Ambe J. Njoh

French Urbanism in Foreign Lands

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To my dear sister, Akwi Salome Njoh, for being a great role model in the Njoh family through her hard work, selflessness, and unreserved generosity.

Preface

Factors at the root of French urbanism abroad can be better understood in the broader context of France's overseas ventures. There is a tendency in the scholarly world to underestimate France's global reach and influence abroad. For instance, popular accounts of the contribution of Europeans in 'opening up' the 'New World' make only passing mention of France's role in the process. Yet, there is a preponderance of evidence portraying France as a dominant player in that process. It was one of the first European countries to traffic enslaved people from Africa to the Americas (NPS.gov).

Yet, France's ventures abroad went far beyond its involvement in the slave trade. As other European powers of the seventeenth century, it was involved in efforts to amass large territories in foreign lands. In this regard, it founded its first colony in North America: Port Royal in present-day Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1605. Three years later, in 1608, it claimed Quebec. This soon became the capital of what it christened New France (roughly, present-day Canada). In what is the present-day United States, France controlled Louisiana. However, it did not limit its territorial acquisition efforts to North America. Rather, it broadened the scope of these efforts to include the Caribbean. Here, it founded Guiana (1624), Saint Kitts (1625), and Guadeloupe and Martinique (1635).

France's early overseas imperial ventures also included the establishment of trading posts and colonies in Africa and Asia. In the former, it established a trading post on the coast of present-day Senegal in 1624. In the latter, it established the colonies of Chandernagore, India, in 1673 and Pondicherry, Southeast Asia, in 1674. Other early French colonies in the Asian region included Yanam, which was established in 1723, and Mahe, founded in 1725. The French also established a number of colonies in the Indian Ocean, including La Reunion (1664), Mauritius (1718) and Seychelles (1756).

The second wave of French territorial acquisition efforts was initiated in the nineteenth century and focused mainly on Africa. Here, France amassed vast territories in North, West and Central Africa. At its peak in the 1920s and 1930s, the French colonial empire covered a total land area of about 12,347 km^2 (Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, 1976). In effect, France controlled this vast area, almost a tenth of

the Earth's surface, from the seventeenth century to the 1960s. One legacy of France's extensive empire-building efforts is the human settlements it built or inspired through its unique spatial design philosophy. Very little of the history of these settlements is known especially in the English-speaking world. The only exception is in the case of erstwhile French possessions such as Quebec, Montreal and Louisiana that are located in developed countries. Thus, there is a lacuna in knowledge of the history of towns and cities that were directly or indirectly planted, if I may borrow Robert Home's (2013) terminology, by the French in many territories outside of France.

This book is intended to bridge this gulf and to examine the spatial and physical development schemes that the French government or its agents employed in these countries. The aim is to highlight aspects of these schemes that embodied French values, culture and socio-economic objectives. Also of interest is how French physical and spatial planning thought has influenced urban planning in territories without a history of French conquest. The case of Latin America is particularly noteworthy. With the exception of French Guiana (or Guyana) and a few Caribbean islands, France never effectively colonized any territory in this region. Yet, the region's architecture and urban design boast features of vintage French urbanism. The following questions constitute the book's guiding posts:

- Which major towns/cities outside of France, and especially in the developing world, owe their origin to France's overseas ventures?
- What specific social, cultural, economic and physical features distinguish these towns/cities from their peers?
- How are they affected by their history as the brainchild of French town planners or builders?

These questions are not only of historical importance but also of contemporary interest for at least two reasons. First, a significant number of human settlements planted by France or its agents rose to serve as the core around which many major contemporary cities developed. Second, France currently maintains territories abroad despite the fact that colonialism is no longer fashionable.

The broad questions outlined above are easy to address once we have some appreciation of the expansionist and territorial conquest motives of European powers—of which France is a prime example. Key amongst these is the desire on the part of Europeans as a dominant group to export their culture in order to acculturate 'cultural or racial others'. This ideological rationale was founded on a belief of the superiority of Europeans over 'others'. But this was only one of several overt and covert purposes of imperialism and colonialism. Others frequently mentioned include the need for European powers to aggrandize their social, economic and political power as well as protect and preserve themselves.

There is no shortage of scholarly works on the military, economic and political tools that were used to realize these goals. What remains unclear is the role that architects, urban planners and others skilled in manipulating the built environment played in this connection. Colonial governments required, at a minimum, roads,

streets, colonial military barracks and government stations. Paradoxically, little attention has been paid to the politics and personalities that were involved in developing these facilities. Far less attention has been paid to how these facilities facilitated the attainment of the overt and covert goals of the colonial project. This is especially true in the case of French colonialism, which has not received adequate attention in the relevant English language literature. Consequently, the English-speaking world lacks knowledge of the many physical and spatial development projects that French colonial authorities undertook throughout the world. It is tempting to argue that to understand the colonial activities of one European power is to understand the colonial activities of all. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. This is not to say that there were no points of convergence in colonial activities and the avowed rationale of these activities. However, one must be careful not to exaggerate the similarities while conversely minimizing the many disparities that characterized such activities. Consider the case of British and French colonial urbanism. Professional civilian planners were responsible for town planning and related activities in British colonies. In contrast these activities fell under the aegis of the military in territories controlled by the French.

Another important issue that is accorded only passing attention in the discourse on colonial urbanism is the race question. There is a glaring distinction between the manner in which British and French colonial/imperial authorities handled this question. This was evident in the first wave of European colonialism in the Americas (*c.* 1500s–1700s) and resurfaced in the second wave in Africa and Asia (1800s–1900s). In the Americas, the British took many actions, including the enactment of laws to separate the races. One of the most notable of these laws forbade interracial marriages and criminalized interracial sexual intercourse. The latter was labelled 'miscegenation'. No similar laws existed in the territories under French control at that time. In fact, interracial marriages were encouraged, especially in the French West Indies. Also, although racial spatial segregation was the norm in both British and French colonies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this spatial structure was not rooted in the same philosophy. In British colonies, racially segregated spatial structures stemmed from a belief in the superiority of Europeans over 'racial others'. In French colonies, this spatial structure was a product of the view that European culture was superior to that of 'cultural others'.

French colonialism was certainly not the only conduit for exporting French urbanism. It is therefore not surprising that the spatial structures of some cities in countries without a history of French colonization boast features of French urbanism. The raison d'être and implications of these features in foreign lands remain largely unknown. This is especially true in the English-speaking world. This book seeks to contribute to efforts aimed at addressing this deficiency in the literature.

The book is unique not only because of its thematic orientation but more importantly because of its substantive focus. Recently—the end of the twentieth century, to be more precise—urbanism has risen to greater prominence. This period marked the first time in human history that the proportion of people living in urban areas surpassed those living in rural settlements. Most of the growth that produced this

phenomenon occurred in developing countries. Here, it is important to note that the nucleus of a significant number of the cities in these countries was created by European colonial authorities. Moreover, Europeans, and especially the French, as this book shows, were or have been influential in shaping these cities spatially, physically and culturally.

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Chapter 1
Rationale for French Colonial Urbanism

Abstract A major component of efforts to universalize French urbanism is the introduction of French urban design schemes in foreign lands. Official pronouncements extoll such schemes as efforts to promote the healthy, effective and efficient functioning of built space. However, a critical examination of the raison d'être of these efforts suggests that they are designed to accomplish other less glamorous goals of the French imperial project. In this chapter I contend that the acculturation of "racial/cultural others" constitutes, and remains, primordial amongst these goals. This raison d'être of French urbanism abroad has largely escaped the attention of analysts. Yet, the need to pay attention to the impact of supplanting the indigenous spatial norms of 'racial/cultural others' with French/Western varieties cannot be overstated. This chapter identifies and analyses some of these implications. In addition, the chapter presents an outline of the entire book.

Keywords Acculturation • Assimilation • Coercion • Colonial governments • Diffusion of urbanism • Force • International development agencies • Manipulation • Power • Seduction • Segregation

Introduction

European projects to amass territories abroad have been richly documented and are well-known. What remains less known are the ancillary activities of these projects. Principal among them are the 'how', 'why', 'who', and 'where' questions relating to the planting of European-style human settlements in foreign lands. The avowed aim of activities in this latter connection was to improve living standards in what Europeans considered backward regions. The French encapsulated their initiatives in this regard under the canopy of their so-called *la mission civilisatrice* or the civilizing mission. In the spatial organization arena, European concepts of environmental design were dressed up in scientific garbs and superimposed on indigenous equivalents in European-controlled territories. Such dressing was necessary to project Eurocentric environmental design concepts as inherently objective and value-neutral. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, the supplanting of indigenous notions of spatial design with European varieties had covert motives (Njoh 2010). They were

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motivated by a desire on the part of Europeans to acculturate and assimilate 'racial others'. Throughout this book, I employ specific cases to bolster this assertion in the context of French imperial and colonial escapades. I begin in this chapter by expanding on the twin concepts of assimilation and acculturation.

Acculturation, Assimilation and French Urbanism Abroad

As the classic works of Franz Boas (e.g., 1888) and Redfield and colleagues (1986) suggest, acculturation is by no means a new concept in the social and cognate sciences. Currently, the concept is often taken to be synonymous with the term assimilation. In this case, it refers to the cultural modifications that occur among members of foreign groups as they seek to adapt to a new environment – their 'home away from home.' This is the definition typically employed or implied by the growing number of studies focusing on immigrant populations in culturally dissimilar regions or countries (see e.g., Schwartz et al. 2010; Tadmor et al. 2009). Conspicuously absent from the literature are studies of the acculturation that takes place when dominant groups invade and impose their culture on less dominant ones. Acculturation of this latter genre has always been a primary objective of territorial conquest projects. Accordingly, it is sometimes referred to as cultural imperialism. Some of the most concerted acculturation initiatives have occurred under the banner of colonialism. Usually acculturation does not end with the demise of colonialism. Rather, as the cases of Asia and Africa have demonstrated, acculturation often continues in the hands of indigenous leaders once the colonial period ends. In this case, the indigenous leadership typically undertakes to serve as agents of the acculturating groups.

Yet, works scrutinizing acculturation as an element of the colonial enterprise are relatively new and are a post-World War II phenomenon. This phenomenon goes under different names, including 'neo-colonialism', 'soft imperialism', 'economic imperialism', 'structural imperialism', and 'cultural dependency and synchronization' (Rauschenberger 2003). Researchers of the phenomenon have been preoccupied with the US cultural hegemony and its dominance of the cultural commodity exporting industry. Consequently, the acculturation initiatives of other world powers, especially the tools they are wont to employ have been ignored. In this latter regard, it is worth noting that modernist urban planning has seldom been treated as a tool of Western acculturation or cultural imperialism. A few works, not necessarily catalogued under cultural imperialism, have focused on the introduction of Western planning models in non-Western societies (see Abu-Lughod 1965; King 1976; Njoh 2007). However, there remains a dearth of knowledge on the specific effects of these models on non-Western societies. In what ways do they affect life in non-Western societies? To address this question adequately, it is necessary to appreciate the models as tools of cultural imperialism. Some (e.g., Rauschenberger 2003) have suggested that the effects of cultural imperialism are first and foremost cultural in nature. It is also conceivable that some of the effects have implications for the

sustainable economic, social, and political development of human settlements. Thus, acculturation undoubtedly impacts sustainable human settlement planning. The question that remains largely unanswered relates to the nature – negative or positive – of this impact. To fully appreciate this impact requires some understanding of urban planning in particular and urbanism in general in their broader contexts. In this regard, the opportunity to shape urban form and function serves as an occasion not only to acculturate and assimilate 'cultural others'. Rather such an opportunity provides an unparalleled platform for articulating power. An examination of the power-related motives of French urbanism abroad serves to illuminate this point.

Power-Related Motives of French Overseas Urbanism

The fact that town planning schemes can be used as tools of power in built space is well established (see e.g., Njoh 2009; Cooper 2000; Dovey 1999; Çelik 1997). Michel Foucault (e.g., 1975) is prolific in his discussion of the expression of power in built space in modern European history. The major tenets of these discussions provide a robust analytical framework for studying spatial power in colonized territories. Dovey (1999) specifies five different categories of power in built space in general, including force, coercion, seduction, manipulation, and segregation. Force in built space entails the use of physical structures designed to confine individuals within a specific location. Coercion has to do with the latent use of force. Here, there is a threat, but not the actual use, of force. This finds expression in built space through the use of public buildings and other structures of exaggerated scale. Seduction has to do with the use of tactics and strategies to advertise an idea, artefact or way of life. Efforts on the part of colonizers to acculturate and assimilate the colonized typically involved seduction. Manipulation employs strategies designed to withhold the truth about a product, service or policy from the relevant public. Segregation entails the construction of boundaries or pathways to separate or compartmentalize built space along racial, socio-economic, or other lines. Concomitant with this is often an effort to impose a socially constructed hierarchical structure on the affected groups.

French colonial town planning authorities used visible instruments of force such as fences and walls. However, the exact functions of these physical structures differed with the specific setting or region and colonial period. In colonial North America, for instance, French authorities used fences and walls to protect towns from external threats. Witness for instance, the fortified walls that enclosed Quebec and Montreal. In Africa and Indochina, these same physical structures were used to enclose both European enclaves, and native districts. In both cases the aim was to protect Europeans from imagined threats posed by 'the natives'. In practice, the fences and walls restricted the movement of the natives – by delineating the spaces they could or could not occupy and stipulating where they could or could not go – at

any given time. Thus, it is safe to argue that fences and walls reinforced the power of French colonial authorities 'over' the natives.

The colonial period also saw spatial strategies used to bolster colonial power. For instance, during earlier colonial ventures in North America from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, France expressed force in built space through sheer numbers. Thus, overwhelming the native Indian population with numerical superiority was a crucial element in France's territorial conquest calculus in the region. Programmes to encourage mass migration from France to New France were part of efforts to implement this colonial strategy. Apart from overwhelming the native Indian population, large numbers of French people were necessary for France to achieve her urbanization goals in the region. Perhaps more importantly, a large French population was necessary to transform the region into a veritable 'New France'. Efforts to encourage procreation and discourage celibacy were designed to achieve this goal.

Coercion has been articulated in the built environment in many ways with the following being commonplace (Njoh 2009; Cooper 2000; Dovey 1999; Wright 1991): use of armed or unarmed uniformed guards, and public and other structures of exaggerated scale. Such structures, including cathedrals, chapels, hospitals, and colonial government buildings and monuments constituted conspicuous elements of built space in French colonies. The Roman Catholic Church was always an active player on the French political stage both at home and abroad. However, the activity of the church was greatly curtailed where there was a history of organized religion predating the French conquest. Thus, for instance, in North Africa, where Islam predated French colonialism by more than a millennium, the church had a diminished role. In such settings, there were 'cathedrals' with no Roman Catholic 'faithfuls'. Yet, the physical structures, because of their ostentatious and Eurocentric orientation stood in stark contrast to the indigenous structures in their vicinity. Such structures tended to coerce through 'domination' and 'intimidation'.

The effectiveness of these structures in displaying France's resourcefulness and technological might was relative. In North America or New France, for instance, the effectiveness was minimal. This is because the population of French citizens migrating to the region increased and eclipsed that of the native Indians. Consequently, most of those who were supposed to be impressed by these structures had already been exposed to them in their native land. In Indochina and sub-Saharan Africa, where there were no settler colonies, the structures continued to be effective as instruments of 'domination' and 'intimidation'. Here, the structures derived their power from implied sanctions. In this case, the sheer size of the structures belittled the colonized and stood as an imposing symbol of the colonizer's inordinate powers.

Another variant of coercion that was frequently used, especially in colonial Africa and Indochina, was internal surveillance. Here, the choice of elevated sites for colonial administrative buildings had two power-related objectives. One was to symbolize and dignify the power of the imperial government, and the other, to facilitate internal surveillance and security. In this regard, French colonial government sites were carefully situated to overlook the low-lying districts that served as the home of the 'natives'. In this case, coercion was invariably manifested to the extent

that those in the low-lying districts, the colonized, were under the constant gaze of those at the elevated site, the colonizers (cf, Winters 1982).

Also worth noting as a unique feature of French colonial urbanism in Africa, the Middle East and Indochina are the encounters of colonial authorities with a long history of urbanization. The history of urbanization predating the European conquest had several implications for the expression of power in built space in these regions. For instance, the indigenous Kasbah in Tunis is located on elevated terrain overlooking the European city in a low-lying area. Not only is this an anomaly, it demonstrates the socially constructed nature of altitude as an element of power in built space.

Altitude served a more critical role as an internal power and control mechanism in France's second wave of colonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is in contrast to the first wave from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century when altitude was less significant. Winters (1982) succinctly captured the essence of altitude in spatial organization during the second wave of European colonization. For Europeans, Winters argued, topography not only symbolized the unequal distribution of power and wealth, but also distinguished the ruler from the ruled. The importance of altitude in the French colonial project in Africa, for instance, is illustrated by the case of colonial Niamey, Niger. In this 'plateau-less' city, French colonial authorities located the colonial government station at a site they designated as 'the Plateau'.

Another physical element of built space that French colonial authorities employed to bolster their power is street design. The grid pattern and wide streets were selected not only to facilitate the movement of people, goods and services. Rather, this pattern in which streets intersect at right angles was essential to colonial security and surveillance activities. In such a system, a military patrol officer with a pair of binoculars could watch over 2 km in four directions from one intersection.

The use of seduction as an instrument of power manifested itself in French colonial urbanism in many forms. Three of the most common are toponymic inscription, the adoption of French planning laws, and the promotion of Eurocentric building materials. Toponymic inscription is well established as a tool of power in built space (Njoh 2013; Bigon 2009; Njoh 2007; Yeoh 1996). In French colonial urbanism, it entailed giving streets/places names from the French socio-cultural lexicon. This was a ubiquitous practice in New France and French colonial Africa. In both cases, the toponymic tradition was used to broadcast or embellish France's power in foreign lands. Brenda Yeoh (1996) suggested that place names are typically not designed to reflect reality or adhere to any specific custom. Rather, they seek to express the power of the 'namer' over the object being named. Power in this case is of the seduction variant because the use of French nomenclature advertised/advertises French appellations as inherently superior to their non-French alternatives.

Another example of the use of seduction as a form of power in French colonial urbanism involved the adoption of French land laws in the colonies. However, the purpose of land laws as a tool of power in French or European settler colonies (e.g., North America) differed significantly from its purpose in non-settler colonies (e.g., Africa and Indochina). In the former, the laws were meant to govern the European

settlements. However, in the latter, the laws' orbit included the overwhelmingly majority native districts. Yet, the indigenous concept of land in the non-settler colonies conflicted sharply with the Eurocentric view. In most of sub-Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, land is viewed as sacred. It is not a commodity that can be sold or exchanged on the market. Rather, it can only be communally held for the general good of the living, the dead, and the unborn. In contrast, the Eurocentric view considers land a commodity and promotes individualized landownership.

Yet another example of the use of seduction as a form of power in built space can be culled from the French colonial construction sector. It is true that building bylaws and codes were transplanted from France to North America in the same manner that they were later transplanted to Africa, the Middle East and Indochina. However, in the case of North America, avowedly a settler colony, the bylaws were made by French people for French people. In the non-settler colonies this was certainly not the case. Here, the bylaws were conceived, formulated and implemented by French people for non-Europeans. Although the introduction of these alien laws was often under the guise of modernization, or *la mission civilisatrice*, the actual goals were economic in nature.

To bolster their power and control over the colonized, French authorities were wont to denigrate locally available or indigenous construction materials while extolling the European equivalents. The duplicitous nature of policies that adhered to this convention was difficult to conceal. In fact, when it was absolutely necessary for the survival of the colonial project, the authorities readily recommended the use of indigenous materials. The policies of association that French colonial authorities adopted in the twilight of the colonial era in Africa, the Middle East and Indochina are illustrative. One instance of this was the 1920 design of Casablanca's courthouse in which Joseph Marrast included elements of Islamic architecture. Here, Marrast's incorporation of indigenous elements in French architecture was designed to win the hearts and minds of the 'colonized.' This, in effect, was yet another strategy to reinforce the colonizer's power.

Manipulation as a form of power thrives on the ignorance of the target subject. Power of this genre was exercised in New France only during the very early phase of European colonization in the region. The brief period before the indigenous population was numerically exceeded by French immigrants is noteworthy in this regard. In Africa the use of this kind of power outlived the colonial era and continues to date. In practice, and with respect to the construction domain, this typically involves withholding critical information about the strength of building materials. For instance, all buildings of locally derived materials including earth, wood and rocks are officially classified as temporary. Only buildings of Western materials such as cement, glass and aluminium are classified as permanent. Yet, most buildings of rocks and earth are stronger and more permanent than those of cement blocks. The purpose of the manipulation inherent in this dubious nomenclature has far-reaching economic implications. These include capital flight as materials for so-called permanent buildings must be imported. They also include quantitative deficiencies in housing as only a few people possess the wherewithal to import building materials. The negative reverberation of policies in this connection

continues to be felt in Africa, where the colonies were of the non-settler genre. The same does not hold true for North America where the colonies were of the settler variety.

Racial segregation in built space is one aspect of French colonial urbanism in North America and Africa where differences and similarities—albeit rare—are discernible. In North America, French colonial authorities encouraged and promoted integration of native Indians and French immigrants (Reps 1969). Similarly, in Africa prior to the nineteenth century, French traders and others lived side-by-side in Gorée, present-day Senegal. In Africa, this changed in concert with the emergence of the political ideology of racial and cultural superiority in Western Europe (Njoh 2008).

Racial segregation emerged a little before the onset of the second wave of French colonialism in the nineteenth century. Thereafter it was used to articulate power and facilitate social control in built space. By racially segregating colonial towns, officials were able control the movement of the native population. It is thanks to racial segregation that French colonial authorities were able to restrict the movement of colonial subjects despite the shoestring budgets of most colonial governments. Racial segregation also enhanced the power of the colonizer over the colonized by facilitating the former's surveillance of the latter. Interning the colonized within a geographically or physically delineated space, and focusing surveillance equipment and/or personnel on this space was typically enough as a control measure. The potency of racial spatial segregation to boost the power of the colonizer can be appreciated at yet another level. Native-only districts occasioned by segregation meant that colonial authorities could use military tactics to quell anti-colonial and other riots without incurring any European casualties. Finally, segregation facilitated the use of basic service provisioning to native-only districts for political patronage purposes. Thus, basic services could be supplied as a reward for compliance, and withheld as punishment for recalcitrance.

Channels for Diffusing Urbanism: The French Experience

The aim of the book is not limited to interrogating the elements and purposes of French urban planning models in foreign lands. It seeks also to promote understanding of the channels or conduits employed in efforts to diffuse these models. Planning historians have explored questions on how planning thought, ideas, philosophies and models are transferred from one locale to another. One outcome of this is the identification of the potent dimensions of diffusion. These include the following (Almandoz 2010):

- Mechanisms of diffusion – e.g., key personalities involved;
- Extent of adaptation – i.e., how much effort is made to contextualize the borrowed/diffused model;

- Pull and push factors at the root of diffusion – e.g., political, economic, and cultural factors.

One factor that is missing from this list relates to power relations, although it can be subsumed under the rubric of push/pull factors. However, a more elaborate treatment of power relations as an important factor in the diffusion of planning models is crucial for the purpose of the discussion in this book for several reasons. For one thing, the introduction of French planning models in foreign lands occurred in large part during France's reign as a colonial power. In practice, this meant the imposition of planning ideas, principles and practice by a stronger entity (a colonizer or conqueror) on a weaker entity (the colonized or conquered). Power was also at play even in regions such as Latin America, where colonialism's demise predated adoption of French planning models. In this regard, Arturo Almandoz (2010) noted that the domination of Eurocentric models in Latin America in the nineteenth/twentieth centuries was possible mainly because the region continued to depend on Europe and the US despite the demise of colonialism in the region.

The UN Report on Global Settlement 2009 summarizes a typology of diffusion into two main channels, namely 'imposition' and 'borrowing' (UN-Habitat 2009). Imposition includes the use of authoritarian mechanisms not only to enable the transfer of planning models to foreign countries, but also to facilitate their institutionalization once in those countries. For its part, borrowing has to do with the 'voluntary' acquisition of planning models, typically through synthesis, selection or uncritical reception. A point worth noting here has to do with the power relations existing between the model exporting and importing entities. Especially important for the purpose of this book is the fact that colonialism and conquest engender the imposition of Eurocentric planning systems (see e.g., Njoh 2007; Home 2013; King 1980). However, there have been other channels of transferring planning systems from one locale to another that did not involve colonialism and conquest in history. This is often the case in what may be termed the horizontal flow of models, broadly taken to include thoughts, ideas, philosophies and ideologies.

Thus, a complete list of channels or conduits that have historically been employed to diffuse planning models must include the following four (UN-Habitat 2009, pp. 51–52):

- Colonial governments;
- Educational and scientific research institutions;
- Professional associations and journals; and
- International development agencies.

Colonial Governments

Colonial governments were at the forefront of efforts to universalize European concepts of spatial organization and environmental design standards in Africa and Asia. Military officers-cum-colonial administrators, engineers, surveyors, architects and

contractors were instrumental in efforts in this regard. The annals of French colonialism contain a litany of names such as General Joseph Gallienni (1849–1916) (in colonial Madagascar), Lieutenant Hubert Lyautey (1854–1934) (colonial Morocco and Algeria), and General Georges Catroux (French Indochina) (1877–1969), who became colonial administrators after serving in the military. Colonial authorities made hardly any effort to disguise their desire to universalize Eurocentric models of planning. For the French, efforts in this regard came naturally as part of their avowed mission to civilize 'cultural and racial others.' The responsibility for diffusing Eurocentric models of planning fell upon the shoulders of European consultants and/or their surrogates based in developing countries. Typically government officials, these surrogates stipulated modernization as their primary objective, and saw replicating Eurocentric environmental design standards as a means of attaining this objective.

Educational and Research Institutions

Educational institutions were among the leading conduits for the diffusion of Western planning models. Their location was inconsequential as the key was the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum and pedagogy. Students from Western and non-Western regions who attended colonial planning schools were taught urban design and layout skills based on Western principles of spatial design. France's *Ecole des Beaux Arts* was especially instrumental in this connection. More importantly, the school inspired the Beaux Arts architecture movement. This began in the twentieth century, and has since had a major influence on architecture and spatial structures throughout the world. Many academic institutions in the non-Francophone world played prominent roles in the diffusion of Eurocentric planning models when modernist planning was in its infancy (King 1980). Prominent in this regard are British-based institutions such as the military academies at Chatham and Woolwich of the early 1900s. Also noteworthy is the institute that was established in Cooper Hill, Surrey to train engineers for colonial India in the late-nineteenth century. To this list, one can add institutions based in British colonies of the time. A good example of these is the Thomason Engineering College, which was later renamed Roorkee University, and Madras Engineering College in India.

In Latin America, efforts to diffuse Eurocentric planning models found expression in the core courses offered in urban planning programmes throughout the region (circa, 1900s). The first and best-known of these courses as Arturo Almandoz (2010) noted was introduced by Alberto Schade Pohlenz in 1928 at the School of Architecture in the University of Chile's Faculty of Economic Sciences and Mathematics. This course, and others that were later introduced in urban planning programmes in the region, contained subject matter that emphasized Western planning thought, philosophy, theories and ideas. Playing a leading role in this connection were books by authors of French extraction or others persuaded by French

planning thought such as Camillo Sitte, Marcel Poëte, and Pierre Lavendan (Almandoz 2010).

Scientific institutions also served as viable vehicles for transmitting Western planning schemes to non-Western settings. For instance, the scheme to develop enclaves for Europeans on hilltops – the so-called Hill Stations – in colonial Asia and Africa was the product of researchers at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in England. The mosquito experiments conducted there (1899–1900) provided justification for the nocturnal segregation of colonial administrators from the local population. This separation was afforded concrete form through residential segregation policies that were initially introduced in British colonies and later adopted in their French counterparts.

Professional and Scholarly Associations

Professional associations and the journals they produce have always been instrumental in transmitting Western planning ideas and schemes to non-Western societies. Prominent in this connection is the French *Revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics* (RGA). The RGA has been characterized as 'one of the leading architectural journals on both sides of the Atlantic during the nineteenth century' (Papayanis 2006). César Daly, the journal's editor from 1839 to 1888 is best remembered for his articulation of the nature of the city in the modern industrial age. Daly's research on the principal determinants of the underlying infrastructure of industrial cities was modelled on Second Empire Paris. It constitutes one of the main pillars of urban reforms in the French capital. Additionally, it is a conspicuous feature of cities in French dependencies and other societies that romanticized French urban design ideas of that time.

International Development Agencies and Consultants

Consultants have played, and continue to play, a primary role in exporting Eurocentric planning models. In this regard, and from a general perspective, the following individuals who served at one point or another as consultants to colonial governments come to mind: Patrick Geddes (1845–1932) and Charles Reade (1883–1933) (British colonial Asia), Thomas Karsten (1884–1945) (Dutch colonial East Indies), Albert Thompson (1878–1940), Charles Reade, and S.D. Adshead (1868–1946) (British colonial Southern Africa), Maxwell Fry (1899–1987) (British colonial West Africa), and Patrick Geddes (Israel). It is worth noting that the use of Western consultants in urban planning overseas, and by extension, as effective agents of diffusion remains current. Contemporary governments, like their colonial predecessors, frequently enlist the services of consultants because they typically lack in-house experts.

Colonial governments, most of which operated on very tight budgets, needed professionals with expertise in architecture and urban planning but could not afford them on a full-time basis. Hiring these professionals as consultants thus constituted a logical alternative. Since the end of World War II, there has been a steady increase in the number of Western-based planning and architectural firms executing projects in foreign lands. For instance, British consultants such as Atkins, Arup, and Sheppard Robinson have worked or are currently working on architectural and planning projects around the world. Similarly, consultancies from Italy (e.g., Architettiriuniti) and Germany (e.g., Albert Speer & Partners) have worked on many architectural and planning projects overseas.

For its part, French presence in the urban planning domain overseas is not only in the form of private consultants. Rather, it is also in the form of large state-owned institutional bodies such as the *Bureau Central d'Etudes pour les Equipement d'Outre-Mer* (BCEOM). The BCEOM is a semi-public company that was established in 1949 by the Ministry of French Overseas Territories specifically to execute planning and engineering projects in French overseas dependencies. Since its creation, the agency has implemented several major urban infrastructure and planning projects in Francophone Africa, the French Caribbean and the Pacific. The institution is the designated implementing agency of overseas urban development projects involving French government funding. Thus, BCEOM has historically been instrumental in transplanting French planning models to foreign lands.

Plan and Overview of The Book

Following this introductory chapter, the next eight chapters are organized quasi-chronologically and by geographic region. Chapter Two focuses on North America, particularly the region that used to be known as New France. In doing so, it explores French influence on urbanism in Canada and the US especially from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. During this time France controlled most of present-day Canada. For a good part of this period, the region went by the name, New France. Most of France's activities in the Canadian built environment during that era were geared towards protecting the territory from its European rivals, especially Britain. One of the monumental structures that have been credited to French colonial military architects is the fort of Louisbourg. A testament to its importance is the fact that although it was destroyed in 1758, the Canadian Government ensured its reconstruction about two centuries later in the 1960s (Canadian Encyclopedia Online). Paradoxically, the French also influenced the development of the built environment in the US, which, with the exception of Louisiana, never experienced French colonialism. A French-born American urban planner/architect, Pierre Charles l'Enfant, assisted by African American, Benjamin Banneker, is credited with the original (1791) design of the US capital. The chapter will analyze plans such as this as well as other important projects that benefited directly or

indirectly from France or persons of French extraction, training or academic background.

Chapter Three examines French notions of physical and spatial structure, and analyzes their impact on urban planning in Latin America. It is worth noting that this region attained a political and socio-economic high point during the second half of the nineteenth century. Two related developments occurred in the region at that time (Almandoz 2010). The first was the republican consolidation marked by widespread nation-building initiatives in the region. The second included efforts to replicate European ideas of modernity in massive urban renewal projects. Accordingly, urban planners in the region took the liberty to borrow generously from their notable European professional colleagues. The ideas of one these colleagues, Eugène Haussmann, proved very persuasive to many planners and leaders in the region. This explains the dominance of Hausssmannesque spatial design features such as tree-lined boulevards in many of the region's capital cities. Planners in Argentina, Chile and Brazil, incorporated these features in their designs as a means of ridding the erstwhile colonial cities of all vestiges of colonialism. The architects of a good many capital cities in the region were also inspired by Le Corbusier's ideas. Some of the major plans that were inspired by, or involved the direct participation of, Le Corbusier in the region include (Hardoy 1990): the plan of Havana by José Luis Sert and Paul Wierner; the plan of Bogota Chimbote in Peru; the *Cidade dos Motores* near Rio de Janeiro; the plan for Buenos Aires by Ferrari Hardoy and Juan Kurchan; and Lucio Costa's plan for Brasilia. These plans are richly laced with vintage Corbusian features. Examples of these features include the compartmentalization of space by function, superblocks and tower blocks, ample green space and motorized vehicular traffic. French urban design ideas found their way into Latin America through other channels. Prominent in this regard are the graduates of French urban design and architecture schools such as the Paris-based *Ecole des Beaux Arts*.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the French Caribbean. Particular emphasis is placed on three main French overseas territories: French Guyana, Martinique and Guadeloupe. These occupy a unique place in French geopolitics and were French colonies from 1635 to 1946 when they became full-fledged French administrative divisions. Analysing them provides an opportunity to understand the role of urban planning policy in French politico-administrative calculus. The fact that they are removed from mainland France by about 6,400 km means that their status as integral parts of France is true only in theory. In practice, they remain no more than French overseas dependencies. That is, they are essentially what the French refer to as *départements d'outre Mers* and *territoires d'outre Mers* (DOM/TOM). Yet, it is indisputable that they enjoy the same benefits from the French central state that are extended to administrative divisions (*départements*) on mainland France. Why is this the case? The chapter employs one area of French urban planning, namely housing policy, especially in Martinique and Guadeloupe to address this question.

Chapter Five discusses French colonial urbanism in Asia, particularly what used to be known as French Indochina (*l'Indochine*). The rich legacy of French colonial urbanism in this region has largely been ignored by urban historians. One notable exception here is Nicola Cooper (2000) who has done a fine job cataloguing and

interrogating the rationale for major projects of French colonial town builders and architects especially in Vietnam. This chapter builds on the foundations established by Cooper. Particularly, it aims to deepen understanding of these projects, especially those completed under the auspices of the French *Service de l'Urbanisme*. Also of interest are projects by other notable French colonial figures, such as Paul Doumer. As the Governor-General of French Indochina, Doumer created the hill station at Dalat in 1897/1898. One of the dominant physical features of the hill station is the monumental Dalat Palace Hotel (also known as the Lang Bian), which was completed in 1922 (Jennings 2003). What purpose did these physical and spatial structures serve within the broader political economy of French colonialism in Indochina? The chapter attempts to address this perennial question.

Chapter Six explores French colonial urbanism in the Middle East. This region was considerably urbanized, and boasted many densely populated human settlements enclosed within structurally sound walls before falling under French control. However, France found a way to impose its own version of urbanism on the region. Rather than supplant extant towns, French colonial authorities decided in favour of setting up their own new towns. These new towns, or *les villes nouvelles*, were designed to promote French notions of aesthetics, spatial form, and function. In this regard, the towns were furnished with broad straight boulevards separating city blocks. In addition, they introduced minor feeder streets, short blocks and high-density multi-storey buildings enclosed within central terraces.

Chapter Seven focuses on French urbanism in North Africa. Throughout the region, and not just in the former French colonies, one finds the influence of French urbanism. Prominent in this regard are features of Haussmannian designs that punctuate parts of contemporary Cairo. Some of these features owe their origins to Khedive Ismail, who had visited Paris in 1867, and was impressed by city's design, itself a brainchild of Eugene Haussmann. Upon his return to Egypt, Khedive Ismail embarked on a project to transform Cairo into what he called 'Paris on the Nile.' Resulting from this was what came to be known as Cairo's *Belle Epoque* architecture. Throughout French colonial North Africa, such structures stood in stark contrast to the traditional Arab medinas. As the chapter reveals, this contrast was designed to help achieve the objectives of French colonialism in the region.

Chapter Eight is concerned with Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. For the purpose of this book, the region includes the former French colonies of West and Central Africa as well as Madagascar. French presence in West Africa dates back to the seventeenth century. However, it is worth noting that France's earliest contacts with the region had commercial as opposed to territorial acquisition objectives. It is therefore not surprising that representatives of French commercial enterprises, and not colonial government officials, were the first to set up camp in the region. Alain Sinou (1993, p. 39) accentuates this point when he states:

> *Ce sans doute les représentants de la compagnie française qui s'etablirent les premiers de façon dans la capitale houédah du XVIIe siècle.*

About two centuries were to elapse before France decided to colonize territories in the region. Noteworthy here is the fact that French colonies complete with

governors in the region predated the official start of the European colonial era in Africa (*c*. 1884/1885). French colonial activities in the region at the time were principally military and designed to accomplish three main objectives. The first was to protect the conquered territories from other rival European powers with territorial ambitions. The second was to pacify the 'natives' and to supplant their tradition and culture. The final objective, which has urban management implications, was taxation. Proceeds from these taxes were necessary to fund colonial government activities. Testament to the foregoing assertion can be gleaned from the activities of the colonial government in Senegal in the 1870s as summarized by Sinou (1993, p. 175).

> *Jusqu'aux années 1870, la priorité des gouverneurs est avant tout l'action militaire. Faidherbe, et ses successeurs, veulent 'pacifier' le territoire et supprimer les 'coutumes', c'est-à-dire les taxes, que font payer les chefs locaux sur les marchandises qui y transitent. Tout puissant, ils dirigent une administration militaire qui couvre également la question de l'aménagement.*

Proceeds from taxation and other sources in the colonies often fell far short of the amount needed to meet the objectives of France's colonial project. In such cases, the funds necessary to supplement the colonial development budget came from the central government in Paris. For instance, a large portion of the funds that were used to construct the rail line from Conakry to Kankan (1899–1914) in Guinea was supplied by the French central government (Goerg 1998):

> *Le coût total de cette ligne dépassa les 60 millions prévus – alors que les recettes de la colonie étaient en moyenne de 6 millions* de F. (Goerg 1998 p. 291).

Subsidizing infrastructure development initiatives in the colonies is not the only noteworthy action taken by the French central government. Another was the replacement of the indigenous land tenure systems in Africa with French ones. Yet another action was the wholesale transfer to Africa of French urban development regulatory instruments. The chapter analyses these actions and their implications for contemporary development efforts on the continent.

The former French colonies of the central African region constituted the Federation of French Equatorial Africa (*l'Afrique Equatoriale Française*), which was created in 1910. However, Madagascar was neither part of this federation nor part of the other French federation, namely the Federation of French West Africa, in the region. French presence in Madagascar dates back to the 1600s (Njoh 2008). However, it was not until some two centuries later that it came under the effective control of France. During the intervening period other rival colonial powers, especially Britain and Portugal, attempted to occupy the territory. The French established a protectorate over Madagascar in 1885 and made it a full-fledged colony in 1896 with General Gallieni as its first Governor-General. Gallieni was a military man with extensive combat experience in Indochina, and a passion for urban design. He initiated and completed several town planning projects on the island before the end of his tenure in 1905. Cameroon and Togo, two former German colonies in sub-Saharan Africa

that experienced French colonial control subsequent to the conclusion of World War I were also never part of any French federation. However, for administrative purposes, Cameroon was treated as part of French Equatorial Africa while Togo was considered part of French West Africa.

Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, is designed to accomplish two major objectives. The first is to show how French notions of spatial and physical design continue to affect contemporary urbanization in erstwhile colonial nations. This is despite the fact that the last countries to gain political independence from France did so more than half a century ago. The chapter's second objective is to demonstrate that more continuity than change has characterized French overseas urbanism. Little, if any change has occurred with respect to the manner in which the French state has employed social control strategies in built space. Paradoxically, some of the strategies that were developed exclusively for use in the colonies now find utility on the French mainland. The chapter identifies and discusses the most prominent of these strategies. Thus, the chapter seeks to underscore the notion that knowledge of colonial urbanism possesses not only historical value. Rather, such knowledge is crucial for efforts to promote sustainable growth and development of human settlements especially in developing countries. If for no other reason, this is because colonial towns constitute the nucleus around which cities in these countries have been developed.

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Chapter 2
French Urbanism in North America

Abstract France was among the first European powers to send explorers to the Americas in the 1500s. What began as exploratory missions designed to seek an optimal route to Asia, soon turned into a mission to colonize and create permanent settlements in the region. This chapter retraces the history of French presence in North America, particularly the region that came to be known as New France. In doing so, it shows how colonialism served as a conduit for transmitting French urbanism to this vast region. It also suggests that French colonialism was not the only conduit for transmitting French urbanism in early North America. The fact that parts of the region which never experienced French colonialism also boast elements of French urbanism is employed to bolster this position.

Keywords Built space • Colonial Canada • Colonial Quebec • French urbanism • Montreal • New Orleans • Quebec City • Spatial structure • St. Lawrence River • US hinterland • Washington, DC

Introduction

France was an imperial power in the Americas from the 1500s to the 1700s. The first explorers under French auspices to reach this region were on a mission to seek an optimal route to Asia via the Pacific Ocean. Like other adventurous European nations of the time, France envisaged trade with Asia as a panacea for aggrandizing her global politico-economic standing. Up until the end of the 1500s, France perceived North America's utility merely in terms of its ability to facilitate trade with China. This perception changed in the 1600s once France realized the region's potential especially in terms of its abundant supply of fur, sugar, and fish. With this realization, she began to create permanent settlements in the region. The first such settlement, Douchet Island in present-day Maine State, USA, was established in 1604 (Reps 1969). Commensurate with this were efforts on the part of French authorities to formally colonize the region. Here, as John Reps (1969) noted, these authorities were more than a century behind their Spanish rivals.

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The year 1604 can reasonably be considered the point at which France's mission in North America changed from exploring to colonizing. To appreciate French urbanism in North America, one must first understand the distinction between these missions. On the one hand, exploration possessed a scientific connotation, and was supposed to be temporary. On the other hand, colonization, from the Latin/Greek word, 'colonia,' implied occupation and exploitation. When the aim is not to simply occupy and exploit, but to permanently settle the colony as was the case in this region, colonization is said to be of the settler variety (Laragy Online). This distinction is essential to understanding the growth and development of New France, and in fact all of North America. Once the region was designated a potential settler colony, European colonial authorities embarked on a mission to annihilate, displace or marginalized the indigenes (cf., Ashcroft et al. 2003). This invariably resulted in the invading Europeans becoming a majority non-indigenous population. This process worked to perfection in the case of New France. It did not take long subsequent to its invasion by France for the region to be almost completely peopled by persons of European descent.

However, it would be an exaggeration if not sheer fabrication to say that French efforts to control New France went hitch-free. In fact, the early phase of France's efforts in this connection encountered threats from other European imperial powers, particularly the British and Spanish. The most disruptive threats came, however, from members of the native population who were well-known for their guerilla-style attacks on French installations (Stelter 1993; Stelter & Artibise, 1986). Before long, the French had succeeded to secure and protect vast territories in the region. During its heydays, French colonial North America extended westward from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes and southward from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico (see Fig. 2.1). Peopling the conquered region proved far more challenging than conquering them. In fact, the vast geographic area under French control in the eighteenth century contained less than 100,000 non-natives (i.e., Europeans and Africans) (Gale Online). To put this in perspective, consider that the relatively smaller area under British control at the time contained a population of two million (Ibid).

This chapter seeks to show how colonialism served as a conduit for transmitting French urbanism to this vast region. It also suggests that French colonial control was not necessarily a pre-requisite for transmitting French urbanism in early North America. It is therefore understandable that traces of French urbanism, particularly vintage neo-baroque features, are just as prevalent in New Orleans as in Washington, DC. Yet, while the former experienced French colonialism, the latter did not. The chapter focuses specifically on the region that lies north of the Rio Grande, a significant portion of which until 1763 went under the name 'New France.' Recorded French presence in, and subsequent colonization of, the region began with Jacques Cartier's exploration of the Saint Lawrence River in 1534. In 1763 France relinquished control over the region to Spain and Britain. The region included four major colonies: Louisiana, Acadia, Canada, and Hudson Bay. In its heyday (circa, 1712) the region in question spanned from Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico.

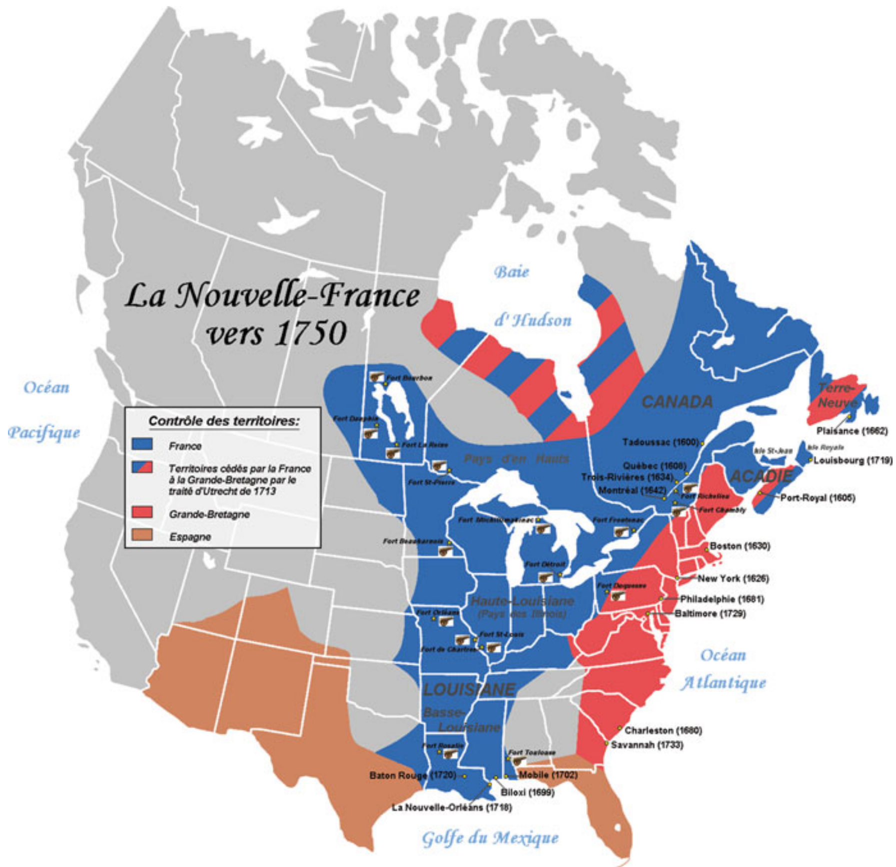

Fig. 2.1 French Colonial North America (or New France), circa, 1750 (Source: From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository site at http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nouvelle-France1750.png. Original source: Les Villes françaises du Nouveau Monde: des premiers fondateurs aux ingénieurs du roi, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles / sous la direction de Laurent Vidal et Emilie d'Orgeix /Éditeur: Paris: Somogy 1999. 2) Canada-Québec 1534-2000/ Jacques Lacoursière, Jean Provencher et Denis Vaugeois/Éditeur: Sillery (Québec): Septentrion 2000)

Background

The French established several settlements throughout North America quite early in the region's modern evolution. John Reps (e.g., 1969) is foremost among the few authors who have presented lucid accounts of these settlements. Especially because they lagged other European settlements in the region, early French settlements benefitted from planning expertise that was rare in that era. For instance, Samuel de Champlain (1574–1635), who was hired as a geographer and navigator by Pièrre du Guast, Sieur de Monts, had an impressive town planning resumé. To be sure, De Champlain had no formal town planning education. However, he had seized the

opportunity afforded him as a commander on a Spanish merchant ship bound for the Americas between 1599 and 1601 to visit all seaports and major inland towns in the West Indies. Consequently, he had not only acquainted himself with the Laws of the Indies but actually formulated his own notions of town planning (Reps 1969). De Champlain's town planning skills were supplemented by his extensive experience and talent as a cartographer. It is worth noting that he is the author of most of the early and best-known maps of New France or parts thereof. He was also instrumental in establishing many of the earliest permanent settlements in the region.

