied to groundbreaking innovations in urban technology.<sup>17</sup> As a result, there is a tendency to

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the 1920s. These ideas revolved around prioritizing efficiency in urban development, maintaining a steadfast belief in technology's capacity to address social issues, and placing trust in the expertise of master planners to shape a better world. In this light, CIAM can be seen as a continuation of earlier planning ideals, carrying forward their principles and objectives into the contemporary era. However, CIAM's vision of modernist planning eventually evolved into a form of counter-*urbanisme*, displacing all previous conceptions. While CIAM members were not the first to advocate for the potential of architecture and urban planning to foster social cohesion, they reimagined this idea in an abstract manner, detached from historical context, local conditions, and the human scale. The deliberate disregard for history was not merely a matter of convenience for CIAM, but rather a deliberate choice viewed as a positive means of gaining insight into the true essence of urban reality. By dissociating from historical precedents and local nuances, CIAM sought to uncover a supposedly purer and more objective understanding of urban planning, unburdened by the constraints of the past.

<sup>16</sup> Within the realm of architecture, the situation has seen improvement. The mythical notion of architectural avant-gardes detached from historical roots has been challenged, emphasizing the significance of the vernacular in shaping the "other" modern architecture. However, in the domain of urban planning, which has remained even more politicized than architecture throughout the twentieth century, the historiography has largely persisted without any significant change. Specifically, the critical reevaluation of the modern project concerning history and regionalism has scarcely engaged the history of urban planning.

<sup>17</sup> Additionally, consider academic institutions, within the United States and other nations, that promote the confluence between science and urban design, encompassing a wide range of disciplines, including urban planning, architecture, environmental science, and data analysis. By amalgamating scientific knowledge and highly technological and computational research methodologies into their design approaches, these educational institutions strive to cultivate effective resolutions to the multifaceted issues prevailing in urban and rural environments, including overpopulation, land degradation, climate change, air pollution, plastic pollution, and deforestation. However, it is worth noting that in this kind of process, alternative modes of analysis are occasionally overlooked or undervalued.

prioritize these technological advancements and their corresponding spatial organization in the pursuit of urban development. As SFU planners clearly departed from such thinking, seeing the merits of both technological advancements and traditional pre-industrial approaches to planning, they had followers, such as Aldo Rossi and Carlo Aymonino, whose work has been celebrated more than SFU's. SFU planners would be today called "contextualists," a term that became prominent in the 1970s as part of the critique of architectural rationalism. But the distinction lies in the fact that SFU was not seeking architectural assimilation, but rather, the new city needed to harmonize cohesively with its culture and environment.

SFU urbanists exported their ideas of social reform to the twentieth-century world, but these ideas, with their planetary and social concern, relate to our society. Studying SFU's urbanism allows us to reflect on today's capitalism and our urban condition: how to rebuild our cities after several old and new wars, and how to deal with our past, a part of which we inherited from SFU. Numerous cities built by these planners survived, and we live in them. Art in SFU's urbanism embraced a deep reverence for collective perceptions of beauty, firmly grounded in traditional values, rather than perpetually diverging from established forms in the quest for unconventional, precarious experiments. At the center of these planners' urban process was the relationship between the new and the old and the past and the future. But today, as the capitalist condition has expanded even more and become complexly entangled with even bigger technocratic governance policies, the administrative, development, and architectural elites view the inherited city as a stolid and contemptuous backdrop against which the future is envisaged. The fascination exerted by the promised or imagined change justifies the mass

destruction of the near and distant past. Unfortunately, some fervent partisans of modernity today promulgate specialization, decontextualization, hyper-individualism, and fragmentation. However, SFU's collective notions concerning sociality, nature, beauty, happiness, and the integration between art and life are timeless. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than at any time in the past fifty years, we could be inching closer to revitalizing a shared structure for urban and terrestrial artistry, a framework that reinstates the foundation of an art- and human-friendly, diverse environment, where structures envelop and define city streets, plazas, and communal areas. For the *Société*, the city was a living heritage, and it is through cultivating our own culture of place-making that we can reconnect and carry that living heritage forward as we address the unique challenges and creativities of our own time. We should always remember that when urbanism was born, it was born with the issue of conservation. It was not about how we build cities; it was about how we preserve them.



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