The settlements can be divided into two main categories. The first consists of those established to serve military purposes. Examples of settlements which began as forts but are major cities today include Quebec and Montreal in Canada; and Detroit, Michigan; St Louis, Missouri; Mobile, Alabama; Biloxi, Mississippi; Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States. The second category comprises settlements which were established by ordinary French citizens in search of greener pastures. Prominent in this regard are a number of small settlements founded in the St. Lawrence (River) Valley in the early-seventeenth century (see e.g., Louder et al. 1983). From the St. Lawrence Valley or what was fondly known as 'Little France', people migrated to other areas in the region. The largest groups of these migrants settled in the area 'stretching from Hudson Bay to Louisiana and from the Rockies to Acadia, in present-day Nova Scotia' (*Ibid*., p. 2). Most of the settlers were involved in hunting, fur trading, subsistence agriculture, fishing, and forest exploitation. These activities undoubtedly influenced the growth and development pattern of settlements in the region. Yet, such unintended influence that resulted from the spontaneous activities of settlers is only part of the story. A clearer understanding of these activities and their influence on urbanization in Northern America is possible once one appreciates the broader goals of French empire-building initiatives in the Americas. These goals are said to have had political, economic, social and ideological dimensions (Njoh 2007; Brunschwig 1966). Some historical background is necessary to show how efforts to achieve these goals as part of broader French empire-building initiatives influenced urbanization in North America.

For purposes of administrative expedience, the region was divided into five colonies: Canada, Acadia, Hudson Bay, Newfoundland (Plaisance), and Louisiana. This region evolved to become Canada and the United States. Earlier on, French and British colonial authorities in the region were involved in significantly different activities. While the British sought to establish permanent agricultural colonies, the French typically created trading posts and small-scale farming communities (Johnson 1974). There is a general consensus that France initially exhibited a lukewarm attitude towards establishing colonies in North America (see Nader 1975/1976). To some extent, this is reflected in a common narrative according to which British overseas ventures were designed to accomplish economic goals while those of the French mainly sought to aggrandize France's perceived prestige, image and social status *vis-à-vis* other European powers. This narrative is succinctly summarized by Brunschwig (1966, p. vii) in the following words:

> The liberal Anglo-Saxons painted the map red in pursuit of trade and philanthropy, and the nationalistic French painted it blue, not for good economic reasons, but to pump up their prestige as a great nation.

However, this distinction between the goals of British and French overseas ventures is not only melodramatic but oversimplified as it largely ignores the realities in European-controlled overseas territories at the time. These realities tended to compel European powers of all stripes to pursue identical policies (Njoh 2009, p. 26). Yet, in their early overseas endeavours, the British were more likely than their French counterparts to establish colonies and permanent settlements. But with the passage of time, the French started establishing permanent settlements in the region. By the end of the seventeenth century they had already created many permanent settlements in North America. Three of these, New Orleans, Montreal, and Quebec, proved to be the most resilient. This resilience appears most pronounced with respect to their manifestation of French influences in built space. Particularly noteworthy are the traces of French urbanism that are clearly visible in the physical structure, spatial organization and cultural life of these cities.

French Urbanism in the US

Most elements of French urbanism still visible in the US today are rooted in the country's pre-independence era. To identify the most prominent of these and how they were transmitted from France to the US, I look first at New Orleans, which served as France's main entrepôt on the Gulf Coast. Then, I examine other regions which experienced French control at one point or another. Finally I discuss Washington, DC. Here, I hasten to note that the plan of this city is a post-colonial creation although it contains indelible traces of French colonial urbanism.

New Orleans

New Orleans, or La Nouvelle-Orléans, was founded on 7 May 1718 by the French Mississippi Company, which was directed by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville. It was named in honour of Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, who served as Regent of France when King Louis XV, great-grandson of King Louis XIV, ascended to the throne at the tender age of five.

France had moved rapidly to assign engineers the task of delineating the city frontiers and making it habitable. Among the major tasks completed in this regard was the creation of a street system to facilitate mobility from, to, and within the city. The task of coordinating and controlling the entire project was assigned to French royal engineers under the auspices of an engineer and cartographer, Adrian de Pauger (Campanella 2002). He designed the streets of the Vieux Carré District

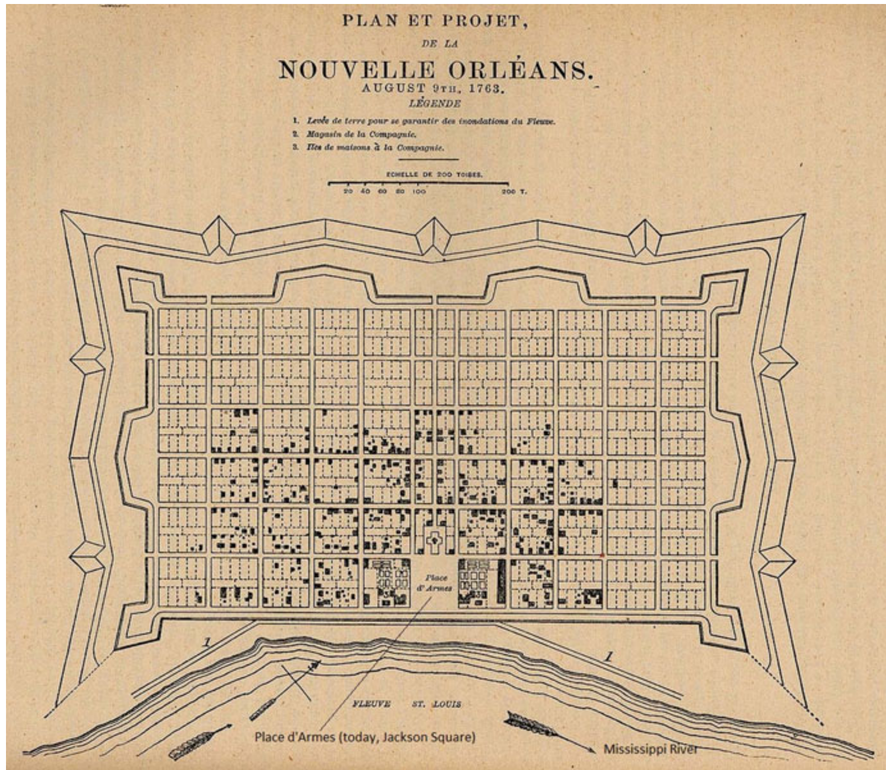

Fig. 2.2 1763 Plan of New Orleans showing street pattern centered around Place d'Armes

(present-day French Quarters), the heart of the city. He was also the architect of the city's original map. Pièrre Le Blond de la Tour, the chief royal engineer in Louisiana, completed the street layout in 1721 (see Fig. 2.2).

Topography and other factors in the natural environment played a crucial role in determining the orientation of the streets. The main streets were oriented perpendicular to the Mississippi River, its levee, and docks (O'Neil 1998). As shown on an early plan of the city drawn in 1693, the streets were configured to create a grid pattern centred on Place d'Armes (present-day, Jackson Square) (see Fig. 2.3). A unique feature of the city's street system is the fact that it deviated from the conventional plan that incorporates the four cardinal points to establish directionality. Instead, the engineers, who found the city's topography particularly challenging, used the river to serve as the point of reference for the system. The street names, in most cases, were given either in honour of royal houses of France or to venerate a Catholic saint. For instance, Bourbon Street, one of the city's major streets, was named in honour of the House of Bourbon, the reigning French royal family when New Orleans was established.

The fact that New Orleans's street and place names were culled directly from the French socio-cultural lexicon is telling, particularly with respect to the political

Fig. 2.3 Plantation house in colonial Louisiana in vintage 'French colonial' architecture. Notice the raised basement, full-length porch, exterior stairs, steep hipped roof with dormer and French doors (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oaklawn_Plantation_house.jpg)

economy of toponymic traditions. Naming the settlement in honour of a French public figure was not simply an attempt to denote a geographical location. Rather, it dovetailed neatly into the broader framework of France's efforts to embellish its image in foreign lands. Here, the aim was to employ toponymic inscription as a tool of power in built space (see Njoh 2010; Rose-Redwood et al. 2010; Yeoh 1996). Thus, the Duc d'Orléans's name was employed to assert France's power over a geographic location thousands of kilometres from France. Brenda Yeoh (1996) suggests that place names are typically not designed to reflect reality or adhere to any specific custom. Rather, they seek to express the power of the 'namer' over the object being named. She contends that place naming in honour of public figures is an indication of nationalistic fervour or community identity. Thus, the French were bent on remaking the toponymy of the territories they conquered in their own image. In this case, spatial inscription using French nomenclatures served at least three purposes. First, they constituted a means of broadcasting French power over the conquered indigenous population. Second, they served as a symbol of perceived French superiority *vis-à-vis* its European rivals in foreign lands. Finally, they facilitated navigation in built space for members of the French settler population.

Also noteworthy is the engineers' decision to ensure that the city was located at the highest point in the region. This was in line with French and, more generally, European, thinking that equated altitude with power in built space in those days.

The city's coastal location was also by design, and was intended to facilitate accessibility. More importantly, the location served France's militaristic purposes. New Orleans, like other towns such as Biloxi and Baton Rouge that the French established in the area, emerged as forts designed to defend the region. However, the French colonial authorities went to great lengths to bolster New Orleans's status as their dominant outpost at the mouth of the Mississippi. Yet another noteworthy aspect of French colonial New Orleans is the fact that authorities endeavoured to endow the city with many attributes of Paris. This appears to have been successful as the city earned the nickname 'Paris of America' at the time.

The early history of New Orleans was characterized by sporadic skirmishes among competing European powers. One of these skirmishes culminated in the Spaniards claiming control of the city in 1763. Spanish control lasted until 1803 when the city fell once more into French hands. This time, French dominion was very brief as New Orleans became part of the United States under the terms of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Although control over the town changed hands from the French to Spaniards and then, to Americans, its ostensibly French character remained, and continues to prove resilient. In fact, today no city in the United States exhibits more traits of French urbanism than New Orleans. The system of rural landholding that the French introduced in the region as far back as the seventeenth century affected the city's spatial growth for a long time. Some (e.g. Reps 1969) believe the system remains influential and significantly contributed to shaping the city's expansion when it was growing beyond its original boundaries.

Another important trace of French urbanism in New Orleans, and in the State of Louisiana as a whole, can be found in the architecture. The city and the state as a whole boast physical features identifiable with a uniquely French brand of architecture known as 'French colonial' (see Fig. 2.3). As the name implies, this architectural style was typically employed by French colonial authorities. It is easily recognizable thanks to its unique features. The most notable of these include: a raised basement; full-length porch on the front façade; exterior stairs; a porch roof comprising part of the main roof; steep hipped roofs with dormers; side-gabled roof; French doors; and exterior walls of stucco (Johnson 1974). Other conspicuous features of this architectural style include, heavy timber frames of logs. These logs are installed vertically on a sill driven into the earth or what the French call *poteaux-sur-sole*. Also, it is not unusual to find buildings in the French colonial tradition that have an infill of lime mortar or clay mixed with small stones or *pierrotage*. Occasionally, the infill comprises a mixture of mud, moss and animal hair or *bousillage* packed between the logs. The foregoing suggests that architecture has been an effective medium for transmitting French urbanism.

French Urban Culture in New Orleans

An oft-ignored aspect of the colonial project has to do with acculturation or the efforts by the colonizer to impose his lifestyle on the colonized. At the root of these efforts is usually a belief that the colonizer's lifestyle is superior to that of the

colonized. The French proclivity to assume that their lifestyle, or culture in general, is superior to that of other groups is well established. The persistent initiatives to export French culture to other societies, especially under the banner of their avowed *la mission civilisatrice*, attest to this. Shortly after their arrival in the region the French embarked on supplanting the culture of native Choctaw, Houmas and other Indian groups with a French variety.

Efforts to export French urban culture to North America were deliberate and elaborate. In this vain, only French urbanites were encouraged to relocate to the region. Leslie Choquette (1995) considers this behaviour on the part of seventeenth-century France paradoxical in her carefully documented article, 'Frenchmen into peasants: modernity and tradition in the peopling of French North America'. She explains this paradox by noting that the early French emigrants to North America were coming from modern, dynamic and outward-looking parts of France but relocating to essentially rural areas. She noted that only 15 % of the French population lived in communities of more than 2,000 inhabitants during the heydays of emigration from France to New France (Choquette 1995, p. 32). Yet, almost two-thirds of all the emigrants originated in French towns. Perhaps more noteworthy is the fact that two-thirds of these emigrants came from what were at the time considered major urban agglomerations—in other words, towns with 10,000 or more inhabitants. This suggests that French colonial authorities were in a great haste to export French urbanism to the settlements they had created in the region. They were convinced that the relatively small size of their new communities (in New France) could not prevent the immigrants from adhering to the urban lifestyles to which they were accustomed in France. Going by the size of their new communities they could not be considered urbanites, but their lifestyles made them urbanites. According to Louis Wirth's 1938 classic statement on urbanization, the notion of an urban settlement can be appreciated from two different perspectives. One characterizes an urban settlement in terms of the size of its population. From this perspective, such a settlement must contain a large, densely packed and heterogeneous population. The alternative definition attributes less importance to size but emphasizes lifestyle. In this latter regard, urbanization is seen as a way of life and not in terms of population size.

An important aim of the French in urbanizing New Orleans was to make the city a replica of typical French cities of that era. For instance, there was an attempt to duplicate in the city the social lifestyle that was in vogue in Versailles (De Lancey 1940). As early as 1818, New Orleans already boasted three elaborate theatres serving a population of 20,000 (*Ibid.*). Another facet of French urbanism that was exported to New Orleans early in the city's evolution is the capitalist ideology. Here, it is necessary to note that the native Choctaw and Houmas were accustomed to an agrarian and communitarian lifestyle prior to the French conquest. Subsequent to the conquest, the French introduced the notion of individualism and the accumulation of material wealth. Accordingly, a property-holding class began to emerge. This process was facilitated by the settlement pattern which had 'privileged isolated farmsteads'. This development went against the grain of communal living. The capitalist ideology took hold in the city rather early

Fig. 2.4 St. Louis Cathedral, French Quarters, New Orleans. Church and ancillary buildings such as these constituted conspicuous features of French colonial urbanism (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Louis_Cathedral_from_Moonwalk,_French_Quarter,_New_Orleans,_Louisiana.jpg)

in its evolution. Thus, like their counterparts in French towns, residents in New Orleans could only be motivated by real or potential profits. Here, it is important to note that capitalism was initially an urban phenomenon because urbanization had pushed the native Choctaw and Houmas Indians to the hinterland, where the French made no effort to acculturate them.

Another element of French culture that found expression in New Orleans was the French language. This was the town's official language. In fact, French, and not English, remained the dominant language in the city for a considerable time after the Louisiana Purchase. Another element of seventeenth-century French culture that also remained dominant in the city after the 'Louisiana purchase' was Catholicism. This facet of French culture asserted its presence in built space through church and cathedral buildings (see Fig. 2.4). The unique architecture of these structures conspired with the French colonial architecture to distinguish New Orleans both culturally and spatially from the Anglo-Saxon settlements of New England and Virginia.

Early French Urbanism in the US Hinterland

John Reps (1969) has conducted an extensive study of French settlement planting in the Americas. These settlements shared one thing in common: they were created to serve important military functions. Take the case of Detroit, which was established by the French explorer, Antoine de la Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac in 1701. From its founding, Detroit was intended to serve as a fortress town and for this reason was heavily fortified. However, the fortification encompassed an area that measured only 600 by 400 ft (183 by 122 m) (Reps 1969, p. 58). Given the financial limitations of French colonial authorities of the time, and Detroit's hinterland location, very little was invested in the town's foundation. Thus, even with its fortifications, it looked nothing like the *bastide* towns of southern France. The streets were narrow with the widest of them, Rue Sainte Anne, measuring barely 30 ft (9 m) while the width of the rest ranged from 10 to 20 ft (3–6 m). The settlers were assigned plots of land nearby, but outside, the town. The orientation of the plots assumed a vintage French design with the farm typically stretching from the banks of navigable rivers. However, the pattern was less conspicuous than that of early French settlements along the St. Lawrence River and the lower Mississippi region (Reps 1969). It should be noted that no part of Detroit's original foundation as laid by the French remains today as this was destroyed by fire in 1805. The city was re-planned and rebuilt shortly after it came under American suzerainty.

Fort Duquesne (present-day Pittsburgh) was another hinterland French settlement designed to serve military purposes. Fort Duquesne was created specifically to act as a bulwark against the westward expansion of English colonies in the region. Further examples of early French settlements created to play exclusively military roles can be found around Lake Peoria (also known by its Illinois Indian name, Pimiteoui). Here, French colonial authorities created at least four communities, Fort Crevecoeur (1680), Fort St Louis (1691–1692), Old Peoria fort and village (1730), and Fort Clark (1813). Before the area was ceded to the United States in 1819, the French had created the Opa Post trading post (1818). These places, as the plaque in Fig. 2.5 shows, remain part of the American landscape and are tourist attractions more than three centuries after they were established.

The agriculture and farming motives of early French settlers were also evident in the types of locations they selected. The choice of fertile areas along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers is noteworthy in this regard. Among the communities established in this region were three Christian mission stations: Cahokia, Prairie du Rocher, and Kaskaskia. Among these, Kaskaskia had an elaborate town plan, which included narrow streets configured into a system of grids, dividing the town into irregularly shaped blocks of assorted sizes. These mission stations underscore the importance of religion as a vector of planning ideas, and as many as four settlements were created by French Christian organizations in the valleys around the Illinois and Mississippi rivers alone if one includes Ste Genevieve. Created in 1732, this settlement was originally on the opposite side of the Mississippi from Kaskaskia, but was later relocated to higher ground where it assumed a more regular town plan.

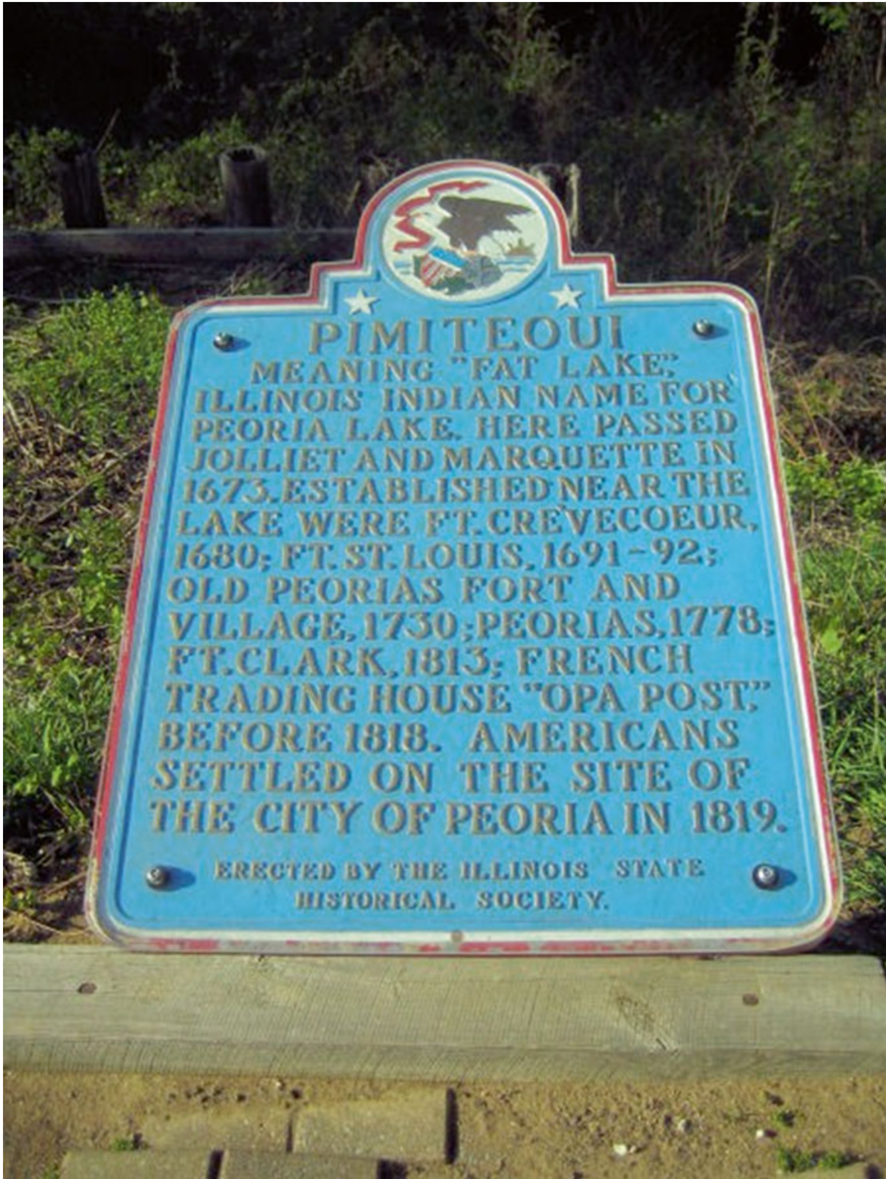

Fig. 2.5 A French colonial site in Peoria. As this plague shows, such sites serve as major tourist attractions in contemporary USA

Washington, DC

Unlike New Orleans, Baton Rouge, St Louis, or Montreal, and Quebec, Washington, DC has no history of French control. Yet, it manifests clear French spatial design features, which are certainly not by accident. The city's design was the brainchild of

Frenchman Pièrre Charles l'Enfant. L'Enfant, an artist and engineer, served in the American Revolutionary Army under President George Washington. Washington had an admiration for French urbanism especially as manifested by the massive urban development and redevelopment projects that had been executed under King Louis the XIV. Thus, like Louis the XIV Washington had come to believe that sophisticated geometric designs coupled with proportion and symmetry in built space were capable of bolstering political power. However, the problem was finding someone with the expertise to produce such a plan for what was to be the capital of the budding republic. L'Enfant's artistic and engineering background as well as his French origins made him the ideal choice.

L'Enfant's plan for the new city, as salvaged by the great mathematician/astronomer, Benjamin Banneker, incorporated features inspired by the designs of Le Nôtre and other notable 17th/18th century French architects and landscape architects (Grant III 1948/1950). The plan was also inspired by the Baroque style as it incorporated broad streets or avenues. These streets radiate out from rectangles and include open spaces at important nodes throughout the city. An aerial view of the city shows topographical points that are linked by straight lines. These lines, as is typical of vintage French urban designs, are broad, tree-lined avenues. L'Enfant was not a fan of the grid street pattern that constituted, and remains a conspicuous feature of Anglo-centric spatial layout; in his opinion, it promoted monotony. Consequently, he did everything possible to avoid it and, instead, designed a street system that took into account the natural topography.

As Fig. 2.6 shows, a key feature of the site of Washington, DC is its triangular shape, with the confluence of the Anacostia River forming the triangle's apex, and the Potomac River comprising the base. L'Enfant took these physical features into consideration, and produced the geometric design that gave the city its French look. His choice of sites for major buildings and structures reflects French notions associated with the use of space to exercise power. This is obvious in the Capitol Building, which is located at the city's geographic centre and on an elevated site. The choice of another elevated point as the site of the Presidential Palace, that is, the White House, is also noteworthy. Another important structure in the vicinity of both the Capitol and the White House is the Washington Monument. These structures were located in a manner designed to ensure their physical and political dominance. In short, the structure of the city and its government buildings were designed to symbolize the dignity and power of the United States' Federal Government.

The French and Built Space in Colonial Canada

The activities of French explorers and colonial authorities had a widespread and lasting impression on the built environment of Canada. With the only French-speaking cities in North America, Canada emerges as the region with the most conspicuous evidence of erstwhile French control. Here discussion is limited to the country's only French-speaking province, namely Quebec, and its two largest cities, Quebec City and Montreal.

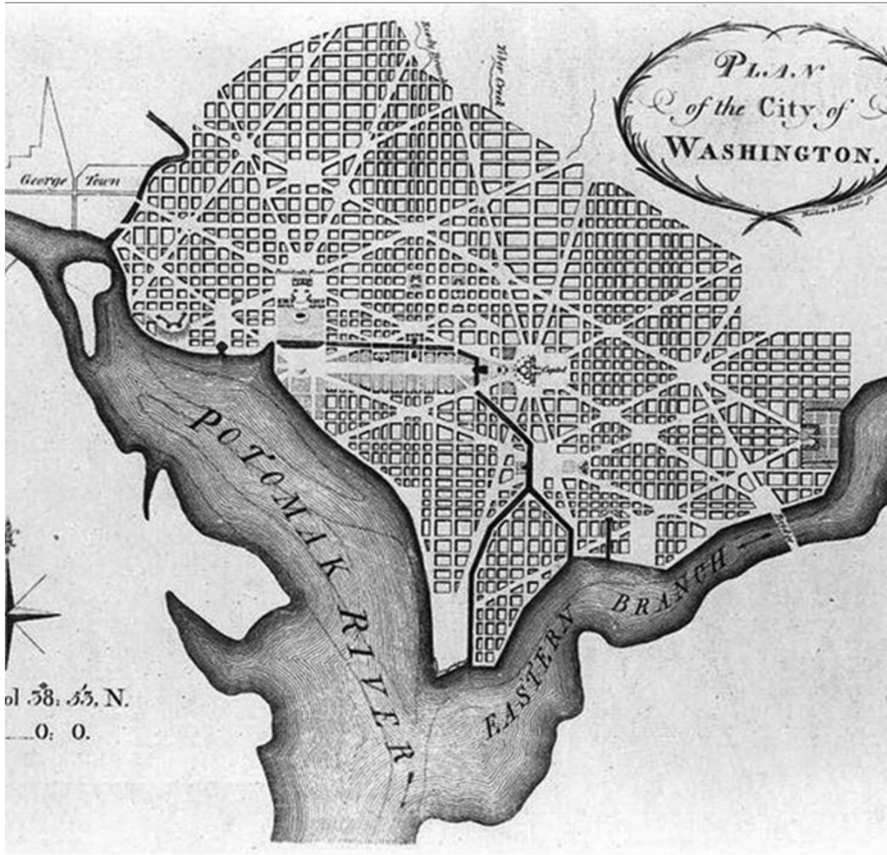

Fig. 2.6 Plan of Washington, DC as originally drawn by Pierre L'Enfant. Notice the diagonal avenues and how the streets radiate out of rectangles and connect to traffic circles or roundabouts (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27Enfant_plan_original.jpg)

Quebec City

Jacques Cartier was the first known European to arrive the area that became Quebec Province. He established territorial claim over Quebec and Montreal on behalf of France in 1535 (Stelter and Artibase 1986; Louder et al. 1983; Nader 1975/1976; Cooper 1969; Gibbon 1947). However, almost a century elapsed before a European settlement was planted in the area.

Quebec, the provincial capital, was founded on the site once occupied by Stadacona, an ancient native Indian village. It is one of the oldest cities in Northern America. Although Cartier is said to have discovered Quebec, credit for establishing or actually planting the city belongs to another Frenchman, Samuel de Champlain. De Champlain arrived in the region on 3 July 1608 at the invitation of Pièrre Dugua de Mons, an explorer and colonizer who was granted the monopoly on

the fur trade by King Henri IV. On his arrival De Champlain moved speedily to make Quebec a permanent settlement. He was adept at planting settlements and demonstrated this by his success in establishing Quebec City and other settlements in the region. His personal journal from 1618 describes a detailed plan for a large city on the banks of the St. Charles River (*Rivière Saint-Charles*). The area corresponds with present-day Saint-Roch and Saint-Sauveur districts (Hinshelwood 1903). The city, which Champlain envisioned but died before ever bringing to fruition was to be named Ludovica in honour of King Louis XIII, then king of France.

The French government was initially reluctant to make New France a colony, preferring instead to concentrate on the fur and timber trade. The decision to colonize the region was reached in the 1660s. In 1663 most of the region was declared the crown colony or royal province of New France (Nader 1975/1976). The province, whose population was about 2500 at the time, was placed under the direct authority of the French king. Its governance and administration, including the control and regulation of trade, were the responsibility of an intendant, or agent of the king. The first of these, Jean Talon, was in office for 9 years (1663–1672). He deserves more than passing attention in any discussion of French influence on urbanization in the Americas. In his official capacity, he significantly shaped the socio-economic and spatial growth of Quebec. In this regard, he was instrumental in crafting policies designed to accomplish the following (Nader 1975/1976):

- Subsidize the immigration of marriageable girls (known as *les filles du roi*, or the king's girls) to New France;
- Provide bonuses to large families willing to relocate from France to New France;
- Impose penalties on single men, and deny them fur trading licenses in New France; and
- Grant land rights under the seigneurie land tenure system to residents of the colony.

As a measure of Talon's success in urbanizing New France, the colony's population increased from 2,500 when he took office to 6,700 by the end of his tenure (Nader 1975/1976, p. 157). Half of this increase occurred in three settlements, Montreal, Quebec, and Trois-Rivières, that evolved to become present-day Quebec Province's three largest cities.

Many factors with roots in French spatial organization thought, practices and principles have influenced Quebec's evolution. However, none impacted the city's development to the same degree as its location. Credit for selecting the city's site and laying its foundation belongs to de Champlain. He established the city and served as its first designer and planner. In this capacity he exercised great care in selecting a site that endowed the city with many advantages. The banks of the St. Lawrence River attracted de Champlain's attention for understandable reasons. The location made the city readily accessible and also guaranteed a level of security that was critical for the survival of seventeenth-century North American settlements. At the point of the city's precise location, the St Lawrence River is flanked on both sides by steep cliffs (Nader 1975/1976). It is also at this point that the river 'changes from a narrow channel above the city to a broad, deep estuary below it' (*Ibid.*, p. 79).

A number of other aspects of de Champlain's plan show sound planning knowledge and are in concert with French government concerns dating back to the medieval era. Military considerations were the key concern throughout most of France's early history (Stelter 1993). It is worth noting that France had no colonial experience prior to venturing into the Americas. Consequently, French colonial authorities had to rely on their domestic and European experiences in dealing with the challenges they faced in North America. The experience gained during France's medieval struggle to reclaim the territories confiscated by the Moors came handy for these authorities. France's success was credited to its ability to create strong urban enclaves and pacify the populations therein. This ability was to prove highly useful in its colonization in North America. Here, the experience of colonial authorities in their homeland served as a template for their overseas territorial conquest initiatives.

Stelter draws other parallels between France's experience at consolidating the nation-state within the broader European context and its overseas colonial escapades. The similarities between the old Gallo-Roman system and the settlements that French colonial authorities were later to plant in North America are inescapable. These settlements, like their predecessors in the homeland, albeit some centuries earlier, developed around a nucleus comprising a church, a castle, the settlement itself, and land for horticulture. These were enclosed within a fortification wall. Thus, as in the twelfth and thirteenth century *bastides*, France planted settlements in North America that 'combined the notion of compact settlements and fortifications' (Stelter 1993, p. 213). The plan of a *bastid*e or 'planted town' typically included a settlement in which families were guaranteed access to equal amounts of land for farming. The French were later to introduce this arrangement, which combines urban and rural functions in their North American territories. The fact that this scheme has proved remarkably resilient, Stelter (1993) has argued, constitutes a testament to its practical utility.

Medieval towns served many functions, including military (defence), habitation, prestige, religion, cultural preservation, and agriculture. This, essentially, is the town planning model that French colonial authorities took to North America. Early Quebec exemplifies this: the city's site denotes aesthetics, military defence and political power. Its elevation afforded residents a clear view of the surrounding area. At the same time, because guards could see any approaching threat from a considerable distance away, it secured the settlement against military threats. Defence and military concerns were also at the root of the decision in 1620 to construct Fort Saint-Louis Château Frontenac (see Fig. 2.7). These structures served as the seat of the French colony's executive power and as the residence of the regime's chief bureaucrats for more than two centuries.

The assignment of important administrative and governance functions to Quebec City ensured the city's relative prominence and rapid socio-economic development compared to other settlements. Its profile was further enhanced after 1663 when France's King Louis XIV assumed full control over the city and designated it the capital of the French colony of New France. Initiatives to enhance the economy of the new capital soon followed. These included the establishment of a shipbuilding

Fig. 2.7 Chateau Frontenac, Quebec (Source: Wikimedia.org http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ch%C3%A2teau_Frontenac.jpg)

yard on St. Charles River and a brewery in the Lower Town in the present-day Îlot des Palais area. These economic development projects served as the springboard that catapulted Quebec to become the region's main port. Consequently, Quebec became part of a tightly woven commercial trading system linking France, the Antilles, Acadia and Newfoundland.

The Spatial Structure of Colonial Quebec

One name, that of the French Canadian Joseph Bouchette (1774–1841) stands out in the annals of French urbanism in North America. The second Surveyor General of Lower Canada, Bouchette is best known for producing two large-scale maps of the Province of Lower Canada. The maps, published in 1815 and 1831 respectively, constitute the first systematic attempt to graphically represent the spatial structure of Canadian urban areas. Bouchette, who succeeded his uncle, Samuel Johannes Holland, as Surveyor General, and occupied that office from 1804 to 1841, was an appointee of the British colonial government. The office of Surveyor General was created by the British to facilitate the documentation and exploitation of the North American territories they had acquired from France.

Fig. 2.8 Map of Quebec, 1815 (Source: http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City_of_Quebec_-_Joseph_Bouchette_1815.png)

Bouchette is also credited with creating maps for smaller entities such as municipalities. For instance, a search of the Canadian map archives produced two maps of Quebec drawn respectively in 1815 and 1830. Although the maps were drawn a few years after the French were defeated and ousted from the region, they contain many spatial elements that had been put in place by the French and so can reveal how the French contributed to shaping the region's built environment (see Ferley 1999). A comparative analysis of the two maps, shown as Figs. 2.8 and 2.9, suggests considerable growth in the urban infrastructure of the region. Notice how much gain the built environment had made in only 15 years, from 1815 (Fig. 2.8) and 1830 (Fig. 2.9). Other maps bolster this observation. For instance, Ferley (1999) noted, based on a perusal of two maps completed in 1815 and 1831 respectively, that, streets in Quebec's St. Roch suburb grew from six to eight during that period. Of greater importance for the present discussion is the manner in which these streets were laid out. As can easily be gleaned from the maps, the city's street layout was based on the gridiron pattern. At first sight, this might suggest that the French had a preference for this street pattern, which is more often associated with the US spatial design tradition. However, on closer inspection, one notices that the grid pattern was restricted to what at the time was the lower part of town. The spatial development of this area was significantly constrained by the St Lawrence River on the one hand and difficult terrain on the other. The street pattern in the upper part of town, which had fewer geographical constraints, was markedly different. Here, the pattern was not a grid design. Yet, there was an order to the layout, with the principal streets focused on the Fort St. Louis and the passageway that led to the lower part of town.

Although informative, little about French colonial urbanism can be learnt from Bouchette's maps unless they are viewed in a comparative context. As was the case in New Orleans, we see the critical role of geography in determining Quebec's

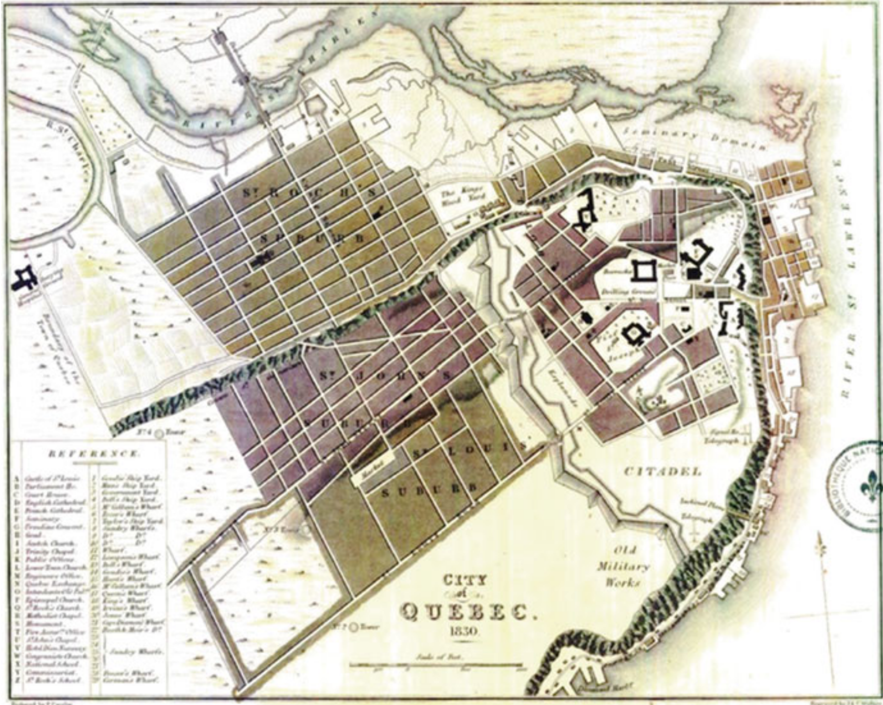

Fig. 2.9 Map of Quebec, 1830 (Source: http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City_of_Quebec_-_Joseph_Bouchette_1815.png)

spatial structure. In New Orleans, it was the Mississippi River that compelled French engineers to impose the gridiron street pattern on the city. In Quebec it is the same geographic feature, a river—the St Lawrence River—that led to a similar street pattern for some parts of the city.

However, it would be erroneous to claim that French colonial authorities were wedded exclusively to the grid system. Local conditions and varying objectives necessitated the use of different spatial designs. For instance, as Ferley (1999) suggested, military or defence considerations compelled the adoption of the grid street system in the layout of Louisbourg. Even there though, the geographical environment, comprising mainly marshy terrain to the southwest, rendered the use of a purely symmetrical street system impossible. Consequently, the authorities reverted to the use of an irregular pattern in some parts of the town. Thus, the tendency on the part of some (e.g., Reps 1969) to view Quebec and Louisbourg as distinct on the basis of their layout is misleading. John Reps (1969) characterized Quebec as non-linear and mirroring a medieval city, while Louisbourg, he suggested was 'linear' and typified a Renaissance town. This faulty distinction often leads analysts to the erroneous conclusion that French colonial town planners employed distinctively different systems in different parts of their North American colonies. A perusal of

Fig. 2.10 Fortification wall around Quebec City, a legacy of French colonialism (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quebec_City_Wall_2.jpg)

colonial maps such as those of Bouchette clearly shows that both 'linear' and 'non-linear' patterns were employed, although the latter tended to dominate.

While the French designed both non-linear or irregular streets systems, military imperatives dictated the use of the linear or gridiron configuration. With this pattern it was easy to see approaching enemy troops from a distance, something that was not possible with an irregular street pattern. Military considerations also explain the fortifications that surrounded many settlements in New France. These fortifications were constructed according to the planning principles of French military engineers. It is therefore no surprise, as Ferley (1999) observed that, French engineers in New France were instructed to adhere to the spatial planning stratagems of Sébastien Le Prestre, Seigneur de Vauban (1633–1707). The latter was the most prominent military engineer during the reign of Louis XIV. He is perhaps best remembered for devising the engineering measures that Louis XIV employed in defending France's international borders. He played a major role in designing the fortification systems employed in defending the towns France had established in New France. The most conspicuous element of this system in the case of Quebec is the wall that surrounds the city's historic district. This still exists today and bears witness to the city's French colonial heritage (Fig. 2.10). At the same time it makes Quebec the only walled city in North America north of Mexico.

The City of Montreal

The French had established a permanent settlement in what was to become Montreal as far back as 1642. Thus, the city is one of the oldest permanent European settlements in the region north of the Rio Grande; only St Augustine, Florida; Boston, Massachusetts, New York, New York; and Quebec in Canada, are older.

The history of Montreal provides evidence of some of the mechanisms by which France exported urbanism to its colonial territories. It is common practice to credit Europeans for discovering and planting settlements in foreign lands. For instance, as noted above, credit for 'discovering' Quebec and Montreal is attributed to Jacques Cartier, while that for planting the first settlement there goes to Samuel de Champlain (Stelter 1993; Louder et al. 1983; Nader 1975/1976; Cooper 1969; Gibbon 1947). This gives the impression that these places were uninhabited before the arrival of the first Europeans. This is totally misleading as there were people living there before the arrival of the explorers and subsequently, colonizers. For instance, the area that is now Montreal City was inhabited by indigenous Indians, who referred to it as Hochelega. Renaming it Montreal was only one in a series of acts on the part of the French to acculturate members of the native population and dominate 'racial others'. They sought to supplant the values, beliefs, and worldview of the 'natives' with French alternatives. Thus, native names were considered inferior to, and had to be replaced by, French alternatives. Montreal is derived from Mont Royale, the name Jacques Cartier—clergyman-cum-explorer—had accorded the island's mountain.

However, Montreal's history reveals a lot more than the use of toponymic inscription to symbolize perceived socio-cultural superiority. It highlights the important but often ignored role that religious institutions have played and continue to play in creating settlements. One of North America's most prominent cities, Montreal was established as a religious centre in 1640 by a group of French Roman Catholics. The site of this settlement they called *Ville Marie*. The group was known as *La Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal pour la conversion des Sauvages de la Nouvelle-France* (or The Society of Our Lady of Montreal for the Conversion of Savages of New France). For a long time in Montreal's evolution, this religious entity was the dominant, if not the only major, landlord in the city. In its heyday, its members were granted seigneurial or manorial rights over all of the island's land. Box 2.1 contains a brief description of the seigneurial system of land tenure that was used in Montreal at the time.

Those tasked with creating Montreal as a religious settlement had rich experiences in their homeland and ancient history to draw from. Evidence attesting to the extent to which these lessons were actually put to use by town builders in the city abounds. Most of the European-style buildings that sprang up especially beginning in 1642 were designed to serve one or more religious purposes. The year 1642 is noteworthy here because it witnessed the arrival in Montreal of a group comprised mainly of missionaries and nuns sponsored by France and charged with converting Indians to Christianity (Reps 1969). This group erected their first buildings around a small square on the narrow piece of land flanked by the St Lawrence River on one side and the St. Pièrre stream on the other. The town grew steadily despite the many

challenges it faced, including frequent raids by the indigenous population, severe winter conditions, and seasonal floods. It grew to a population of 500 in just 3 years after the first French settlement was established. This increase in population necessitated some town planning action.

Box 2.1: The Seigneurial Land Tenure System

The seigneurial settlement model, which was introduced in New France in 1627, was a system of landholding based on the French feudal model. Its introduction in New France occurred under the *Companie des Cent-Associés* (or the Company of 100 Associates), which was initially in charge of distributing land grants and seigneurial rights. In practice, the company divided the land along the St. Lawrence River into tracts measuring 5 by 15 km. The tracts were further subdivided to form plots for settlement development. In dividing up the tracts, care was taken to ensure that each plot contained enough room for living and farming as well as uninterrupted access to the river. Three main classes of people—*seigneurs*, *habitants* and *engagés*—lived off seigneurial land.

Seigneurs. The seigneurs occupied the top rung of the landholding ladder. They were the landlords and typically hailed from the higher ranks of the military, aristocracy or other socio-economically elevated groups in France before becoming settlers in New France. They were responsible for subdividing and renting the land to other members of society. In addition, *seigneurs* were authorized by French law to set up courts of law, mills and communes on the land.

Habitants. The habitants comprised those individuals who were transported to New France as part of France's effort to urbanize, by increasing the population of, its colonies in the Americas. They lived on the land and were required to pay rents and taxes to the *seigneurs*. Members of this group were considered co-owners of the land although they were required to work for the *seigneur* a few days per year in addition to paying rents and taxes.

Engagés. This group occupied the lowest rung of the landholding ladder. It comprised indentured servants who were required to sign contracts, typically of a 3-year duration, to work in New France as farmers.

The seigneurial system of landholding did not end when Britain gained control of New France in 1763. Instead, the British maintained the system despite its French roots. This was especially so in the areas whose settlers were mainly of French extraction. However, British authorities discontinued the system in 1854 contending that it was antithetical to their colonial economic development goals. One consequence, perhaps unintended, of abolishing the system is that it rewarded seigneuries, thereby creating an unfair land distribution system that exists to this day in the region. This is despite the fact the system was replaced by the Seigneurial Tenures Act of 1854, which allowed tenants to claim the right to their land.

(Source: *Canada in the Making. Pioneers and Immigrants: New France (1608–1763)*. Also: http://www.canadiana.ca/citm/themes/pioneers/pioneers3_e.html#seigneurial.)

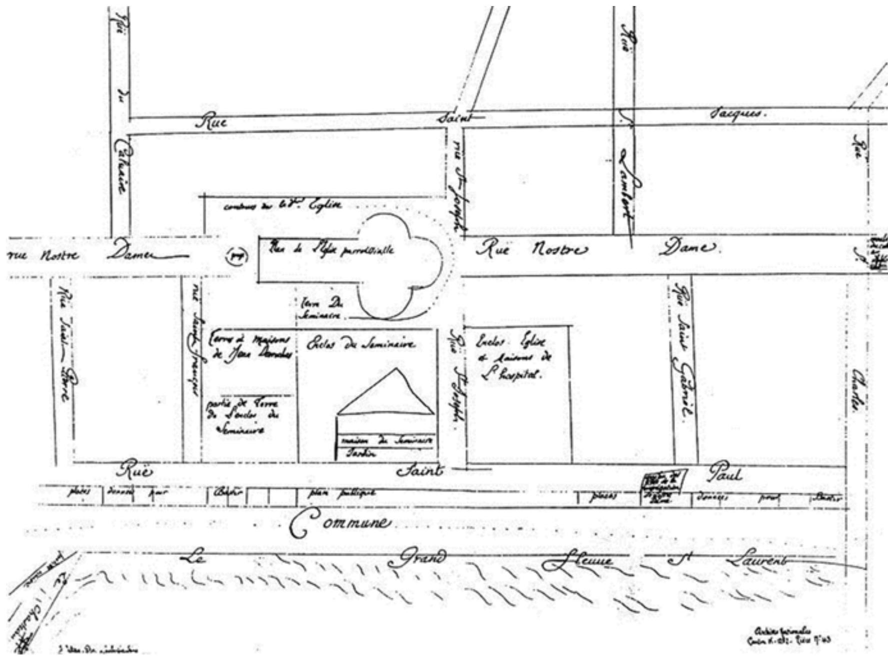

Fig. 2.11 Dollier de Casson's original plan for Montreal (c. 1642) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DollierRuesMontreal.jpg)

John Reps (1969) has documented some of the planning initiatives undertaken in Montreal during the early stages of the city's development. He noted that this phase coincided with significant changes in the colonial status of New France. Among the many actions orchestrated by these changes was the granting of seigneurial rights over the Island of Montreal to the Sulpician Order. This enabled members of the order to carry out the planning necessary to accommodate the town's burgeoning population. In 1672 Dollier de Casson, the Superior of the Order, oversaw the surveying and demarcation of the town, the creation of new streets, and delineation of building plots. In the process some of the old streets were realigned; for instance, St Paul Street, a meandering street was straightened and extended to serve the few buildings that had been erected beyond the outer limits of the original settlement (see Fig. 2.11). One new street, Notre Dame, ran parallel to St Paul Street and 'was laid out 30 ft broad and in straight line above and below the site set aside for the parish church of Notre Dame' (Reps 1969, p. 57) (see Fig. 2.12). Together, St Paul Street and Notre Dame, served as the nucleus around which the town's street system developed. Other new streets were developed to intersect with the two main streets at right angles, forming a linear grid system. This system of narrow streets—none greater than 24 ft (7.3 m) in width—served the entire town until St James Street was added in 1678. That year also witnessed the completion of the Notre Dame Church. The development of new streets as well as the completion of other

Fig. 2.12 The Parish Church of Notre Dame, Montreal (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paroisse_Notre-Dame-du-Sacr%C3%A9-Coeur.JPG)

infrastructure projects resulted in attracting more people to settle in the city whose population had reached 1,400 by 1680 (Reps 1969, p. 57).

Throughout this period, Montreal remained principally a religious city, with churches, seminaries, convents, and monasteries prominent amongst the built structures. The population continued to grow reaching some 8,000 by the time of the British conquest in 1760 (Reps 1969, p. 57). However, housing this growing population meant that planning and building regulations were ignored and many of the buildings were shoddily constructed. Wood framed buildings, replicas of similar structures in France, were commonplace. These buildings appeared safe until 1721 when they were destroyed by fire. This led the town's municipal authorities to enact more stringent building regulations, including the use of stone for all building works. Thus, the fire afforded municipal authorities the opportunity to ensure that buildings were developed to conform to some preconceived image of modernity and to impose some geometric order to the city's spatial structure. Accordingly, the reconstruction of Montreal involved the widening and realignment of all its streets.

To appreciate this character, one must first understand the philosophy behind efforts to promote and control the growth of settlements in New France as a whole in the seventeenth century. These drew inspiration from the town planning activities

in France under Louis XIV. This monarch recognized the importance of urban planning articulated in terms of sophisticated geometric designs and domineering physical structures as a source of power (Kovitz 2003).

This suggests that during the earlier phase of Montreal's evolution the line distinguishing politics from religion was generally blurred. Apart from the fact that a religious entity controlled most of the land, it is worth noting that the island's first governor, Paul Chomedy, Sieur de Maisonneuve, was selected for his religious affiliation and dedication. A devout Christian, Chomedy was assisted in his official capacity by other equally devout Christians of whom the most prominent was Jeanne Mance. Mance is credited with founding Montreal's first hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, and schools that taught French to children of the indigenous population. The acculturation and assimilation goals of these projects were obvious. The European-style buildings that housed these institutions also conspired to attain the same goals. Both the activities that went on in these buildings, and the buildings themselves were meant to enhance France's avowed mission to civilize 'cultural others'.

The spatial structure of early Montreal bears many traces of French influence. Apart, from intentional activities that had the specific goal of asserting French presence in the region, one also finds unintended scars from events that characterized France's relationship with its friends and foes at the time. Some of the major events that come to mind are, in chronological order, the following: the skirmishes between the French and the indigenous Indian population; the war that culminated in the cession of Canada to Britain; the American Revolution; and the French Revolution (Cooper 1969). This suggests that events affecting spatial structures are not always by design and/or premeditated, but sometimes accidental. Examples of this latter include natural disasters and fires. While such events are accidental, the reaction of those in authority is usually not. Indeed, authorities often consider such events an opportunity to (re)shape the built environment.

Immigration of French people to New France, and their willingness to settle in Montreal increased once skirmishes with the indigenous Indian population significantly subsided in 1663. From then on, the city experienced steady population growth and marked geographic expansion. Over the same period, the Catholic mission embarked on two major projects that significantly altered the city's landscape: the construction of the Notre Dame Church (1682) (Fig. 2.12) and the Saint Sulpice Seminary (1684–1687) (Fig. 2.13). Both projects were developed under the supervisory authority of Dollier de Casson. An examination of Casson's work, including his plan of Montreal (see Fig. 2.11), reveals a man who was way ahead of his time. Arguably, his work, such as the straight and well-aligned streets he designed for Montreal, reflected his attachment to French thinking on spatial order. French design ideas, which later blossomed and influenced urban planning throughout the world in the nineteenth/twentieth century, were already gaining traction during Casson's era. This may explain the fact that Montreal's street pattern was widely extolled and more highly regarded than those of other older North American towns such as St Augustine, Boston, and Quebec.

The end of skirmishes with the indigenous population led not only to Montreal's growth but a rise in its status, both regionally and internationally. It evolved from

Fig. 2.13 The Saint Sulpice Seminary (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vieux_seminaire_de_Saint-Sulpice_17.jpg)

being simply a fur-trading post and a religious centre to one which coordinated and directed regional and international fur trade. Key changes accompanied or were triggered by this unprecedented growth (Cooper 1969), including the construction of a wall enclosing the city. This wall was considered a crucial defensive measure especially because of the city's regional and international prominence. A further major development was the creation of deep vaults on the enclosure walls. These were designed to serve as storage space for the growing inventory of precious furs. Another development idea was a canal to provide water for the mills and facilitate shipping towards the 'up-country'. Finally, a number of buildings were constructed to provide for the health and social needs of the city's growing population, including the Bureau des Pauvres (1684), the Hôpital Général (1741), separate schools for boys and girls, and mission settlements for the indigenous population. These facilities effectively changed the spatial character of Montreal and served as the nucleus around which the city would later develop.

The transfer of Canada to Britain did not significantly affect planning and urban policy in Montreal. This is because when the British assumed political control of the country they allowed the French laws governing land use, urban planning and cognate activities to remain intact. There are three possible reasons for this. First, the military campaign that culminated in Britain assuming control over Canada caused very little, if any damage in Montreal. Second, very few of the town's French residents opted to relocate back to France as they were allowed to do under the terms of the agreement between France and Britain. Third, drawing up new urban planning laws and creating the necessary institutions to implement them would have required a quality and quantity of resources that the British authorities did not possess. Consequently, it was easier for the British to ensure that the residents continued the uninterrupted ownership and/or use of their property. One effect of this was that the Sulpicians effectively maintained their position as the dominant landholding entity in Montreal. In 1704 the title and signeurial rights of the Sulpicians of Paris were transferred to their community in Montreal, and the Order was established as a Canadian institution (Cooper 1969, p. 7).

The fact that Montreal's land tenure system remained following the British takeover of the city does not mean that there were no changes to its spatial structure and land tenure. But, while the city's population became increasingly diverse as British citizens elected to live there, French culture remained dominant in everyday life and French-based laws continued to guide urban development and planning.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

As suggested above and demonstrated in the chapters that follow, French design ideas gained increased popularity in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century. A careful read of planning history suggests that French architecture, spatial organization philosophy and culture had also become popular in colonial North America. However, many factors, including the harsh climate and uniqueness of building materials, hindered the transplanting of authentic French architecture and spatial designs to the region. This necessitated adaptation, a task French architects and planners proved adept at executing. In architecture, the eclecticism that resulted from adaptation is obvious. French colonial architects and engineers did not indulge in the wholesale transplanting of models from France. Rather, they melded practices with which they were familiar and those they acquired from their host environment to produce the unique architectural style that came to be known as French colonial. It is widely agreed that this style originated in French colonial Louisiana in 1699 and was quickly exported to the region that evolved to become present-day Canada. The fact that the style came to be widely used throughout the Americas, including regions that were controlled by Spain, Britain and other European powers is noteworthy. If nothing else, it lends credence to the assertion that French physical and spatial design ideas were already exhibiting signs of global reputation in the seventeenth century. The resilience of these ideas is also worthy of note. It manifests itself in the ubiquitous nature of buildings adhering to variants of the French colonial (architectural style) such as the French Creole plantation house, Creole cottage and Creole townhouse in North America and the Caribbean.

As for town planning expertise and models, we have already shown how French engineers were influential in the planting of human settlements in early colonial North America. However, it bears acknowledging the fact that town planning was not yet a formal profession when the French colonial era began in the Americas. Yet, there is a preponderance of evidence suggesting that French authorities in this region adhered strictly to classical principles of town planning in creating any structure in built space (cf., Canadian Encyclopaedia Online). Witness the early plans of towns such as New Orleans, Quebec and Montreal, which were meticulously plotted on paper before being transposed to the ground. One would be remiss by not drawing attention to the detailed maps of the region and its municipalities that John Bouchette and others completed. These maps attest to the attention to detail that French colonial authorities in the region accorded spatial and land development matters.

The story of French urbanism in North America remains, however, incomplete without mention of the elements of French or European spatial organization that were transplanted without modification to the region. Three of these, namely socio-cultural expression, toponyms and spatial design come to mind. In the area of socio-cultural expression, one cannot help noticing the uniqueness of New Orleans within the socio-cultural context of the US. The city's music theatres, cuisine and round-the-clock vibrant social lifestyle place it at the top of cities in the South, and among the top-ranking cities in the US as a whole. The city's socio-cultural acclaim is traceable to efforts on the part of French colonial authorities to make it a replica of Versailles. Recall that as early as 1818 when the city was a town of only 20,000, it boasted three well-equipped theatres.

One more attribute of French culture that was imported to North America is the Roman Catholic Church. This is paradoxical given that the Roman Catholic Church as its name suggests is of Italian, and not French, nativity. Yet, as discussed above, the French were as bent on spreading Catholicism as they were in promoting any aspect of French culture such as the French language. In fact, as argued above, the line between politics and (the Catholic) religion was blurred in French colonial North America. The Catholic Church in New Orleans was actually named after the French Monarch, King Louis. More importantly for the purpose of the present discussion, the Catholic Church and ancillary facilities have always been a conspicuous feature of built space in North America, particularly Montreal and Quebec, since the French colonial era.

Another aspect of French culture that has proved exceedingly resilient in North America is the French language. Although traces of this cultural feature are now ineligible in the US, French remains alive well and strong in Canada, where it is one of that country's two official languages. The dominance of English notwithstanding, French is the lingua franca in Quebec Province of which Quebec City and Montreal are the major cities. Yet, throughout North America, French toponymic inscriptions are commonplace. This is not limited to the place or street names that French colonial authorities selected to commemorate themselves or other French personalities. Rather, it has to do with the attribution to objects in built space of French words, such as boulevards, route, cul-de-sac, façade, and avenue. Of these, the term boulevard deserves further attention here. This is because what was actually imported is not the term alone but also the commensurate design pattern (Jacob et al. 2002; Lawrence 1988). The term boulevard has its roots in Dutch/German, and had been taken to be synonymous with the English word, 'bulwark.' However, the modern meaning of the word as employed in colonial North America originated in seventeenth century Paris in reference to the promenades that replaced that city's walls. As a term referring to wide tree-line streets, the boulevard concept was popularized by Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann during the reign of Napoleon III in France. It is from here, particularly the French capital of Paris, that the multi-way, often tree-lined boulevards that constitute a prominent future of the urban landscape in North America were imported.

One more element of built space that was transplanted, without modification, from France to North America is the hub-and-spoke street design pattern. This is epito-

mized by the design for Washington, DC, which was initially conceived by Pièrre L'Enfant. The plan contains well-known elements of the gridiron design such as crisscrossing streets. However, unlike the gridiron layout, the streets in L'Enfant's design contain diagonal avenues that are connected by traffic circles or roundabouts. The street pattern in Detroit, another US city whose establishment, as noted above, is credited to French colonial authorities, was also based on the hub-and-spoke pattern.

In some cases, not only the street pattern, but also entire human settlement structures were transplanted from France. An entry in the Canadian Encyclopaedia (Online) suggests that Quebec and other cities in its vicinity are exemplary in this regard. The city contains many elements of a vintage medieval town. For one thing, it was designed to repose on a butte that mimicked the knoll upon which medieval castles sat. For another thing, it was completely surrounded by fortified walls. Albeit symbolic, these features define urban space by delineating the aristocratic town (the bourg) from the rest of the town. This dualistic structure determined who had access to what in the city. Beyond the frontiers of New France's major towns, such as Quebec, Montreal and Trois-Rivières, many new villages sprung up while the old ones flourished. These villages formed a ribbon pattern along the St. Lawrence River. The shape which was conditioned by topography and other natural features notwithstanding, these villages assumed a two-tier structure that comprised the seigneurial domain complete with the manor and its mills. To access these facilities, residents of the other villages had to pay. The rest of the town was occupied by the parish and its ancillary facilities including the church, rectory and cemetery.

This chapter suggests in very strong terms that French colonial urbanism in North America is not only of historical significance. It has relevance for any meaningful effort to understand French influence on contemporary built space in the region. As shown throughout the chapter, elements of French urban design tradition have always constituted conspicuous features of the North American urban landscape. This is true in areas with or without a history of French colonialism. More light is shed on this latter point in the next chapter. The chapter highlights the influence of French urbanism on built space in Latin America, a region that experienced hardly any French colonialism.

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Chapter 3
Latin America

Abstract France colonized hardly any part of Latin America. Yet, the region boasts elements of French urbanism. This chapter explains how this came to be the case. It identifies and discusses three specific factors that facilitated the diffusion of French urbanism to the region. The first of these is the region's abundant supply of land which made the region ideally suitable as a laboratory for teasing out the workability of Eurocentric theories of spatial order of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second factor was an abundance of financial resources that enabled the region to meet the high cost associated with hiring foreign consultants. The third factor was the availability of effective diffusion mechanisms such as professional urban planners and architects. These professionals served as some of the most effective enablers in the complex process of transferring French urbanism to the region.

Keywords Argentina • Brazil • Ecole des Beaux Arts • Economic prosperity • Eurocentric urbanism • French urbanism • Venezuela

Introduction

With the exception of tiny portions, mainly islands, in present-day Brazil and Mexico, France possessed no colonies in Latin America. Therefore, as a colonial power, France was inactive in this region. It is therefore paradoxical that traces of French urbanism are nearly as prevalent in the region as in some erstwhile French colonies. Apart from the efforts of a few (e.g. Hein 2010; Collins 1995; Moreira Online), researchers have tended to ignore this paradox. Consequently, there is a lacuna in knowledge of the mechanisms and rationale for exporting French urbanism to non-French dependencies. This chapter seeks to bridge this gulf. It does so by addressing the following specific questions. Why and how was French urbanism exported/imported to Latin America? What specific vehicles facilitated this process? What specific urban planning projects were influenced by, or drew inspiration from, France or French-trained planners/architects? The chapter tackles these questions through a close examination of the infusion of French notions of spatial and physical organization in Latin America. Of particular interest is the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century period. This period witnessed marked economic progress

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that facilitated the implementation of ambitious urban development projects in the region. French influence on the built environment in this region can be best appreciated within the broader context of efforts to universalize Eurocentric urbanism. It is therefore in order to begin by identifying major aspects of European urbanism in the region.

Economic Prosperity and the Allure of Eurocentric Urbanism

Rapid economic prosperity engendering equally rapid urban growth marked the 1870s and 1880s in Latin America (Hardoy 1992). Economic prosperity in Latin America coincided with a period in planning history when urban planning was concretizing its identity as a profession. The task of human settlement planning was increasingly being seen as one requiring specialized skills and talent. At the same time, the politico-administrative leaders in the region sought to transform especially their national capitals into replicas of European cities. On their part, European urban planners viewed urban planning projects in Latin America as opportunities to make financial gains while showcasing their design ingenuity. Thus, the factors that conspired to propel the Europeanization of built space in Latin America can best be characterized as both 'pull' and 'push' in nature. In other words, the forces were both of the endogenous and exogenous genres. Prominent among the endogenous forces were planners of Latin American origin who studied in Europe and were significantly influenced by Eurocentric notions of spatial organization. The case of Lucio Costa (1902–1998), profiled in Box 3.1 is illustrative. An architect by training, Costa was born in France of Brazilian parentage. He is best known for his role in designing Brasilia. He collaborated with Oscar Niemeyer in 1956 to develop this centrally located city, which replaced Rio de Janeiro as the national capital. Among the peculiar features of Brasilia's plan is the compartmentalization of spatial activities. This resulted in separate blocks and sectors for different activities such as hotels, banking, and administration. The plan is particularly noteworthy here because its architects were indigenous to the region and also because of its unmistaken Eurocentric features. Foremost in this latter regard is its pro-automobile orientation and broad, tree-lined boulevards—a conspicuous feature of French and North American urban design.

The need to involve urban planners in efforts to manage and control the growth of the region's major cities increasingly became compelling for two reasons. The first had to do with the growing desire of local leaders to realize grand visions for their cities. The second was an equally burning desire to rid the cities of their colonial image. A perusal of the region's urban planning history reveals that this latter objective was by all measures inherently contradictory. This is because efforts to rid the cities of their colonial image entailed, in practice, the hiring of European planners and architects. It also meant, paradoxically, affording the cities a European image. Efforts to attain both objectives required the input and/or direct participation

Box 3.1: Lucio Costa as a Native Emissary of Western Design

Lucio Costa was born in Toulon, France of Brazilian parentage in 1902. He received his early education in New Castle Upon Tyne in England and Montreux, France until 1916. He later moved to Argentina to attend the School of Fine Art *(Escola Nacional de Belas Artes)* in Rio de Janeiro. He graduated from this institution with a degree in architecture in 1924. As a practicing architect and urban planner, Costa was greatly influenced by the urban design ideas of Le Corbusier and Eurocentric concepts of spatial planning such as New Urbanism. These ideas and concepts informed Costa's contributions to the design of the Gustavo Capanema Palace *(Palacio Gustavo Capanema)* located in downtown Rio de Janeiro, and his plan for Brasilia. The plan, which catapulted Costa to prominence, won a public competition in 1957 and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. (Source: Macionis and Parrillo (2003).)

of European professional planners. This feat was rendered possible by what at the time was the region's new-found wealth.

Beneficiaries of the input of professional planners—most of whom originated in Europe or were European-trained—were cities of the Atlantic coastal countries, including Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. These cities had become the destination of choice for immigrants from Europe and rural areas within the region. The immigrants, especially those who had secured lucrative niches within the region's burgeoning export-oriented economy, tended to flaunt their newfound wealth by erecting European-style mansions. The history of Latin America is marked by, albeit often brief, periods of anti-European sentiment. However, it has always been fashionable for the region's privileged to identify with Europe. The desire to erect European-style mansions or adopt physical and spatial models rooted in European ethos is only one manifestation of this tendency. Also, even when the availability of locally-trained architects/urban planners was no longer a problem, authorities in the region continued to exhibit a preference for European expertise.

Latin American authorities of the republican consolidation era viewed major European cities as emblematic of modernity. Consequently, they undertook massive urban renewal projects in an effort to produce facsimiles of these cities in the region. The authorities were particularly drawn to the designs that constituted part of Georges-Eugène Haussmann's (1809–1891) *grand travaux* projects in Paris. Two distinct waves of Haussmannian planning in the region occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century. The first wave led to the 'systematization' of the structure of the capital cities within the colonial-era city limits. The second resulted in expanding the capital cities beyond these limits. The modernization efforts were physically manifested through the superimposition of wide, tree-lined boulevards in classic Haussmannesque style on the colonial urban layouts. Despite borrowing

generously from the West, authorities billed the projects as an effort to rid the erstwhile colonial cities of all vestiges of their colonial history. More logically, the urban renewal projects were designed to transform the erstwhile colonial towns into bourgeois cities. This was especially the case in the capital cities in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, which were the most rapidly expanding economies in the region at that time.

It is easy to appreciate the extent to which European colonial concepts of urban planning influenced spatial organization and physical structures in the region. Consider, for instance, the incorporation of wide streets that became commonplace in urban design in the region in the late-1800s. The roots for such design schemes are traceable to British colonial urban planning in India. Here, as Robert Home (1997) noted, wide streets had been employed to control public space in colonial cities in the mid-1800s. In the older Latin American cities, this endeavour necessitated a considerable degree of retro-fitting by widening existing streets to form avenues and boulevards. Avenues such as Corrientes, Cordoba, and Belgrano in Buenos Aires are among the many streets that benefited from such retro-fitting exercises.

From the 1900s, the structure of Latin American cities was rapidly assuming a form previously unknown in the region. In particular, the cities were expanding spatially at an alarming rate. Also, urban residential areas were sprawling into the suburbs as members of the middle class sought new residential locations. This expansion was exacerbated by the advent of the motorcar in the region. To remedy the attendant problems, authorities again, turned to Europe. From there, they imported the Garden City model. Although this model originated in Britain, French planners and their local disciples did not hesitate to promote it in Latin America as *les cités jardins* or *villes nouvelles*. One distinction between the purpose of garden cities in foreign lands as employed by the British and French is noteworthy. For British colonial authorities, garden cities had an ostensibly racial spatial segregation objective (Home 1997). In contrast, the French always insisted that the *'cités-jardins'* were an instrument of spatial modernization. Once in Latin America, the model was slightly modified to take the form of what came to be known as the 'garden suburb.' Examples of places to which this term has been loosely applied include the first *colonias* of Porfirio Díaz's Mexico City, the 1890s area of Higienópolis in São Paulo and the *urbanización* El Paraíso in 1900s Caracas. Havana's *Vedado* also exhibits some of the suburban qualities of the garden city. One instance in which the English Garden City principles were employed with hardly any recognizable alterations was the 1915 project of *Jardin America* in Sao Paulo.

The Dominance of French Urbanism

Most of the Europeans who participated in urban planning in Latin America in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century were either of French origin or French-trained (Ward 2005; Almandoz 2002; Gutierrez 2002). That era was marked by the

dominance of French spatial organization models. These had come to be regarded as fashionable and symbolic of modernity throughout the region. Commensurate with this was the popularity of the ideas and philosophy of French planners, architects and designers such as Eugène Haussmann. Some analysts have characterized the influence of Haussmann on town planning in the region in more melodramatic terms. For instance, Ramon Gutierrez (2002: 55) described this influence as follows:

> Perceived as a model, the Haussmannic influence became embodied in a group of design trademarks worshipped by followers of the late nineteenth century 'building aesthetic.'

Thus, the contributions of other Europeans notwithstanding, it bears reiterating that French designs, planning ideas and principles had the most influence on the form and structure of major Latin American cities in the late-nineteenth/twentieth century. Features of Haussmannian design surfaced and became permanent elements of built space with the increased participation of French expatriates in town planning in the region. Prominent in this regard were the following:

- Wide tree-lined streets;
- Avenues and nodes constituting part of a web of communication arteries;
- New railway stations;
- New plazas and public meeting places;
- Isolation of more important buildings in accordance with the dictates and planning philosophies highlighting important landmarks in concert with the old baroque tradition.

Among these urban design features, one, namely the tree-lined boulevard, stands out and deserves further elaboration. As was the case in North America discussed in the previous chapter, both the appellation and the design pattern were imported from France (Jacob et al. 2002; Lawrence 1988). Here, broad tree-lined boulevards constituted a crucial part of Haussmann's extensive urban renewal project for Paris whilst he was prefect of the Seine under Napoleon III. Haussmann's project had three avowed purposes, namely to destroy Paris's squalid, dilapidated and obsolete buildings and neighbourhoods; discourage urban unrest; and beautify the city. Of these, city beautification constituted the basis for the widely-recommended tree-lined boulevards. This urban design element was enthusiastically adopted by French urban planners at home and abroad. It was warmly embraced by authorities in Latin America. Here, designs for plazas, including those of non-French origin, incorporated features of Haussmann's urban renewal project for Paris. As suggested earlier, the infusion of French urban design ideas was not a monopoly of French urban designers in region. Rather, in some cases, the infusion was by local or other planners who had been influenced by designers of French extraction. The influence of Le Corbusier is illustrative in this regard. Box 3.2 summarizes the many ways in which Le Corbusier influenced urban planning in Latin America in general and Brazil in particular.

To shed more light on French influence on the spatial development in general and urban planning in particular in Latin America, it is necessary to focus specifically

Box 3.2: Le Corbusier's Influence on Planning in Latin America

Le Corbusier was the architect of two major projects that cemented his place in the annals of Latin American urban design and architecture. These include the design of the Ministry of Education and Health and the city plan of Brasilia A Swiss-born French architect and planner, Le Corbusier was a prominent figure in the urban planning and architecture domain of early-twentieth century Brazil. To get some sense of Le Corbusier's impact in this regard, one needs only appreciate the extent to which his ideas influenced the works of Brazil's foremost planners and designers of that era. Three of these, Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer and Roberto Burle Marx, are especially noteworthy. Le Corbusier travelled to Latin America in 1929 and included lecture stops in São Paolo and Rio de Janeiro. His futuristic vision for cities at that time was developed as a reaction to the increasing congestion and lack of physical space in European cities. As such, while Corbusian designs were openly reviled in Brazil by some as Eurocentric and physically improbable, they were embraced as modernistic and forward-thinking by others. Enter Lúcio Costa: Costa is one of those who embraced Corbusian design ideas and espoused them as modernist. In his capacity as the head of the Brazilian Heritage Service Costa was hugely influential in setting the aesthetic tone of preservation and publicly commissioned projects after 1930. The 1938 commission of the new Ministry of Education and Health (MES) building in Rio de Janeiro is one example of Le Corbusier's distinctive stamp on a major public project. Le Corbusier, Costa, and Niemeyer served as principal architects for the building, and many of the classic Corbusian concepts—an elevated 16-story block structure with horizontal ribbons of windows, surrounded by a minimalistic plaza—reflect a direct adaptation of European modernist principles. Costa was a mentor to Niemeyer during his early career, and the three—Costa, Niemeyer and Le Corbusier—worked on a number of architectural and development projects.

In the case of Roberto Burle Marx, however, Le Corbusier served as a point of departure and contrast for his radical and celebrated landscape designs. An influential landscape designer by the 1930s, Marx was commissioned to design the MES Gardens—located on the roof of the building. Marx's design, a meandering design of biomorphous shapes, illustrates the cultural "cannibalization" (syncretization) of Le Corbusier's ideas on modern form and indigenous materials. Both internalizing exoticized aspects of Brazil's "jungle image" and rejecting strictly rational theories of European form, Marx' MES Gardens, as well as the subsequent proliferation of his landscape design throughout Rio de Janeiro, provide physical symbols of the broader dialogue between European and Latin American ideas on architecture and urban form during this time.

The 1956 commissioning of the new capital city appointed the three professionals for the planning, architectural, and landscape design of Brasilia, respectively. (Sources: Young 2003; Segre 2007; Fraser 2000.)

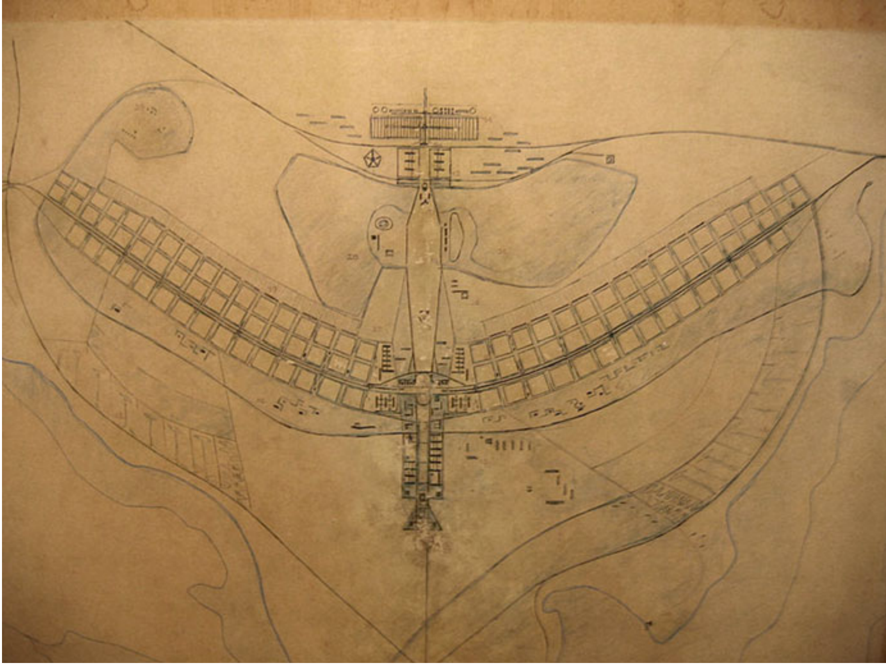

Fig. 3.1 Original sketch of the Plan of Brasilia by Lucio Costa (Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brasilia_-_Plan.JPG)

on three of the region's largest countries, namely Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. Arguably, most efforts by French or French-trained planners and architects to influence built space in the region were directed at cities in these two countries.

Argentina

Argentina is arguably the country that benefitted the most from the input of French urban planners. Its capital city, Buenos Aires contains spatial forms and physical objects reflecting the ideas of French planners such as Joseph Antoine Bouvard, Nicolas Forestier, Leon Jaussely, and Le Corbusier. The city sits on the shores of the La Plata River, where it was founded in 1580. Municipal authorities in the city have always been attentive to urban planning matters. Upon its founding, a meticulous master plan comprising a gridded street pattern was crafted to guide its growth. Drawn by Juan de Garay, the plan had as its emblematic central piece, a plaza, the Plaza de Mayo (Fig. 3.1). The city was designated the national capital of Argentina in 1880. With this designation the city's growth significantly accelerated. One of the consequences of this was the problem of congestion, which worsened with increased automobile traffic and as the country became economically prosperous

in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century. The city's nucleus continued to be the Plaza de Mayo while its infrastructure, including the shipping harbor and commensurate facilities grew increasingly inadequate (Collins 1995). To address these problems, authorities invited urban planning experts from Europe. Notably among these was Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier had been invited to the city a decade earlier in 1929 by the *Amigos del Arte*, a group that represented the interest of the art-loving wealthy class in the country. Members of this class were passionately in love with French culture and the aesthetic appeal of French cities to which they were frequent visitors. Le Corbusier spent most of his time during that visit giving lectures throughout Argentina and other parts Latin America. During one such lecture, that of 18 October 1929, he suggested that he could adapt the Plan Voisin of Paris to Buenos Aires (Collins 1995: 211). What Le Corbusier proposed for Argentina was a replica of his 1925 'Plan Voisin', which incorporated elements of his 'Plan for a Contemporary City of 3 Million'. It would be recalled that he had presented this latter at an exhibition in Paris in 1922 (Ibid). Le Corbusier's vision of a capital city for Argentina was a comprehensive business city or as he preferred, *'la cité d'affaires'*. His vision was articulated in the master plan *(Plan Directeur)* he completed for Buenos Aires in 1938/39. He was assisted on this project by two Argentinean architects, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy and Juan Kurchan. Both worked under Le Corbusier's auspices at his Paris-based atelier. Although the plan was never implemented, it fueled intense discussion on urban planning throughout the country and the region as a whole.

The tendency to sought Le Corbusier's design expertise is only one manifestation of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Argentineans' infatuation with French planning models. There were many initiatives specifically designed to duplicate the form and aesthetic appeal of French cities in Latin America. Activities in each of the functional areas of planning such as housing, transportation and the environment were all geared towards accomplishing this objective (Almandoz Online; Hardoy 1992). For instance, some of Haussmann's ideas found expression in Buenos Aires's large public parks. Figure 3.1 is a photograph of Plaza de Mayo, one of the parks that benefited from these modernization efforts. The expansion of these parks and green areas is in line with the Beaux Arts tradition. In addition, authorities imported and planted an assortment of new trees and plants, created artificial lakes and added pedestrian and bicycle trails in the parks. Authorities in other smaller Argentinean cities such as Rosario, Mendoza, Cordoba, Parana and Tucuman soon followed Buenos Aires's lead to modernize their own parks. At least one public park in Mexico City, the *Paseo de la Reforma*, arguably the first copy of a Parisian boulevard in the western hemisphere, was modeled after Haussmann's *Bois de Boulogne* in Paris. Other major projects along these lines include the Avenida de Mayo in Buenos Aires; the Paseo del Prado and the Avenida Agraciada in Montevideo; the Parque Forestal and the Santa Lucia Hill in Santiago; and the Guzman Blanco Boulevard and Paseo El Calvario in Caracas. Similarly, parks such as Santa Lucia Hill, the Parque Forestal, the Quinta Normal de Agricultura and the forestation of the Alameda, in Santiago de Chile, drew inspiration from Haussmann's works.

French influence on town planning and ultimately the spatial structure of major cities was not the same throughout the region. This influence was greatest in the countries that were enjoying high levels of economic growth in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The fact that Buenos Aires, the city nicknamed "Paris of South America" was a popular destination of European planning ideas is therefore understandable on account of Argentina's standing as the most prosperous nation in the region at the time. Buenos Aires, which lies along the La Plata River, was founded in 1580. The city's first plan is the brainchild of Juan de Garay. In 1828, James Bevan was commissioned to draw a plan for the city (Almondoz 2002). In response, he produced a plan conforming to the grid design, complete with rectangular blocks and several diagonal plazas. The city grew at about the same pace as other human settlements in the region. However, with its designation as the national capital of Argentina in 1880, this pace was accelerated. At the same time national authorities became increasingly concerned with the city's global image. With the economic prosperity that the country was enjoying, these authorities could literally 'think big.' In this regard, they were unified in their desire to afford Buenos Aires the image of a modern and sophisticated city. Their desire was to make it comparable not to its regional peers but to cities in Europe. This was in line with conventional wisdom in the region that had come to view European cities as the ultimate symbol of modernity. Therefore, the goal of supplanting the city's archaic image with a modern and attractive one was never debatable.

It is difficult to state with certainty the extent to which the choice of French urban planners and architects was deliberate. However, their dominance on the roster of planning expatriates in the country at the turn of the century is unquestionable. Planners with a French background in terms of origin or training on this roster included, for example, Joseph Antoine Bouvard, who visited the country in 1907 and again from 1909 to 1910; Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier, who was there in 1923; Léon Jaussely, who visited in 1926; and Le Corbusier, who was there in 1929. These planners and architects of the *Belle Epoque* era maintained some ties with the *Ecole Française d'Urbanisme* (EFU). They were invited to participate in various capacities in local urban planning projects in Buenos Aires and other cities in South America in general.

An examination of the specific activities of the afore-named expatriates can highlight the influence of French urban planning thought in the region. Consider the case of Joseph Antoine Bouvard. An urban planner from Paris, Bouvard first travelled to Buenos Aires in 1907 to present Mayor Carlos T. De Alvear with a plan for future avenues in the city. Bouvard's plan was richly laced with elements of Haussmannian spatial design. He contended, as Almondoz (2002: 56) recounted, that "the Haussmannic stamp would make a strong impression on the city through the potential irruption of 60 km of artery and 32 diagonal roads which would lead to the destruction of the old foundation square."

On his part, Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier (1861–1930) brought to Buenos a wealth of experience from his work as a landscape architect in Paris. He had also served as a planner/architect in another city in the Americas, namely Havana, Cuba. He was invited to Buenos Aires in 1925 to lend his expertise to initiatives addressed

to enhancing the city's aesthetic appeal. This, as suggested earlier, fell under the rubric of efforts to 'Europeanize' Buenos Aires. Forestier had demonstrated a knack for 'contextualizing' spatial planning in Havana. There, he had produced a master plan, namely *para el Embellecimiento y Ensanche de la Habana* (i.e., Plan for the Beautification and Enlargement of Havana) (Almondoz 2002). This plan was unique as it emphasized harmony between extant spatial/physical structures and their tropical surroundings. For his proposal for improving the image of Buenos Aires, he reached for planning ideas of French and other European origins. In this regard, his proposal drew inspiration from the City Beautiful Movement with roots in the British planning tradition.

Leon Jaussely is one of the French urban planners with the most far-reaching impact on planning in Argentina. A graduate of France's prestigious *Ecole des Beaux Arts,* Jaussely arrived Buenos Aires in 1926. Jausely arrived the region with knowledge of its planning issues he had gathered through his former students, Mauricio Cravato and Jorge Hardoy. These were local practicing planners and academics who traced their nativity to the region but had studied under Jausely in France. Although he possessed some knowledge of local conditions, Jausely, like other French design experts before him, advocated the adoption of Eurocentric urban design structures (Gutierrez 2002). Thus, Jaussely's proposals manifested traits of the theories and philosophies that dominated planning thought in Europe at the time. His penchant for incorporating elements of the garden city is illustrative in this connection. The following recommendation, which he once made to municipal authorities in Buenos Aires is illustrative.

> From now on you should propose to fill the spaces which are still free in your plan with new neighborhoods with a simpler design, be it curved or straight, well-proportioned lines, gardens in front of all houses, be they for the rich as therein lies the beauty of modern cities (quoted in Gutierrez 2002: 65).

However, the similarities between Jaussely's proposals and those of his contemporaries in Latin America are few. For one thing, unlike other French expatriates in the region, he placed a high premium on spatial harmony, and functionality. He was concerned with spatial harmony and displayed a preference for beauty and physical aesthetics. This led him to pay greater attention than his contemporaries to the configuration and interaction of elements in built space. One testament to this preference is his disenchantment with surface interconnectivity of Buenos Aires's railway and road systems. To him, having the two systems operate above ground introduced avoidable conflicts. Accordingly, he recommended an underground railway system thereby allowing roads as the only ground level transportation infrastructure. Jaussely also expressed dissatisfaction with the grid/block squared spatial design pattern that constituted part of the city's colonial legacy. His plan for the Bario Parque Chas is only one testament to his disdain for the grid/block squared pattern. The plan's layout contains many curves, a common feature of French urban designs. Jaussely found the spatial monotony associated with the grid/squared pattern not only insipid and bland but also antithetical to spatial functioning. However, he conceded that such a pattern facilitated the enumeration or identification of buildings

and other elements in built space. However, he did not believe this single positive attribute was sufficient to nullify the pattern's drawbacks. He is also on record for rejecting the checkerboard pattern. In its stead he proposed an alternative system along the lines of one he had previously submitted as an entry for a spatial design competition in Barcelona, Spain. He defended his proposed alternative by contending that it was capable of seamlessly unifying different parts of built space.

A conspicuous feature of Jaussely's spatial design proposals worth noting is his recommendation that important public buildings be gigantic and sited in elevated areas. This recommendation is deeply rooted in Eurocentric thinking on power relations and dynamics in built space of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Within this framework power in built space is derived from altitude and size. Elevation and size were seen as proportionate to the magnitude and intensity of power. Thus, higher altitudes and larger buildings or monuments commanded more power.

Brazil

Rio de Janeiro is another Latin American city whose spatial structure was greatly influenced by French planning models and ideas (see Box 3.3). This influence was arguably most intense during the tenure of Francisco Pereira Passos (1902–1906) as

Box 3.3: Agaché and the Garden City Idea in Rio de Janeiro
In the late-1920s a French planning team led by Alfred Agaché was contracted to craft a new plan for the City of Rio de Janeiro. Agaché was a devout member of the English Garden City Movement. The plan he and his team produced was designed to beautify the city and afford it badly needed spatial order. To achieve this latter goal, the planners divided up the central Rio area into six distinct districts, namely the Business Centre (*Centro de Negócios),* Administrative Centre *(Centro Administrativo)*, Monumental Centre *(Centro Monumental),* Financial Centre *(Centro Bancario),* Embassy Distict *(Bairro das Embaixadas),* and Calabouco Gardens *(Jardins do Calabouço)*. The southern districts located on the seacoast including Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon, were modeled after European Garden cities. The aim was to attract the affluent class of Rio. A number of districts, whose designs were less radical such as Calete, Botafogo, Flamengo, Laranjeiras, Villa Isabel and Tijuca, were designated as middle class. The poor were to live in public housing in the suburb. They were to be provided adequate public transportation to ferry them to and from the city centre. Although never implemented, the plan was to serve as a conduit to transmit at least three well-known attributes of the conventional Euro-centric planning model. These included the segregation of urban dwellers based on their socio-economic classes; public or social housing for the poor; and dependence on motorized means of transportation. (Source: Brandão (2006))

the city's mayor (Hardoy 1992). An engineer, Passos studied in Paris from 1857 to 1860. He returned to Paris frequently thereafter and was familiar with the works of Haussmann. As Rio's mayor, Passos tapped from his French town planning instincts to oversee the city's massive urban renewal project. The project was one of Latin America's most extensive during the first half of the twentieth century. As other projects in the region at that time, this project had two ostensibly contradictory aims. These included ridding Rio de Janeiro of all vestiges of its colonial heritage and endowing it with features characteristic of major European cities. Discussions of French influence on urban planning in Brazil in particular and Latin America in general in the 1900s contain generous references to the *Beaux Arts* and/or SFU traditions (see e.g., Moreira Online; Almondoz 2002; Gutierrez 2002). This is not accidental.

Rather, it is because most of the French planning ideas destined for the region at the time were transmitted as part of the Beaux Arts/SFU tradition. Evidence of how these ideas gained expression in built space in Brazil is hard to miss. Many buildings, especially those completed in the early-twentieth century not only conform to Beaux-Arts/SFU standards, but were actually designed/built by disciples of this movement. The *Palácio Gustavo Capanema* (or the Gustavo Canema Palace), a gigantic office building in Rio de Janeiro constitutes a glaring example of this (see Fig. 3.2). This 1930s symbol of modernist architecture was designed by

Fig. 3.2 A building in Rio de Janeiro designed by Le Corbusier (in collaboration with (with Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer and others) (Vista norte do Edifício Gustavo Capanema) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MESP4.jpg)

Lucio Costa (profiled earlier), Affonso Eduardo Reidy, Ernani Vasconcellos, Carlos Leão, Jorge Mochado and Oscar Niemeyer. Le Corbusier was the overseer of the entire project. As instruments for the diffusion of French planning ideals, the Beaux Arts/SFU movement assembled as ambassadors some of the best talent France had to offer. Notable among these ambassadors were Eugène Henard, J.C. Forestier, Henri Prost, Leon Jaussely, and Alfred Agaché.

Agaché is best remembered in the annals of Brazilian urban planning as the architect of the plan of Rio de Janeiro (1928–1930). The plan was unique for its attempt to realize a new global vision for the city (Moreira Online). Perhaps more importantly, it ignited and stimulated debate on modern urbanism in the country. Furthermore, it established a previously unknown pattern for revamping and resuscitating decaying central areas. As Moreira (Online) noted, the plan consisted of three parts as follows:

- Background study;
- Rio de Janeiro Maior; and
- Hygiene and sanitation.

The background study was a page straight out of SFU's book on urbanism. The SFU saw urban planning as simultaneously a science and an art. As a scientific endeavor, the planning of Rio de Janeiro required an extensive study to unearth important data or information on the city's history, topography, economy and demography. These data were necessary as valuable input for the planning process. The Rio de Janeiro Maior part was essentially the heart of the plan. It included attributes of the plan and how they interact with each other. The hygiene and sanitation component had to do with water and sanitation. This component was included in the plan to address the city's public health problems such as waste disposal.

One notable aspect of the SFU philosophy that Agaché emphasized was highlighting similarities between an urban plan and a living organism (Moreira Online). Thus, the city was seen as comprising lungs, a brain and digestive system. The lungs include the city's open spaces, avenues, parks, and streets. The city's brain is the civic centre, which by SFU standards, every city must have. Hygiene and sanitation fixtures, including the sewage disposal network, and potable water supply lines are taken to be the city's digestive system.

Apart from directly participating in urban design, development and redevelopment projects, Agaché influenced planning in Brazil indirectly. In this regard, his former students, Nesto Figueiredo and Arnaldo Gladosch, drew the plans of Recife and Porto Alegre. The plans bear the hallmarks of French urbanism—wide, tree-lined streets, generous green spaces and plazas. Furthermore as Moreira Online) noted, the plans adhered closely to the principles of the Rio de Janeiro Plan, which as stated above was the brainchild of Agaché himself.

Agaché's background in sociology appears evident in his plans. His proposals drew inspiration from the ideas of Emile Durkheim and Gabriel Tardé (Moreira, Online). In this respect, elements of sociological concepts of social functionalism,

universal progression, bureaucratization and ordered society are clearly visible in the proposals. The SFU had an agenda whose objective was to re-align planning thought, and especially its objectives, with the spirit of these key concepts. Accordingly, coordinating the activities of the different disciplines involved in guiding the growth and development of built space became primordial. From this perspective, the role of urban planning is to integrate, synchronize and harmonize the activities of many, sometimes disparate players in built space. This viewpoint was central to the SFU agenda in particular and French urbanism of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in general. Of course, this is not meant to overlook other essential concerns of the SFU/Beaux Arts objectives. Among these is the emphasis on surveys and concern with communication arteries, classical as well as the appearance of objects in built space.

The task of implementing French notions of urbanism in built space in Brazil ran into a number of problems not least of which was the country's topography. Constraints occasioned by topography rose to the fore during implementation of the transportation element of the plan of Rio de Janeiro. Agaché's proposal to address this problem entailed the introduction of several circles (roundabouts), crossings, a plethora of expressways and a radial peripheral system. These features were designed to facilitate access to all parts of the city. However, Agaché's transportation planning efforts were obfuscated by an element of the city's colonial foundation. Comprising the nexus around which the city developed, this foundation was established with horse-drawn carts and not the automobile in mind. Consequently, it boasted a circulatory system of narrow streets that frequently turned at obtuse angles. Thus, widening the streets to accommodate the needs of automobile traffic required massive destruction of existing structures. In other words, any street-widening project invariably entailed the destruction of several years of the city's history. Agaché's decision was to widen streets in some, but not all, areas of the city. This translated into erasing the history of some parts while preserving that of others. Those parts of the city that did not benefit from street-widening efforts were designated as pedestrian-only areas. In the areas that benefited from these efforts, low-rise buildings were replaced with taller structures in a bid to significantly increase the city's density. Raising neighborhood or city density was increasingly being accepted as a strategy to maximize the utility of scarce land. An identical strategy in the transportation domain which Agaché employed is the relocation of railways and automobile parking space underground.

Agaché's concern for functionality does not imply that he was less attentive to issues of aesthetics or spatial/physical beauty. To be sure, he was just as concerned with aesthetic appeal as his contemporaries. In Rio de Janeiro, one finds at least one testament to this, especially his endorsement of Haussmannian designs, complete with emphasis on aesthetics. This testament can also be found in his design of the Brazilian cities whose planning drew inspiration from his ideas in the 1940s and 50s. These include Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Porto Alegre and Curitiba.

Venezuela

Venezuela is one the many Latin American countries in which traces of French urbanism abound. To appreciate this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the historical ties between Venezuela and France at the national and individual levels. At the individual level many Venezuelans, some of whom rose to leadership positions in the country's architecture and urban planning domain, were born, raised and/or studied in France. The best-known of these personalities and their major contributions to architecture and urban planning in Caracas are mentioned below. At the national level, Venezuelan leaders have historically maintained very cordial relationships with France. In addition, they have largely been avowed admirers of that country's capital city, Paris. As president in the 1870s, Antonio Guzman Blanco, was such an admirer of Paris that he spent most of his time there instead of Caracas (Larrañga 2004). Blanco is of particular interest here because of his interest in urban development and spatial planning. He is noted in the discourse on Venezuelan urban planning as one of the leaders who crafted projects to transform Caracas into a mini-version of Paris. When Blanco embarked on the project to give Caracas a facelift in the late-nineteenth century, he articulated his objective as supplanting the city's Spanish structure with a vintage French design. Many financial and political problems prevented implementation of Blanco's lofty urban development projects. The opportunity to re-embrace urban development projects presented itself in the 1930s as the country transitioned from an agro- to an oil-based economy.

Like Blanco and others, Venezuelan leaders of the 1930s also admired French urbanism and entertained the wish to transform Caracas into a facsimile of Paris. In 1939, almost seven decades subsequent to Blanco's initial attempt to 'frenchichize' Caracas, the city's municipal authorities initiated an ambitious urban redevelopment project (Larrañga 2004). The first major activity in this regard was the creation of *Comission Nacional de Urbanismo* (CNU, or National Comission of Town Planning). The creation of this commission, the first of its kind, signaled a shift towards prioritizing urban planning, in the country. Members of the commission were unified in trusting French urban planners as those most capable of modernizing urban structures. Accordingly, they embarked on a search for a suitably qualified French planner. Their search culminated in the hiring of Maurice Rotival, who, at the time was a professor at Yale University in the United States, and partner in the planning firm of Prost, Lambert, Rotival and Wegenstein. Rotival was active in planning circles in his native France, Algeria, and the United States. He arrived in Caracas in 1937, and was assigned the task of crafting a plan for the Central District of Caracas. The project's aim was to afford the city a form and functionality befitting a modern capital city. In collaboration with local professional colleagues, Rotival embarked on efforts to complete this project. Their efforts resulted in an ambitious urban (re)development plan that became fittingly known as the '*Plan Monumental'* (Monumental Plan). The plan, an original sketch of which is captured in Fig. 3.3, was completed in 1939 and approved in 1940 (Hein 2010). The plan sought to expand the city east and south with a system of diagonal avenues and grid-

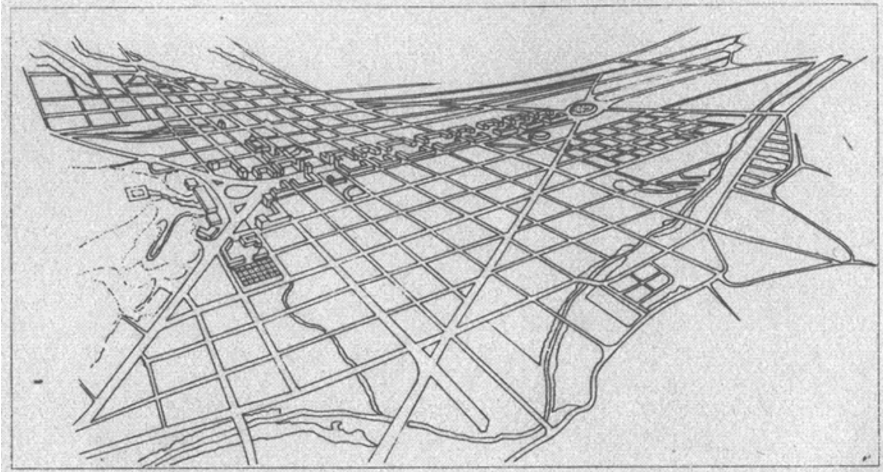

Fig. 3.3 Maurice Rotival's Plan for Caracas, 1939 (Source: Wikimedia.org)

ded streets (Larrañga 2004). It is characterized by large axes, symmetry, classical composition and monumentality. In addition and reflective of the Beaux Arts tradition, it contained large streets flanked by trees. These elements reflect Rotival's attachment to his Parisian design background. In recommending them, Rotival contended that they were most compatible with Caracas's undulating topography (Hein 2010).

Certainly, Rotival was not one to be faulted for lack of creativity. That he always insisted on having an aerial view of an area as a prerequisite for crafting any plan for the area is telling. An aerial view of Caracas was not all he required as a prerequisite for drawing the city's plan. He also insisted on analyzing the city in its geopolitical context. In this regard, Rotival saw Caracas as the capital city of a country that needed to undergo significant socio-spatial transformation in order to assume an important regional economic, social and political role. From this vantage point, Rotival believed urban planning had an indispensable role to play if the country was to maximize its regional politico-economic utility.

As stated earlier, political turmoil prevented implementation of Rotival's ambitious plan. However, his ideas as expressed in the plan lingered on enough to stimulate discourse on the city's form and function for generations. In the late-1940s, the CNU, under the chairmanship of Carlos Raul Villanueva decided to re-visit one specific proposal contained in Rotival's plan, the Avenida Bolivar (Fig. 3.4). This provided an opportunity for a better understanding of specific aspects of the plan. Rotiva had envisioned a mixed-use pair of skyscrapers to form the focal point of the avenue. This specific element won the hearts of local authorities who believed such a project would afford Caracas just the kind of image they desired for their national capital. To execute the project, they hired a native Venezuelan architect, Cipriano Domiguez to design a pair of towers, which became the emblematic centre of the *Centro Simón Bolivar*.

Fig. 3.4 A Product of Rotiva's Plan Monumental, Avenida Bolivar in Caracas, Venezuela

It is widely believed that the building paradigms contained in Rotival's initial plan inspired the city's first systematic urban codes in 1942 (Larrañga 2004). These codes applied to La Candelaria, the easternmost district of the city's traditional downtown area. Larrañga (2004) identified a good number of features of Rotival's plan that have since given inspiration to later urban development efforts in the city. One such element is the original plan's fanlike shape, which served as the template for developing the city's northeast edge. Another element relates to the street and public space design. This comprises the ample avenues and civic spaces that Rotival incorporated in the original plan. Thus, it is safe to conclude that although Rotival's plan was never directly implemented, it constitutes the skeletal framework around which all the city's urban (re)development plans have been developed over the years.

The continuity of French influence on Venezuela's built space was assured by the fact that most of the country's influential local architects were trained in France. Examples of such personalities include (Larrañga 2004): Carlos Raúl Villanueva (1900–1975), who designed El Silencio (1942), and a housing district on the western end of Avenida Bolivar; Luis Malausena (1900–1962), the architect of the meticulously designed Eldificio Paris (1948); Carlos Guinand (1889–1963), the designer of Casa Taurel in 1941; and Cipriano Dominguez (1904–1995), the architect of Centro Simón Bolivar.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

France was hardly active as a colonial power in Latin America but significantly influenced urbanism in the region. This renders conventional explanations for the diffusion of Eurocentric models of urban planning inadequate. Also, it would be unreasonable to view the introduction of French urbanism in the region as solely designed to achieve political power and control-related goals. Yet, it is undeniable that a lot of urban development ideas flowed from metropolitan France to peripheral Latin America. This phenomenon easily passes for one of the most extensive transfer of ideas in recent history. Several factors, some within, and others outside of, the region were at work to enable this remarkable transfer. At least three of these factors come to mind. The first is the region's vast supply of land. This made the region ideally suitable as a laboratory for testing the workability of the grand spatial theories and schemes that had emerged in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Europe, because of natural constraints, such as scarcity of land and financial resources rendered such experiments impossible at the time. The second factor is an abundance of financial resources. As stated earlier, Latin American countries were experiencing rapid economic growth as export economies. One manifestation of the region's new-found wealth was a rapidly growing class of very wealthy people. This new and growing class was especially notable for its voracious appetite for European culture and desire to replicate elements of European urbanism in the region. This appetite coupled with the ability to pay made efforts to create replicas of European cities in the region an affordable proposition. The third factor was the availability of effective diffusion mechanisms. Prominent in this regard were the groups of professional urban planners and architects that were increasingly being established in the region in the 1920s. The membership roster of these groups was dominated by professionals who had been trained in French institutions of higher learning and/or had some affiliation with planning professionals of French origin. These professionals served as some of the most effective enablers in the complex process of transferring French urbanism to the region.

However, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the movement of architectural and spatial design ideas was to some extent symmetrical between France and Latin America. In other words, some degree of reverse transference occurred between the two regions. Thus, encounters with cultures and places of Latin America resulted in some modification of French planning ideas, principles and practices. A pertinent example of this is the modification of the garden city concept that produced the 'garden suburbs' in Latin America; and later, other parts of the world.

There is hardly any doubt that the street-widening and similar projects succeeded in attaining their objective of ameliorating spatial aesthetics. However, a meaningful analysis of these projects cannot ignore important questions relating to their sustainability. To what extent can ideas and models transplanted from Europe be sustainable in culturally different and geographically far-away Latin America? The jury may still be out on some of the major implications of adopting European planning models in non-European settings. Yet, there is no doubt that the street widening

project in Rio de Janeiro caused enormous collateral damage. For example, thousands of old buildings, most of which provided housing for the city's poor, were damaged. Also, the resultant large streets are not pedestrian-friendly as they tend to encourage speedy automobile traffic.

Forces at work to facilitate the diffusion of French models of urbanism to Latin America were not exclusively of the endogenous variety. Rather, the process was also facilitated by factors of the exogenous genre. Prominent in this regard is the level of self-confidence that French architects and urban designers projected in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This confidence was reinforced by several years of brilliant performance in international design competitions (Ward, 2005). This record of performance made the design ideas of French architects highly sought-after. In fact, interest in French design ideas was expressed not only in developing regions but also in Europe itself. The selection of the French architect, Leone Jaussely to craft the plan for the post-Cerda Barcelona offers only one testament in this connection. Similarly, another French man, Jacques Greber was invited to design the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. Of course, French spatial organization ideas remain clearly visible in highly visible projects in Latin America. Witness, for instance, national capitals and major cities such as Buenos Aires, Argentina, Caracas Venezuela, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The design projects for these cities as noted in this chapter, were contracted out to French architects/planners. Additionally, it must be noted that quite a good many of the French architects and urban planners who were invited to the region held high-level positions in France. More importantly in this regard, many of them were linked in one manner or another to some highly acclaimed post or project at home. For instance, Joseph Antoine Bouvard held the post of Director of Architecture, Roadways and Planning in the City of Paris when he was invited to participate in the planning of Buenos Aires, and other projects in Latin America. Alfred Agaché was the co-founder and pioneer secretary of the *Société Française d'Urbanisme* (SFU). It was typical of these experts to simply dust off and bring to Latin America a plan they helped to implement or recommended for a French city. Bouvard exemplified this trend when he proposed parks for the City of Sao Paulo that included familiar baroque themes such as monumental space that he had been working on in Paris.

A paradoxical 'push factor' that led to the heightened exportation of French urbanism to Latin America in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century was the lack of opportunities for urban planners in France. The lack of opportunities in France, as Stephen Ward (2005) opined, was a function of the fact that the French state did not assert itself as much as its contemporaries in the planning domain. For instance, the first state planning law in that country was not promulgated until 1919 (Ibid). Therefore, the tendency for French planners to maximize the utility of their expertise was terribly constrained at home.

Prominent among the 'pull factors' that helped to attract French planning models/planners to Latin America was simply an infatuation with Paris. As Ward (2005: 130) stated, there was "a longing for Paris that permeated very many Latin American exercises in city planning" (in the 1900s). Consequently, authorities in the region

were wont to turn to French planners. In fact, the authorities made no effort to disguise their desire to transform their capital cities into mini-versions of Paris.

Some of the pull forces that served to facilitate the spread of French planning ideas and models in Latin America are of the political variant. Included in this category are the political reforms and spatial growth occasioned by global trends that occurred in the region in the 1900s. Most notable in this regard are developments that occurred in the area of transportation. The introduction of the automobile accelerated urban growth in the region. Another noteworthy trend had to do with innovations in the construction industry. Two of these innovations, the invention of the elevator, and the introduction of steel in the industry rendered possible the construction of tall buildings, hence the vertical expansion of human settlements. These developments rendered the task of urban planning more complicated than it had ever been. This in turn accentuated the need for highly skilled and talented planners. The scarcity of architecture and urban design schools in the region at the time necessitated the hiring of international experts.

An important political force that served to accentuate the need for Eurocentric planning models, and subsequently their adoption, in Latin America has to do with political reforms. The case of Brazil is illustrative of how political dynamics instigated the need for innovative planning initiatives. In 1930, the country experienced a political event, the ascension to power the Vargas Regime. This regime, unlike its predecessor, launched an ambitious program of modernization with emphasis on revamping the nation's spatial structure, particularly the modification of its major cities. In line with the regime's ambitious program, authorities embarked on a program to make-over the image of the country's cities. The invitation in 1928 of Alfred Agaché to Rio de Janeiro by the city's mayor, Antonio Prado constituted part of efforts in this regard. Agaché was charged with the task of crafting an urban renewal plan for the city. His plan is noteworthy especially because of its emphasis on the ideals of the *Societé Française des Urbanistes* (SFU).

The fact that France played hardly any role as a colonial authority in Latin America did not hinder the diffusion of French urbanism to the region. This suggests that colonialism was not the only vehicle for exporting French urbanism. This should not be construed as a trivialization of colonialism's role as a vehicle for diffusing planning models. Rather, this suggests that despite the absence of colonial state forces, planning ideas, philosophies, and doctrines were still able to move from metropolitan to peripheral countries.

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Chapter 4
French Caribbean Territories

Abstract French urbanism in the Caribbean is unique in one respect. With the exception of Haiti, the territories discussed in this chapter are integral parts of France. Therefore, the introduction of French planning models in the region is not completely French urbanism in foreign lands. Yet, there is no denying that territories in the region are culturally and socio-economically different from administrative divisions in mainland France. This chapter discusses the unique nature of France's relation with these overseas dependencies and the various mechanisms that the French state has employed to diffuse French planning models to the region.

Keywords French Caribbean • French Guyana • French urbanism • French West Indies • Guadeloupe • Haiti • Martinique • Private housing • Social housing • Employer-assisted housing

Introduction

The French West Indies ranks high if not highest among the overseas regions with the longest history of French control. Despite the scant attention accorded it in the relevant English language literature, French presence in the Caribbean dates back to the seventeenth century. More noteworthy is the fact that the region contains territories considered integral parts of France. In fact, with the exception of Haiti, no erstwhile French colony in the region has ever gained political independence from France. Rather, erstwhile French colonies in the West Indies/South America were transformed into politico-administrative divisions of France after World War II (Arvin 1971; William 1981; Blérald 1986; Miles 1986; Constant 1990; Deville and Georges 1996). These ex-colonies include Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, the French side of Saint Martin, and Saint Bathelemy. Thus, the French government has had a greater chance to influence urban development in the region than elsewhere. Yet, this aspect of French urbanism has been largely ignored by analysts. Consequently, the full extent of the influence of French urban thought, principles and practice in overseas territories remains only partially known. This chapter constitutes a modest contribution to efforts addressed to reversing this situation. The focus is specifically on Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana, three French

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overseas administrative divisions (or *départements d'outre Mers or territoires d'outre Mers* (DOM-TOM)). According to a previous study from which I generously draw to complete this chapter, these territories rank highest among post-colonial overseas recipients of French central government urban development funds (see Njoh 2009). My aim is to show how these funds, and the policies they are meant to implement, have served as conduits of French urbanism to the territories. The emphasis is on the housing domain. I begin in the next section by providing some historical background to the French West Indies.

France and Modern Human Settlements in French West Indies

Although French Guiana (or *Guyane,* in French) is geographically located in South America, for convenience sake, I discuss it as part of the French West Indies or Caribbean. These territories were colonies of France from 1624 to 1946. Throughout this period, France treated them just as any of her other colonies around the world. However, the presence of French settlements in the region predates this period. Early French incursions in the region began with the claiming of territories along the South American coast. Here, we find French Guiana, which French empire-building authorities formally occupied in 1624. However, it must be noted that French settlement in the territory dates back two decades earlier. The establishment of French Guiana was followed by the founding of Saint Kitts in 1625. From there, the French went on to establish Guadeloupe and Martinique a little more than a decade later in 1635. The actual establishment of these two islands as a settlement under French control is credited to *la Compagnie des Îles de l'Amérique* (i.e., Company of the American Islands). Some 15 years later, French empire-building authorities established Saint Lucia. It was not until 1664 that they founded Saint Dominique. The latter was at the time France's largest and richest colony in the Caribbean. Reputed as a sugar cane producing island, Saint Dominique (present-day, Haiti), occupied the western half of the Spanish island of Hispaniola.

Urban planning was not necessarily a primary concern of French colonial authorities in the Caribbean. Rather, the main concern of these authorities was with maximizing the islands' economic potential. Whatever little urban planning occurred done was of the order required to enable exploitation of the region's fertile land. Accordingly, colonial authorities proceeded to introduce sugarcane, pineapple and banana plantations. The successful operation of these plantations required manpower. Such manpower was completely absent in the region, which contained very few Arawaks as the region's natives are known. French imperial authorities were therefore compelled to formulate more innovative strategies for building this manpower. Also, the region was sparsely populated, thus prompting the authorities to adopt population growth measures. One of these measures entailed recruiting willing and able French people to settle permanently in the Caribbean. Rather early during their colonial era in the region, the French had actually recruited people from other islands to relocate to Martinique. This occurred

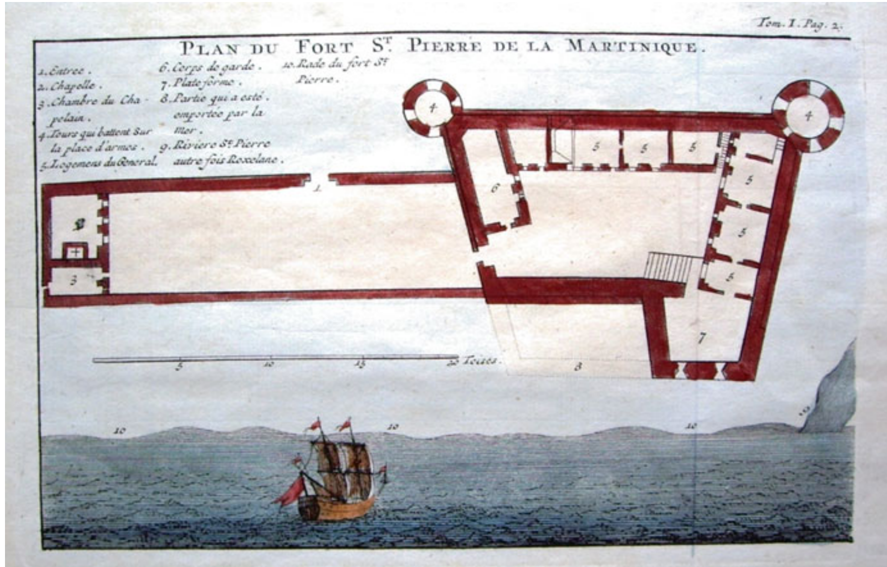

Fig. 4.1 Plan of Fort Saint Pierre, Martinique, 1742 (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Plan_du_fort_Saint-Pierre_de_Martinique)_en_1742.jpg

precisely on September 1, 1635 when French colonial authorities recruited and relocated 80 people from St. Christophe to Martinique (Kelly 2004: 3).

They were settled in the island's north-western end, specifically in present-day Saint-Pièrre at the mouth of the Roxelane River. Saint-Pièrre, which is named after its French trader/adventurer founder, Pièrre Belain d'Esnambuc, was established as the first permanent colony in Martinique in 1635. Here, the French constructed the Fort Saint-Pièrre whose plan appears as Fig. 4.1. The second fort in Martinique, Fort Saint Louis was constructed 3 years later in 1638. The construction of these forts and the commensurate establishment of human settlements around them was a contributing factor to early population growth in the West Indies.

The labour force necessary to operate agricultural plantations was another important source of population growth in the region. To recruit this labour force, French imperial authorities followed in the footsteps of the English and Spanish in North and South America. Accordingly, they proceeded to massively import enslaved persons from Africa to work on plantations throughout the French Caribbean. By the last decades of the eighteenth century, Martinique and Guadeloupe alone contained more than 200,000 enslaved Africans (Kelly 2004: 3).

Consequently, the population of French West Indies became racially mixed—comprising native Caribs, Africans, and Europeans—quite early in the region's modern history. An examination of the human settlement patterns of the island during the early phase of the colonial era can therefore be very illuminating. Such an examination can shed light on urbanism in early French colonies. For instance, archaeological and other evidence suggest that spatial residential patterns throughout the region were of the racially integrated variant (see Box 4.1). With the exception

Box 4.1: Plantation Housing in French Colonial West Indies

Most evidence of plantation housing in French colonial West Indies can be gleaned mainly from archaeological sources. One such useful source published within the last decade is a collection of papers in a special volume of the Journal of Caribbean Archaeology (2004). All of the articles in that volume were dedicated to the French Caribbean, which the editor noted as woefully underrepresented in the literature. As is the case in the literature on urbanism, most of the works on the region have focused on the erstwhile British, as opposed to former French or Dutch, possessions.

Two articles in the publication, one by Laurence Verrand (2004), and the other by Nathalie Croteau (2004) are especially informative for the purpose of the present discussion. Croteau's research focused on sugar cane plantation agriculture with emphasis on the configuration of residential and other units in colonial French Guiana. Advanced and complex communities had developed around sugar plantations. Prominent in this respect is the community that had grown around a Jesuit sugar plantation in Loyola between the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Croteau 2004). By 1674, the plantation had grown into a very successful and powerful entity in the capital city, Cayenne. By 1720, the plantation already encompassed 1500 ha—the largest in French Guiana at the time. It required the labour input of 400 enslaved people to function.

Analysis of the ruins of the plantation at the heart of this community reveals a structure whose roots are traceable to French planning thought of that era. The housing units were located on an elevated site at the center of the plantation, where they were flanked by other built structures. The location of the master's house was by no means randomly selected. Rather, it was carefully chosen to maximize its intake of breeze. This was necessary to temper the sweltering heat of the tropics. Also, the location was designed to facilitate a clear and uninhibited view of the entire plantation. As Croteau (2004: 75) stated,

> *Le choix de l'emplacement de ce complexe domestique est dicté par deux facteurs: ce lieu est à la fois plus frais et plus aéré et il permet d'avoir une vue sur les champs.*

More importantly, locating the master's house at the heart of the plantation settlement symbolized power and facilitated surveillance. Built of stone and in vintage Creole style, it comprised a kitchen with two rooms. One of these rooms served as storage space while the other had a hearth, bread oven, and cooking area. The master's house was flanked by other units that were necessary for the plantation's functioning. The units included a hospital, pottery factory, a forge, gardens, chapel, cemetery, and living quarters for enslaved plantation labourers. Source: Croteau (2004).

of military towns, human settlements in the region were dominated by people of African origin. Within these plantation-dependent settlements, enslaved labourers, their overseers and masters lived together albeit in different living quarters.

In 1794 the French government abolished slavery in all her colonies. This was, at least in part, due to the waning ability of the French government to suppress slave revolts, which had become increasingly bloody. The abolition of slavery introduced racially segregated residential patterns for the first time in the region. This is because, with abolition, freed enslaved people proceeded to improvise for themselves homes in locales geographically removed from the plantations. This situation and the piece of legislation that triggered it were short-lived as Napoleon Bonaparte enacted a decree re-instating slavery on 20 May, 1802. This law met with fierce resistance that Bonaparte's military could not quell in Saint Dominique. Resulting from this was the birth of Haiti, the first independent republic in the Latin American and Caribbean region in 1804.

Efforts to re-instate slavery were, however, successful in the rest of French West Indies. Consequently, there was a resumption of the racially integrated pattern in which enslaved labourers lived in group-homes congregated around the plantation master's home. Thus, with the exception of the brief period in which slavery was abolished in French colonies (1794–1802), settlement patterns on the islands were of the racially integrated variety. This pattern was resumed in 1802, and lasted until the formal end of slavery in the region in 1848. Thereafter, the region witnessed a drastic alteration of residential patterns that has never been reversed since then. Without the means, as suggested earlier, most members of the freed enslaved population and their descendants resorted to improvised housing. It is to this development that the roots of the islands' squatter settlement problematic is often traced (see e.g., Njoh 2009; Blérald 1986).

Laurence Verrand (2004) has unveiled evidence highlighting the important role of military defence in influencing spatial structures in colonial French West Indies. In fact, the earliest modern structures in the built environment in the region were designed primarily to serve military objectives. Verrand grouped these structures into four categories corresponding with four major periods in the region's early colonial history. The first, 1635–1700, witnessed the construction of facilities designed to defend the islands mainly from pirates and Indian raids as opposed to other European powers. Hence, the facilities were located mainly around the harbour of Saint-Pièrre. Three of these were sited to overlook the large bay at Fort Royal (present-day, Fort-de-France). As other areas grew in socio-economic and political importance, the need to defend them was also heightened. For instance, the need to fortify Fort-de-France was accentuated when it was designated the administrative headquarters of Martinique. The second period, 1700–1750, was characterized by a significant increase in the number of fortifications—from 8 to 59. There was also an increase in the number and intensity of commensurate activities such as military barracks and service centres. At the same time, the region of Saint-Pièrre remained heavily defended even though the colonial administrative headquarters had been relocated to Fort-de-France. A major defence-related activity in built space during this period had to do with the installation of batteries circumscribing all of Martinique. If nothing else, this grand military project underscored the island's growing importance, which was credited to the booming sugar industry. Another

testament to the island's importance was the tremendous growth that it experienced during this period.

The Third Period, 1750–1802, witnessed a number of wars associated with the French Revolution. At the same time, the island was invaded several times by British forces and was occupied briefly from 1762 to 63, and from 1794 to 1802. The period also witnessed the construction of the first set of forts in the interior of the region. These were designed to counter increasing internal threats from slave revolts that were growing both in frequency and intensity. External threats were also on the rise and led to the creation of more ephemeral camps as opposed to permanent internal forts. The Fourth Period lasted from 1803 to 1848. The period witnessed yet another occupation of the island by the British (1809–1814). French military authorities on the island continued to prioritize maritime defence and intensified their efforts to construct military facilities along the coast. In the interior they maintained existing, and constructed new, garrisons as the need to deal with possible slave unrest remained heightened.

Altitude was also considered necessary to command political power in the colonization calculus of the French military. Thus, the choice of Fort Royal as the seat of the colonial government was based on a desire to endow the institution of government with power above all societal powers. The plans and location of these military facilities reveal a conscious effort to transplant French notions of spatial order and defence to other regions. In this regard, French colonial authorities had set out to plant mini-versions of Medieval towns in the regions they conquered in the Americas. Medieval towns, it should be noted, served manifold functions. They were military, religious, political, economic and cultural centres. Above all, they were human settlements. In this latter regard, it is necessary to draw attention to the following fact. French empire-building authorities were never very successful at recruiting many able and willing French people to relocate to the Caribbean islands. Nevertheless, they succeeded to establish human settlements complete with military installations. These installations were effective in defending French politico-economic interests in the region.

The decision to locate military facilities and commensurate settlements on elevated sites was informed by the fashionable medical and spatial thinking in France at the time. The high altitude was not only necessary for aesthetic reasons. Rather, such altitude was believed to constitute some sort of prophylaxis against a variety of diseases. Militarily, such locales facilitated the task of defending human settlements against the genre of military threats that were commonplace in the seventeenth century. From a high altitude, it was easy to see and take necessary action to deal with oncoming threats from a distance. A more noteworthy attribute of the military in the discourse on the diffusion of French urbanism is their design. This adhered to the design principles of Sebastien Le Prestre, Seigneur de Vauban (1633 – 1707). Vauban, as mentioned in Chapter Two, was the most prominent military engineer during the reign of King Louis XIV. He was well-known for his ingenuity in fortifying French cities, and had played an important role in defending towns in New France.

Modernist Urban Planning in French West Indies

The French Caribbean islands, like others in the region, faced many problems that conspired to stifle colonial government development efforts. Among these were frequent disruptions resulting from attacks by competing European powers and members of the indigenous population, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. These problems were further complicated by the impermanence of administrative regimes. Despite this, traces of French urbanism abound in the region, although these are more visible in the architecture than the spatial structure. Some possible explanations for the paucity of vintage elements of French urbanism include the islands' small geographical size and difficult topography.

Consider the case of Cap Haïtien on the northern coast of Haiti. Founded in 1667, this town was laid out based on the Spanish colonial city model (UFDLC Online). When the French took control of the island in the eighteenth century, they renamed the town Cap Français, and proceeded to develop it. Efforts along this line were so successful that for the last half of that century the town was considered "the Paris of the entire island" (Ibid). It suffered significant destruction during the revolution of 1802, and was nearly decimated by an earthquake 40 years later in 1842. Consequently, the administrative capital of the island was relocated to Port au Prince. This latter was founded in 1749 and was initially designed to adhere to the gridded street pattern. However, its stubborn topography necessitated incorporation of a number of irregular and randomly-configured streets. A close examination of the plan of Champs de Mars, the town's administrative district, shows an abrupt departure from the vintage grid pattern (see Fig. 4.2). Instead, one finds a series of diagonal streets intersecting the gridded arteries in the area around the *Palace National*. It is necessary to note that the area was redesigned in 1953. This explains the contrasts between this area with its broad streets and the older section comprising narrow ones.

Another conspicuous contrasts relating to urbanism in the region is between the *départements d'outre Mers/territoires d'outre Mers* (DOM/TOM) and non-DOM/TOM territories. As stated earlier, the DOM/TOM territories are integral parts and administrative divisions *(départements)* of France. French central government policies, including urban policies in force in metropolitan France are applicable in these overseas territories. However, the policies do not have the same impact on the overseas territories that they do on the mainland. Any meaningful analysis of development policies in these territories must *à priori* account for their status as erstwhile colonies, tropical location, and distance—at least 6400 km—from mainland France. An examination of urbanization and other developments trends in the region's spatial domain can prove informative in this regard.

The most prominent of these developments and trends are rooted in French colonial era policies. The region experienced a transport revolution with the emergence of motorized vehicles in the 1930s (Blérald 1986; Condon and Ogden 1997). This development had far-reaching implications for spatial patterns as it facilitated mobility in the region. With the transport revolution, long distance travel became significantly easy. At the same time, it contributed in no small way to urbanization

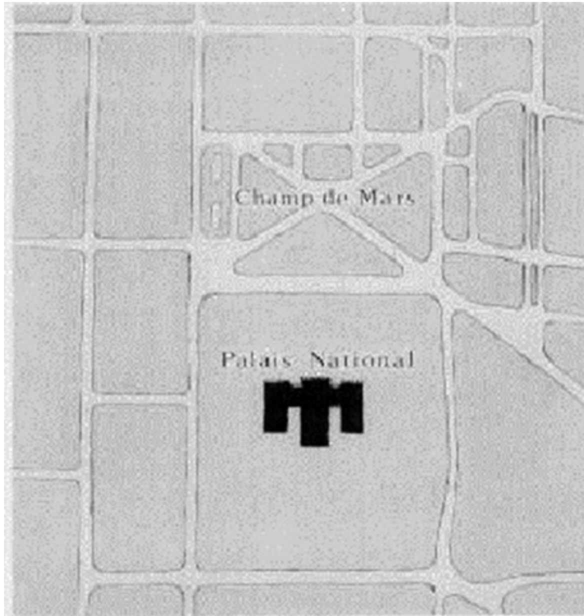

Fig. 4.2 Champs de Mars showing the National Palace, Port au Prince, Haiti (Source: UFDLC (Online))

as commuting to and from work was facilitated. Yet, early urbanization on the islands differed markedly from urbanization in mainland France and Western Europe during the industrial revolution. While urbanization in Western Europe was a function of urban-based 'pull factors' (as), urbanization in the French West Indies was due to rural-based 'push factors'. In the latter, urbanization was fuelled by people fleeing deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the rural areas. However, in the former, it resulted from people rushing to take up gainful employment positions created by the industrial revolution.

On the islands, urbanization meant the rapid growth of towns such as Forte-de-France in Martinique (Fig. 4.3), Pointe-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe and Cayenne in French Guiana. The population of Fort-de-France, Martinique rose from 60,648 in 1954 to 96,943 in 1967, while that of Basse-Terre and Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe rose from 11,837 to 15,833 and from 26,160 to 29,160, respectively during the same period (Condon and Ogden 1997: 222). Another factor that contributed to accelerating urbanization in the region is rooted in the urban policies of the central government in Paris. These policies, such as those directed at improving the quality and quantity of housing have actively encouraged urban living. This is because the policies often target urban as opposed to rural areas. The policies typically sought to provide and improve the quality of urban-based public infrastructure and amenities such as water and electricity. Suh policies constituted part of the French colonial authorities' strategy to urbanize, hence modernize the region.

Fig. 4.3 Fort-de-France (Source: Wikimedia.org)

Spatial modernization initiatives continued, and were in fact, intensified when the French West Indies became integral parts of France in 1946. These initiatives have occurred under the rubric of different sets of central government policies. However, none of these policies have targeted severely underprivileged areas in the manner exemplified by the *Zone Franches Urbaines* (ZFU). Efforts undertaken under the canopy of ZFU are deliberately biased in favour of historically disadvantaged regions (Green et al. 2001). This policy is part of France's attempt to bring urban standards in her overseas territories up to those on the mainland. It is founded on France's *Loi d'Orientation pour la Ville* of 1991. To be sure, the policy did not exclusively target the overseas territories. Rather, they were designed to address deficient urban conditions in these territories as well as on the mainland, especially the outer suburbs. The 1991 law became *la Loi d'Orientation pour l'Aménagement et le Dévéloppement du Territoire* in 1995. Its avowed objectives are as follows (Green et al. 2001):

- Rationalize the central government's intervention to regenerate deprived areas;
- Focus intervention on severely deprived regions;
- Create partnership mechanisms to facilitate intervention of central government regional planning problems.

One year following passage of this law, the government of France under Jacques Chirac, designated 44 ZFU's. All major cities in the French West Indies, including Fort-de-France (Martinique), Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and Cayenne (French

Guiana), and Pointe-à-Pierre/Les Abymes and Base Terre (Guadaloupe) are part of the ZFU's. Through this law and related policies, the French West Indies territories have benefited exceedingly from the largesse of the French Central Government.

To be sure, urban conditions in the French West Indies are not entirely attributable to their status as integral parts of France. This is because, among other things, the territories have, albeit a limited degree of autonomy (Irazabal 2009; Njoh 2009). For instance, they are authorized to determine their own taxable income, tax credits, and an extra value-added tax. This latter is specific to French overseas territories and departments. Nevertheless, urban and other socio-economic conditions are better in these territories than within their regional peers. As integral parts of France, these territories became part of the European Union with the birth of the 'Europe without frontiers' in the 1990s. Under the Treaty of Amsterdam, the E.U. accorded the special status of "Ultra-Peripheral Regions" (UPR) to seven different E.U. regions including the French Caribbean territories. The treaty which was approved by the European Council on 16–17 June 1997, and went into force on 1 May 1999, provide E.U. funds to European overseas territories in direct proportion to the following factors: distance from mainland Europe, difficulty/challenges of their terrain, and natural environment (climate, etc). The funds are also provided in inverse proportion to the accessibility and natural resource endowment of the territories.

Thus, the French West Indies territories have tended to benefit the most not only from the largesse of France but that of the E.U. as well. The infusion of funds from the French Central Government and the E.U. has enabled the territories to undertake otherwise impossible urban and other development projects. The sheer number of these projects complicates the task of analyzing them. Consequently, this chapter focuses exclusively on the French Central Government's involvement in one specific urban development domain, namely housing. Understanding housing policy as an aspect of French urbanism in the French West Indies requires some appreciation of the broader context of French housing policy.

French Housing Policy in the Caribbean

France's contemporary housing policy is rooted in many bold actions. These actions were initiated as part of efforts to deal with the consequences of the world wars. The Second World War alone destroyed 500,000 housing units, and damaged twice as many in metropolitan France (Gustin and Dubois 2001: 194). A few years were to elapse subsequent to the conclusion of the war before the French state decided to intervene in the housing policy field. The first major intervention occurred in 1950 when the State provided funds for developing social housing. It would be recalled that this was only 4 years subsequent to the conferment of DOM-TOM status on territories in the French West Indies. In 1953, the French State took another major action by mandating employers to contribute to efforts designed to significantly increase the nation's housing stock. The State mandated that firms with more than ten employees contribute 1 % of the wage bill, also known as the

'housing 1 %' towards the construction of social housing (Gustin and Dubois 2001: 194). However, because of the relatively small size of the formal sector of the French West Indies, their housing conditions are at best only marginally improved by policies such as this.

In 1954, the French national government got more directly involved in the housing supply process by launching a building programme that was credited with the production of 12,000 new dwelling units that same year. These units were specifically designed to house homeless families or families facing other forms of housing emergencies. Three years later in 1957, the State took yet another remarkable step in the area of social housing by enacting the Enabling Act of 7 August 1957. This Act established a 5-year HLM *(l'habitations à loyer modéré)* construction programme. A major objective of this programme was to produce 300,000 housing units.

As the foregoing narrative suggests, most state efforts in the housing policy field in France during the post-World War II era were focused on resolving quantitative deficiencies in the country's housing stock. Efforts to improve the quality of this stock began in the 1970s as part of the 7th Plan (1976-1980). One noteworthy aspect of these efforts is their highly centralized nature. Only authorities in the central government in Paris were involved. An important change with respect to the level of centralization occurred with the onset of the 1980s. In 1982 and 1983, the state took steps to decentralize housing policymaking. An upshot of efforts in this vein was the requirement for communes, *départements* and regions to establish housing priorities within their respective jurisdictions and based on their individual needs and competence.

Efforts to decentralize housing policymaking have accentuated the role of local authorities in the housing policy field. This holds especially true in the Overseas departments. For instance, decentralization has enabled authorities in Martinique and Gaudeloupe to, when necessary, "call on qualified, dynamic operators that are increasingly involved in local policies and able to help with … the regeneration of town centres and insalubrious areas" (Richy 2002: 4). Also, decentralization has enabled local authorities to have,

> control over social life in the existing housing stock, particularly in a few large housing estates (but which rarely exceed 2000 housing units), with none of the large pockets of lawlessness that are commonplace in metropolitan France (Richy 2002: 4).

Furthermore, decentralization has resulted in sensitizing elected representatives and local assemblies to the nature, magnitude and complexity of the housing problem in their respective jurisdictions. Some evidence of this sensitization effort resides in the fact that relevant local authorities in the French West Indies have decided to create local land operators (Richy 2002). These operators are indispensable in on-going efforts to break the deadlock in land supply, especially over the medium term. Finally, it is in order to note the implications of recent trends toward decentralization. These have been accompanied by a considerable degree of devolution, which in turn has endowed local authorities with unprecedented powers.

The avowed aim of the national state in the housing policy field in France and its overseas dependencies has been summarized as follows (French Embassy, USA 2006: 1). "Encourage a diversified supply of housing: from detached houses to apartments, in urban and rural areas, in the social housing and private sectors." In addition, it seeks to ensure that every household is able "to find an affordable home appropriate to their needs." Furthermore, under the Besson Act of 1990, the state has the duty of guaranteeing access to housing to "any person or family experiencing peculiar difficulties, in particular owing to inadequate resources or living conditions" (Gustin and Dubois 2001: 194). One important provision of the Besson Act for the purpose of the discussion in this chapter is the requirement for administrative divisions *(départements)* such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Guiana to draw up an action plan for housing the most economically deprived members of society. As a national government requirement, the plan has to be "devised and implemented by the prefect and the president of the general council in conjunction with the local bodies' financial backers" (Gustin and Dubois 2001: 194). To realize its ambitious housing policy goals, the French government has taken a number of noteworthy actions. In addition, it has created many programmes specifically aimed at ameliorating housing conditions in all departments on the mainland and abroad. These can be discussed under the following categories (French Embassy 2006; Laferrère and Le Blanc 2007): social housing, aid to individuals, private housing stock, and employer-assisted funding.

Social Housing

The French state provides financial support for about three quarters of the 300,000 housing units produced in France annually, and through funds derived from a 5.5 % reduced value added tax (VAT) rate, contributes to the production of social housing throughout the country (French Embassy, USA 2006). As much as 65 % of all renters in France, compared to 19 % in the U.S. benefit from some form of government housing assistance (Laferrère and Le Blanc 2007). This is a testament to the dominance of the French state in the housing sector. The state is supported in its social housing efforts by a number of special operators and agencies in the private and quasi-public sectors. Most of these agencies are moderate rent agencies (or *organismes d'habitations à loyer modéré*, HLM), with a few comprising semi-public property companies (or *sociétés d'économie mixte à activité immobilière*). Social or public housing, particularly under the canopy of HLMs rose to prominence in French overseas administrative divisions in the 1960s (Condon and Ogden 1997). This was in response to the rapid rates of urbanization, which had significantly contributed to poor housing conditions *inter alia*.

Aid to Individuals

There are three major types of programmes designed to assist the social housing delivery and consumption processes in France. On the housing delivery or supply side, social housing agencies may benefit from government financial aid, particularly grants to home building companies. The objective of such assistance, officially referred to as *aide à la pièrre,* is to reduce the financial cost of construction (to the private homebuilder) and ultimately to make housing more affordable to low income groups. One weakness of the *aide à la pièrre* is the fact that it targets whole groups rather than individuals. In efforts to realize its avowed housing goals, the national state took steps to enact a number of reform measures designed to specifically redress this flaw in 1977. Prominent in this regard was the promulgation of the Housing Finance Act of that year. The Act sought to personalize government housing assistance to the poor. Thus, the 1977 Act effectively supplanted *aide à la pièrre* with *aide à la personne*. However, as Condon and Ogden (1997) observed, this reform measure was limited to metropolitan France. Therefore, housing conditions in overseas departments such as those in the French West Indies have not benefited from *aide à la personne* and concomitant programmes.

On the consumption or demand side, low-income tenants may be eligible for a special allowance from the state. This allowance—*aide personnalisée au logement, APL, or allocation logement, AL*—which is based on a tenant's disposable income, is designed to help the tenant meet the cost of rental housing. Approximately 6.3 million households benefited from housing assistance accounting for a total of about 12.09 billion Euros in 2005 (French Embassy, USA 2006: 2).

Private Housing

The French state actively promotes the growth and sustenance of the private housing market through three major approaches. The first of these comprises tax breaks to private landlords. This is on condition that the landlords agree to charge moderate rents to individuals or households. These must have an income exceeding the upper income limit for obtaining an HLM but insufficient to secure housing in the traditional private housing sector. Another approach is to provide incentives to reduce the vacant housing stock. For example, in 2000, landlords received as much as 3048.98 Euros above the ordinary ANAH (*Agence nationale pour l'amélioration de l'habitat*) subsidy for re-injecting a vacant dwelling into the market. Yet another assistance package to facilitate the housing consumption process is in the form of a special (low-interest) loan *(prêt à l'accession sociale—PAS)* to low-income families. This low-interest loan can be, and is often, combined with another special loan, an interest-free loan *(prêt à zero pour cent)*. "Around 115,000 loans of this kind are granted each year by credit institutions which have signed an agreement with the state" (French Embassy, USA 2006: 2). Finally, there is the 'home ownership

savings accounts and savings plans, which the French state has used over the years to provide tax relief to eligible individuals who take out loans to purchase homes. In addition, the state provides funds in the form of grants *(prime à l'amélioration de l'habitat)* to carry out necessary home repairs or improvements.

Employer-Assisted Housing Strategies

The French government requires employers with a staff of more than ten to operate an employee housing assistantship program. The purpose of this is to help workers secure adequate housing. Part of the state's initiatives in this vein directly involves employers in the construction process under the rubric of a program known as "employers' participation in the building effort" *(participation des employeurs à l'effort de construction)*. This program is partially funded by a 0.45 % levy on the payroll. The resulting funds are used to provide low-interest loans to employees interested in purchasing a home or as subsidies for HLM agencies involved in the social housing production process.

Some (e.g., Condon and Ogden 1997) have drawn attention to an oft-ignored fact about central government housing assistance initiatives in French overseas departments such as Guiana, Martinique and Guadeloupe. These boast a formal sector that is by far smaller and a lot more constrained than that of administrative divisions in metropolitan France. Consequently, they stand a very small chance of benefiting from housing assistance programmes that are tied to formal sector employment. Thus, it is safe to conclude that, housing conditions on the islands have not been significantly helped by state housing assistance programmes that require proof of formal employment (e.g., the low interest housing loans or *prêt à l'accession sociale*—PAS), or similar programmes whose functioning depends partially on funds from levies on the payroll (e.g., the *participation des employeurs à l'effort de construction*). Yet, programs such as these have been "crucial in facilitating the access of thousands of salaried workers and their families to social housing in mainland France since 1954" (Condon and Ogden 1997: 232, citing Condon and Ogden 1996, 1993). Geographical distance has certainly been an inconvenience in efforts to transform the French West Indies into integral parts of France. This partially explains the fact that authorities in metro-France have not been completely successful in urban modernization efforts in the region. These efforts have been compromised by difficulties associated with factors other than distance. There have been a plethora of problems resulting from other factors. Examples of these include high and sustained levels of population growth, rapid rates of urbanization, and skyrocketing annual rent charges. In addition, there have been issues with inflexible home costs and negative trends in the economies of Caribbean countries (Njoh 2009; Richy 2002).

Nevertheless, the special status of the French West Indies as DOM-TOM has had other positive effects on urbanism in the region. One such effect is the increased attention that has been accorded social housing in these territories. An avowed

objective of the national government in Paris in the late-1990s was to inject 8000 social housing units per year into the housing stock of the Overseas Departments (Richy 2002: 3). Although the government fell short of meeting its objective, it financially supported the production of as many as 7000 social housing units in 1999, 4900 in 2000 and 4942 in 2001, in the French Overseas Departments (Richy 2002: 3).

French Urbanism in West Indies: Regional Perspectives

It is clear that urban conditions in the French West Indies are better than those in other territories in the region. This is primarily because, as stated earlier, the French dependencies in this region benefit from urban policies and programs designed for Metropolitan France. Within this framework, the responsibility for urban development in mainland France or the French overseas territories belongs to the French central government. This government is in charge of all matters relating to urban policy conception and formulation. It also plays a critical role in the urban policy implementation process. The local states, including local authorities in the administrative divisions on the mainland and overseas territories or DOM, such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana are required to play a supporting role in the implementation process. Of late, the sub-national state, particularly the administrative divisions or *départements* have been given ample latitude and powers over urban planning, land use and social measures (French Embassy, USA 2006). However, the national state remains firmly in charge of such critical aspects of housing as housing finance, overseeing the activities of local authorities in the housing policy field and defining technical standards for housing development.

The involvement of the French central government notwithstanding, the French West Indies region remains in many ways, similar to other developing regions. This is especially true with respect to the region's housing problems. Dennis Conway and Robert Potter (1997) have dedicated some time to analysing these problems. They have characterized the problems to include dilapidated and overcrowded tenements, sprawling and largely uncontrolled spontaneous settlements, and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in rental housing. These problems are commonplace in the region. However, vast differences exist with respect to state efforts to address the problems in the French West Indies and other countries in the region. In this regard, the state has been directly involved in every facet of urbanism in the French West Indies. In contrast, governments in the politically independent countries in the region have been more selective with their involvement. For instance, these governments have been active in built space as little more than regulators. Even then, the problem of resource scarcity compromises their ability to fully regulate activities in built space. Hence, the growth and proliferation of unauthorized building and other activities especially in urban space throughout the region. Also, as is commonplace in developing countries, government commitment to address the housing problematic

has been limited to rhetoric. The only exceptions here are Cuba, an avowedly socialist country and Puerto Rico, a U.S. dependency.

On the contrary, the state in territories of the French West Indies has sought to improve housing conditions through strong national government policies (Conway and Porter 1997). In fact, programs such as mortgage financing that are rare in developing countries are commonplace in the French West Indies. In the recent past, the French central government has promulgated several policies that place housing at the front and center of the national agenda. Efforts in this regard have ideological overtones. The notion of housing as a basic (human) right is at the heart of this ideology.

With the exception of Cuba, any acknowledgement of housing as a basic human right has remained at the level of rhetoric. Instead, there has been a tendency to embrace a neo-liberal agenda on the part of governments in the region. This has led the state in most cases to enlist the involvement of the private sector in efforts to address urban problems. In the housing sector, this has meant, for example, privatization as opposed to the government-provisioning of housing and related services. This is in stark contrast to what obtains in the French West Indies. Here, the French central government in Paris has taken steps to directly participate in the housing policy field. The French state's role in this regard has included supplying or financing housing for all socio-economic strata. Thus, while the popular sector has been de-emphasized in other countries in the West Indies, it has enjoyed a boost in the French dependencies of the region. Accordingly, the gap that has historically separated the poor from the rich in the housing market is narrowing in the French West Indies. However, it is rapidly increasing in other countries in the region.

The urban policies in vogue in the French West Indies are influenced by a dominant ideology of the French central government. Central to this ideology, as noted earlier, is the notion that housing is a basic human right. Several pieces of legislation have been inspired by this notion. Two of these are particularly relevant for the purpose of this chapter. The first is the Act of 6 July 1989, which recognized the right to housing as a basic human right. The second is the Act of 31 May 1990, which expressly placed the responsibility of guaranteeing access to housing under the charge of the state in the name of solidarity. Resulting from this latter development has been the establishment of a special fund, namely the Housing Solidarity Fund *(FSL-Fonds de solidarité logement).* This fund works with matched funding from the central government and the local governments or administrative divisions including overseas *départements* such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana. Specifically designed to help address the housing needs of people in difficulty, this fund has benefited millions of households since it was established in 1998 (Embassy of France, USA 2006: 4).

The notion of housing as an instrument of "national solidarity" is taken very seriously in French overseas dependencies. The following quotation from a study of housing policies in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and regurgitated by Condon and Ogden (1997: 217), is only one testament to this.

> The housing sector, in the same way as health, is one of those aspects of national "solidarity" for which state intervention is of prime importance, especially in allowing many households access to a dwelling in relation to their financial means. [From (Antilla 1994: 27)].

The French state has also initiated a number of other programs designed to improve housing conditions throughout metropolitan France and the overseas departments. Prominent in this connection are programs to promote the view of towns, their suburbs and surrounding countryside as a single entity. This is what the French call *'bassin d'habitat'*. There have been efforts to articulate this view in built space as part of social housing conurbations. The first step in this direction constituted the promulgation of the Town Planning Outline Act of 1991. The Act essentially required conurbations to meet stipulated minimum quotas (depending on their sizes) of social housing. A subsequent Act, the Town Planning Outline Act of 1998, was designed to prevent exclusion. A more important objective of the Act within the context of this discussion is the fact that it urges local partners such as local authorities, landlords, and non-commercial entities to cooperate with local communes. This cooperation is undertaken under the aegis of the *Conférences Intercommunales du Logement (CIL).* The aim is to address local social housing needs.

There have also been concerted efforts to reinforce the strength of local communes. Passage of the Urban Solidarity and Renewal Act of 13 December 2000 was intended to accomplish this objective. The Act includes several provisions granting these communes the right to address the social housing needs within their respective areas of jurisdiction. A direct effect of the Act is the power it accords locally elected officials in the housing policy field. The 1991 Act had assigned local representatives a role in housing but failed to endow them with the power to make them effective. Apart from endowing the representatives with power, the 2000 Act also enhanced the authority of the French central government. It did so by making it mandatory for local communes to meet a minimum quota of social housing (20 %) by a stipulated deadline or face penalties (Embassy of France, USA 2006).

The French central government authorities have also been concerned with the issue of qualitative deficiencies. Accordingly they have taken a number of steps to ameliorate housing quality throughout France and its dependencies. In this regard, the national government has entered into partnerships with local governments in efforts to restructure the built environment. Efforts along these lines have typically included the demolition of structures, particularly buildings deemed squalid and dilapidated. The demolition initiatives have also targeted units considered to be eyesores by public authorities and societal elites. In addition, the national government, through the National Home Improvement Agency, has been assisting local governments in efforts to improve local housing conditions under OPAH *(Opérations programmées d'amélioration de l'habitat).*

Furthermore, the state has been active in encouraging professionals in the housing policy field to improve the quality of building products and processes. To contribute to efforts in this regard, the state, through the Ministry for Capital Works and Housing, has initiated a plan, the Urban Development, Building and Architecture Plan *(Plan urbanisme-construction-architecture-PUCA).* Plans such as these have

influenced urban development in French overseas dependencies such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana. These territories are further required to adhere to the French *Code de l'Urbanisme*. It is within the framework of this code that the Solidarity and Urban Renewal Law of 2001 outlines the commune system of planning (Pugh and Richardson 2005).

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has identified French urban policies in the West Indies and the problems they were designed to address. The chapter began by noting how the region's spatial structure is rooted in major aspects of its history of colonial plantation agriculture. Colonial plantation agriculture depended on the labour input of enslaved Africans. The eighteenth century witnessed a sharp and sustained growth in plantation agriculture throughout the America's. This was especially true of the West Indies, where sugar plantations had grown and proliferated in response to the global surge in the demand for sugar. Commensurate with the intensification of sugar cane plantation farming was a tremendous growth in the population of enslaved Africans. The French-speaking countries in the region constitute a special case because of their ability to deal with the urban problems arising from their unique history. Since 1946, the countries have functioned as integral parts of France as French Overseas administrative divisions *(département d'outre mer, DOM)*. Urban conditions in these territories have experienced significant improvements thanks to their special status. The activities of the French national state in the urban policy field of the dependencies have been of both the direct and indirect variety. Directly, the French government has undertaken massive public works and capital improvement projects in the dependencies. Indirectly, the government has, from time to time provided incentives to encourage the involvement of private entities in urban development projects. In the housing sector, government involvement has spread the gamut from in-cash support to regulatory measures that encourage only 'standard' or so-called modern housing structures in the urban areas. Particularly worth noting is the role of French urbanism, which has effectively ensured better urban conditions in the DOM than other polities in the West Indies.

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Chapter 5
French Urbanism in Indochina

Abstract French colonialization of Indochina, arguably the most tumultuous of all of France's colonial projects, began in 1887 and ended in 1956. It had many objectives, three of which can be considered dominant. The first was to enhance the colony's economic potential—often qualified in French as *mise en valeur*. The second was 'assimilation' or acculturating and assimilating the people of the region. Efforts to attain this latter objective yielded negative results, including the alienation of members of the native population. This led to the conception and implementation of policies to attain a third objective, namely 'association' or winning the hearts and minds of the people. This chapter identifies and discusses specific spatial and physical planning projects that French colonial authorities deployed in efforts to attain these projects.

Keywords Built space • Da Lat • Economic development • French architecture • Hanoi • Ho Chi Ming City • Public infrastructure • Saigon • Spatial order • Urban planning • Vietnam

Introduction

Analysts critical of the French colonial project in Indochina *(l'Indochine Française)* appear increasingly contemptuous of this project and those who have dared to condone it. One such analyst, Bodil Prestegaard (2011: 31) expresses this contempt in the following words.

> *Dans une terminologie soigneusement choisie, la conquête des pays est décrite comme une aventure au prix de maints sacrifices pour les Français, et la formation de «notre Empire résulte à la fois de l'esprit aventureux de nos marins et de la prudence de nos hommes d'État».*

Prestegaard is especially indignant of the word-choice of commentators such as Marguerite Duras (1914–1996), who have dared to condone this project. This is particularly evident when he stated thus (p. 31):

> *L'auteur évite avec soin d'évoquer la brutalité des conquêtes militaires en les désignant comme «notre activité» sur «des théâtres d'opérations » où finalement «La France s'installe».*

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Perhaps more troubling, Prestegaard noted, is the fact that the commentators make no effort to disguise their biased characterization of the colonial project as a whole. Instead, colonialism is seen as a matter of 'us' versus 'them.' The possessive pronouns and adjectives often employed as noted below tell only part of the story in this regard.

> *On peut aussi noter les adjectifs possessifs notre et nos, un nous collectif, qui signalent que l'oeuvre coloniale et l'empire doivent être considérés comme un acte d'héroïsme et d'un intérêt communs à tous les Français* (Prestegaard, 2011: 31).

There was even the expectation that territorial conquest initiatives would be considered an act of heroism by every French woman, man and child. Such an expectation appears, at least superficially, reasonable. However, the expectation that such initiatives would have won the approval of the natives of the conquered regions appears patently perverse, and borders on irrationality. French colonial authorities considered themselves as liberators of the oppressed. The roots of this thinking run deep in French history and are tied to what some have called a racialized concept of class (see e.g., Njoh 2008; Fredrickson 2005). Within the framework of this concept, the French are considered descendants of the Gauls, a supposedly 'inferior' and 'impure' race in contrast to the 'superior' Germanic Franks (Fredrickson 2005). According to Fredrickson, French colonial expansionists of the nineteenth century invoked this racialized conception of social class and associated it with liberation from tyranny. The mid-nineteenth century coincided with the onset of the colonial era in Indochina.

This explains French colonial authorities' tendency to rationalize their activities in the region as geared towards improving the living conditions of the natives. An examination of the activities in their entirety is outside the scope of this chapter. Instead, it focuses on those activities that succeeded in expressing French spatial and physical design theories and principles in the region's built space. The manner in which the theories and principles were expressed evolved significantly over time. These changes mirrored the evolution of ideologies and philosophies about 'racial others' in particular and the colonial project in general. The activities are discussed under three major categories, according to their avowed, and quite often, covert purposes. It is argued that the colonial initiatives in French Indochina were designed to boost France's global economic, political and cultural power. The chapter begins by presenting a compressed history of the French colonial era in the region.

Historical Background

The French colonial moment in this region began in 1858. By 1867, the French had taken control of the lower basin of the Mekong River, the southern provinces of Dai Nam (present-day Vietnam), and the Kingdom of Cambodia (Brocheux and Hemery 2009; Waibel 2004). However, there was a lull in French territorial acquisition activities between 1867 and 1882. These activities did not resume until 1882. At its

pinnacle, the Federation of French Indochina comprised three Vietnamese regions, including Tonkin (North), Annam (Central), and Cochinchina (South) as well as Cambodia. This federation was created in 1887. Laos and Guangzhouwan were added in 1893 and 1900 respectively. French colonial control of the region was interrupted briefly from March 1945 to March 1946. During this time the Japanese and Allied Military Administration, in that order administered the territory. The French resumed control of the territory from September 1946 to July 1956 when it became independent. Thus, the colonial moment in the territory under discussion in this chapter effectively began in 1887 and ended in 1956.

During this period, the colonial administrative capital of the territory was relocated three times. The first occurred in 1902 when the capital was relocated from Saigon (in Cochinchina) to Hanoi (in Tonkin). The second took place in 1939 when the capital was relocated from Hanoi to Da Lat (in Annam). The final occurred in 1945 when the capital was relocated from Da Lat back to Hanoi. A colonial map of Hanoi, which remains the capital of contemporary Vietnam appears as Fig. 5.1.

Colonial authorities are well-known for their tendency to concentrate town planning and infrastructure investment projects in colonial capital cities. French colonial authorities were no exception. It is therefore no wonder that these authorities concentrated their Indochinese infrastructure development projects in Saigon and Da Lat. Some background information on the French conquest of the Indochina is necessary to contextualize these projects. As in the case of New France, the French government and the Roman Catholic Church cooperated in many ways in the conquest of this region. Initially, it was necessary for the Catholic Church to gain access to the region. For this, King Louis XIV capitalized on his diplomatic ties with the Indochinese Emperor Trinh Trâng. With this, he was able to win access for the Catholic Church to Indochina in the early-fourteenth century (Burlette 2007). A significant portion of the little success that the Church had in converting Indochinese to Catholicism is credited to the king's efforts. The Church's contribution to the conquest came by way of its missionaries. Missionaries served as interpreters and significantly aided French colonial authorities in their efforts to penetrate and conquer the region.

The penetration occurred on many fronts, all of which served as conduits for transferring French urbanism to the region. Three of these fronts were commonplace and include the following: commerce, natural resource exploitation, and manufacturing. Commerce was one of the earliest activities in which France and other European countries were involved in the region. This was expressed in built space by trading companies and commensurate structures including warehouses and offices. The construction of these structures entailed importation of building materials, technical expertise, and funds from France. The first major French trading company entered the territory as early as 1665. The company introduced French goods in Indochina with a desire to make a profit develop a taste for French products among Indochinese. The trade in French goods was never quite successful. However, the few Indochinese who developed a taste for French products instantly gained several rungs on the local social ladder. Thus, the consumption of French goods was considered a status symbol.

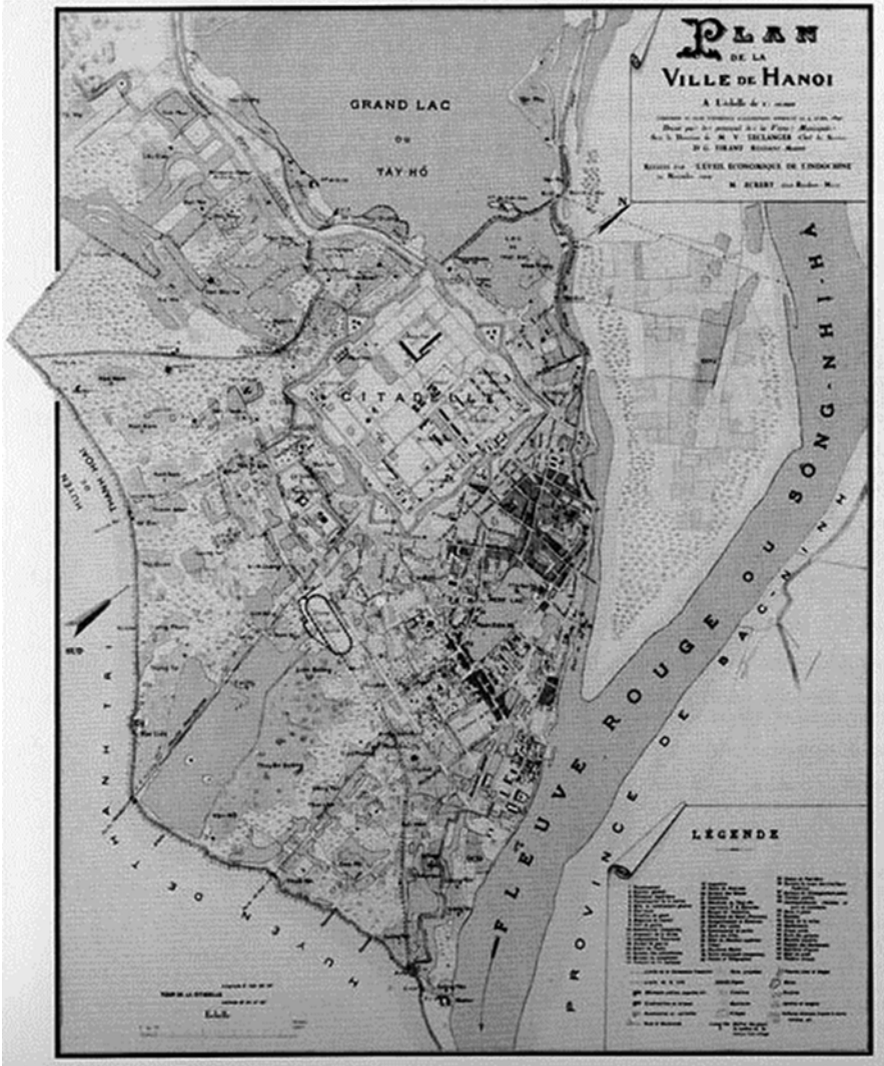

Fig. 5.1 Map of Hanoi 1890 (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hanoi_map_plan_1890.jpg)

The French also strived to dominate the natural resource sector. Here, they were involved in harvesting from the region, natural products such as tea, fruits, pepper, and minerals that were highly sought-after in Europe. Additionally, French colonial authorities were in the region's coal, tin, silver, lead, phosphate, and gold. French mining technology was necessary to access these resources. Accordingly, the authorities constructed coal mines in Quang Yen in Tonkin, gold mines in Annam Province of Song-Wan and the Nui-Kem Valley. In addition, they constructed zinc,

tin, silver, lead and phosphate mines in different parts of the region. French colonial authorities were also widely successful in the agriculture sector. This success led to the need to introduce in Indochinese built space previously unfamiliar infrastructure such as factories for the production of coconut and peanut oil, as well as the manufacture of silk, rubber, tobacco, lumber and cotton products.

French ambitious colonization initiatives in Indochina as evidenced by the above account are noteworthy. These initiatives can be best understood within the broader framework of France's effort to establish itself as a global superpower. Here, three points are worth underscoring. First, subsequent to the Peace Treaty of 1763, France had relinquished most of her North American territories to Great Britain. Consequently, she was badly in need of opportunities to regain her prestige as a global power. Indochina provided just such an opportunity. Second, France recognized the importance of raw materials as a source of politico-economic power in the era of industrialization. Indochina was considered, within the framework of France's international dominance calculus as a viable source of necessary raw materials. France needed raw materials especially to meet the demands of the industrial plants that were rapidly emerging throughout Europe. More importantly, France needed to feed its stock of rapidly growing domestic industrial plants. The power motives of France's activities in this regard were best articulated by Leroy-Beaulieu, a French government official in the following words (Burlette 2007: 22):

> Colonization is for France a matter of life and death. Either France became a great colonial Power, or in a century or two, she will be a secondary European power and will count in the world a little more that Greece or Rumania counts in Europe.

The entire French colonial project in Indochina is widely regarded as a failure. Yet, there is no denying that France went a great distance trying to transform the territory into a showcase of her ingenuity as a great architect of the built environment. As Burlette (2007: 23) noted,

> In only a few years, Indochina was transformed from an insignificant and small holding to a symbol of French prestige and honor.

Economic Development and Civil Infrastructure

France's initiatives under the economic development rubric were referred to in French colonial lexicon as *mise en valeur*. In employing this term, the French wanted to distinguish their brand of imperial capitalism from the genre pursued by other European imperial powers. Here, it is worth noting that the French were wont to present their version of imperial capitalism as compassionate. Underlying the notion of *mise en valeur* is the thinly veiled belief that French colonization benefited the colonized. As Nicola Cooper (2001: 29) explained,

> mise en valeur is a polyfunctional concept which was much cited and invoked in defence of French colonialism. Mise en valeur could be put forward as an example of the beneficial value of French colonial action, and thus served as a form of autolegitimation for imperial France.

Civil and related infrastructure in the colonies proved ideal in France's efforts to boost her global prestige and power. More importantly, civil infrastructure building projects helped France to distinguish the 'metropolitan self from the colonized other' in the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. As was the case with Italy in Libya and Ethiopia noted by Mia Fuller (1988), colonial architects and civil engineers were instrumental in these efforts. Most importantly, especially for the purpose of the present discussion, the projects served to articulate France's image as an imperial power.

Indochina provided an ideal setting for France to publicize her proclaimed wizardry in infrastructure building. The Indochinese territory constituted a blank slate. It contained no modern infrastructure. The bridges, were typically of bamboos and precarious. However, the Annamites had a sophisticated system of dykes, seawalls, storage ponds and irrigation canals. Even then, it is irrefutable that credit for Indochina's modern civil infrastructure system belongs to French military engineers.

An identification and discussion of the most prominent aspects of this system is in order. Three facts about the territory's colonial civil infrastructure projects are worth noting. First, the projects, particularly those related to railway and road construction excruciatingly strained France's slim budget of the mid-nineteenth/early-twentiethcentury. Note that France was involved in two wars—World War I and II—that almost emptied her coffers during this period. Second, the French colonial project in Indochina encountered (native) resistance of a magnitude that was at the time previously unknown in French imperial history. Finally, natural forces, including Indochina's rugged terrain and lethal diseases such as malaria and typhoid conspired to complicate any effort to effectively control the region. Despite the enormity of these challenges, France completed several noteworthy public works projects before the demise of her colonial reign in the region. If nothing else, this record constitutes a testament to the importance France attached to the need to portray herself as a global superpower. The most costly of these public works projects were in the communication domain (Thompson 1968).

Transportation infrastructure as a tool for boosting colonial power can be best understood in the context of French Indochina by first appreciating the following fact. In contrast to New France, Indochina was a colony of occupation and exploitation as opposed to a settler colony. This is what the French qualified as *une colonie d'exploitation*. Thus, all investments in the colony were meant to promote the socio-economic development of the metropole and not that of the colony. To attain her goals in this regard, French imperial authorities devised a strategy that guaranteed maximum profits at minimal cost. One aspect of this strategy entailed employing proceeds from taxes on the natives to defray partial cost of governing the colony. Another entailed the colonial government monopolizing the opium, salt, and rice alcohol trade. This trade was so lucrative that it accounted for as much as 44 % of the colonial government budget in 1920. At the same time, the metropolitan government in France directed a significant amount of human, intellectual and financial resources into the Indochinese economy. By 1940, France had invested

6.7 million francs into this economy. On this account, Indochina was second only to Algeria as the target of France's overseas investments. By the 1930s, Indochina had become a viable source for natural resources such as tea, rice, coffee, pepper, coal, zinc, tin, timber from Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos. At the beginning of the twentieth century and with the growing automobile industry in France, the rest of Europe and North America, rubber (for tire-manufacturing) emerged as a highly lucrative commodity. In response, France moved speedily to establish rubber plantations throughout Indochina. Commensurate with these plantations was the injection of physical structures such as plantation workers' housing, storage facilities, access roads, and seaports. These facilities were necessary to facilitate the functioning of the rubber production and export sector. Developing the facilities afforded French colonial civil engineers and architects an opportunity to showcase France's prowess in spatial organization and physical development. The growth of the rubber sector also resulted in creating a presence in Indochina's built sector of physical structures belonging to French commercial companies such as the tire giant, Michelin.

From the onset, French colonial authorities considered the colony exceedingly promising as a source of agricultural and other natural resources. The problem was to craft innovative strategies for evacuating and transmitting the resources to Europe where, thanks to the industrial revolution, they were in high demand. Additionally, there was the need to rapidly deploy soldiers to defend the territory against competing European powers or internal anti-colonial factions.

Both needs called for significant investments in transportation infrastructure. Colonial authorities on the ground in Indochina were therefore confronted with the problem of rationalizing the large capital outlays necessary for such infrastructure. The economic literature of that era contained a smattering of works linking investments in transportation infrastructure to development in agriculture-dependent economies. Prominent in this regard was Johann H. Von Thünen's classic study of 1826 (Von Thünen 1826). This study suggested a link between investments in transportation infrastructure and development in the agriculture sector. To be sure, Von Thünen did not make a direct connection between transportation and development. Rather, he was concerned with land use patterns, and posited transport costs as a function of the bulkiness and perishability of agricultural products. This did not stop proponents from tying investments in transportation to development. Hence, the special place that was accorded transportation within the framework of the colonial project.

French colonial authorities in Indochina appeared persuaded by the development theory of transportation investment. This is evidenced by the large chunk of the meager colonial government budget they spent on transportation infrastructure building projects alone. The leading beneficiary sector of investments in transportation infrastructure was by far the railway. This was not accidental. Rather, it was based on a careful consideration of the many advantages offered by the railway vis-à-vis other modes of transportation of that era. Four of these advantages for the era in question deserve mention (Njoh 1999). First, the railway guaranteed faster and greater returns on investments. Second, it far surpassed other competing modes of transportation with its ability to transport bulky and heavy goods at the least cost

over long distances. Third, the construction of railways required narrower paths than say, roads and highways. Finally, railway building was labour-intensive. Thus, colonial authorities were able to significantly reduce the cost of railway-building projects by forcefully enlisting the unpaid labour input of colonial subjects.

French colonial authorities recognized the importance of a functional communication network in Indochina rather early during their colonial tenure in the region. In fact, the development of transportation infrastructure was seen as a *sine qua non* for France's efforts to make Indochina a premier commercial center in Southeast Asia. By all accounts, France succeeded in this regard as attested to by the many railway lines it built, before the end of its colonial reign, in the region. The first of these comprised 77 km. It was developed between 1881 and 1886 to link the Port of Saigon to the network of rivers in the delta peninsula. The second which covered a distance of 101 km was developed in 1889. However, unlike the first railway line, which had primarily economic objectives, this one was designed to attain military objectives. One of its primordial military objectives was to ensure the rapid mobilization of armed troops to defend the fledgling colony against other real or perceived European rivals. However, as Virginia Thompson (1968) noted, French imperial authorities in the metropole appeared to have lost sight of the project's avowed objective. Thompson's intimation is founded in the fact that metropolitan authorities voiced disenchantment with the project's inability to generate profits. In fact, these authorities had charged Paul Armand Rousseau, the territory's Governor-General (January 1895–December 1896) with the task of ensuring the project's profitability. To accomplish this task, Governor Rousseau embarked on initiatives to extend the two ends of the railway. Rousseau's tenure as governor of the territory expired before these initiatives could be completed. The task of completing them fell on the shoulders of Joseph Athanase Paul Doumer who took over the territory's governorship from Rousseau, served from February 1897 to October 1902. In 1892 the Doumer colonial administration received a grant earmarked for infrastructure development from the French government. Two hundred million francs of this grant were directed toward the construction of 1056 miles of railway construction (Burlette 2007).

An even greater need for railways was recognized soon after the creation of the Indo-Chinese Union. The need had to do with linking major points within the territory as a means of making it a veritable union (Thompson 1968). Accordingly, the decision was reached to undertake a massive project designed to endow the territory with a system of railways. The system comprised four main railway lines. One line named *Trans-Indochinois* and opened in 1936, was designed to link Saigon with Hanoi. A second line, the Yunnan-fou Line, was to traverse Tonkin from Hanoi, through the Red River valley. A third line, the Transversal Line was designed to connect the Mekong to the coast of Annam thereby affording Laos access to the sea. A fourth line was to traverse the South Annamite Range. It was projected that Cambodia would be linked at one end to the Siamese network, and at the other, to Saigon via Pnom-Penh. Covering a distance of 3200 km, this project was, by any standard, ambitious.

Another infrastructure development project that can be considered ambitious even by today's standards is the 2400-m-long (i.e., 2.4 km or 1.5 miles) Doumer

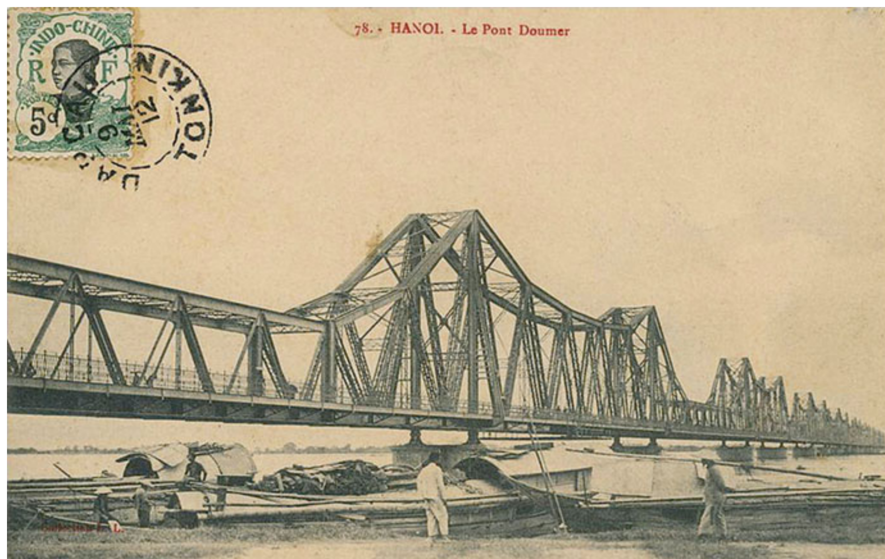

Fig. 5.2 Paul Doumer Bridge (2400 m. across the Red River), Hanoi (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASIE_-_VIET_NAM_-_TONKIN_-_HANOI_-_Le_Pont_Doumer.jpg)

Bridge across the Red River (see Fig. 5.2). The Doumer Bridge (present-day, Long Biên Bridge) was originally named after Governor-General Paul Doumer. As indicated above, this latter was the colony's chief executive officer from 1897 to 1902. Constructed by the Paris-based Dayde & Pille between 1899 and 1902, and became functional in 1903, the bridge showcased France's technological might as it was at the time one of the longest bridges in Asia. It also served a colonial-power-related strategic purpose as it helped to facilitate the control of Northern Vietnam by French colonial authorities. Furthermore, it played an important socio-economic role in the French colonial project in the region by connecting the two parts of Hanoi.

Architecture and Urban Planning

The most conspicuous evidence of French colonialism in Indochina is on the region's cityscapes. The most tangible of this evidence was inscribed around the end of Third Republic in France. This is when the expertise of French architects was summoned to impress upon 'primitive societies' in exotic foreign lands the 'ingenuity, wizardry, and creativity' of Western civilization. Le Brusq (1996: 2) expresses this in a slightly different manner.

> *Tandis que les ingénieurs apportent à la conquête leurs compétences techniques, les architectes ne tardent pas à être solicités. La communauté coloniale attend d'eux qu'ils mettent leur savoir-faire artistique au service de la présence française, désormais durable.*

It is in this context that French colonial authorities expressed two diametrically opposed policies. The first strived to forcibly stamp an indelible mark of French colonialism. The second sought to appease the indigenes by making architecture more contextually relevant. We delve further into the nature of specific projects that were designed to attain these objectives later. For now, suffice to note that Indochina provided ample opportunity for European architects and urban planners to test emerging planning theories of that time. The region was experiencing rapid growth, especially in urban areas, thanks to colonial development projects. French imperial authorities considered these projects necessary to regain the power and prestige they lost when their American colonies gained independence. They took many actions to make Indochina the object of envy by other European colonial powers. One such action involved the French president, Gaston Doumergue, enacting a decree in 1928 to expand and improve Indochinese cities and towns. Steps to implement the plan began in 1931 with the colonial cadastral unit working under the aegis of municipal authorities to expand Hanoi. The reputed French architect, Ernest Hebrard, was responsible for overseeing the project.

As mentioned earlier, the colonization of Indochina coincided with a period when the French government was facing acute resource-scarcity problems. Thus, the decision to commit scarce resources to creating and/or adorning human settlements seemed odd at least superficially. On closer inspection, the decision appeared to have been motivated by three factors. The first had to do with the need to bolster France's prestige as a preeminent European power. The second was to render a territory that was viewed as primitive and backward attractive enough to accommodate Europeans for extended periods. Prestegaard (2011: 29) articulates this second rationale more eloquently in the following words.

> *L'aménagement de ces villes a été l'objet de projets d'urbanisme ambitieux dans le but de les rendre attrayantes et modernes, dans un style d'architecture plutôt familière aux Français expatriés loin de leur mère-patrie qui pouvaient y mener un train de vie agréable.*

Finally, the French believed that their notion of civilization was or ought to be universal. This, as Nicola Cooper (2001: 29) was quick to note is rooted in France's revolutionary legacy. The many architectural and urban design projects completed in colonial Indochina constituted part of the design to articulate this belief in built space.

Efforts to spread French colonial urbanism were significantly helped by French settlers in the region. These settlers had been attracted to the region by opportunities in the plantation agricultural, mining and cognate sectors. They were wont to construct buildings that adhered stringently to the principles of *Beaux-Arts* architecture. In collaboration with the French colonial governments and other parties based in the metropole, the settlers inscribed notable landmarks in the region's built environment. Two major examples in this regard, include the Hanoi Opera House and the Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica. In addition, French colonial authorities created, from scratch, two Hill Stations, including Da Lat, Southern Vietnam and Pakse, Laos, which served as summer resort venues for Europeans in the region. I discuss these

facilities in greater detail later. For now, suffice to acknowledge the fact that the facilities remain an indelible reminder of French presence in the region.

Quite a great deal has been written on French influence on the architecture and cognate matters of Indochina. The written material include books (e.g., Jennings 2011; Cooper 2001), doctoral dissertations (e.g., Cooper 1997) and peer-reviewed articles (e.g., Jennings 2003, 2009; Cooper 2000). These works largely attribute the physical and spatial changes experienced in the region to French colonial urbanism. Evidence of this appears to be most conspicuous in Hanoi. As noted earlier, this city was designated the capital of Tonkin in 1883. It assumed a dualistic structure during the heydays of French colonialism in the region. The structure segregated built space along racial lines. With this structure, colonial authorities were able to concentrate scarce resources on service-provisioning in European enclaves while ignoring native districts. As the headquarters of the Tonkin Protectorate as of 1883, and the administrative capital of the Indochinese Union subsequent to 1902, French urban designers were bent on making it the Paris of Annam. As Waibel (2004: 33) observed, Hanoi was supposed to become a facsimile of the French capital in Southeast Asia. The rationale for attempting to duplicate French cities in foreign lands such as Indochina can be best understood within the broader framework of France's mission to civilize 'racial others'. These efforts can also be understood as part of French acculturation and assimilation initiatives.

Hanoi's street pattern was designed along the lines of a grid system. The avowed intention of this was to duplicate Haussmannian principles of street designs in the region. Apart from the tree-lined and wide boulevards, the city boasted neo-baroque style buildings. One of the prominent buildings that embodied this style is the municipal theatre (Waibel 2004: 33). A very noteworthy attribute of the building was its sheer size. The building was so large that it could accommodate more than the entire population of Europeans in the city in 1911 when it was completed. Other notable aspects of the city included the sanitary systems that were introduced to drain the city of standing and flowing bodies of water. The city was also permanently altered by the relocation of commercial activities from the River Market to the city center.

The story of these initiatives is incomplete without mention of the region's history of planned built space predating the French conquest by about a millennium. Thus, implanting physical objects of French origin in most cases entailed the destruction of some indigenous equivalents. One case in point is eloquently narrated in a contemporary web-based travel guide (Vietvision Online). The case involves the demolition of the Hanoi Citadel in 1873 under the auspices of the French explorer/naval officer-cum-colonial administrator, Francis Garnier (full name, Marie-Joseph-François Garnier, 1839–1873). The initial plan was for the citadel to be restored. This was to be in exchange for developable land along the banks of the Red River at Don Thuy by the terminus of Dao Street. This plan was later abandoned in favour of total demolition. Beginning in 1882, this time under the auspices of Henri Rivière, steps were taken to stamp an indelible French imprint on the demolished citadel's district. French military troops played an active role in these efforts. In particular, they constructed wide, well-aligned access roads in efforts to

modernize the area. On their part, French architects designed what some have characterized as "plain, unadorned buildings with verandas on all four sides" (Vietvision Online: para. 2). None of these projects can be considered more noteworthy than the drawing up and subsequent construction of a magnanimous cathedral, the St. Joseph Cathedral. This was soon followed by the construction of other colonial buildings, including military barracks, and the clearing of the land around Lake Hoan Kiem. Another casualty of efforts to rid the Indochinese built environment of any vestiges of its pre-French colonial past was the ancient Bao Thien pogoda. Michael Waibel (2004) described the structure "as one of the most important Buddhist sacred buildings in Vietnam." The building was demolished to make way for the gigantic St. Joseph Cathedral (Waibel 2004; Pedelahore 2006) (see Fig. 5.3).

French colonial authorities concentrated their human settlement renewal endeavours on everything in built space and not just monuments and other large structures. This was particularly true for the area that was known as the 36-street neighbourhood *(le Quartier de 36 rues)*. The authorities designated the area the colonial

Fig. 5.3 St. Joseph Cathedral, Hanoi (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St._Jospeh%27s_Cathedral.jpg)

capital and marked all traditional physical structures at its core for demolition. Colonial authorities viewed such structures as belonging to the outskirts of town because of their perceived unhygienic and backward nature. They earmarked the central part of the town for large-scale modern structures that were imported directly from France. Phillippe Papin (2001: 2) makes this point in the following words:

> Le mouvement qui se met alors en place voit les habitations traditionnelles, paillotes jugées peu hygiéniques et disgracieuses, rejetées vers les franges de la ville. Soucieuse de marquer le caractère pérenne de sa présence, la puissance coloniale importe un modèle d'urbanisation en damier sur les nouveaux espaces conquis au détriment des territoires ruraux – ou procède, dans les zones déjà urbanisées, à des restructurations du bâti ancien – quitte à détruire des monuments existants.

For French colonial authorities, these human settlement development and redevelopment projects were supposed to transform the built environment in Indochina into miniature versions of Paris. Their efforts in this regard were accelerated and magnified in the mid-1880s. This period marks the beginning of grand infrastructure development projects under the auspices of the Public Works section of the French Civil Service. A few projects realized as part of these initiatives stand out. They include the Governor-General's Palace in Saigon—constructed between 1866 and 1873—and a series of land reclamation and street building schemes that were undertaken in Hanoi. The palace project encountered several problems, not least of which was the high water table that necessitated an unusually deep and costly foundation (Le Brusq 1996). In addition, the complexity of the work created a need to import skilled labour from the neighbouring British colony of Hong Kong. The authorities initiated many other projects following completion of the governor-general's palace. Executed under the supervisory authority of Auguste-Henri Vildieu, these projects involved mostly colonial government administrative buildings. They included, among others, the following that were completed between 1892 and 1906 (Vietvision Online; Le Brusq):

- The Residence of the French Resident Superior of Tonkin (1911);
- the City Hall (Mairie);
- the Supreme Court (le palais de Justice);
- the Central Post Office (la Poste Centrale) (1896);
- The Army Division Headquarters (le quartier général) (1897);
- the Presidential Palace (at the time, Palace of the Governor-General) (1901–1906) (see Fig. 5.4);
- the Public Works Building (le Batiment de Travaux Publics); and
- the Central Prison (la prison centrale) (1899).

Vildieu served as the head of the Public Buildings Unit of the colony *(Service des Bâtiments Civils de l'Indochine)* from 1870 to 1906. He was an avowed and articulate opponent of the principle of utilitarian rationalism that had dominated spatial and physical planning thought in the 1880s. Although few, the projects he supervised were instrumental as conduits for transmitting French or Eurocentric concepts of spatial order to Indochina. He ensured that all buildings were orderly set and well-aligned thereby affording built space in the area a Eucentric shape, form and

Fig. 5.4 Presidential Palace, Hanoi (formerly the Governor-General's Residence or Palais du Gouverneur-General) (Circa, early-twentieth century) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tonkin_Hanoi_Palais_du_Gouverneur_General.jpg http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hanoi_cau_long_bien.jpg. PAPIN Philippe, Histoire de la ville de Hanoi, Fayard, 2001)

harmony. Also worthy of note as an element of French colonial urbanism that remains an important landmark in Hanoi is the Hanoi Opera House. The design of this structure mimics that of the Palais Garnier in Paris, and continues to be a tourist attraction in Hanoi.

The 1800s also marked another crucial period in the brief colonial history of Indochina. This is when French architects went to all lengths to transplant classic Beaux-Art-style architecture from the metropole to the region. Architects of this era were summoned to lend their expertise to efforts to assert France's perceived political power and technological superiority overseas. Their successors were charged with a completely, and almost contrasting mission—that of winning the hearts and minds of the natives. Efforts to realize this mission in the region initially went into force during the construction of the Resident Superior of Tonkin's residence in 1911. This is arguably the moment when Western rationalism and Eastern philosophy combined to create a unique blend of architecture. Unique to Indochina, this architecture laid the groundwork for what later became known as the Indochinese Architectural School of the 1930s.

In Hanoi, the land reclamation project entailed filling the ponds between Lake Hoan Kiem and the Red River. Four major street-building projects also completed in Hanoi at that time deserve special mention (Vietvision Online). The first is the Rue Paul Bert (re-named Pho Hang Khay and currently, Tranf Tien Street). This

street effectively expanded the French Quarter eastward on land gained through the land reclamation project afore-mentioned. The second, third and fourth street projects included Boulevard Rollandes (present-day, Pho Hai Ba Trung), Boulevard Catreau (today, Ly Thuong Kiet), and Boulevard Gambetta (now, Tran Hung Dao). The common thread running through these streets is their strict conformity to vintage Haussmannian dictates—broad, well-aligned and tree-flanked.

Architecture had suddenly become critical within the framework of the colonial matrix in Indochina. As a testament, some French architects moved to establish in the colony immediately before and after its pioneer governor-general was installed in 1887. Two of these architects are noteworthy especially because of their critical role in making the colony's built space in France's image. Auguste-Henri Vildieu, whom I mentioned earlier is one of these architects. The other, one of the first to establish in Indochina, is Alfred Foulhoux. Foulhoux established his base in Saigon and went on to become Director of the Bureau of Governmental Buildings in 1875 (Wright 1987). Prominent among Foulhoux's many projects in the region are the Supreme Court *(le palais de Justice de Saigon)* (1884/5), the Customs House (*l'hôtel des duanes)* (1887), the Museum *(le Musée commercial)* (1887), and the Palace of the Governor of Cochinchina (1890). The latter since became the War Museum but more popularly known as the Palace of Gia Long. It faces a street, which was christened Rue Lagrandière by French colonial authorities. However, since the demise of the French colonial era this and other streets of that era have been re-named to commemorate indigenous personalities or events.

To be sure, French architects were not exclusively under the commission of the colonial government. Rather, religious, commercial and other entities of Western extraction also sought their expertise. One notable example here is the French architect, Jules Bourard, who is credited with crafting the plan and overseeing the construction of the Notre-Dame Cathedral (1880) in Saigon. In addition, French colonial authorities are on record for creating from scratch, human settlements in their own image. Particularly noteworthy in this connection are the Da Lat exclusively European hill-top enclaves in Southern Vietnam, and Pakse in Laos.

A common attribute of the architectural artifacts that were conceived for the region by French colonial architects is their embodiment of power and authority. This was by design. As Gwendolyn Wright (1987) noted, the French architects in Indochina ensured that their works manifested as much political power in built space as an inert object could. Accordingly, the architects turned for inspiration to the works of their professional colleagues or predecessors in the metropole. For instance, Foulhoux's work in Indochina is said to have been influenced by the ideas of Claude Perrault. The latter was the architect of the Colonnade for the Louvre (Wright 1987). Gwendolyn Wright (1987) characterized the Colonnade "as a masterpiece of stately French classicism," which was designed in 1670 for the French King Louis XIV. Remarkably, what Perrault designed for Louis XIV and the structures that Foulhoux designed more than two centuries later in Indochina signaled a desire for absolute power (cf., Wright 1987). There were several instances involving the direct transplantation of designs from the metropole to French colonial Indochina. This was largely designed to devalue the achievements of the colonial

subjects especially with respect to architecture and spatial design. This transplantation was particularly rampant in colonial building projects such as those credited to Auguste-Henri Vildieu above. Le Brusq (1996: 2) elaborated on this thus:

> *Sous la conduite de l'architecte Vildieu, l'importation des modèles prend la forme de citations littérales d'édifices parisiens récents.*

He went on to bolster his assertion by invoking the case of the Hanoi Supreme Court building whose front elevation was copied directly from the Louis Duc in Dauphine Square in Paris.[1]

> *La façade du palais de Justice de Hanoi (1906) emprunte directement à celle que Louis Duc fit ériger en bordure de la place Dauphine* (Le Brusq 1996: 2).

Power Dimensions of Urban Planning in French Indochina

The residential pattern in French colonial Indochina was distinctly racially segregated. This pattern had already taken form before enactment of the official policies that resulted in the construction of exclusively European enclaves in the territory's highlands. The dichotomous nature of this pattern is succinctly captured by Prestegaard (2011). Prestegaard attributed three major characteristics to the distribution of the French population in the colony. First, they were typically concentrated in the extreme northern and southern portions of the peninsular. Second, they were essentially based in urban areas, especially the territory's three largest cities, namely Hanoi, Haiphong, and Saigon. Finally, they were typically employed in the colonial civil service or the military.

This dichotomy was duplicated in the two major regions, the northern and southern portions of the peninsula. In this case, Europeans were typically located in the urban milieu while members of the indigenous population could be found in the villages. This should however, not be taken to mean that absolutely no members of the native population were based in the urban center. No urban economy has ever survived without individuals functioning at all levels. Thus, members of the native population were needed, and could be found providing the labour power that was required to keep the colonial urban economy functioning. It is also true that the rural areas were not completely without Europeans. Certainly, one could find a few Europeans serving as plantation foremen, missionaries and other capacities in rural areas.

The dualistic nature of the population distribution schema in colonial Indochina existed not only at the regional or macro-level. Rather, it was also clearly visible at the micro-level, especially in the cities. Here, the natives were typically relegated to the outskirts or urban fringes while the French and other Europeans occupied the

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[1] The Louis Duc alluded by Arnauld Le Brusq above is Joseph-Louis Duc (1802–1879), the architect who was tasked with rebuilding the Supreme Court (Palais de Justice) in Paris in the nineteenth century. The monumental building was originally constructed in the thirteenth century.

central areas. The difference between the Europeans and natives was expressed not only in geographic terms but also, and more consequentially, in terms of basic service provisioning. Prestegaard (2011: 28) drew attention to one case in point. It relates to Saigon, when as late as by 1937, basic services were available only in the urban core, which is the European district. This left as much as 70 % of the peri-urban population, comprising the natives, without access to such services.

Spatial Order and Built Space

Modernizing built space was an avowed aim of the French colonial project in Indochina. Part of the modernization initiative entailed encouraging urbanization. The equation of urbanization with modernity has roots that run deep in Western ethos. Louis Wirth's (1938) classical piece on urbanization as a way of life is among the first to introduce this link in academic discourse. What is distinctively modern in Western civilization, Wirth (1938: 1) had opined, "is best signalized by the growth of great cities." As a concept of centrality in Western ethos, modernization is inextricably intertwined with industrialization and the sociological process of rationalization. Rationalization itself is often viewed as an element of progressive changes that occurred under the umbrella of the Enlightenment movement. This movement emerged in England in the seventeenth/eighteenth century. The movement possessed three main features that can be discussed under the following categories: the power of reason over ignorance; the power of order over disorder and the power of science over superstition (Njoh 2013). French spatial design projects overseas were largely motivated by these ideals and propelled by their avowed mission to civilize 'racial others' *(la mission civilisatrice)*. In Indochina, French architects and spatial designers proceeded to design plans requiring adherence to a strictly Eurocentric moral order for all urban residents.

These plans were part of the broader French colonial enterprise in the region. The enterprise as a whole ran into a number of problems foremost among which were the following:

- finding qualified Frenchmen with the ability and willingness to live and work in the region;
- the adverse climatic, topographic and cultural characteristics of the region;
- lethal diseases typical of tropical regions; and
- financial difficulties.

Colonial authorities recognized these problems and believed in the ability of modernist urban planning to craft the strategies necessary for addressing them.

This belief was rooted in developments in modernist planning in the metropole. Urban planning in eighteenth/nineteenth century Europe had presented itself as a profession capable of promoting a healthy, efficient and functional built environment. Furthermore, it claimed an ability to synthesize historical and natural elements 'into a representable object—the planned city as a regulator of modern

society' (Rabinow 1988: 360–361). French planners and others with design backgrounds, especially graduates of the *Ecole de Beaux Arts*, had come to be regarded as leading authorities on modern urbanism. These planners, with Tony Garnier being the best-known, are credited with articulating the principles of modern urbanism in France between 1899 and 1909 (Rabinow 1988). Paul Rabinow (1988) identified some major projects for which these architects/planners are best-known. Prominent among them are Garnier's renowned *cité industrielle*, Henri Prost's construction of Constantinople, and Ernest Hebrard's proposal for a universal world center, a center of science, art and industry. These three prize-winning architects/planners are important for the purpose of the present discussion particularly because of their roles in French colonial urbanism. Henri Prost, who is credited with the first regional plan for Paris, went on to lead urban planning activities in different capacities in Morocco and Istanbul. Tony Garnier's principles of urbanism influenced many French colonial planning activities in Asia and Africa. Ernest Hebrard was instrumental in socialist Garden City planning initiatives and went on to serve as chief planner in Thessalonika and Indochina.

A more intense focus on the work of Ernest Hebrard in Indochina is in order. Such a focus can shed light on how French urban planning expertise was employed to address political, socio-economic, cultural, and physical problems in the region. An archaeologist, architect and urban planner, Hebrard (1875–1933), arrived Indochina at the beginning of the 1920s. He was appointed the colony's Director of Architecture and Urban Planning *(directeur du service central d'architecture et d'urbanisme)* for Indochina in 1923. Once in office, Hebrard undertook a number of micro-level and macro-level projects. Most notably in the former connection are the design and/or construction of the *Institut Pasteur* (1930), and the *Musée Louis Finot* of the *Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient* in Hanoi (1931). He was reputed for his work in efforts to render the colonial project more palatable for indigenous populations in colonized territories. This entailed, among other things, crafting colonial policies that were considerate of the sensibilities of indigenous populations in these territories. He pioneered architectural schemes that incorporated elements of Indochinese art resulting in a syncretic style that was uniquely Indochinese. Efforts in this vein fell under the umbrella of what came to be known as 'associationist colonial policies.' What Hebrard went about instituting as part of these efforts, was the product of a careful study of local building craft, art, and practices not confined to Indochina but belonging to the wider Asian and Indian region.

As Hông Nga (2010) describes this,

> *Il crée le "style indochinois" qui résulte d'une observation minutieuse des motifs et équilibres architecturaux traditionnels développés en Indochine, au sens large, c'est-à-dire de l'Inde à la Chine.*

Notably among the buildings in which Hebrard incorporated local Indochinese features are the following:

- the governor-general's palace (currently, the presidential palace) (1901–1905) (see Fig. 5.4);
- the deputy governor-general's residence (1902–1904);

- the central prisons (1896–1899);
- the police headquarters in Tonkin, which later became the police headquarters for Hanoi (1914–1915);
- the Finance Building, which later became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1925–1928);
- the girls' higher primary school, which became the Ministry of Justice (1918); and
- the University of Indochina, which became the Hanoi Polytechnique (1941).

Arguably the most remarkable of Hebrard's projects in Indochina is the Da Lat (or ĐàLạt) City project. The project is noteworthy not only for its monumental size. It is more remarkable for its role within the broader scope of the French colonial project in Indochina. The project constitutes the focus of many contemporary works on French colonial urbanism. Foremost in this regard are the many pieces by Eric Jennings, the doyen of French colonial Indochina (see e.g., Jennings 2003, 2009, 2011). Nicola Cooper's (2001) chapter on 'colonial anxieties' provides a rich discussion of this city.

The idea to establish Da Lat City as the capital of French colonial Indochina was conceived and seriously entertained during the mid-1800s. In 1897, Governor Paul Doumer gave official orders to lay the foundation stone for this city. The specific location for the city was identified as the Lang Bian plateau, which was accessible through rugged hilly terrain. The aim was to create an exclusive European enclave up the hill as far away as possible from settlements of members of the native population. By so doing, Doumer had effectively created the French colonial establishment's own version of a hill station in Asia. Here, we hasten to note that more than three decades earlier, the British had already established a number of hill stations in India. For instance, Panchgani, one of British colonial India's notable hill stations was founded by Lord John Chesson in 1860 (Panchgani online). The British had employed health reasons to rationalize their decision to employ scarce resource to create costly exclusive European enclaves on hilltops. In fact, the British hill stations also went under the name Hill Sanatorium.

The British could be forgiven for erroneously attributing therapeutic value to altitude in the seventeenth/eighteenth century. After all, the prevailing medical scientific knowledge of the time incriminated 'bad air' and 'wetlands' as leading sources of lethal diseases. Malaria, which previously went under such appellations as 'jungle fever' and 'swamp fever' was mistakenly considered to emanate from wet ground (Frenkel and Western 1988). Consequently, colonial authorities believed that locating human settlements on hilltops constituted a prophylaxis against lethal diseases. This, the argument went on, is because such sites were dry and windy. This argument and underlying belief are in concert with the miasmatic disease theory. This theory excessively weighted environmental factors such as contaminated water, foul air and unhygienic conditions as disease vectors. To be sure, environmental factors were at the root of some, but not all of the lethal diseases of that era. Yet, there was a tendency to attribute all diseases to these factors. In fact, miasma theory was used to partially justify the renovation works that Baron Georges-Eugène

Haussmann executed in Paris between 1853 and 1870 under Napoleon III. At the time the cholera outbreak that had wreaked havoc in London some years earlier had been attributed to bad air.

By the mid-1800s, the miasmatic theory of disease transmission was already being questioned in the medical scientific community. The groundbreaking works of John Snow in England, Fillipo Pacini in Italy and Louis Pasteur in France, to name just a few, had undermined the tenability of miasmatic theory. Instead, these scientists had traced most lethal diseases of the time to causes other than environmental factors. In 1854, Fillipo Pacini had identified the bacteria (bacillus) responsible for cholera (Vibrio cholera). A year later, John Snow argued that cholera was not an airborne disease (UCLA Online). Rather, he contended, it could either be ingested or transmitted from person to person. On his part, Louis Pasteur (1880) conducted a series of experiments between 1860 and 1864, which uncovered further evidence challenging the miasmatic theory while supporting germ and cognate theories.

The fact that the foregoing and other studies/discoveries predated efforts to plant Da Lat City, further puts to question the motives behind these efforts. Many analysts appear persuaded by the argument that the choice of a hilltop for Da Lat was motivated by a desire to promote public health. For instance, Jennings (2009: 2) would have us believe that the Da Lat hill station was born of a need to safeguard the health of Europeans in Indochina's tropical setting. Furthermore, he intimated, a climatically temperate milieu was necessary to facilitate attainment of this objective. On her part, Nicola Cooper (2001: 149–150) contended that the plans for Da Lat, especially those that were crafted by Ernest Hebrard, displayed 'an obsession with health and hygiene.' This obsession, she argued was not unique to Da Lat. Rather,

> It is present in much writing and thought on France's colonies. An abundance of health and hygiene manuals proliferated during this period, which was also marked in Indochina by the construction of several further sanatoria for the metropolitan and European populations.[2]

Cooper was also quick to hint at one plausible motivation for establishing sanatoria such as Da Lat on the part of French colonial authorities. The motivation was fueled by the anxieties colonialists harboured once they found themselves in foreign lands. Elements of this motivation can be summarized to include 'fears of contamination by association and proximity; anxieties over difference and the integrity of the colonial body' (Cooper 2001: 145). Taken together, these fears symptomized a larger concern with a fundamental fact. The fact is that the knowledge of colonial authorities about the foreign lands they colonized was by far inferior to that of the natives of those lands. Recognizing knowledge as power, colonial authorities understood they had lost some of their perceived power over 'racial others' once in foreign lands.

[2] Da Lat was not the only Sanatorium developed by French colonial authorities in Indochina. They are credited with two more of these sanatoria, namely Bokkor in Cambodia (1925) and Tam-Dao in Tonkin (1905).

To regain some of this ground, colonial authorities proceeded to device strategies capable of intimidating the natives. The creation of Da Lat embodied two of these strategies. One had to do with the choice of the city's altitude and the other was tied to its grandiose spatial development blueprint. It is informative to examine the location, particularly the rugged nature of the terrain leading there before discussing the altitude's implication for power. The road leading to the city was literally etched into rocky, tedious and rugged terrain. The resultant is a carefully built highway that meanders almost endlessly for several kilometers up a series of steep hills. French colonial authorities believed that, if nothing else, such a feat of engineering served as an indisputable testament of France's technological might. As for the altitude, it is important to note that this feature has always been instrumental as a symbol of power in French ethos. Da Lat was planned as a capital city. In fact, from 1937 to 1947, it was considered better suited than all competing locales as the Indochinese federation's capital (Jennings 2009). Thus, the city's altitude, which dwarfed other proximate areas, was supposed to endow it with the genre of power befitting of a capital. Altitude also embodied power of the non-political order. With its temperate climate, considered to approximate conditions in metropolitan France, Da Lat's altitude endowed it with many positive qualities. These qualities, particularly its airiness, serenity and tranquility made it ideal as a place for Europeans in the colony to retreat, rest and rejuvenate themselves. Cooper (1997: 77–78) characterizes the raison d'être of Da Lat more cogently:

> Dalat was designed as a Summer seat of government, and a retreat for the metropolitan elite. It was conceived as a highly controlled environment Dalat was intended to inspire governmental efficiency, high-minded leisure, the health of body and mind, through its site and its design.

The elegant spatial plan as crafted by Ernest Hebrard had two purposes both of which are tied to France's power ambitions of the eighteenth/nineteenth century. For French colonial authorities, Indochina provided an opportunity to test many of the spatial theories that had been developed in nineteenth century Europe. The plan also afforded the authorities an opportunity to showcase French, and by implication, Eurocentric notions of spatial order. The highly compartmentalized land use schemata embodied in the Da Lat plan constituted part of efforts in this connection. The compartmentalization scheme carved out five specific zones designed to serve the following respective purposes (Cooper 2001: 147): administration, residential, recreation, commerce and industry. This compartmentalization schema has its roots in Europe. However, one feature of Hebrard's plan for Da Lat, namely racial segregation was, at least at that time, without any precedent in Europe. The plan stipulated the physical or geographical separation of European districts from those of members of the indigenous population.

Manipulating topography as Hebrard and his collaborators did in the case of Da Lat exemplified the use of planning expertise as a tool of power in a Foucaultian sense (see e.g., Foucault 1980, 1984, 2000). In his treatise on *Space, Knowledge and Power* Foucault (1984) focalized on space and its link to power. He articulated the

ease with which space can be, and is often, manipulated by the powerful to complement instruments of control, surveillance and domination of the controlled.

In a general sense, power can be defined as the ability to influence people's behavior. Behavior modification was in fact one level on which Da Lat's modernist plan registered the most success. It was successful in regulating and controlling the behavior of the city's residents particularly in terms of what they could do, when and where. With their background in architecture and spatial design, Hebrard and his collaborators were able to draw up a master plan *(plan directeur)* that required specialized knowledge to understand. Such knowledge invariably constituted a source of power in and of itself. This was particularly true in the case of Da Lat where planning knowledge and ideology were employed in tandem to attain badly needed objectives of the colonizer vis-à-vis the colonized. For instance, racial segregation employed to maintain a safe distance between these two entities, was incorporated into the plan to produce a racialized hierarchical social pecking order. This made the French and other Europeans considerably more powerful than members of the native population. From this vantage point, modernist urban planning was employed as a tool to contain and subdue this population (cf., Cooper 2001).

This use of planning expertise essentially employed domination with a view to facilitating attainment of other objectives of the colonial project. However, over time, colonial authorities came to realize that bullying and domination tactics served mainly to antagonize and alienate members of the native population. Such tactics spelled doom for the colonial enterprise. French imperial authorities in the metropole had come to realize this problematic. Accordingly, they issued directives to field officials in the colonies to eschew previous practices that strived to forcibly stamp a French presence on the landscape of the colonies. Instead French colonial architects, planners, engineers and others were instructed to device strategies capable of winning the hearts and minds of the colonized. Consequently, architects embarked on novel projects that no longer emphasized the classic themes inherent in works straight from the Beaux-Arts tradition. Instead, they began exploring means of incorporating vintage Indochinese elements, and notions of artistic expression.

This colonial policy of association as opposed to domination was, in theory, an acknowledgement of the indigenous culture and tradition of colonized societies. It was supposed to constitute an expression of respect and tolerance for the culture of 'racial others'. However, in practice, it strived to achieve goals and objectives strikingly resembling those of their domination counterparts. In fact, 'colonial associationist policies' spelled more doom for the colonized societies than the 'domination' alternatives. In contrast to the latter, the former brand of policies was duplicitous and disingenuous. The term 'quasi-deceptive' has also been employed to characterize these policies. In justifying her use of this term, Cooper (2001) points to the covert aim of French colonial urbanism in Indochina. This aim was to maintain in a less overt manner the control that had been ensured through military rule in the territory. Thus, urbanism proved to be a portent tool for consolidating political power in the region. It is therefore safe to conclude that French urbanism's aesthetic role was only secondary and not primordial.

Concluding Remarks

The French colonial enterprise in Indochina can be discussed under three overlapping categories corresponding with their primary objectives. The first comprises the projects that were intended to enhance the colony's economic potential—often qualified in French as *mise en valeur*. The bridges, roads, and factories that French colonial authorities developed in the region fall under this category. The second includes policies that were designed to accomplish assimilationist objectives and the third comprised those that sought to attain associationist goals. In terms of their impact, policies in these two latter categories must be seen as the same wine in different bottles. Although often masked as policies designed to benefit Indochinese, the policies were, in fact, designed to largely enhance attainment of the French colonial project. Thus, the image of a quid pro quo or bilateral relationship between France and Indochina that French colonial authorities painted was false. In fact some have gone so far as to characterize the relationship as exploitative on the part of France. In the case of Vietnam for instance, Auguste Perret (2011, para 1) contends thus:

> La relation entre la France et ses colonies était un système d'oppression mal masqué par les efforts de l'administration coloniale de présenter une façade d'une relation réciproquement bénéfique.

Assimilationist policies were often manifested in the form of grand structures of exaggerated scale such as the colonial government buildings. These structures constituted an expression of power—powerful symbols of French wealth and technological superiority. As symbols of power they were supposed to be imposing and intimidating thereby passively mitigating potential resistance or unrest on the part of the natives. To develop these structures necessitated the destruction of several indigenous Indochinese ancient buildings. The aim for French colonial authorities, was to supplant what they saw as the 'primitive and backward Indochinese physical structures' with the 'modern varieties' of the French. However, the French buildings and other structures that replaced the destroyed units served the needs/interest of the French and not those of the natives. Indochinese built space was afforded a new look conforming to the Beaux-Arts and Haussmannian tradition. Many major colonial government buildings in French Indochina were replicas of well-known structures in France.

The third category of colonial policies included those often characterized as associationist. These had the avowed purpose of recognizing and preserving important aspects of Indochinese culture in physical and spatial structures. In theory, the policies were supposed to develop social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and cognate facilities to benefit Indochinese. Thus, it is easy to consider the policies as a gesture of goodwill by French colonial authorities towards the native Indochinese. However, upon closer scrutiny one finds that their aim was to camouflage the duplicitous and perfidious intentions of the French colonial project. Paradoxically, associationist policies were far less costly than military force in efforts to attain critical goals of this project in the region.

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Chapter 6
French Urbanism in the Middle East

Abstract While only seldom mentioned, France has always played an active role in efforts to shape the spatial and physical structures of the Middle East. This does not imply the presence of large-scale spatial or physical projects of the genre found in other locales with a history of French control. One reason for this is the fact that the French did not view the Middle-East as the valuable prize of colonization that other regions such as Indochina and Africa were. Another reason is the fact that the Middle-East has a rich history of human settlements in particular and built space in general that predated the French colonial enterprise. Nevertheless, marks of French urbanism are difficult to miss in the region. This chapter discusses the genesis and evolution of the most conspicuous of these marks.

Keywords Aleppo • Ancient cities • Ankara • Barriers • Beirut • Damascus • Diffusion of French urbanism • French colonial urbanism • Haifa • Istanbul • Middle-East • Tel Aviv

Introduction

Although seldom mentioned, France has had a long and sustained presence as a dominant European power in the Middle East. For instance, France has maintained regular communication links with Syria since the Roman times (M.B. and H.G.L. 1940). As a leader during the Crusades, France constructed many castles in Syria that survived into the country's modern history. However, it must be noted that until the nineteenth century France's presence and activities in the region were mostly informal. In addition, the activities exhibited little ambition for territorial conquest.

This changed in the 1900s, particularly during the period spanning the world wars. This was a significant moment in French presence in the Middle-East. Two countries in the region, Syria and Lebanon, came under French rule as League of Nations Mandate Territories after World War I. The countries became independent during the course of World War II. During the thirteen or so years between the wars, France managed to assert itself as the main protector of Christianity in the two countries. Her efforts in this regard were manifested in built space through the

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construction of churches, cathedrals and mission schools. This latter is very important in the context of the present discussion. Schools served as an important conduit for the transmission of one element of French urbanism abroad, namely the French language. French was the language of urbanites or individuals the French called *'les evolués.'* Consequently, as previous analysts have noted, "the French language and French culture have long been important elements in the development of Lebanon especially and of Syria to a lesser extent" (M.B. and H.G.L. 1940: 842).

French influence on built space has not been limited to the countries that were part of the French empire. Rather, as this chapter shows, visible traces of French urbanism are present in countries with disparate histories, political economies and ideological leanings in the region. Yet, it is misleading to contend that efforts to plant elements of French urbanism in the Middle-East went hitch-free. Two major categories of forces were at play during the French colonial era in the region. The one comprises forces that sought to protect the region's purity by resisting any foreign intrusion in all facets of the region's life, including urbanization. The other was made of forces orchestrated by French colonial authorities bent on succeeding where their predecessors had failed with respect to empire-building. These complex and diametrically opposed set of forces explain the ebb and flow in successive attempts to diffuse French urbanism in the region. However, there is a lacuna in knowledge of the forces and how they interplayed to produce the region's contemporary built environment. This chapter seeks to contribute to efforts addressed to bridging this gulf. It begins in the next section by identifying and discussing the barriers and opportunities that French urban planners and architects encountered in the region.

Barriers and Opportunities for French Colonial Urbanism

In the Middle-East, unlike elsewhere in their colonial empire, the French found no tabula rasa upon which to inscribe French notions of urbanism. Once in the Middle-East, the French soon realized that actualizing their civilizing mission through the [re] structuring of spatial order would prove excruciatingly difficult. Three factors lurked at the root of this quandary for the French. First, most of the buildable land in the region was already occupied. More importantly, human settlements in the region date back to antiquity. The Citadel of Aleppo in Syria, for instance, is reputed as one of the largest (if not the largest) and oldest in the world (see Fig. 6.1). Its usage as a fortified palace dates back to at least the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE.

Second, the region lays claim to a rich and profound history of civilization. Third, the region has always been inhabited by people with a sense of pride, determination and attachment to their indigenous tradition. The latter attribute takes on a unique identity in the region. This is because the distinction between religion and politics in the Middle-East is blurred. This feature of the region's identity is difficult to miss in the architecture and spatial structure of its cities. As Lebon (1970: 179)

Fig. 6.1 The Citadel in Aleppo, Syria (dating back to the Mid-3rd Millennium BCE) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Citadel_of_Aleppo_Syria_panoramic.jpg)

noted, the traditional cities of the region "possessed common features of planning and architecture, arising from the needs, customs, laws, economy and aesthetic principles of Muslim society."

As a polity, the Middle-East lays a claim to political fame that is difficult to challenge. Note that the region, including most of North Africa, was part of the Great Ottoman Empire. During its heydays (circa, 1299–1453) the empire had succeeded in extending its suzerainty over parts of Southern Europe and Asia Minor. The region's experience as a dominant power inspired resistance to efforts to supplant its indigenous spatial and physical structures with Eurocentric varieties. Also worthy of note is the fact that the region is home to some of the world's oldest organized and meticulously-planned human settlements. The region's profound human settlement history partially explains its resistance to France's efforts to articulate power in its built space.

Yet, the Middle-East contains conspicuous and indelible traces of French urbanism. A number of factors conspired to facilitate French input in architectural and planning endeavours in the region. First, there was the League of Nations' decision to place France in charge of Syria and Lebanon as Mandate Territories as part of the outcome of World War I. As Mandate Territories, the two countries were, for all practical purposes, part of the French colonial empire. Thus, France, and by extension, French planners/architects considered it their duty to 'modernize' both countries. Second, French presence in the region occurred on the heels of a number of events that had drawn global attention to French urban planners. Prominent among these were a number of international spatial design competitions in which French designers had emerged victorious. More importantly, French designers were increasingly winning contracts to plan major cities around the world. For instance, Henri Prost won the contract to plan the City of Antwerp in Belgium in 1910. Six years prior, Leon Jaussely had won the first prize in the competition to plan Barcelona in 1904. Yet another Frenchman, André Bérard was the winner of the contract to plan

Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1906. Apart from their reputation for winning international planning competitions and contracts, planners with French backgrounds, such as Le Corbusier, Eugène Haussmann, and Alfred Agaché were considered leading authorities on architecture and spatial planning throughout the world. We discussed the influence of these latter on built space in Latin America in Chap. 3. Third, political and cultural leaders in the Middle-East were allured by the structure and aesthetic appeal of Western European capital cities. Consequently, they wanted capital cities in the region to replicate the European model. Finally, there is the region's proximity to Western Europe. This made the region too attractive as a venue for testing the tenability of new modernist planning theories. Emerging in the late-nineteenth century, these theories were advertised as essential elements in the Western global conquest and domination toolbox. The remainder of this chapter shows how French spatial designers expressed these elements in the built space of the Middle-East. Initially, it paints an image of the region as the home of the world's oldest organized human settlements.

French Urbanism in Ancient Cities

Archaeological findings have consistently identified the Middle-East and North Africa as home to some of the world's oldest cities (UN-Habitat 2009). Particularly noteworthy for their meticulous and sophisticated designs are the ancient cities of Old Jericho, Uruk, Catal Huyuk, Memphis and Hierakonopolis. The site of Old Jericho, believed to be the world's oldest city, is in present-day Israel. Archaeologists have identified a site south of contemporary Jericho and just to the north of the Dead Sea as the true location of Old Jericho. The ancient Mesopotamian city of Uruk was located along the Euphrates River, some 155 miles (about 248 km) south of Bagdad in present-day Iraq. With an area of 1,100 acres and a population of at least 50,000, the city was the largest in the world during its time (Macionis and Parrillo 2004). Elements of the city's sophisticated design structure included ziggurats, cemeteries, temples and a six-mile (i.e. 10 km) surrounding fortification ramp. Catal Huyuk was located in present-day Turkey. With an area of 32 acres, Catal Huyuk was a lot smaller than Uruk but nonetheless politically powerful. A few of the ancient cities survived and constitute part of the built environment in the region today. For example, the nucleus around which contemporary Istanbul in Turkey has developed is an ancient city. The ancient city played a dominant role in the region's politico-economic and social evolution. It was the seat of government for three of the region's historic empires, including the Eastern Roman Empire (324–395 CE), the Byzantine Empire (395–1453 CE), and the Ottoman Empire (1453–1923 CE). Memphis and Hierakonopolis, were established in 3100 BCE during the reign of Menes, the first paramount pharaoh of a united Egypt. The ancient city of Hierakonopolis is best-remembered for its role as the cultural, political and religious capital of Upper Egypt from about 3200–3100 BCE. On its part, Memphis, which was established in 2925 BCE, is best-known as the capital of ancient Egypt

whilst a united polity under King Menes (Memphis 2013). The ruins of this city in its ancient form can be found south of the River Nile delta, about 15 miles (24 km) south of present-day Cairo (Ibid, para. 1). The region also served as the home of a number of other ancient cities that do not pre-date the Common Era. One example, the ancient city of Carthage, comes to mind. The site of Carthage, which was founded in the seventh century, has been identified as lying just 9.3 miles (15 km) from present-day Tunis in Tunisia (Finlay and Paddison 1986).

Diffusion of French Urbanism to the Middle-East

French urbanism as manifested through monumental projects in built space is relatively scanty in the Middle-East. This paucity of large-scale projects of the genre found in Indochina is easy to explain. The French did not view the Middle-East as the valuable prize of colonialism that Indochina was. In fact, the French had very little incentive to colonize the Middle-East, which was not reputed for its rich oil fields until later in the twentieth century (Macionis and Parrillo 2004). Here, it is necessary to note that the first discovery of oil in the region was made in Persia in 1908. The second finding was in Saudi Arabia 30 years later in 1938. Thus, early European incursions in the region were not driven by a desire to tap raw materials necessary as inputs for Europe's industrial machinery. Rather, they were motivated by military strategic reasons and the desire to find an easy passage to the orient. Notwithstanding, the French succeeded in significantly influencing the region's urbanism.

France's entry as a formal power in the Middle-East did not begin until the twentieth century. She signed the first major agreement placing her squarely at heart of the region's political stage on December 23, 1920. Signed between France and Britain, this agreement sought to formalize the Syrian/Palestinian boundary. On October 20, the following year, France reached an agreement with Turkey on the northern boundary of the mandated territory. This latter agreement was signed by French politician-cum-diplomat, Henri Franklin-Bouillon (1870–1937) for France, and the Turkish nationalist foreign minister, Yusuf Kemal Bey (1878–1969) for Turkey. The agreement is known as the Treaty of Ankara [France-Turkey (1921)]. It formalized France's recognition of the Grand National Assembly and not the government of the Ottoman sultan, Mehmed VI as the sovereign power in Turkey. However, none of the earlier agreements was as important as the one France signed with the League of Nations, forerunner to the United Nations, on September 29, 1923. An outcome of World War I, the agreement, endowed France with trusteeship powers in the region.

For a long time, the spatial and physical structures of the Middle-East resulted from endogenous forces. In fact, during the Ottoman period, there was a conscious effort to resist and reject outright, foreign urban and physical design ideas. The region's leaders were particularly suspicious, retiscent, and apprehensive of Western

influence. Consequently, they had made efforts to actively discourage indigenous architects and urban planners from imitating their Western counterparts (UN-Habitat 2009). The fact that traces of European urbanism were visible in the region as early as the nineteenth century suggests that these efforts were unsuccessful. Paradoxically, one of the earliest cities to manifest Western influence in the region is Istanbul. To understand this paradox it must be understood that Istanbul served as the seat of government of the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century. Here, we hasten to note that the Ottoman Empire manifested an acute disdain for the West.

However, things changed as of the latter part of the nineteenth century. This period marked the region's entry into what may be characterized as a new course of development based on principles conceived and shepherded by Europeans. Recall that the same period coincided with the peak of the second wave of European colonization initiatives. With the re-emergence of European colonialism, the region's domestic and international affairs were increasingly controlled by Europe. As Box 6.1 shows, some of the urban planning recommendations of Europeans were vehemently rejected in the region.

Turkey was never formally colonized by a European power. However, it served as the filter and facilitating center for the transmission of Western urban design and architectural elements to the region (Kiet Online). No sooner had Turkey assumed this position than it began to 'Westernize' its own architecture. Western models of architecture and urban design had come to be identified with modernization. Soon, a movement whose purpose was to promote westernization of spatial and physical structures emerged in the region. Prominent in this movement were French and other European architects and urban planners such as Le Corbusier, Loos, Gropius, and van der Rohe (Kiet Online). A notable attribute of this movement was its avowed

Box 6.1: Failure to Contextualize French Urbanism as Grounds for Its Rejection in the Middle East

In 1932, two Frenchmen, Alfred Agaché and Henri Prost, and one German, Hermann Ehlgotz, were invited to submit proposals for a modern plan for Istanbul. All of these planners, including Jacques Henri Lambert, who was invited to replace Henri Prost who declined the invitation, were accomplished urban planners. All of the proposals were bent on modernizing the ancient city. With the exception of Ehlgotz's, all of the proposals were rejected because they were radical and inattentive to the city's traditional urban character. In contrast, Ehlgotz sought to 'conserve the Oriental and Turkish civilization in Istanbul" (Bilsel 2011: 102). To achieve this goal, his proposal recommended regulations specifically aimed at preserving the city's traditional urban structure and architectural monuments. Precisely because of its attentiveness to the preservation of indigenous tradition and culture, Ehlgotz's proposal was selected for implementation.

Source: Bilsel (2011).

rejection of any efforts to employ architecture as an instrument for expressing cultural identity. Instead they emphasized the need for functionalism and rational efficiency—all crucial features of modernist urban planning. The variant of 'modernist urban planning' of interest here is that whose roots are traceable to the post-industrial era in Western Europe. This contrasts sharply with the version commensurate with other known Middle-Eastern modernization cycles. The modernization cycles associated with the Ottoman, Levantine and Muslim regimes respectively are often cited as prominent in this regard (see e.g., Levine 2007). The Eurocentric variant of modernity as articulated in built space became quite impactful throughout the region. A discussion of how specific elements of French urbanism found expression in some major cities in the region as a whole can be illuminating.

Tel Aviv and Haifa. The six decades preceding the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 witnessed an ambivalent and conflictual interaction between multiple modernities (Levine 2007: 175). This was inspired by different agendas and powers in the region. The creation of the Israeli capital, Tel Aviv, had one significance for urban planning. It coincided with a period when two opposing discourses dominated planning thought in the region. One of these discourses defined a modern city as (Levine 2007: 175),

> a hierarchized, stratified, and planned space generated by modernist/colonial ideologies of planning.

The other considered it a

> subaltern space generated by (post)modern Einsteinian physics, through which the concretized, hierarchized, modernist spaces could be shattered.

The former discourse was grounded in theories that drew inspiration from the same source that informed Eugene Haussmann's plan for the reconstruction of Paris. It is safe to argue that most of the plans that were drawn for the new (capital) cities in the Middle-East in the twentieth century were inspired by Haussmann's work. This is because, as vintage Haussmannian schemes, the plans assumed a tabula rasa of some sort. Levine (2007) explains why European architects such as Patrick Geddes, who drew the plan for Tel Aviv in 1925, could not resist the temptation of making this assumption. "Such *tabulae rasa,* which were difficult to create in Europe were much easier in the 'backward' colonies" (p. 175). French influence on physical structures and spatial organization were not exclusively of the indirect variant. Notable luminaries of the French architecture and urban planning traditions such as Le Corbusier are known to have significantly influenced Israeli spatial and physical structures. As Elhyami (2004: 96) noted,

> Le Corbusier's status as the principal influence on urban architecture and planning in Israel both before and after 1948, is uncontested.

Also worth noting are the contributions of some of Le Corbusier's ardent disciples and associates such as the Brazilian Oscar Niemeyer. One of the latter's most notable projects in Israel was the design of the University of Haifa's campus. Niemeyer visited Israel on the invitation of the mayor of Haifa, Abba Hushi, in

1964. Two years later, in 1966, he was invited to Tripoli, Lebanon to design the International Permanent Exhibition Center.

The post-World War II era witnessed the proliferation of symbols of Western civilization in built space in the Middle-East. For instance, Western architecture and other elements with roots in the West, such as apartment housing, were making their presence increasingly felt in the region. Similarly, there was a marked increase in the number of Western-style buildings that flanked major streets in Istanbul and other major cities in the region. At the same time, these cities, particularly Aleppo in Damascus and Bagdad in Iraq were experiencing rapid growth in their stock of Western-type infrastructure, including broad and tree-lined streets, multi-storey buildings, and other monuments.

Unlike the radical and massive ‘demolition-and-reconstruction’ projects commonplace in their colonies elsewhere, French colonial authorities adopted a more conservative strategy in the Middle-East. This was particularly true of the first phase of their colonial era in the region. In other words, French colonial authorities were, not bent on ridding the region of all vestiges of its earlier experience. Rather, modernization meant a peaceful co-existence of Eurocentric and traditional structures. Such a co-existence has been the norm in Istanbul since the demise of the Ottoman Empire.

Istanbul and Ankara. French influence on the region’s spatial and physical structures grew significantly in the nineteenth century. This was because of the increasing number of French or French-influenced architects and urban planners working in the region at the time. Notable among these was Antoine Ignace Melling (1763–1831). Melling was born in Karlsruhe but spent most of his adult life in France. There, he served in many capacities including landscape painter to French Emperor Napoleon’s wife. His work in Turkey drew most of its inspiration from his experience in France. He was the architect of the first plan outlining Istanbul’s traditional district layout in 1802. At about the same time, he crafted several detailed drawings of the Sultan’s palaces, Ottoman society and vedute of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul). The task of developing a comprehensive plan for Istanbul was also given to another Frenchman, named Joseph Antoine Bouvard in 1902. In executing this task, Bouvard adhered strictly to the ideals of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* tradition. Yet, Istanbul benefited from the design ideas of Europeans other than those of French extraction. For instance, Sultan Mahmud II invited the Prusian, Von Molke to Turkey to help modernize Constantinople. Von Molke’s plan is noteworthy because it was the first to pay significant attention to roads and streets. The plan, which eventually supplanted the traditional Ottoman structure, laid out seven straight and large arteries and three levels of roads according to width. Thus, since 1840, a spatial design scheme in line with European standards has been in force in Istanbul. One of the projects that Henri Prost completed in Istanbul is a master plan containing the road network in the European part of Istanbul (see Fig. 6.2).

The afore-described urban planning initiatives were less intense in comparison to those that were undertaken subsequent to the founding of the Republic in 1923. Concomitant with the Republic’s proclamation were two events worthy of note for the purpose of the present discussion (Bilsel 2011). The first was the designation of

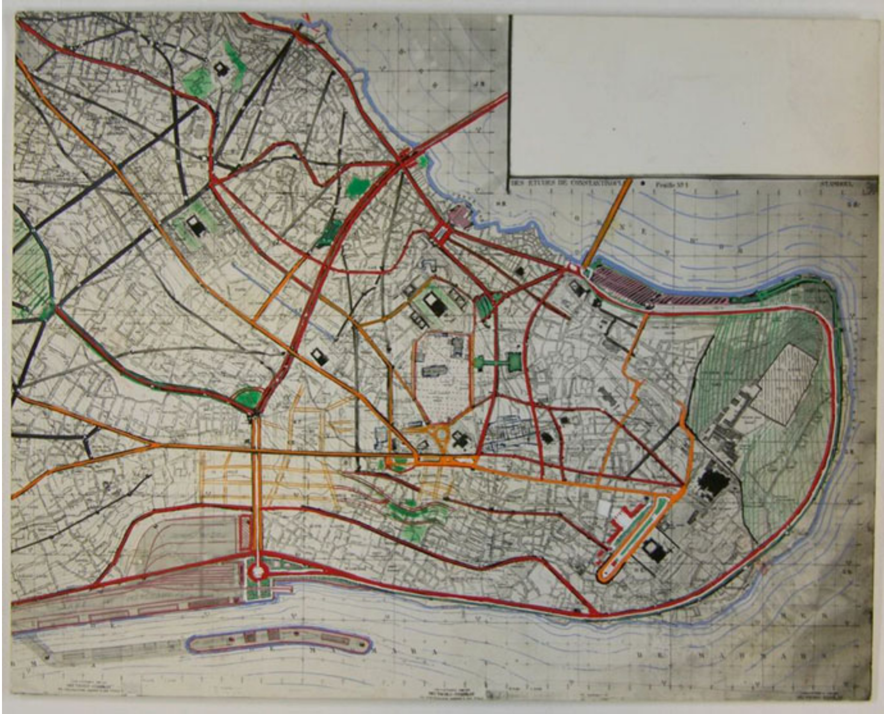

Fig. 6.2 Road Network Study for the Old Istanbul Master Plan by Henri Prost. Source: Bilsel (2011, Fig. 4).

Ankara instead of Istanbul, the old imperial capital, as the new capital of the Republic. The second was the assignment of urban planning to a high rung on the priority ladder of the Republic's modernization agenda. No sooner had Ankara been designated the new capital than it became the target of most urban development projects in the country. Nevertheless, Istanbul continued to bask in its old glory and was also the beneficiary of many urban development initiatives.

Not long before the proclamation of the Republic, urban planning as a profession had emerged in Western Europe. The new profession professed to address the needs of cities and their inhabitants, and in particular, deal with the negative externalities of industrialization. The Republic's leaders were passionate about making their capital a world-class city. Hence, they moved to enlist the services of the best minds in the emerging urban planning field. To achieve this goal, the leadership and municipal authorities organized a competition for the capital city's planning in 1928 (Bilsel 2011). The jury that convened to deliberate over the many submitted proposals selected German urban planning professor, Hermann Jansen's design. The design was approved for implementation in 1932. Not long after this, a competition by invitation for proposals for the country's historic capital, Istanbul was organized (Bilsel 2011). Two prominent French urban planners, namely Alfred Agaché and Henri Prost, topped the list of invited competitors. Henri Prost was unable to honour

the invitation because he was working on the Master Plan of the Paris Metropolitan Area at the time. As Box 6.2 shows, Prost boasted a lengthy resumé in French urbanism in foreign lands, and was arguably the most prominent French urban planner of his time. Thus, it is understandable that municipal authorities in Turkey persistently invited him to execute planning tasks in the country. For instance, he was assigned the task of planning the Yalova Thermal Station, the locale of the President's summer residence. He was also requested to draw the plan for Florya, yet another locale of one of the country's presidential palaces. In 1935, he was invited to develop the plan for Istanbul. Thus, for fifteen years (1936–1951) Prost was retained as the planning consultant for Istanbul (Bilsel 2011).

Cânâ Bilsel (2011) has undertaken a detailed analysis of different aspects of Henri Prost's master plan for Istanbul. The plan included three specific sub-master plans. One was completed in 1937, and was for the European part of the city. A second was completed 2 years later in 1939 and covered the Asian district. Drawn between 1936 and 1948, the third of these sub-master plans was concerned with the two coasts of Bosphorus. In addition, Prost oversaw the completion of several detailed urban plans for plazas, squares, new avenues, parks and promenades

Box 6.2: Henri Prost's Experience as a Planner in France and Abroad

Architect/urbanist, Henri Prost was a graduate of France's prestigious *Ecole des Beaux Arts.* From there, he pursued advanced studies at Villa Medici. Here, he was in the company of other French architecture and urban planning luminaries such as Léon Jaussely, Ernest Hébrard and Tony Garnier. Prost first rose to prominence in French architecture and urban planning circles when he won the competition to plan the city of Antwerp, Belgium in 1910. Six years prior, he had visited Istanbul to study the ancient city's archaeological remnants. This was Prost's first recorded visit to Istanbul, to which he was to return as its foremost planner more than two decades later. Prost's noted in his personal notes as gleaned by Cânâ Bilsel (2011: 103), that the mayor of Istanbul under the Union and Progress Party, Cemil Paşa had invited him to craft plans for Istanbul in 1912. However, realization of the plans was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. Prost was also active in the French colonial urban planning domain. Some of his major endeavours in this connection began three years subsequent to his winning entry for Antwerp. At that time (1913) the military governor of the French Protectorate of Morocco, Maréchal Hubert Lyautey, had invited him to establish a new colonial government planning office in that protectorate. After founding the new office, *le Service des Plans,* Prost went on to craft the comprehensive plan for five cities, namely Fez, Marrakesh, Meknes, Rabat and Casablanca, in Morocco.

Source: Bilsel (2011).

throughout the city. These features are reminiscent of Haussmann's design for Paris. Furthermore, his plan sought to restructure the entire city's street network. In this regard, he proposed opening up several new avenues with a view to facilitating transportation flow within the city. The plan was also generous in its allocation of public spaces or what Prost called *'les espaces libres'* (Bilsel 2011). This latter coupled with the restructuring of the city by introducing new streets and realigning old ones is what Prost called *'les transformations d'Istanbul'* (Ibid).

Aleppo and Damascus

Turkish cities were certainly not the only ones in the Middle-East to attract French architectural and urban planning expertise. Cities in a number of other countries in the region competed for pride of first place in this regard. Zara Lababedi's work (2008) demonstrates that Damascus, one of the region's cities that date to antiquity did not escape the intrusion of French urbanism. In fact, she marshals evidence to show that Aleppo, another prominent Syrian city also received architectural and planning input from French expatriates. Most of this input occurred during the post-World War I era and particularly subsequent to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Under the League of Nations Mandate Rule, French imperial authorities strived to adhere to the urban development blueprint of the defunct empire. These authorities' willingness to adopt this blueprint must not be construed as an approval of the planning ideas and ideologies of the empire. To be sure, it would have been out of character for the French of that era to endorse any urban development policy of non-French or non-European origin. Thus, it was only out of necessity that French imperial authorities on the ground in Syria maintained the Empire's urban development plans. The necessity was borne of the long time lag needed to craft large-scale urban plans. Recall that France's presence in Syria was not a result of some careful planning. Instead, it was simply one of the unintended outcomes of the First World War.

France's control over part of the former Ottoman Empire comprising Syria, Lebanon, and Alexandretta was formalized by the League of Nations on September 29, 1923. Twelve years later in 1935, French imperial authorities commissioned the drawing of Damascus's master plan (Lababedi 2008). A French planning firm led by René Danger was retained to execute this project. The plan, the first ever in Syria's history, focused intensely on hygiene, sanitation, infrastructure and aesthetics. The aesthetic element later became the main focus of planning midway into the French Mandate. This was especially true when Michel Ecochard increased his involvement in the planning domain and accentuated the value of historical monuments.

From its earlier experiences in Indochina and Africa, France had come to see all overseas territories under her control as laboratories for teasing out even the most radical planning theories, ideas and ideologies. Damascus, despite its history as an ancient city, never escaped the brunt of this experimentation project. Paradoxically, some elements of Western urban planning had found their way into Damascus's

urban planning domain during the Ottoman Empire. This, however, did not prepare the city's residents for the large-scale radical schemes that were introduced during the French Mandate. As Lababedi (2008) noted, the residents fiercely opposed the French planning initiatives, especially the master plan of 1935. For them, the changes that were already ongoing as well as those that were proposed were too radical. They were accustomed to a traditional city whose growth was organically determined. In fact, Damascus had followed an organic development path for more than ten centuries prior to the arrival of the French. Also, as Lababedi (2008) suggested, the residents found the French imperial approach to urban planning overbearing. She noted that under the Ottoman rule, the responsibility of municipal authorities was confined to new development. Urban residents at large were responsible for urban restructuring and improvement initiatives—particularly the maintenance of road and sewage systems.

As the architect of Damascus's maiden master plan, René Danger was the city's de facto first formal chief planner during the French Mandate. Zara Lababedi (2008) has characterized his outlook on city as 'holistic.' She qualified her characterization by citing Danger's detailed study of Damascus, which elicited crucial data on the city's social, economic and historical profile. A background study such as this was necessary to contextualize urban policies. In other words, Danger and his associates in Syria did not believe that 'one size fits all' as far as urban planning went. This orientation constituted a dramatic departure from conventional planning under the rubric of the French colonial project. To appreciate this departure, it is useful to understand French colonial theory and the transformation it underwent in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Raymond Betts (2005) is among the few who have provided a very detailed account of this policy transformation process. He noted that French colonial policy was initially founded on the concept of assimilation. Within the framework of this concept, the French had the responsibility of 'civilizing' 'racial/cultural others', particularly those they colonized. In the planning domain, this meant supplanting everything non-French with French varieties. Such radical changes as the French were wont to accomplish within this framework dovetailed neatly into the French colonial administrative model of 'direct rule.' Over time, this strategy proved prohibitively costly and faced increased resistance from their colonial subjects. Consequently, by the turn of the century, the idea of 'direct rule' and the theory of assimilation had ceded its place to the notion of 'indirect rule' and theory of association. Within this new framework, French colonial authorities were instructed from the metropole to treat colonial subjects as partners in the colonial development process. In architecture and urban planning, these authorities were supposed to incorporate aspects of the indigenous culture of the colonized.

Implementing the policy of association more often than not resulted in articulating in colonial urban space familiar French racist ideologies of the nineteenth century. Danger's plan for Damascus is illustrative. For the residential area, he borrowed generously from the dichotomous schema that Lucien Vilbert outlined for French urban (re)development projects in Morocco (Lababedi 2008). This resulted in a racially segregated city with the old city on one side and the modern European city

on the other. For the city's transportation system, Danger collaborated with Michel Ecochard to produce a 'radio-centric road system creating a ring road around the old city' (Ibid: 35) (See Fig. 5.1). The ring element was designed to relieve the city centre of congestion as well as facilitate access through the city.

Another substantive planning area which also bore the brunt of France's modernization initiative was land tenure. The French Mandate authorities moved speedily to supplant Syria's land tenure system with Eurocentric equivalents. This resulted in encouraging the growth of what Lababedi (2008) branded 'private latifundia.' In addition, France's modernization efforts ensured the maldistribution of land with the lion's share of valuable land being funneled into the hands of the French Mandate government's proponents. Thus, French Mandate authorities employed the territory's scarce land for purposes of political patronage. Where this was not the case, land was sold outright to the few with the wherewithal. For instance, Ottoman era Sultan's lands were either sold, leased or transferred on other basis to business elites in the mid-1920s (Lababedi 2008).

Land development activities seemed to have escaped the scrutiny of regulatory authorities more frequently under the French Mandate in Syria than under the Ottoman rule. For instance, Lababedi (2008: 39) noted that the proportion of buildings works without government authorization rose astronomically to 36 % in 1919, just 4 years after the formal onset of the French Mandate. To put this in perspective, Lababedi (2008: 39) drew attention to the following fact. There was no unauthorized construction works from 1858 when the Ottoman Land Code came into force until the beginning of the French Mandate in 1923.

Beirut

Beirut is the capital city of Lebanon. Like Syria, Lebanon was a League of Nations Trust Territory. It was placed under French Mandate following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Beirut has served as the capital city since 1943. In 1975, a civil war broke out and the city was divided between the two main warring factions, mainly different Islamic sects and Christians. During this bloody civil war many of the pieces of infrastructure that French imperial authorities had developed in an effort to overlay Ottoman physical and spatial features were destroyed. However, a few of the French physical structures such villas or low-rise ('yellow houses') can still be found in some parts of the city. Eric Verdeil (Online) implied that these structures constitute a reminder of French urbanism dating back to the mandate era. To appreciate the extent of French planning in Beirut one needs only be reminded that the city was, for a while, known as the 'Paris of the Middle-East'.

French urbanism in Beirut during the Mandate era is peculiar for at least one reason. It did not manifest traits of a desire to supplant all existing structures in built space in the name of 'civilization'. Rather, it appeared to have been more concerned with aggrandizing France's economic power than her socio-cultural prestige. Some

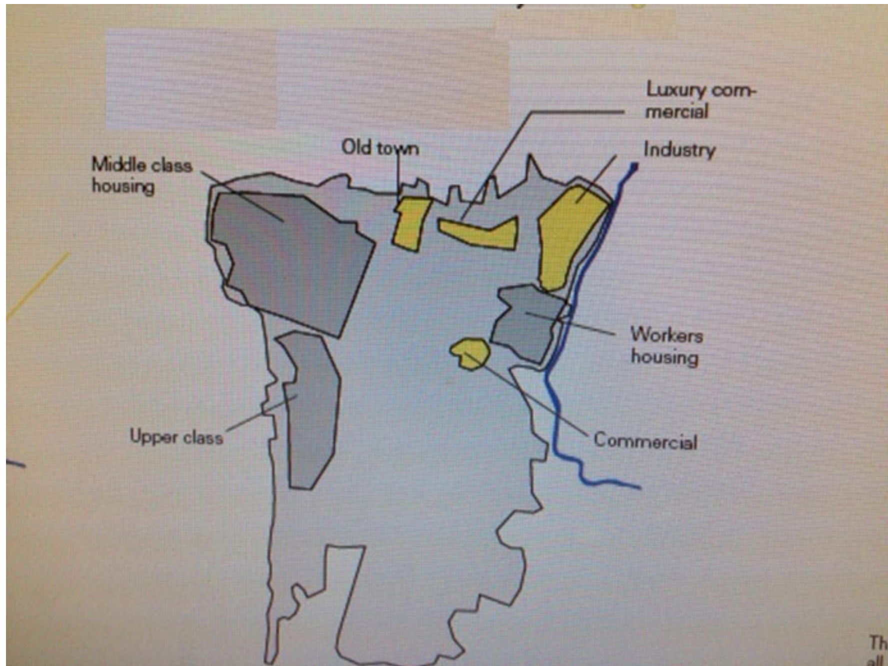

Fig. 6.3 The Danger & Ecochard Programmatic Zoning Plan for Beirut, 1931-32. Source: Toffel (Online). http://www.studio-basel.com/assets/files/files/20_urban_development_of_beirut_web.pdf

analysts (e.g., Maddox Online) have cited the emphasis on road projects by French Mandate authorities as proof positive of this assertion. From this vantage point, developing a system that guaranteed easy access to the seaport from any part of the city as these authorities did was designed to maximize the city's economic potential. Efforts to improve the permeability of the downtown district and commensurate facilities had identical objectives. The threat from disease and illness engendered a strong emphasis on hygiene and sanitation in the city as a whole. This was a deviation from the practice of selective health protection strategies that the French were accustomed to in racially segregated colonial towns (Fig. 6.3).

A perusal of the colonial urban development plans of Beirut reveals that French Mandate authorities were no less concerned with making the city in their own image. For instance, the Danger and Ecochard master plan for Beirut of 1931/1932 contained familiar modernist planning goals, namely: protecting public health, facilitating circulation, and separating unlike land use activities (see Fig. 6.4). The tools with which these goals had to be attained also possess a familiar ring: building regulation and code enforcement, zoning, and street realignment and widening. The plan contained three specific proposals (Toffel Online). The first was to develop a multi-nodal system to link Beirut to nearby cities within and outside of Lebanon. The main links were designed to connect the city to Tripoli in the north-east, Saida

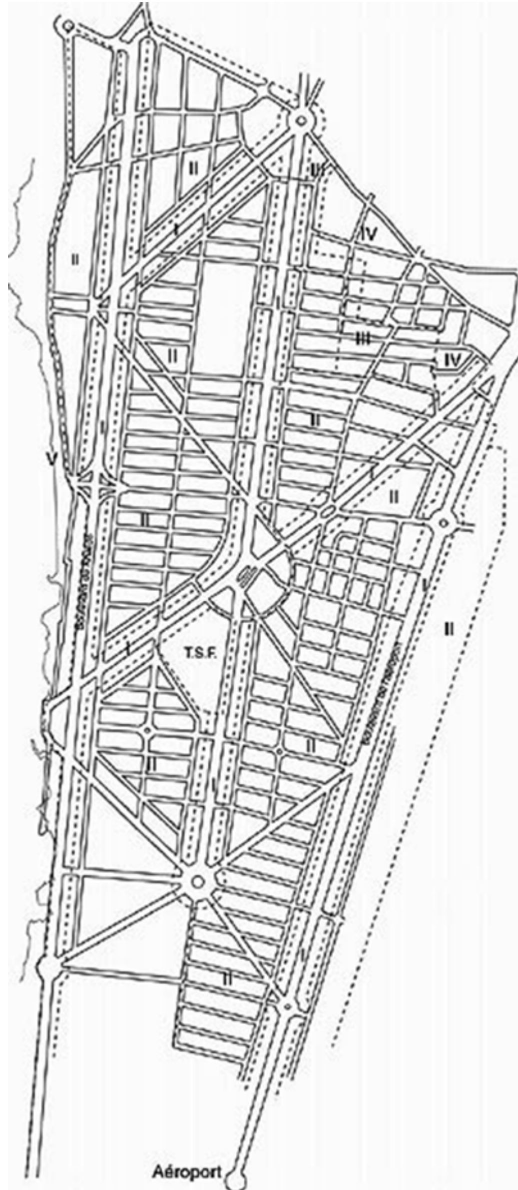

Fig. 6.4 Master Plan of Beirut by Michel Ecochard, 1961. Source: Verdeil (Online)

to the south-west, and Damascus in the south-east. The second proposal was to develop a peripheral Ring Road with a view to relieving traffic congestion in the city centre and the port. As part of this effort, the plan recommended the reinforcement of the east-west major axis. The third major proposal contained in the plan related to programmatic zoning. This assumed the form of several designated areas in which a system of compartmentalized land use was to be implemented.

A perusal of the plan that Michel Ecochard completed for the city in 1940 is also revelatory (Toffel Online). In this plan he made several bold proposals, two of which deserve attention here. The first was to group all public buildings in a district he branded *Quartier des Ministères*. This was earmarked for the axis of the *Place de l'Etoile*. The second was to create a completely new city in the south-west quadrant, specifically in the Bourj el Brajneh districts. The plan also contained proposals for the circulation system. Here, he created three different categories as follows. The first comprised a turn out road designed to link the northern and southern portions of the city. The second comprised a system of lateral roads connecting the eastern and western parts of the city. The last included terminal roads designed to penetrate the urban layers as well as link the downtown district to the rest of the city.

The demise of the mandate era did not forestall further French participation in the Lebanese urban planning sector. Thus, post-colonial Lebanon may be just as influenced by French urbanism as Lebanon under French Mandate. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that French urban planners who were active in the country during the mandate era remained active thereafter (Verdeil Online). Beirut's master plan of 1961 for instance, was crafted by Michel Ecochard, the author of the city's master plan of 1940 (Fig. 6.4) and co-author of the 1931/32 plan. Another French consultancy, the *Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme*, completed a plan for the city more than a decade later in 1977. Yet, another French entity, the *Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Region Ile de France* was involved in major urban projects in the country from 1983 to 1986 and in 1991.

Concluding Remarks

The circumstances of French control in the Middle-East were very unique in many respects. For one thing, France was technically never a colonial master nation in this region. Rather she held a trustee-administrator status over territories that were under the League of Nation's (forerunner to the United Nations) Mandate. Clauses in the relevant agreement such as the one that mandated respect for, and preservation of indigenous culture, significantly constrained French operations. In built space this meant that French colonial authorities could not undertake radical spatial development projects of the genre they undertook in colonial Algeria, Indochina and elsewhere. For another thing, the Middle-East boasts a rich history of urbanization of a magnitude previously unknown to French colonial authorities. Nevertheless, certain paradoxical factors such as a desire for Western spatial and architectural modernization models on the part of local leaders conspired to facilitate actualization of French urbanism in the region. The craving for these models did not co-terminate with the political independence of Middle-Eastern countries. Instead, the competition for modernity appears to have had a multiplier effect on the appetite for Westerner planning models in the region. In this regard, French architects and planners, thanks to their international record of the early-twentieth century, remain popular as emissaries of modernist urban planning. Thus, French urbanism as a subject of interest in

the Middle-East is not only of historical but also, and perhaps more importantly, of contemporary relevance.

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Chapter 7
French Urbanism in North Africa

Abstract North Africa constituted the locale of France's second colonial empire-building project, which began in 1830 with the annexation of Algeria. France's often tumultuous reign as a colonial power in the region lasted for more than a century. During this time she struggled to afford the region's built space a uniquely French image. The French were only partially successful in this regard for several reasons. Prominent among these is the fact that the region's built space boasts a history with roots in antiquity. This chapter discusses the many strategies that French colonial authorities deployed to supplant indigenous physical and spatial structures in the region with French varieties. Additionally, it draws attention to an important but largely ignored aspect of French urbanism in foreign lands – the fact that this phenomenon is not limited to regions that experienced French colonialism. In this connection, it is shown that the French influenced built space throughout North Africa, including countries such as Egypt that experienced British colonialism. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the French colonial policies of assimilation and association. Although these policies were advertised as diametrical opposites, they were, metaphorically speaking, the same wine in different bottles. This is because the policies were summoned to attain the common goal of reinforcing France's grip on colonial North Africa.

Keywords Algeria • Algiers • Assimilation • Association • Built space • Casablanca • Egypt • French colonial urbanism • Ideology • Morocco • North Africa • Pre-European-colonial North Africa • Tunis • Tunisia

Introduction

North Africa constituted a crucial focus of the second wave of France's empire-building endeavors subsequent to the loss of her North American colonies. France's campaign to formally colonize North Africa began in 1830 when she annexed Algeria as a protectorate. With the creation of this protectorate, its capital, Algiers, soon became widely regarded as the capital of French colonial Africa. Half a century later (1881), Tunisia became the second country in the region to become a French protectorate. Djibouti, a lesser known country in the region, came under French colonial control in 1894. Morocco was the last major territory in the region

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to become part of the French empire. It effectively became a French protectorate with the signing of the Treaty of Fez in 1912. All accounted for, France spent considerably more than a century in the region, during which time she left indelible marks on its built space.

This chapter identifies and discusses the most conspicuous of these marks under the generic category of French colonial urbanism. In doing so, it draws attention to two phenomena. First, traces of French urbanism in the region are not restricted to territories that experienced French colonialism. Thus, it is shown that the French had occasion to influence built space throughout the region, including countries such as Egypt that experienced British colonialism. Second, the French colonial policies of assimilation and association, which were advertised as diametrical opposites, were, metaphorically speaking, the same wine in different bottles. This is because the policies were summoned to attain the common goal of reinforcing France's grip on the colonized territories. The discussion begins in the next section by highlighting traces of French or European urbanism that predated the formal onset of French colonialism in North Africa. The aim is to shed light on the region's rich history of human settlement development that dates back to antiquity. As shown later, this history obfuscated France's efforts to fully realize major tenets of its civilizing mission in the region.

French Urbanism in pre-European-Colonial North Africa

The ubiquitous nature of French urbanism in North Africa is hardly questionable. The case of Egypt undermines any theory that attributes French urbanism exclusively to territories that experienced French colonialism. Egypt, where traces of French urbanism are too conspicuous to be missed, was briefly occupied by French troops under Napoleon from 1798 to 1801. Napoleon is said to have brought along 400 ships and 54,000 men, of whom 150 were scientists, engineers and scholars (Napoleon Online, para. 1). Particularly noteworthy for the purpose of the present discussion is the remarkable success registered by Napoleon's topographical survey team. This success, which some have qualified as "beyond anyone's expectations" included the development of "meticulous topographical surveys" (Ibid, paras. 1–2). These French-commissioned surveys, according to one analyst, constituted the first large-scale systematic surveys of Egypt (Peters 2009).

The praises often heaped on the surveys convey a false image of the Egypt Napoleon had invaded. To be sure, it was not, as suggested by this image, a backward territory with hardly any history of human settlement. Rather, the territory boasted a history of sophisticated human settlements dating back to antiquity. Two of these settlements, Memphis and Hierakonopolis are illustrative. These cities were established in 3100 BCE, during the reign of Menes, the first paramount pharaoh of a united Egypt. The ancient city of Hierakonopolis is best-remembered for its role as the cultural, political and religious capital of Upper Egypt from about 3200–3100 BCE. On its part, Memphis, which was established in 2925 BCE, is

best-known as the capital of ancient Egypt as a united polity under King Menes (Memphis 2013). The ruins of this city in its ancient form can be found south of the River Nile delta, about 15 miles (24 km) south of present-day Cairo (Ibid, para. 1). During France's albeit brief occupation of Egypt, Napoleon commissioned French surveyors to draw a plan for Cairo, which turned out to be the city's first modern plan (Lebon 1970). Another Frenchman, the municipal engineer, LeGrand was also the architect of the plan for a major Egyptian city, namely Ismailiya, in the 1800s. The plan featured many elements of Haussmann's reconstruction blueprint for Paris (see Box 7.1). Particularly worth noting are the city blocks and gardens that replaced the villas on an earlier plan that had been crafted prior to the British occupation of Egypt (1882–1952).

The North African region also served as the home of a number of other ancient cities that do not necessarily pre-date the Common Era. One example, the ancient city of Carthage in Tunisia, comes to mind. The site of Carthage, which was founded in the seventh century, has been cartographically situated as lying just 9.3 miles (15 km) from present-day Tunis (Finlay & Paddison 1986). One does not have to dig

Box 7.1: Haussmann's Influence on Cairo's Plan

Although Egypt never experienced French colonialism, the development of its premier city, Cairo, was significantly influenced by French urbanism. Egyptian leaders of the nineteenth century were infatuated with French physical and spatial structures, and strived fervently to replicate these structures in their country. The leader who most exemplified this trend is Pasha Ismail who was the Khedive of Egypt from 1830 to 1895 (Paraskevas 2011). Ismail had visited Paris to attend the *'Exposition Universelle,'* which was organized by Eugène Haussmann in 1867). Subsequent to this visit, Ismail maintained contact with Haussmann. He was later to borrow generously from Haussmann's ideas in his efforts to give Cairo a physical and spatial image befitting of a modern capital city. Thus, the urban development projects that Ismail undertook in Cairo subsequent to 1867 drew inspiration from Haussmann's plan for Paris. However, traces of Haussmann's ideas can be seen beyond the frontiers of Cairo. For instance, these traces are visible in the plan of the Suez Canal and the Egyptian rail system. Ismail was cognizant of the difficulties inherent in transforming the pre-nineteenth century portions of Cairo, particularly the Downtown area. Consequently, he concentrated his urban re-development efforts on the Western portion of the city. Commensurate with the implementation of the new plans was the emergence of a system of gridded streets that crisscrossed Egypt's major cities. Ismail's instructions to the master planner of Cairo, Ali Mubarak, did not mince words. It was straightforward, and read simply as follows: "transform Cairo into the Paris of the Nile" (Paraskeva 2011: 2).

Source: Adapted from Paraskeva (2011).

deeper into Tunisia's ancient history to appreciate the barriers that French colonial initiatives to modernize built space in the region encountered. These initiatives encountered sophisticated spatial and physical structures, some of which had been erected by Europeans, including French nationals, before French colonialism began in the region. Here, it is worth noting the extent to which a country like Tunisia has endured foreign intrusions throughout its long history. The French were certainly not the first Europeans to occupy the land. This distinction belongs to the Romans who controlled Carthage, not far off from Tunis, the national capital, following the Third Punic War (circa, 149–146 CE). In more recent history, the Spaniards occupied Tunisia from 1535 to 1574. Thereafter, the land was occupied by Ottoman Turks as part of the Ottoman Empire. The commensurate Islamic/Arabic influences which occurred during that period left an indelible mark on built space throughout the country.

Thanks to its prior experience with the West, Tunisia's largest cities, particularly Tunis, boasted elements of European urbanism prior to the French conquest. Massimo Amodei (1985) has chronicled specific features of the city's built space that are credited to European activities predating the French conquest. Most of these activities were in the road and railway construction domain. The following three are particularly noteworthy in this connection. The first is the railway line connecting Tunis to Bardo, which was built in 1872. Then, there is a second railway linking Tunis to la Goulette, and continuing on to la Marsa, which was constructed between 1871 and 1876. Finally, there is the railway line from Tunis to Algiers, the Algerian capital, built between 1876 and 1880. One point deserves underscoring here. The portion of this line that goes through the Manoubia tunnel, and the Hammam Lif line, were not completed until 1882, one year after Tunisia had become a French protectorate. However, French influences on Tunis's urban landscape had begun long before France moved to extend protectorate status to Tunisia. For instance, construction of the French consulate in Tunis began in 1862, about two decades before Tunisia became a French protectorate. Two other projects indicative of Tunis's pre-colonial modernization ambitions based on a Eurocentric model are worth mentioning. The first is the building of the gas factory for public street lighting under the auspices of an English company in 1874. The second is the construction of the Central Market located near the 'indigenous' or old part of the city.

Logic of North African Indigenous Built Space

Contemporary North African cities embody manifold human settlement traditions, including Berber, Roman, Byzantine, Arab-Islamic, Ottoman and French (Encyclopedia Britannica Online). Counting among the permanent fixtures that French colonial authorities encountered in the country's built space were neighbourhoods containing people of diverse ethnicity and religious backgrounds, including Arabs, Turks, Berbers, Moors, Andulusians, Christians and Jews (Pouliot 2011; Çelik 1997; Encyclopædia Britannica Online). The neighbourhoods were served by

a network of meandering streets, and as Pouliot (2011: 17) noted, "strongly conditioned by the culture and politics of Islam." Five important phenomena with implications for built space are worth noting in this regard. First, land tenure was regulated by Mohammedan Law according to Islamic doctrine. Thus, the concept of collective or at least 'dual ownership' (man and God) prevailed (Sait and Lim 2006). In any case, the right to 'own' land was considered sacred with the understanding that everything on earth, including land, belonged to God. Thus, to the indigenous members of North African societies, humans could only hold land as trustees and not 'owners.' In fact, in most cases, the documentation of ownership was unnecessary as the indigenes were used to, and honoured, oral evidence as sufficient to proof claims of entitlement. Second, built space in traditional North African society was compartmentalized by gender. This is in conformity with Islamic doctrine. This doctrine defines the home as the private sphere of women, and holds that women are pre-ordained to carter to the husband, and bear and raise children. In contrast, men, to whom public space belongs, are assigned the role of breadwinner for the family. The rationale is that public space constitutes the source of the resources necessary to effectively fulfill the breadwinner role. Third, the human settlements (the medinas and the Kasbah) of the region were typically enclosed within walls. The walls served a number of crucial purposes, including defense of the inhabitants from intruders. In addition, the walls marked the outer limits of settlements thereby affording each a definite form. Fourth, the streets and footpaths that served these settlements meandered not because the inhabitants were incapable of aligning them. Rather, they were made to deliberately meander for aesthetic and defensive reasons. Aesthetically, meandering streets and pathways served as an antidote to the monotony that would otherwise result from straight roads and paths. These streets and pathways took on a defensive role when they facilitated the escape of residents while proving difficult for outsiders to navigate. Finally, the streets, pathways and places within these settlements were named to commemorate indigenous personalities, natural features, and events among others.

French Colonial Ideology of Assimilation in North African Built Space

Articulating France's colonial ideology of assimilation in built space entailed supplanting indigenous institutions, spatial and physical structures with French varieties. Efforts to accomplish this objective in North Africa were obfuscated by the presence of well-entrenched permanent physical and spatial structures. Yet, French colonial authorities spared no opportunity to supplant traditional institutions and legislation bearing on land tenure and development with French versions. The specific strategies employed in this regard varied, if only slightly, from one colonial territory to another. Thus, it is informative to examine country-specific French colonial urban development projects in this connection.

As the first French possession in North Africa, Algeria served as the testing ground for the assimilationist policies that were employed throughout the region. One of the earliest attempts to implement policies of this genre was in January 1870. This coincided with the appointment of Emile Olivier to head the Algerian colonial government (Almi 2002). In fact, as Saïd Almi (2002: 57) would say, *c'est* Emile Olivier *"qui avait engagé le processus de 'francisation' de l'Algerie*. 'Frenchisization,' a major component of France's mission to civilize 'racial/cultural others' *(i.e., la mission civilisatrice),* assumed many forms in Algeria. Here, as elsewhere in the French empire, colonial authorities recognized the ability to control land as critical for wielding politico-economic power. Consequently, upon initially invading Algeria in 1830, French colonial authorities proceeded speedily to aggressively appropriate land throughout the territory. The use of military force was commonplace and the appropriated land was typically placed at the disposal of European merchants and farmers (Pouliot 2011). The French government's aim to resettle as many French people as possible in Algeria was never a secret. In this regard, the government supplemented its land appropriation initiatives with well-designed schemes to resettle French people en masse in Algeria. As part of France's empire building calculus, Algeria had been earmarked as an extension of France. The only comparable scenario in French history occurred two or so centuries earlier. This is when, as discussed in Chap. 2, massive numbers of French people were paid to relocate and occupy large tracts of appropriated land in North America (i.e., New France).

In Algeria, military force was often summoned to implement colonial government decrees in efforts to transfer land from the natives to French settlers. Rather early in his tenure as Governor, Emile Olivier had signed a decree that introduced the notion of private property in the country. Two other early pieces of legislation designed to accomplish assimilationist objectives in the land and municipal governance domain in colonial Algeria are also worth noting. Saïd Almi (2002: 57) draws attention to these pieces of legislation in the following narrative:

> Parmi les textes le plus importants, le décret du 24 octobre 1870, suivi de celui du 4 fevrier 1871, porte un coup fatal à l'administration militaire en supprimant les Bureaux arabes. Les trois département algeriens sont alors placés sous l'autorité d'un Gouverneur général civil . . . .

A number of other pieces of legislation designed to endow members of the resident European population with land were later founded on these decrees. The Warnier Law of 1873, and its supplements, such as the laws of 22 April 1887 and 16 February 1897, are illustrative. These and cognate pieces of legislation were effective not only in supplanting traditional Algerian systems with French varieties. Rather, they also succeeded overwhelmingly in bolstering the power of the resident European population over their Algerian counterparts. Colonial land decrees resulted in endowing Europeans with enormous quantities of land at the expense of native Algerians who became increasingly landless. This is because the decrees essentially commodified land and nullified all alternative claims of entitlement to land that were backed by informal instruments.

Vladimir Lutsky (1969) described the tactics that French colonial authorities employed to expropriate large tracts of land upon seizing control of Algeria's next door neighbour, Tunisia in 1881. The tactics were, on the whole, similar but with one major difference. The initiatives proceeded more speedily in Tunisia than in Algeria. Also more rapid was the speed at which colonial authorities enacted decrees designed to wrest control over land throughout Tunisia. The earliest and best-known of these was enacted barely 4 years into the French colonial era in Tunisia on July 1, 1885. This decree introduced land registration as a means of formalizing land rights based on the Torrens system in the country. The decree effectively made formal instruments rooted in European ethos the only valid proof of entitlement to land throughout Tunisia. Conversely, the decree nullified all alternative instruments, particularly those grounded in indigenous tradition. No sooner had the decree been enacted than members of the resident European population in the country were able to use their land titles as collateral for bank loans.

In 1892, colonial authorities in Tunisia moved to confiscate and transfer Arab land to French and other European proprietors (Lutsky 1969). Efforts in this regard were meant to complement the series of decrees that had been enacted since the territory became a French protectorate. Further initiatives in this regard included the land-related law of 1898. This law required the traditional government in Tunisia to set aside as much as 2,000 ha of colonial government land for agricultural purposes. A set of related decrees enacted in 1890, 1896 and 1903 effectively abolished collective ownership of land throughout the country. Together, these and other related policies conspired to ensure the rapid and effective transfer of land from indigenous entities to French settlers in Tunisia. The success of these policies was unprecedented. This was discernible from the rapid growth in the quantity of French settler-owned land, and the corresponding shrinkage in the stock of communally-held land in the country. As Lutsky (1969) noted, between 1881 and 1892, this quantity of settler-owned land rose from 107,000 to 443,000 ha; and by 1912, it had increased to 882,000 ha. The 1912 figure does not include the 135,000 ha owned by Europeans of non-French extraction.

French colonial authorities in Morocco, as Robin Bidwell (1973) noted, adopted land expropriation strategies that were no less aggressive than those they had adopted in Algeria and Tunisia. Landholding in pre-colonial Morocco was dominated by the collective system. Most land throughout the territory was held collectively by indigenous tribes. In fact, the notion of land ownership was non-existent. All of this, however, changed after the French seized control of the country as a protectorate in 1912. The ink on the paperwork making Morocco a protectorate had hardly dried when French colonial authorities began aggressively expropriating land throughout the territory. These authorities however did well to avoid the use of brute force. Lessons of experience from Algeria and Tunisia revealed that such force was counterproductive as it almost always triggered violent local resistance. Consequently, authorities in Morocco opted to employ less brutal, but equally aggressive land grabbing tactics. For instance, local landholding collectivities were led to believe that they had an obligation to cede portions of their land to the

colonial state. The words of Hubert Lyautey, who is discussed in more detail below, as quoted by Robin Bidwell (1973: 210) are informative.

> Comme nous accroissons la valeur du domaine de chaque membre de la tribu, nous demandons en retour une cession d'une partie de la terre collective à l'Etat.

The success of efforts in this regard is easy to appreciate. A little more than a decade into the colonial era in 1925, 22,000 ha of collective tribal lands had become colonial government property (Bidwell 1973: 210).

Land was not the only entity French colonial authorities considered crucial in their efforts to wield politico-economic power in North Africa. They viewed spatial layout as also critical in this regard. When the aim was to assimilate, the schemes employed were often of the radical and more aggressive variance. Within the French or Eurocentric urban planning tradition, the organization of spatial structures was necessary to institute order in built space. Accordingly, French colonial authorities had come to view the meandering and narrow streets typical of North Africa's Medina's or Kasbah as conflicting with French planning ethos. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, these authorities considered such spatial configurations antithetical to efforts to exercise power and social control in built space. Consequently, they moved speedily to spatially and physically re-order built space throughout the region. In practice, this entailed French colonial military engineers undertaking large-scale projects to demolish traditional structures of historic, religious and symbolic value. In their stead, the engineers developed wide, well-aligned streets flanked by trees and/or buildings incorporating Beaux-Arts notions of aesthetic beauty.

However, the efforts of French colonial authorities in North Africa were significantly impeded by the pre-colonial built-up nature of space in the region. Here, as suggested earlier, these authorities encountered well developed densely populated Islamic walled cities with no room for expansion. Accordingly, they were compelled to develop new planned spacious layouts based on European principles of urban design to serve as exclusive European enclaves. French achievements in this vein are legendary and have constituted the subject of exaltation or despair depending on one's ideological persuasion. However, it is incontestable that French colonial authorities succeeded in engraving a permanent image of French urbanism on built space in the region. Often conducted under the guise of science and progress, French colonial urbanism was designed to project the authority and power of France in North Africa. Studies treating this element of France's overseas ventures as a discursive cultural project have underscored its crucial role in molding the region's physical and spatial structures (see e.g., Demissie 2009; Elleh Elleh 2002; Wright 1991).

In Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco colonial urban planners proceeded to develop new layouts, which reflect French urban planning style as well as urban features of French civilization. The new towns contained broad straight boulevards separating city blocks, minor feeder streets and plots dividing the blocks and high density multi-storey buildings concentrated in terraces within the centre (Njoh 2015). The inclusion of these features constituted an attempt to replicate Georges Eugène

Haussmann's design of Paris in colonial North Africa. Consequently, the new layouts stood in stark contrast to the indigenous and Islamic towns. The unique nature of indigenous and Islamic towns meant that any foreign spatial object within or next to one was likely to offer a sharp contrast. Here, it must be noted that the human settlements developed by Italian and British colonial planners were less elaborate than those developed by their French counterparts.

The preoccupation of French colonial authorities with implementing assimilationist schemes in built space meant they could not leave the indigenous districts completely to their own devices. Rather, they strived against all odds to remake these districts in the French image. Some of the most noteworthy projects in this connection occurred during the first decade of French occupation in Algeria (1830–1846). Here, the alterations were undertaken in the lower portion of Algiers. This area came to be known as the Marine Quarter or *Quartier de l'Ancien Prefecture*. Later activities in this connection were undertaken on a smaller scale. Creating the public square, *Place du Gouvernement*, and widening adjoining streets, marked, according to Çelik (1997), the veritable onset of French urbanism in Algiers. Zenep's use of the term 'French urbanism' must, however, not be in a strict sense. This is because, strictly speaking, the philosophy of French urbanism, often associated with the *Musée Social*, did not emerge until the early-twentieth century (Pouliot 2011). To be sure, the philosophy was inspired by the English-based garden city movement. In French urban planning circles this was known as *'le cité jardin'*. The role of French colonies as laboratories for experimenting with planning theories and ideas attained its zenith in the case of French urbanism. In this regard, the first ever "French law on urbanism was passed not in France, but in Morocco, on 14 March 1919" (Pouliot 2011: 24). The law mandated that all human settlements with 10,000 or more inhabitants produce master plans mapping out urban functions and growth. The French planning tradition has always been attentive to detail since the advent of modernist planning in the eighteenth century. Thus, the planning schemes that French colonial authorities relentlessly pursued in North Africa contained detailed specifications for public spaces, streets, building heights and floor area ratios.

The streets and other physical structures that French colonial authorities found in North Africa were considered inadequate in many respects. Consequently, they were earmarked for modification, particularly by way of widening and re-alignment. In Algiers, three streets were targeted during the immediate-post-conquest street widening and realignment initiative. These included the southbound Rue Bab Azzoun, the northbound, Rue Bab el-Oued, and the eastbound, Rue de la Marine leading to the harbour. No efforts were ever made to disguise the military objectives of the *Place du Gouvernement*. In fact, one of its avowed aims was to serve as an assembling ground for military troops. As one colonial military official, Lieutenant Colonel Lemercier is said to have remarked, a grand public square was necessary to shelter troops, enable the movement of carriages and establish markets (Çelik 1997). Developing the square engendered enormous collateral damage including the destruction of many shops, houses and the minaret of the al-Sayyida Mosque.

Political and economic factors severely limited the efforts of French colonial authorities to demolish and rebuild traditional human settlements in the region in

their own image. Before long, and even before the formal launching of associationist policies discussed later, these authorities had come to accept the inevitability of traditional settlements in the region. At the same time, they continued relentlessly to implement spatial policies designed to accomplish the mission to civilize the natives. In this regard, they embarked on large-scale projects to erect exclusive European enclaves in cities throughout the region. These cities contained two parallel communities, one for the natives and the other for Europeans. The authorities referred to the former as *les villes des indigènes* and considered them unfit for European habitation and symbolic of backwardness. The latter, referred to as "*les villes des Europeènes,*" were fitted with modern amenities. The densities in these enclaves were exceedingly low, and the street network comprised broad, straight and tree-lined roads. With these facilities, the European enclaves stood in stark contrast to the indigenous districts (e.g., the Kasbahs and medinas).

Broadening and re-aligning streets, creating public squares and destroying pre-colonial local politico-cultural and religious symbols facilitated the assertion of French politico-economic power on three levels. First, such passageways that were alien to pre-colonial residents of the region served to announce France's professed socio-economic and cultural superiority over 'racial and cultural others.' Yet, the traditional street network supplanted by the French colonial authorities displayed an unmistakable orderliness that was well understood by the natives. However, for these authorities, the streets were primitive, woefully inadequate and irrational (cf., Çelik 1997). Second, wide, well-aligned streets and public squares were necessary to facilitate passage and parking of police vehicles for surveillance and social control purposes. As Pouliot (2011) noted, in 1852, French colonial authorities in Algiers went so far as to hang a clock from the minaret at the Al Sayyida Mosque in the *Place du Gouvernment* mentioned above. This gesture was meant as a testament to what the French believed to be the West's triumph over Islam. Çelik (1997) recounted other efforts in this connection, including the widening and re-alignment of existing streets in the traditional districts. In most cases, because of the highly dense nature of these districts French colonial military engineers could do little more than simply widen the streets while maintaining their meandering shape. Here, the aim was to attain a width of 8 m, in other words, one capable of accommodating two parallel horse-drawn carts. In some cases, the street widening and public square development projects necessitated the demolition of existing structures. For instance in 1833, a mosque and a number of commercial buildings in Algiers had to be demolished to make room for the *Place de Chartres* between Bab Azzoun and Rue de Chartres. As a form of reparation for the damaged facilities, the French colonial authorities built an indoor market comprising 250 shops in the traditional district of the city (Çelik 1997: 31).

The built space in Algiers was irreversibly altered once French colonial authorities embarked on setting up parallel European enclaves alongside, but considerably removed from, the Kasbah. When geographic distance was not enough, colonial authorities erected physical barriers to separate the two residential districts—European and traditional. The case involving the construction of the *Boulevard de l'Imperatrice* as recounted by Çelik (1997) is illustrative. This broad street

Fig. 7.1 Basilica of Our Lady of Africa (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Notre-Dame-Afrique.jpg)

effectively locked the Kasbah away from the modern European enclave. Activities designed to alter built space in North Africa were not undertaken uniquely by French colonial authorities. Rather, other Western entities were also on hand to assist. Prominent in this regard, and similar to the case in New France, was the Catholic Church. For example, the Church constructed a domineering Cathedral, the Basilica de Notre Dame de l'Afrique (The Basilica of Our Lady of Africa) in Algiers in 1872. One cannot help noticing the syncretic nature of this monumental structure, a photograph of which appears herein as Fig. 7.1. The meticulous blend of Western and Arabic architecture is unmistakable. This suggests that the Church might have been aware of the need for 'associationist' policies before it became apparent to colonial government authorities.

The relentless efforts of these authorities notwithstanding, political, economic and cultural factors prevented them from completely transforming Algiers. Thus, focusing strictly on the achievements of these authorities in built space leads only to partial knowledge of French urbanism in the region. Understanding the urban development plans that were never realized is necessary to obtain a more complete picture of the politics of French colonial urbanism. Çelik Zenep (1997) has done a praiseworthy job chronicling and explaining the realized and unrealized French colonial urban development projects in Algiers. Although the *Place du Gouvernement* was already a large-scale project in the 1830s, it was incomplete. As seen through the eyes of Lieutenant Lemercier, the plan was to be enlarged on a continual basis with a view to embellishing its aesthetic and commercial dimensions (Çelik 1997). Several projects to realize this goal, including plans to add "a pentagonal piazza, planted with trees, dotted with fountains and surrounded by two-storey residential buildings with arcades on the ground level" were proposed in 1830 but never realized (Çelik 1997: 27). Equally not realized was a rectangular proposal by a colonial government architect, Luvini, which recommended demolition of the al-Jadid and

al-Sayyida mosques in 1831. Obviously unbeknownst to him, the French colonial official, Théophile Gautier was far ahead of his time in 1845. Frustrated with the difficulties inherent in creating Algiers's Kasbah in the French image, he had recommended for it to be left alone, or "preserved in all its original barbary" (Çelik 1997: 27).

French colonial spatial planning activities of the assimilationist genre were not limited to Algeria. Tunisia also saw its own share of such activities. Tunisia's capital city, Tunis, possesses features with roots traceable to the country's French colonial past. The city is often characterized as 'two-partite' as opposed to the 'tri-partite' form characteristic of other North African cities (Amodei 1985). Massimo Amodei's (1985) use of the term, 'two-partite' is meant to convey the dualistic nature of Tunis.

Amodei (1985) marshaled map-based evidence to document the speedy manner in which the zone was radically transformed. French colonial authorities succeeded in expanding Tunis beyond its pre-colonial boundaries barely 28 years subsequent to assuming control of the country. The expansion occurred mainly in the region between the old district and the lake. It also extended to the area from the Belvedere Hill through the old cemetery of Jellaz on the slopes of the Sidi Belhassen to the south. The street network in this zone was of the vintage French variety: hierarchically organized avenues, streets and passages intersecting at right angles. Up until about a decade into the colonial era, the street network had two major arteries, the *Avenue de Paris* to north and *Avenue de Carthage* to the south.

The early phase of the French colonial era also witnessed a few spatial and structural transformations in the historical district (i.e., the Medina and R'bats) (Amodei 1985). Having deprived the indigenous district of its traditional administrative and economic functions, French colonial authorities proceeded to link the district to the European town. Efforts in this regard had the avowed goal of ensuring the sustenance of the old district. However, it is easy to appreciate the dubious motives of these efforts. For one thing, they guaranteed the socio-economic dependence of the old district on the European zone. For another thing, the link facilitated policing of the historic area by French colonial authorities. The need to facilitate access to the historic district especially for policing and surveillance purposes was at the root of one specific project. The project had two proximate objectives (Amodei 1985). The one was to develop a boulevard around the Medina. The other was to destroy and replace the medina's inner walls with European-style buildings.

The early phase of the French colonial era was mainly used to establish the foundation for colonial administration. Accordingly, Tunis, the seat of the colonial government witnessed the development of a network of wide, well-aligned and orderly streets. It also became the venue for a plethora of construction activities. Most of these were designed to create facilities for the execution of colonial government functions. Among these were educational institutions such as the St. Charles College (1882), which was later renamed Carrot High School (1892), and the Professional School (1906). Colonial government administrative buildings featured prominently on the list of the projects that were executed during that early phase of colonialism in Tunisia. Among them were the Post, Telecommunication and Telegraph Building (1888), the headquarters of the Department of Public Works and Finance, the

headquarters of the Department of Agriculture, the High Court and the Civil Prison. The period also witnessed the construction of health facilities such as the *Institut Pasteur*, the Civil Hospital and the Italian Hospital.

The activity with the most far-reaching implication for spatial order in Tunis at that time took place within the historic city's peripheries. It occurred specifically "between the outer city-walls and the dense traditional settlement of R'bat Bab Jazira" (Amodei 1985: 30). Amodei (1985) contended that the activities sought to plant garden cities in this area. However, it is unlikely that French colonial authorities actually envisioned developing garden cities in the true sense of the term in such a constrained area. Recall that Ebenezer Howard's vintage garden city concept entailed horizontal development. It is more likely that French colonial planners were actually striving to replicate Le Corbusier's radiant city concept. Le Corbusier's concept sought to eliminate spatial disorder, and congestion. In addition, it was intended to promote the judicious utilization of scarce buildable land by developing vertically instead of horizontally. It is worth noting that Le Corbusier's radiant city in contrast to Howard's garden city concept had French roots. This would make Le Corbusier's radiant city model a more likely choice for French colonial authorities. Recall that French colonial authorities in Tunis did not have a tabular rasa upon which to give their notions of urban spatial order concrete form. Most of the buildable land in the city already contained well-established human settlements. These pre-colonial settlements, the medinas, were of the Turkish/Arabic variety and was already set on the most desirable land. Consequently, French colonial authorities had no choice but to build less desirable locales.

Thus, a noteworthy feature of French colonial urbanism in Tunis and other North African cities is its encounter with a rich history of urbanization. The history of urbanization predating the European conquest had several implications for the expression of power in built space in Tunis. Here, we note that the Medinas and R'bats were located on elevated terrain overlooking the European city in a low-lying area. This anomaly essentially undermines theories in French urbanism that posit altitude as a symbol of power in built space.

The European-style enclaves came to be known as *les villes nouvelles or villes européenes* in Tunis. These enclaves stood in stark contrast to the pre-colonial Islamic districts or the medinas (UN-Habitat 2009). Although colonial Tunis was one city, it contained two distinctly separate districts. The one, the medina, was home to the city's non-European population. The other, the *villes Européenes,* as the name suggests, was an exclusive European enclave. Therefore, one effect of French colonial urbanism in Tunis was the creation of a racially segregated spatial structure. This structure assumed concrete form rather early during the colonial era.

Thus, within this ancient city, one finds, on the one hand, an 'old district,' a legacy of its glorious past. On the other hand, one finds the facsimile of a European city perched conspicuously on African soil. Inscribing botched replicas of European towns in Tunis as French colonial authorities did constituted an ostentatious display of professed French industrial might and technological superiority. The medinas and R'bats were deprived of basic amenities and were under the constant gaze of the colonial police and military. In sharp contrast, the European enclaves were fitted

with modern amenities. In addition, these enclaves served as the locale of modern industries, commerce, and the colonial government administrative centre.

Frantz Fanon might have as well had colonial Tunis in mind when he so eloquently characterized the 'colonized world' in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Hear Fanon (1963: 3–4):

> The colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier (p. 3). . . . . . The native sector is not complementary to the European sector. The two confront each other but not in the service of a higher unity. . . . . The colonist's sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It's a sector of lights and paved roads, where the trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of left overs. . . . . The colonized's sector, or at least the 'native' quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people . . . . It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other the shacks squeezed tightly together (p. 4).

French urbanism in Tunisia extended beyond the infrastructure building domain. It encompassed other areas of the political economy of the Tunisian protectorate. One such area with far-reaching implications not only for urbanism but for the welfare of urban dwellers in general is land. The French were keenly aware of the need to boost their political and economic power by controlling every centimeter of land throughout the protectorate. In 1886, barely 4 years subsequent to extending protectorate status to Tunisia, French imperial authorities enacted a radical and sweeping Land law (Masthaq 2009). The law effectively formalized the status of the colonial state as the sole overseer of all transactions in land. Conversely, it nullified the role of indigenous and religious leaders in the land domain. The law was part of France's effort to Europeanize the protectorate's land tenure system. In practice, it had three immediate impacts on life especially in Tunis. First, it supplanted the Mohammedan or Islamic law that was in force prior to the French conquest. The French land law contrasted sharply with the Mohammedan version it supplanted. While the latter recognized both fee-simple ownership and usage rights, the French land law did not. Rather, it individualized land ownership and required owners to formalize their claims of entitlement to any parcel of land as soon as they acquired it. French colonial authorities set the land registration cost deliberately high and out of the reach of most Tunisians. Thus, the third immediate impact of the French land law is easy to appreciate. It rendered members of the indigenous population landless. At the same time, it facilitated the European acquisition of land throughout Tunis. Also, land in Tunisia was placed at the disposal of French people at exceedingly low costs through aggressive sales announcements in France. Figure 7.2 bears one such announcement from 1890. It advertised land in Tunisia at the cost of 50 francs per hectare. Advertisement campaigns such as this were also meant to encourage mass emigration of French people to Tunisia.

The pinnacle of the French colonial era in Tunisia can be situated around the 1930s. This period witnessed a doubling of efforts to Europeanize the protectorate by French colonial officials. As Amodei (1985: 32) noted, "there was clearly an

Fig. 7.2 'Land for Sale in Tunisia' announcement in France (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Immigration_tunisia_colons_around_1890.jpg)

increase in building" activities. The buildings were of the commercial, industrial and residential variety. Those destined to meet the growing housing need occasioned by the influx of Europeans in the colony were villas designed on a European model. Concomitant with Tunis's industrial, spatial and physical expansion was an influx of rural migrants, which invariably contributed to its demographic growth. This rural-to-urban migration trend accelerated within a short time and took the colonial authorities unaware. The sudden growth manifested itself in overcrowded Medinas and the emergence of spontaneous settlements (or gourbivilles) on the outskirts of Tunis. The term, gourbiville should not be confused with biddonvilles. Although both connote spontaneous settlements, they differ in one important respect. While biddonvilles are constructed of makeshift building materials, usually industrial wastes such as discarded cardboards and tins, gourbivilles contain buildings of mud or clay. This distinction is crucial for one reason. It undermines any theory that ascribes the status of temporariness or precariousness to both bidddonvilles and gourbivilles. Most of Tunis's gourbivilles germinated in "the areas of Jebel Lamar on the hills west of Belvedere, Mellassine on the marshy shores of Sebkret es Sejoumi, Manoubia on the hilly heights to the south of the city" (Amodie 1985: 32). The initial reaction to this phenomenon on the part of the French was coercive (Musthaq 2009). In other words, the colonial authorities took active steps to purge the city of what it characterized as eyesores that were antithetical to its modernization initiatives. For instance, during the twilight of the French colonial era in Tunisia in 1951, the colonial government created a specific government agency, *le Commisariat à la Reconstruction au Logement* (i.e., the Agency for Reconstruction and Housing). The main purpose of this agency was to eliminate all spontaneous settlements in the periphery of Tunis (Masthaq 2009). The agency never registered any significant success as it often encountered much resistance from the population. The following tale narrated by Masthaq (2009) lends credence to this assertion. Soon after the agency was established, it served eviction orders to the nomadic people who were squatting on land in Djebel-Lahmar. The 'squatters' ignored the orders, and went on to enlist the support of left-wing opposition groups. These groups combined forces with the nomads to fiercely and successfully challenge the colonial government's 'degourbification' efforts.

Another important development in the urban planning milieu in Tunis that is attributable to French colonialism is the master plan. The earliest documented master plan in the city was completed in the 1920s. It is plausible, as Amedio (1985) opines, that at least one plan, perhaps of the building layout genre, existed to guide building works in Tunis since 1889. At any rate, the oldest best-known formal master plan for the city was christened the Municipal Plan of 1920 (Amodie 1985). The author of this plan was architect Victor Valensi, who began the project in 1919. Valensi and other well-known, mainly French, architects/urban planners, including René Marché, Guy Raphael, Henri Saladin, Joss Ellen and Jean-Emile Resplandy applied their design mettle in Tunisia. Given the combined expertise of these and other architects/planners such as Henri Prost, Tranchant de Lunel, Albert Laprade and Michelle Ecochard in Morocco; Roland Simounet, Jules Voinot, Marius Toudoire, M.J. Coutereau and Henri Petit in Algeria; and Armando Brasini, Alpago

Novello, Allessandro Limongelli and Florestano Di Fausto in Libya, North Africa could well be considered a think-tank for brewing both functionalist and culturalist ideas of modernist architecture and urbanism (Radione Online). The region provided vast opportunities for testing the lofty planning and design theories that had emerged in Europe during the immediate post-industrial revolution era.

However, by the time Valensi completed the municipal plan, it was already too late to substantially influence the structure of Tunis's European enclave (Amediome 1985). As for the old districts, that is, the Medinas and R'bats, the French colonial planners, for several reasons, deemed it prudent to simply leave them alone. For one thing, the districts were already well-established, and their complex structure and dynamics appeared inherently intolerant of any alteration. For another thing, imposing any Eurocentric spatial order on them constituted a politically risky proposition—one that French colonial authorities were unprepared to wrestle with in 1920.

At the beginning of the 1930s, particularly in 1931, another municipal master plan, was drawn up. This was initially published in the proceedings of the *"Congrés International de l'Urbanisme aux Colonies."* It was showcased at the International Colonial Exposition which was held in Paris in 1931. The main difference between this plan and that of 1920 has to do with its radical, reckless and audacious nature. In this regard, the plan contained prescriptions for razing old areas of the city. As Amediome (1985) observed, the plan made no effort to protect any portion of the city. In fact, not even the Medina and R'bats were protected. All areas were marked for renovation. "Here and there renovation penetrated deeply" (Ibid: 34). The plan's reckless nature can be gleaned from pronouncements such as the following that it made (Amediome 1985: 34):

> The area of La Hara, where there are plenty of indigent buildings, often in ruins and of a frequently remarked insalubrity, will be condemned to make place for a new European quarter, crossed by 35 meters wide thorough-fares from Porte de France to the Bab Bou Sadoun.

From Assimilation to Association in North African Built Space

Morocco was the last territory in the region to come under French colonial control. Paradoxically, the colony came to serve as the laboratory for testing one of the most radical colonial policies in French colonization history. Soon after extending protectorate status to the territory in 1912, French colonial authorities embarked on grand schemes to Frenchicize the territory's built space. However, by the onset of the colonial era in Morocco, French colonial authorities were already rethinking the policy of assimilation that they had pursued with relentless gusto in Algeria and Tunisia. This initially led to scaling back as opposed to completely reversing the policy. Thus, some efforts directed at reconfiguring traditional districts to conform to French standards and image of spatial order remained active.

Nevertheless, most urban development efforts sought to develop alongside the medinas, so-called modern human settlements that strictly conformed to 'modern' standards. The tolerance and apparent respect for traditional spatial structures constituted a crucial element of what is the French colonial policy of association. The policy was part of efforts to make colonial rule more palatable. Its roots are traceable to the International Conference on Colonial Urbanism that was held in Paris in 1931 (Pouliot 2011). The proceedings of this conference culminated in arguably one of the most authoritative compilations on French colonial urbanism. Bearing the caption, *L'urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, this compilation contains contributions from some of the most influential personalities of the late colonial époque. One of these personalities was a French military officer by the name Marshal Hubert Lyautey. Lyautey had a stellar career in the French colonial military, serving first in Algeria and later under General Joseph Gallieni in Indochina. Although his background was in the military, Lyautey, who later became the Resident-General in the French Protectorate in Morocco, proved remarkably skillful as an administrator. He is credited with advocating the policy of association. Lyautey advocated respecting the culture, tradition and values of indigenous inhabitants of the colonies by leaving their districts in intact. For him building European towns alongside these districts will lead to a happy co-existence. Furthermore, to win the hearts and minds of the natives, he accentuated the need to furnish their districts with basic services.

On the whole, Morocco presented French colonial authorities with an opportunity to experiment strategies other than the failed ones they had adopted in Algeria and Tunisia. Lyautey's vehement support for the policy of preserving, and building European enclaves alongside, indigenous districts proved very ingenious and bold. The unprecedented nature of this shift in French colonial urbanism is vividly captured in the following words (Icomos.org, Online):

> A ce constat, va succeder une théorization de la séparation entre la cité musulmane et la ville colonial qui constitue un tournant majeur, un changement historique entre l'urbanisme colonial qui a marqué la phase précedénte dans les colonies françaises et celle qui s'ouvre avec Lyautey au Maroc sous Protectorat français: L'expérience de trop de villes algériennes était la pour nous l'enseigner.

The foregoing passage echoed the sentiments of Lyautey, who is on record for characterizing Algeria as a glaring example of how not to run colony (Rabinow 1989). For Lyautey, as Paul Rabinow (1989: 289) recounted, the French colonial project in Algeria was abhorrent for political, social, and ethical reasons. Also at the root of the French colonial project's failure in Algeria were the racist, insular and rapacious attitudes of colonial authorities on the ground. Once at the helm of the government in the Protectorate of Morocco, Lyautey took in rapid succession, a series of major decisions. Many of these had spatial implications. Notably in this connection is the decision to relocate the territory's capital from Fez to Rabat and the creation of a modern port in Casablanca. Alongside the port, was a port city for Europeans, which was named after Lyautey, and remained under that name until the territory gained independence in 1956. These decisions triggered a marked shift of the territory's center of gravity, hence growth dynamics, from the interior of the

territory to the Atlantic coastal region. Lyautey demonstrated his proclivity for employing urban planning to articulate colonial power by inviting and appointing a number of reputable French architects and planners to key positions in the Protectorate government. Prominent in this regard was the appointment of French architect/urban planner, Henri Prost, to head the Protectorate's Architecture and Planning Agency. Prost held this post for a decade beginning in 1913. Paul Rabinow (1989: 288) noted that Lyautey did not mince words when he instructed Prost to:

- Ensure the preservation of, and show respect for, the social, cultural and other tenets of Moroccan cities;
- Employ modern theories, principles and practices of urban planning in the new towns *(villes nouvelles)* with a view to avoiding the blunders that produced the unhealthy and chaotic cities found in Europe.

During his tenure in office, Prost conceived, planned and oversaw the development of major Moroccan cities such as Fez, Marrakesh, Meknes, Rabat and Casablanca, among others. A notable feature of Prost's plans is the manner in which they reflect the associationist ideology. He was always careful to maintain a safe physical and social distance between the traditional and European districts. In practice, this often meant neglecting the traditional districts or leaving them to their own devices. This served to dramatize the stark contrast between the European and native communities (cf., Wright 1991).

Casablanca's *ville des Europeènes*, which was situated alongside the medina, glaringly illustrates this phenomenon. A *cordon sanitaire* (i.e., greenbelt) was developed to separate and dissuade any meaningful interaction between the European and native settlements. Arguably the most elaborate attempt to impose French notions of spatial and physical order with limited damage to pre-colonial structures in Casablanca occurred in the area of infrastructure building (Brown 2007). In this connection, the French constructed a ring road circumscribing 2,500 acres (Ibid, 115). Within this area, they built elegant public squares. Two of these stand out for their names. The one was named *Place de France* apparently to glorify France's achievements in empire-building, one would imagine. The other was christened Place Lyautey in honour of Marshal Hubert Lyautey. In addition, the French had moved speedily to adorn the landscape with a litany of administrative buildings. Most of them were designed by Henri Prost.

Some of the structures that were planted in urban space in colonial North Africa can be arguably construed as provocative and aggressive gestures of their planters. The construction of the Sacred Heart Cathedral *(Cathédral du Sacre Coeur),* an ostensible and grandiose relic of Christianity in the heart of the historically Muslim city of Casablanca is illustrative (see Fig. 7.3). Designed by Paul Tournon and built in 1930, the ostentatious building was only a cathedral by name as Casablanca was never the seat of any Catholic bishop.[1] Another flamboyant Christian monument that stood out in this almost completely Muslim region is the Cathedral of St. Philip,

[1] Since 1956, when Morocco gained independence from France, the building has never served any religious functions. Instead, it has since assumed cultural and touristic functions.

Fig. 7.3 Sacred Heart Cathedral, Casablanca under construction, c., 1930 (Source: Wikimedia. org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Casablanca,_%C3%A9glise_du_Sacr%C3%A9-C%C5%93ur_vue_du_chantier.JPG)

which was constructed between 1845–1860, in Algiers (Encyclopædia Britannica, Online). The building was converted to a mosque (Ketchaoua Mosque) in 1962. Converting a Christian relic to serve Muslim ends was not the only post-colonial attempt at purging Algeria of vestiges of its French colonial past. Other efforts in this respect were in the area of toponymic inscription or place-naming (Çelik 1997). For instance, the Place d'Aristide Briand, which previously went by the name Place de la République, was re-named, Square Port Said. Similarly, Boulevard de Verdun was re-named Boulevard Abderazak Hadad.

Conclusion

As a testament to their long history as sovereign polities, all erstwhile French protectorates in North Africa enjoyed some degree of autonomy pre-dating French rule. The region's long and well-established history of urbanization obfuscated France's colonial mission to civilize the natives. Yet, French colonial authorities remained steadfast and undeterred. They employed all means necessary, including force, to overlay the region's Berber, Bedouin, and Arabic practices and artifacts in all domains with French equivalents. In the town planning domain, French colonial authorities proceeded with unparalleled gusto to introduce widespread reforms in

land, spatial organization and building practice. These colonial initiatives left indelible marks on built space in the region. Consequently, today, more than half-a-century subsequent to the demise of colonialism, traces of French colonial urbanism remain inescapable throughout the region.

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Chapter 8
French Urbanism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract Although Algeria is considered France's first colony in Africa, France had been present in Africa in one capacity or another since 1659. This is when French traders set up a permanent trading post in Saint Louis in present-day Senegal. This marked the beginning of France's effective control of what later came to be known as French sub-Saharan Africa. However, it is worth noting that the official onset of European colonialism did not begin in Africa until 1884/1885, following the conclusion of the Berlin Conference. This chapter discusses how French colonial authorities employed urban planning to facilitate attainment of important goals of the colonial project in this region. These goals were of the economic, political, socio-cultural and psychological variety.

Keywords Brazzaville • Construction and housing projects • Dakar • Douala • Francophone sub-Saharan Africa • French urbanism in pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa • Gabon • Guinea • Land • Public health • Senegal • Spatial/physical expressions of French urbanism

Introduction

The colonial project had manifold objectives. In Africa, it was designed to bolster the absolute and relative scientific, politico-economic and socio-cultural power of Europeans. The eminent Africanist, Ali Mazrui (e.g., 1969) was more succinct when he contended that Europeans colonized Africa in order to: acquire scientific knowledge, substantiate their belief of presumed racial superiority, and bolster Europe's grandeur and economic prowess. This chapter highlights the manner in which French colonial authorities employed urban planning to facilitate attainment of these objectives in sub-Saharan Africa. It begins in the next section by elucidating French urbanism in the region before the formal onset of European colonialism in the region.

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French Pre-Colonial Urbanism in Sub-Saharan Africa

The formal onset of European colonialism in Africa is 1884/1885. This is when European imperial powers met at the Berlin Conference in Berlin, Germany and took the decision to partition Africa among themselves. Thus, French pre-colonial urbanism refers to any activity by the French that culminated in influencing built space in Africa prior to this decision. Unlike the case of North America, early French traders in sub-Saharan Africa of the fifteenth century had some opportunities to considerably alter built space. This is because while well-developed human settlements and kingdoms were also present in this region, they were sparsely distributed. In fact, by the sixteenth century when a few European traders began settling in the region, most of its ancient kingdoms were no longer in existence.

Prior to invading Algeria in the 1830s, France had been present in Africa in one capacity or another for more than two centuries. Issac de Razilly had sailed to Morocco as far back as 1619. Some 40 years later in 1659, France established a trading post in Saint Louis in present-day Senegal. It is generally agreed that this date marked the beginning of France's effective control of what we herein refer to as Francophone Africa (UNESCO Online). That year (1659) also marked the beginning of the French conquest of Senegal and the commensurate creation of Saint-Louis. Some 17 or so years later, the French captured Gorée Island (Fig. 8.1) from the Dutch. However, France did not embark on the formal colonization of territories in the region until later in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the French began influencing urbanism in Africa prior to the formal onset of the colonial era on the continent.

In fact, early trade between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans dating back to 1364 involved French merchants from Dieppe and Rouen in Normandy (De Graft-Johnson 1986; Woodson 2000). This trade had a reciprocal effect on urbanism in France and sub-Saharan Africa. The ivory-carving industry that developed and contributed to the expansion of commerce, industry and human settlements in Dieppe and Rouen in the fourteenth century is credited to this early trade. Similarly, thanks to this trade, according to De Graft-Johnson (1986: 122), the French created at least three settlements in the general area of what came to be known as the Gold Coast and Ivory Coast (present-day, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire) respectively. The first of this was a settlement called Petit-Dieppe on the Gambia Island in the Sierra Leone River. The second was established at Sesters in the region that evolved to become Liberia and christened Petit-Paris. The third early French settlement in the region was established in Elmina and named Mine d'Or. This suggests that French efforts to influence spatial development in sub-Saharan Africa predated European colonialism in the region by at least four centuries. However, it is worth noting that most of these efforts were spontaneous and unorganized. The best-known organized and officially sanctioned initiative to alter built space in the region occurred in the 1850s. This is when Louis Faidherbe, the Governor of Senegal (1854–1865) began the process of transforming Dakar into the main hub of French colonial sub-Saharan

Fig. 8.1 A street and buildings dating back to the French colonial era in St. Louis, Senegal (Source: Wikimedia.org http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint-Louis_Senegal.jpg)

Africa. It is also during this period, 1856, to be more precise, that Dakar's first master plan was drawn by the chief military engineer of Gorée, Jean-Marie Emile Pinet-Laprade (Harris 2011).

Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Francophone sub-Saharan Africa can be divided into three geographic sub-regions, including West Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa/Indian Ocean Region. It is worth noting that not all of the 17 Francophone countries in the region were colonized by France. Rather, some of them are erstwhile colonies of Germany while one experienced Belgian colonialism. France controlled 12 territories as separate polities in the region. In 1895, she re-configured all of her territories in West Africa into one block called the federation of French West Africa (FWA). This federation contained eight territories, including Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali (formerly, French Sudan), Niger, Benin (formerly, Dahomey), and Burkina Faso (formerly, Upper Volta). The administrative headquarters of FWA was Dakar,

the capital of present-day Senegal. France effectuated a similar re-configuration exercise in the central African region in 1908. Here, she regrouped the territories to comprise the federation of French Equatorial Africa (FEA). This federation contained four countries, namely Gabon, Middle Congo (today, People's Republic of Congo), Ubangi Shari (present-day, Central African Republic) and Chad. French Equatorial Africa had its headquarters in Brazzaville, Congo (PR). Three countries in the region were also controlled by France but were not part of any federation. Two of them, Cameroon and Togo, were German colonies. Like Syria and Lebanon, discussed in Chap. 5, these two territories were designated Trust Territories of the League of Nations under French Mandate at the conclusion of World War I. Two central African countries, Rwanda and Burundi, were also German colonies that became League of Nations Trust Territories under French Mandate. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, these League of Nations Mandate territories were, for all practical purposes, part of the French colonial empire. In the Indian Ocean, France controlled Madagascar, Seychelles and La Reunion. This latter is unique in that it remains under French control albeit as an administrative division *(département)* of France.

Urbanism in French Colonial Sub-Saharan Africa

The late-nineteenth century marked a defining moment in French efforts to influence built space in sub-Saharan Africa. These efforts were preceded by the Berlin Conference's decision to partition Africa and assign territories therein to European colonial powers. Subsequent to this decision, European colonial powers set out to outdo each other in efforts to develop and exploit their respective territories. For French colonial authorities, urban development imperatives provided an opportunity to employ physical and spatial structures to realize France's avowed mission to civilize 'racial and cultural others.' In practice, this meant, among other things, implementing policies aggressively promoting urbanization. The French were not the only European colonial power to vigorously pursue policies along this line. Britain, which was France's most formidable rival in sub-Saharan Africa, is also on record for pursuing this policy. As Robert Home (2013) observed, the British were wont to apply this policy to their overseas plantations and colonies. He went on to note that the policy had its roots in the mediaeval era. Thus, the equation of urbanization to modernity in Western ethos is by no means of recent vintage. The classic article on 'urbanism as a way of life' by Louis Wirth in 1938 expressed this more forcefully. "What is distinctively modern in our civilization," Wirth (1938: 1) proclaimed, "is best signalized by the growth of great cities." As used here, modernity is associated with industrialization, the sociological process of rationalization and the Enlightenment movement that originated mainly in France (circa, late-17th century). Efforts to promote urbanization in French colonial sub-Saharan Africa assumed both passive and active forms. At the passive level, French colonial authorities, *inter alia,* introduced a pecking order for human settlements. This order denigrated rural milieus in favour of urban equivalents. In this regard, French

colonial authorities coined two phrases, *les indigènes* (i.e., natives) and *les évolués* (i.e., 'evolved ones') to refer to residents of rural and urban areas respectively. Implicit in this nomenclature is the notion that urbanization symbolizes modernity while rural living is indicative of backwardness. The French were not unique in adopting this dichotomous categorization scheme that promoted a pejorative view of rural dwelling while extolling urban living or urbanization. British colonial authorities are also well-known for operating a similar scheme. They did this as part of the indirect rule colonial administrative strategy. In this vein, the British, like the French, maintained two sets of laws. One of these covered rural locales while the other covered urban areas. Therefore, through the imposition of Western-style urbanization, French colonial authorities effectively divided African societies into what Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has labeled 'citizens' and 'subjects' (cf., Njoh 2013). Subjects are considered nothing more than rural-based peasants who are ideally governed by the tenets of customary laws. As for citizens, they comprised persons deemed to be above the writ of customary laws. Those in this group were afforded the privilege to enjoy some civil liberties approximating those available to French citizens.

In concert with this classification schema, the authorities in French West Africa (FWA) for instance, targeted exclusively urban centres for infrastructure development projects. Given the shoestring budgets of colonial governments, not all urban centres in the region could be targeted. Consequently, most of the urban development resources were directed to Dakar, the headquarters of FWA. The emphasis on Dakar could also be explained by its strategic location. This is because the capital of French Equatorial Africa (FEA), Brazzaville was never accorded the same degree of attention. In fact, as Phyllis Martin (1995) noted, Brazzaville was virtually neglected within the framework of the French colonial project in sub-Saharan Africa. As late as the first decade of the 1900s, colonial officials in Brazzaville lived in deplorable conditions, especially in comparison to their counterparts across the Congo River in the Belgian Congo. As Fig. 8.2 portrays, the residential and colonial government buildings of these officials were of local materials such as straw and grass.

The focus on Dakar is comprehendible at yet another level. The city, as noted earlier, had served as a French trading post for more than two centuries predating the formal onset of the European colonial era in Africa. Dustin Harris (2011) recently drew attention to Dakar's special place in the French colonial project in sub-Saharan Africa. It was, after all, the capital of the more prosperous of France's two colonial federations in the region. Also, its location at the westernmost end of the African continent, majestically protruding into the vast Atlantic Ocean, made it conspicuous. Furthermore, France had decided rather early in the colonial era to use Dakar to showcase the positive attributes of her brand of colonialism. One such attribute, based on the French imagination, was the conversion of Africans into 'Black Frenchmen.' As Harris contended (Harris 2011: Abstract), "Dakar was constructed to physically implement and visibly project France's assimilationist conception of colonial power." Commensurate with this was the attribution of French spatial features to built space in Africa. Understanding French colonial projects in Dakar requires some appreciation of how they embodied and reflected the French

Fig. 8.2 Colonial government building in Brazzaville (c. 1898) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French_Colonial_administrator_Congo_1905.jpg)

colonial doctrine in Africa as a whole. Initially, as noted in the previous chapter, the doctrine was one of assimilation, and later, association. How these two doctrines were articulated in built space is a question deserving of more attention than it has received in the relevant literature.

Before exploring this question, it is necessary to clarify one important point about European contribution to human settlement development in Africa. A common error in the relevant literature is the assertion that European colonial authorities were responsible for founding all the major cities throughout Africa. Jean-Louis Venard (1986: 154) committed this grave error when he stated thus:

> *à part Antananarivo, toutes les grandes villes actuelles des pays francophones d'Afriques noire, sont les créations coloniales: même si aujourd'hui les proportions sont très différentes de ce qu'elles étaient en 1960, toutes ces villes gardent clairement les traces de cette origine.*

Robert Home (2013) echoed this sentiment, and therefore, committed the same error is his superbly written book on British colonial urbanism. In this major work, Home (2013) credited British colonial authorities with the 'planting' or 'formation of towns and cities' in Anglophone Africa. Contrary to these erroneous claims, indigenous human settlements existed at or near all the sites at which colonial administrative centres were established throughout Africa. Consider the case of Dakar whose founding is often attributed to French traders, Dutch or Portuguese explorers. Yet, native Lebou people (a sub-group of the Wolof and Sereer tribes) had already settled in the area before the arrival of any European. Also, the area that evolved to become Brazzaville, Congo (DR) contained people of the native Bateke

tribe when the Italian Frenchman, Pièrre Savorgnan de Brazza arrived there in 1880. Yet, de Brazza, after whom the city is named, is given credit for founding it. Douala in Cameroon was a thriving fishing village when the Portuguese, who are credited with its founding arrived there in the fifteenth century. Similar examples can be summoned from all parts of Africa. Certainly, Venard (1986) is accurate in noting the presence of traces of colonialism in large cities throughout the continent. However, these traces do not signify that the cities were necessarily founded by colonial authorities. Rather, the traces connote the extent to which their growth and development have been shaped by colonial and neo-colonial forces.

It is necessary to note that European colonial powers deliberately avoided locating colonial administrative headquarters at sites with large and well-developed human settlements. This was necessary to prevent plausible power struggles for control of built space between indigenous and colonial authorities. The preference for the highest elevation in any locale as the site of the colonial administrative headquarters was also predicated on power considerations. As noted in previous chapters, altitude has always had power connotations in European spatial development ethos. Within the framework of this ethos, the higher a locale's altitude, the greater the degree of power the locale is believed to command. The essence of locating colonial facilities on elevated terrain as was the case in French colonial sub-Saharan Africa can be appreciated at two levels. First, spatial configurations that assigned the 'natives' to low-lying areas and Europeans to elevated terrain reinforced the myth of European superiority over 'racial others.' Second, this configuration ensured that the 'natives' remained literally under the constant gaze of the Europeans.

Conferring the status of colonial administrative capital on a locale was necessary but not sufficient to make the locale more urbanized than its competitors. French colonial authorities in sub-Saharan Africa were patently aware of this. Consequently the decision to confer this status on any locale was always followed by active efforts to modernize the locale and boost its population. Modernization entailed transforming built space in these locales into mini versions of French towns. The role of actually translating this ambitious dream into reality was assigned to French colonial urban planners and architects. Mostly men with distinguished military records, these professionals embarked on a journey to give each colonial town an image befitting a modern capital. The power struggles among late-nineteenth century European powers meant that each of them fervently sought opportunities to present itself as more powerful than its rivals. The otherwise mundane act of constructing administrative buildings and ancillary facilities afforded them one such opportunity in colonial Africa. In fact, developing colonial capitals afforded each European power the opportunity to employ built space to articulate power at two specific levels. First, this space was employed to express 'power over' the colonized. Second, each European power used the space to articulate its 'power to' do things better than its rivals. However, problems of resource limitations that were compounded in no small way by the World Wars stifled most efforts in this regard.

It is impossible to exaggerate the extent to which conferring the status of headquarters or capital on a locale can stimulate its development. Most of the major cities in contemporary Francophone Africa bolster this assertion. These cities were

relatively less significant than their regional neighbours until they were designated headquarters by French colonial authorities. The federation capitals mentioned earlier, and the following cities attest to this assertion (Njoh 2004, 2007): Douala in Cameroon, Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, Pointe Noire in Congo (P.R.), and Niamey in Niger. Douala's status as Cameroon's most populous and most urbanized city is due in no small part to the fact that it served as French colonial Cameroon's capital for two decades (1940–1960). The growth of Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso benefited from the fact that French colonial authorities transferred the colonial capital there from Bobo-Dioulasso in 1947. Pointe Noire made significant gains in its population, infrastructure and spatial structure once it became the administrative capital of Middle Congo. Finally, there is Niamey, which would not be the large city it is today if French colonial authorities never relocated Niger's national capital there from Zinder in 1924.

Based on the foregoing examples one can safely reach the following conclusion. Most large urban centres in Francophone Africa owe their supremacy as human settlements to their status as administrative headquarters during the colonial era. Conversely, some important pre-colonial or early colonial towns regressed significantly once they lost their status as hubs or capitals. The case of Grand-Bassam in present-day Côte d'Ivoire is illustrative (Njoh 2007). Located east of Abidjan, Grand-Bassam served as the capital of French colonial Ivory Coast for 3 years (1893–1896). Thereafter, French colonial authorities relocated the seat of government to Bingerville, and later to Abidjan when the country became independent in 1960. The decision to strip Grand-Bassam of its colonial administrative functions set in motion the town's demographic and socio-economic decline. Efforts to resuscitate it for touristic purposes notwithstanding, Grand-Bassam, as the photograph in Fig. 8.3 shows, is characterized by squalid and dilapidated colonial buildings.

Locating and relocating colonial administrative headquarters was only one of the many strategies that French colonial authorities employed to influence urbanism in sub-Saharan Africa. Other strategies included the promulgation of pro-active town planning policies designed to accord legal cover to otherwise perfidious colonial government actions in built space. A number of works have chronicled the most prominent of the initiatives in this connection (see e.g., Njoh 2004; Sinou 1995; Coquery-Vitrovitch and Goerg 1996). For the sake of convenience, only a few of these initiatives are discussed here under the planning substantive areas of spatial configuration, housing, land tenure, sanitation and hygiene, and municipal governance.

Spatial and Physical Expressions of French Urbanism

The colonial state was pre-occupied with issues relating to spatial configuration and territorial control. In fact, the notion of statehood in the lexicon of colonization is ostensibly theoretical unless it incorporates some instrument for territorial control. Territorial control in any given colony in French colonial Africa occurred at two

Fig. 8.3 A dilapidated French colonial building in Grand Bassam. Cote d'Ivoire (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:800px-Grand-Bassam.jpg)

different but overlapping levels. First, there was the national level or the entire colony, whose control was the duty of the colonial military and customs apparatus. Then, there was the colonial capital and urban centers throughout the colony, whose functions were regulated by town planning laws. Control of the two levels constituted an important source of power for colonial governments. For the colonial state, the authority to control urban space was interpreted as the power to control when, how, and where people lived. Colonial town planning laws were therefore, not only a reflection of technical considerations, but also an embodiment of politico-economic, socio-cultural and ideological proclivities. The outcome was typically compartmentalized land use and racially segregated residential space.

The compartmentalization of land use activities constituted part of the efforts on the part of French colonial authorities to acculturate 'racial others.' The term acculturation is not used here in the sense implied in Frank Boas's (1885) classic piece. Boas considered acculturation to comprise the cultural modifications that may occur among members of foreign groups as they seek to adapt to new environments away from their native home (Boas 1888). Rather, as used here, acculturation is synonymous with assimilation, and occurs when dominant groups invade and impose their culture on weaker groups (Njoh 2013). It is true that cultural imperialism was a major attribute of the colonial projects of all Europeans on the continent. However, it is worth noting that the indirect rule colonial administrative strategy, which is often associated with British colonialism was relatively less concerned with supplanting indigenous ethos with the Eurocentric varieties. In contrast the French,

through the colonial administrative strategy of direct rule, essentially strived to supplant all indigenous structures and practices with French varieties.

In the spatial planning arena, this meant amongst other things, the transmutation of African spatial organization schemes with those of French origins. This occurred at both the micro- and macro-level. At the micro-level, there was a deliberate effort to supplant African urban lifestyles. Thus, unlike their British counterparts, French colonial authorities did not forbid members of the native population from living in urban areas—at least not initially. However, members of the native population were not allowed in town unless they were prepared to adopt French culture. As Claude Faure (1914) noted, the Lebou, that is, the natives of Dakar and Gorée, vehemently protested this precondition for urban residency. When colonial authorities became increasingly intolerant of other than European lifestyles in town, the Lebou opted to relocate to the towns' outskirts rather than comply. Only Africans from distant locales complied and settled in the two towns. By relocating to the urban peripheries, the Lebou effectively gave birth to a phenomenon that was at the time unknown in sub-Saharan Africa. The phenomenon is what has come to be known as informal settlements (or *biddonvilles*). Another micro-level change which occurred in French colonial sub-Saharan Africa had to do with the configuration of residential units. Here, French colonial authorities moved rapidly to supplant native-style semi-circular compounds with linearly-configured free-standing bungalows. Central to this spatial organization scheme were regularly spaced broad, often tree-lined streets that intersected at right angles. Apart from symbolizing order, this street pattern went a good way in facilitating the task of control and surveillance for colonial authorities. Conceivably, a single soldier positioned at one intersection could, with the help of a pair of binoculars, watch over considerable distances in four directions. Here, the role of surveillance as a means of bolstering power as articulated by Michel Foucault (e.g., 1982) cannot be overstated.

Modern communication facilities were also necessary to facilitate the movement over the vast territories whose conquest and occupation coincided with the industrial revolution. The case of the Island of Madagascar under Governor-General Joseph Galienni is illustrative (Njoh 2007; Wright 1991). Movement across the island was almost impossible until Galienni's colonial government widened the trail linking Antananarivo to Mahanjanja on the west coast, and later to Toamasina to the east. To be sure, the goals of colonial infrastructure projects extended far beyond facilitating the movement of people, goods and services. A cursory inspection of the plans Hubert Lyautey had crafted for major urban centres on the island during Galienni's tenure as governor-general are telling in this regard. The plans were sophisticated, and complete with hallmarks of vintage French urban design. Particularly, they included a combination of gridded and diagonally configured streets that converged at traffic circles or roundabouts. Lyautey's aim was to create a veritable new town (or *la ville nouvelle*) capable of not only announcing France's urban engineering prowess but also assuaging members of the indigenous population.

Land use compartmentalization constituted another strategy that the French employed to impose Eurocentric spatial order on built space in colonial Africa. This macro-level strategy was typically implemented through zoning. This was a conspicuous feature of master plans *(les plans directeurs)* in French colonial Africa. These plans were drawn with a view to imposing Eurocentric spatial order on built space in the region. The roots of zoning are traceable to the advent of industrialization, which favours a certain degree of rational order by locating large-scale manufacturing and residences in separate single-function buildings (Njoh 1995, 2003).

Efforts to impose French spatial order on built space in Africa, as shown on Table 8.1 pre-date the colonial era on the continent. For instance, the French are on record for drawing up an urban physical development plan for Saint Louis, Senegal as far back as 1828. Drawn by the Topographic Service of the French Army Corps of Engineers, the plan was in strict conformity with modernist planning principles. Far away from Senegal, the French had also embarked on efforts to alter the spatial structure of present-day Gabon. Here, an urban development plan had also been drawn for Libreville in 1881. At the time, the town served as the main French outpost in what evolved to become the Federation of French Equatorial Africa. Gabon became part of French Equatorial Africa, and Libreville ceded its status as the regional center to Brazzaville, the Headquarters of that Federation in 1908. A plethora of such plans were drawn soon after the official commencement of the European colonial era in Africa (1884/1885) (see Table 8.1).

The earliest plans of the colonial era were designed for the headquarters of the colonies France had just acquired throughout the region. Examples of these plans are, the plan of Côte d'Ivoire's first capital, Grand Bassam (1890) and that of Bingerville, which succeeded Grand Bassam as the Ivoirian colonial capital (1899). The plans of Bamako (1895), Conakry (1895) and efforts to set up a colonial station and government in Brazzaville (1908–1909) were designed to do more than foster urbanization. These projects also sought to symbolize France's colonial control over territories throughout the region. A tool that was often employed in this connection was toponymic inscription. In this regard, French colonial authorities moved speedily to rename the towns they transformed or established throughout the region. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, French colonial authorities speedily moved to replace the indigenous name, Adjame with the French name, Bingerville, once it was designated that colony's capital. Bingerville was so named after colonial Côte d'Ivoire's first governor, Louis-Gustave Binger. Toponynic inscription was by no means limited to town names. Rather, it extended to streets, public parks and plazas. Toponymic inscription involving the attribution of French appellations to places in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be understood simply in the context of France's assimilation efforts. Rather, this act must also be seen as part of France's effort to broadcast her authority.

Table 8.1 Urban development projects, French colonial sub-Saharan Africa

No.	Country	City	Project	Description	Period
1.	Benin	Cotonou	Sub-division plan	Plan served to shape the city's spatial growth.	1892
2.	Benin	Porto Novo	Urban development plan	Plan indicated existing structures and stipulated course for further growth, including proposed modifications especially for access roads.	1904
3.	Côte d'Ivoire	Grand Bassam	Plan d'implantation de la capitale de la colonie de Côte d'Ivoire.	Plan of Cote d'Ivoire's first colonial capital. Drawn by the Topographic Service of the Army Corps of Engineers (Service topographique du Genie Militaire) financed with funds from the colonial budget.	1890
4.	Côte d'Ivoire	Binger-ville	Plan d'implantation de la ville de Bingerville (formerly, Adjame-Santey)	Bingerville, was Adjame-Santey prior to the French conquest. Renamed Bingerville in honor of country's first colonial governor. Became capital of colonial Côte d'Ivoire in 1899. Plan was for the new capital.	1899
5.	Côte d'Ivoire	Odienne	Premier plan d'alignement et lotissement d'une ville moyenne	This was the first official plan for what was at the time a colonial town. The town was to the north of a colonial military post.	1911
6.	Côte d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Residential facilities for employees of the campagnes de chantiers de chemin de fer.	This project depended on forced labour input from Africans. It was designed to construct buildings to house workers of the Regie d'Abidjan Railway Corporation.	1923
7.	Côte d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Projet d'amenagement et d'extension de la capital économique et administrative de la Côte d'Ivoire	Project comprised 3 components, namely (a) urban master plan (scale: 1: 10,000), (b) urban management plan (scale: 1: 5000), and (c) preparation of document containing description, rules and regulations governing physical development.	1949

8.	Côte d'Ivoire	*Adzopé* Village	Plan de lotissement de village pilots, modernization de l'habitat rural.	Plan was aimed at 'urbanizing' a rural settlement by introducing features of modernist planning such as subdivisions, grid street system, and public infrastructure and amenities.	1953
9.	Guinea	Conakry	Premier plan d'implantation de Conakry	This was Conakry's first plan based on modernist principles. Accordingly it made provision for wide, tree-lined, and well-aligned streets, and public infrastructure. It also included provision for colonial government buildings.	1895
10.	Guinea/Niger	Conakry/ River Niger	Railway development project	Work on the Guinea – Niger railway line begun in 1900. By 1904 line had reached Kindia; by 1910, it was extended to Kourouscou on the River Niger.	1900–1910
11.	Mali	Bamako	Plan of colonial capital of the French colony of Mali.	Gov, Trentinian's of colonial capital at Kati Plateau, Bamako. Kati is highest point in the area. The site was actually a few kilometers from the Bamako city center in the direction of Kayes City.	1895
12.	Mali	Bamako	*Plan d'une Cité Administrative—Un Quartier de Bamako.*	Plan was drawn by the Topographic Service of the French Military Engineering Corps. Funded from the colony's budget. Resembled ancient acropolises. One road flanked by government buildings, led in and out of the complex. The road ended at Governor's mansion.	1903
13.	Mauritania	Nouakchott	Construction of low-cost housing low-income housing *(Plans Types de Logements Economiques).*	Project was carried out under the auspices of the *Bureau d'Etudes du service fédéral de l'habitat.* Funded with 77 million francs loan from French Overseas Central Fund *Caise Centrale de la France d'outre-mer).*	1954

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

No.	Country	City	Project	Description	Period
14.	Niger	Niamey	*Plan d'aménagement de la Ville de Niamey, chef-lieu du territoire du Niger*	The plan made provisions for residential districts (with separate districts for Europeans and natives, respectively), a commercial district and an administrative district.	1937
15.	Senegal	Saint Louis	*Premier plan d'urbanisme pour l'ile de Saint-Louis*	This was the island's first official urban plan even though French presence in the area dates back about 3 centuries earlier. Plan, which was drawn by the Topographic Service of the French Army Corps of Engineers, was adopted on July 23 1828.	1828
16.	Senegal	Saint Louis	*Plan de Réalignement et extension du Quartier Point-nord de l'île Saint-Louis*	The plan had 2 aims. (1) facilitate traffic flow on the island; (2) relieve the developed portion of the island of the problem of population congestion from which it was already suffering.	1843
				The extension project mainly sub-divided the northern tip of the island into building lots.	
17.	Senegal	Dakar	First Major Military Barracks. Also, construction of Christian Religious Facilities.	Most of the facilities were located between *Place de Protêt*, what is now the Independence Square *(Place de l'indépendance)* and the seaport.	1850
18.	Senegal	Dakar	First cadastral plan for Dakar (premier plan cadastral de Dakar).	Plan was drawn under the auspices of the reputed French military engineer, and one-time governor of colonial Dakar, Jean-Marie Emile Pinet-Laprade (1822–1869).	1858

19.	Senegal	Dakar	Re-alignment plan for the City of Dakar. (Nouveau plan d'alignement de la ville de Dakar)	The plan was the brainchild of Pinet-Laprade. It was designed to give the city's street system a veritable 'modern' look.	1862
20.	Senegal	Dakar	First plan to segregate the City of Dakar, creating a district exclusively for Europeans and another for Africans.	The plan used the plague epidemic outbreak as a pretext for devising and implementing the racial segregation plan. The Medina was designated as the African district. Other African districts were located at the outskirts of the city. The city center was reserved exclusively for Europeans and colonial government buildings.	1914
21.	Congo (DRC)	Brazzaville	Plan to racially segregate the Town of Brazzavile.	The highest elevations in the city were set aside exclusively for Europeans. The area served as the locale for colonial administrative facilities and European living quarters. Two villages, Bacongo and Poto-Poto were set aside for Africans. A 9 pm to 5 am curfew was in force for the villages.	1908-1909
22.	Congo (DRC)	Brazzaville	Elevation of Brazzaville to level of 'commune'.	With this status, the town became a distinct administrative unit complete with a mayor, an operating budget and municipal council, within the French colonial government system.	1911
23.	Gabon	Libreville	Designation of Libreville as the headquarters of French Congo.	Libreville, the oldest French settlement in the region, lost its status as regional headquarters (HQ) in 1908. This is when Gabon became part of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa. Brazzaville, Congo was the HQ of this federation.	1881
				As HQ, Libreville was the target of infrastructure development projects (colonial government buildings and facilities).	

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

No.	Country	City	Project	Description	Period
24.	Gabon	Libreville	First Cadastral Plan for the Headquarters of the Territory of Gabon *(Premier Plan de Cadastre pour le Chef-Lieu du Territoire du Gabon).*	Plan provided information needed to levy taxes on land. Also provided information needed to monitor all transactions in land.	1929
25.	Gabon	Libreville	Urban management and extension master plan for the administrative headquarters of Gabon. (*Plan Directeur d'Amenagement et d'Extension du Chef-Lieu du Gabon*).	The plan was essentially a comprehensive design to guide long-term development. It was, above all, a tool to shape the city in the image of French colonial authorities.	1939
26.	Madagascar	Antananarivo	Urban plan for the capital city of Madagascar, Antananarivo	The plan was drawn under the auspices of an all-European Commission. The commission was given specific instructions to draw up a plan based on "principles of modern hygiene and urbanism" (Wright 1991: 273).	1918

Source: Adapted from Njoh (2007)

French Urbanism Expressed Through Construction and Housing

French colonial authorities exhibited much disdain for African traditional architecture and building techniques. For these authorities, African architecture and building structures, like other aspects of African ethos needed to be supplanted by French varieties. Thus, for French colonial authorities, there was nothing of architectural value in Africa. It is therefore no wonder that at the peak of their assimilationist endeavours, African traditional buildings were prohibited in the towns. In Saint Louis, Senegal, for instance, municipal legislation prohibited thatched-roof buildings *(les chaumières)* (Bigon 2012). In colonial Madagascar, only buildings of European or so-called modern materials were allowed within the core of Antananarivo (Njoh 2007; Wright 1991). In French colonial Cameroun, only buildings of Eurocentric materials were labeled as 'permanent' while those of local materials were officially considered temporary. French colonial authorities seized the opportunity provided them as League of Nations Mandate Administrators to showcase their brand of architecture in the country. Buildings from that era, such as the Court of Appeals building in Douala (Fig. 8.4), the nation's economic hub remain part of the built space in major cities throughout the country.

Fig. 8.4 French colonial architecture: Court of Appeals Building, Douala, Cameroon (Built 1930–1931) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palais_de_Justice_Douala.JPG)

Box 8.1: How Socio-Economic Segregation Translates to Racial Segregation

Colonial Madagascar constitutes fertile ground for understanding French efforts to reconcile the seemingly conflicting aims of colonialism in the late-nineteenth and twentieth century. The French had been on the island since the seventeenth century but did not make it a colony until 1896. That same year, General Joseph Simon Galliéni was appointed the territory's first colonial governor. General Galliéni who had extensive military experience, including a stint in Indochina, vehemently opposed the colonial ideology of assimilation. Instead, he favoured association. Thus, he expressed an aversion for racial segregation in all its forms. His tenure as French colonial Governor-General Madagascar coincided with increasing opposition to the colonial project throughout metropolitan France, especially as of the 1920s. However, some of the brilliant minds in French urbanism were known to subscribe to the ideology of racial superiority. Individuals of this ilk, including Georges Cassaigne, were decidedly bent on giving this ideology physical expression in built space in French colonies. Cassaigne, a graduate of France's prestigious *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, had been hired by Galliéni to undertake a number of urban design projects in Madagascar. Cassaigne was patently aware of the growing opposition to colonialism in general and racism in particular in the metropole at the time. At the same time, he considered his assignment an opportunity to articulate his ideological view in built space. In collaboration with his brother, Albert Cassaigne and the landscape architect, Gustave François, Cassaigne proceeded to craft urban plans that included a clause permitting only buildings of exclusively European materials. It was clear from the outset that no member of the native population could afford the prescribed building materials. Thus, members of this population were effectively excluded from the districts in which only buildings of European materials were authorized. Therefore, although the plans did not contain any overtly racist language, the material-specification clause had succeeded in accomplishing racially segregated urban space on the island. Cassaigne might have betrayed his ulterior motives when, in a 1924 interview with *le Tribune de Madagascar* he contended that there is nothing wrong with excluding from European districts "those who cannot or will not live by European standards" (Wright 1991: 278). Four years subsequent to this pronouncement, Governor-General Marcel Achille Olivier (governor-general 1924–1929), provided official cover for Casaigne's de facto racial segregation policy by enacting a law establishing 'European-only construction districts' for urban centres throughout the island.

Source: Njoh (2007, 2008); Wright (1991).

Thus, French colonial authorities effectively prohibited indigenous African building materials from the heart of the city. Regardless of their avowed aims, policies such as this resulted invariably in the creation of racially segregated residential space almost everywhere in French colonial Africa. Box 8.1 contains a narrative on how prohibiting indigenous building materials in certain urban districts (socioeconomic spatial segregation) produced racially segregated urban space. In addition to prohibitive legislation, French colonial authorities employed subtle methods to discourage structures of African indigenous materials. The use of nomenclatures is an example that readily comes to mind. One such nomenclature classified buildings of indigenous materials as 'temporary' and those of European varieties as 'permanent.'

It is easy to appreciate efforts to discourage indigenous building units in the context of France's broader colonial objectives. Permitting such units invariably went against the grains of efforts to attain the goal of creating mini-versions of French towns in Africa. Further efforts to realize this goal entailed the speedy enactment of prescriptive as opposed to performance-oriented building codes. These codes were enforced mainly at the building application review phase and throughout the building construction process. French colonial urban development law had made the building permit a *conditio sine qua non* for all building works especially in urban areas. Additional directives on urban development were written in copious detail in the urban master development plans. These plans were almost always drawn by French colonial military planners, architects and/or engineers. If nothing else, this constituted a testament to the crucial role of the military in the French colonial project in sub-Saharan Africa.

Another widely utilized programme whose purpose was to discourage indigenous buildings in French colonial urban Africa entailed the introduction of prefabricated units. The case of Senegal where French colonial authorities had introduced prefabricated building units from France in Saint Louis's housing market is illustrative (Bigon 2012). To be sure, the French were not alone in this regard. The British colonial authorities in Ghana are on record for carrying out identical projects. Here, pre-cast concrete structures were hauled in from Europe to create lonely monuments and symbols of the industrial age in Africa (Njoh 2009: 304). Efforts to supplant African housing practices with French varieties went beyond colonial government building control legislation. A substantial part of these efforts included the transplantation of urban housing policies that had been tried at some point in France to colonies in Africa. The introduction in Africa of public housing, a popular low-income housing delivery strategy in Western countries exemplifies this tendency (Njoh 2007). Efforts in this regard included, but were not limited to, the establishment of specialized colonial government housing delivery agencies. One such agency, the Bureau of Low-Cost Housing *(l'office de l'habitat économique, OHE),* that was introduced in French West Africa in 1926 is illustrative. Another was the housing association or housing authority (i.e., *le société immobilière*). This was introduced in French colonial Africa in the 1950s. Other efforts to supplant indigenous practices in the housing sector with French varieties included the introduction of institutionalized mechanisms for financing residential development

projects. The housing mortgage corporations *(les bureaux des crédits fonciérs)* that were introduced at the twilight of the French colonial era in sub-Saharan Africa constituted part of these efforts.

French Urbanism in the Land Domain

The French realized the importance of land as a symbol and tool of control and power rather early in their colonial escapades in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a preponderance of evidence on this. The frantic haste with which French colonial authorities proceeded to convert land throughout the conquered territories into property of the colonial state is one testament. Also, once the colonial government became operational, the authorities sought fervently to afford their perfidious land grabbing actions legal cover. An imperial government decision in 1830 placed colonial governments in charge of all land-related transactions in their respective territories. To accord this decision the full force of law, the French Civil Code was decreed to be applicable in Gorée, Dakar, Saint Louis and Rufisque in Senegal. One aim of this was to permit French and other European settlers to 'legitimize' their claims of entitlement to land in these towns. Another aim was to set in motion urban land commodification throughout French colonial sub-Saharan Africa. With their increasing territorial acquisition ambitions, the French soon realized that it was not enough to control exclusively urban land. Accordingly, they moved to bring all land in the territories under their control. Efforts in this connection drew inspiration from the success of the British who had transferred to their territories in Africa the Torrens Act they had successfully instituted in Australia. The Act introduced an official register for land ownership registration. From their own native land, French colonial authorities were inspired by the Napoleonic Doctrine of 1810. Like the Torrens Act, this doctrine also recognized individual, as opposed to communal, property rights.

Adhering to the Eurocentric land tenure ethos, French colonial authorities began enacting formal land laws soon after the official onset of the colonial era in Africa. Some of these decrees initially acknowledged the existence of local or customary land laws. One such decree was enacted on February 8, 1899. Modified on March 28 of the same year, the decree created two categories of land, namely public and communal lands. The decree also introduced the land register in French Congo (in 1899), French West Africa (in 1906), the rest of French Equatorial Africa (in 1920), and Cameroon (in 1932) (Njoh 2004).

The massive land appropriation schemes that French colonial authorities implemented go a good way in illuminating their desire to control land. One such scheme entailed the classification of land into two categories. One category included so-called 'unoccupied and ownerless lands' (or *'terres vacantes et sans maître'*). Lands in this category, that is all land not effectively occupied or in use—in other words, most of land in the French colonies at that time—were converted into property of the colonial state. The other category comprised land that was in effective

occupation or use, which was designated as individual land but under colonial state control. Further efforts in this regard included the decision to operate two parallel systems of land tenure. The one—*l'indigénat*—governed what the French colonial authorities branded, the 'natives' or (*les indigènes).* The other governed European residents as well as what the French labelled, *les assimilés.* This latter group comprised Western acculturated members of the indigenous population. The *indigénat* system was introduced in Cameroon by a decree of 4th October 1924. Here, there might have been a difference but certainly no distinction between the systems (Njoh 2004).

Again, it bears reiterating that French colonial authorities were bent on supplanting African indigenous land tenure systems with Eurocentric varieties. Therefore, it would be foolhardy to imagine that they would have taken any steps to ensure sustenance of significant aspects of the indigenous system. If anything, French colonial authorities knew that they did not make many friends within the native population with blatant and relentless efforts to appropriate their land. Resistance to these efforts was frequent, often fierce and occasionally violent. Consequently, the colonial authorities devised several strategies to appease, placate and assuage members of the native populations. It is conceivable that crafting legislation that, if nothing else, acknowledged the native land tenure system, constituted one of these strategies.

Most pieces of land legislation in French colonial Africa were simply transplanted verbatim from the metropole. The French colonial government Land Law of 24 July 1921, officially known as *la legislation d'attente* is illustrative. Although later repealed on June 17, 1959, this law had been employed in 1855 to introduce the transcription system in France. Another example is a law that came into force in 1945. This law was applicable in all of France's overseas territories *(Territoires d'Outre Mer or TOM)*. The law was in fact a 1943 piece of legislation that was originally intended to regulate urban land use in France. Also that same year (1945), all French colonies were required to produce urban development master plans detailing present and future uses of land. All of the plans had to be reviewed and approved by authorities in the metropole. The specific institutional bodies that were charged with this responsibility were: *le Comité National de l'urbanisme et de l'habitation aux Colonies* (the national committee for urbanization and housing in the colonies) and *le ministre de l'urbanisme et de l'habitat* (Minister of urban Planning and Housing). Further proof that French colonial authorities were bent on controlling every centimeter of land in the colonies resides in the following two facts. First, the power of the aforementioned institutional bodies were broadened and the mandate for them to control land in the territories buttressed soon after they were created. Second, the law requiring urban development plans was made universal in all French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa in the late-1950s. As many as 19 cities, including the following, in the region had complied with the law before the end of that decade (Njoh 2004: 439; Venard 1986): Cape Verde, Dakar, Rufisque and Thies, Kaolack and St. Louis in Senegal; Bamako, Segou and Gao in French Sudan (present-day, Mali); Niamey in Niger; Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso in Upper Volta (present-day, Burkina Faso); Conakry, Kankan, Kindia, Labe and Dalaba in Guinea; Abidjan, Sassandra,

Bouake and Man in Côte d'Ivoire; Cotonou and Porto Novo in Dahomey (present-day, Benin). In French Equatorial Africa, seven cities, including Port Gentil in Gabon; Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire in Middle Congo (present-day, People's Republic of Congo); Bangui in Oubangui-Chari (present-day, Central African Republic); Fort Lamy and Fort Archambault in Chad had also adopted the policy. In the erstwhile German colonies that had come under the colonial orbit of France, four cities, including Yaounde, Douala and Dschang in Cameroon; and Lome in Togo were also on record for adopting the policy.

French Urbanism and Public Health

Modernist urban planning emerged essentially to protect the health and safety of people in built space. It therefore comes as no surprise that health and safety were the most frequently invoked pretext for planning by colonial authorities in Africa. The need to protect the safety of people was the avowed rationale for building codes and the concomitant building permit application processes throughout the colonies. French colonial authorities took one of the most significant actions in this regard in sub-Saharan Africa on 14 April 1904. This involved the creation of sanitation agencies in the colonial territories of French West Africa. This was initially carried out in Senegal and later duplicated in cities in the two French colonial sub-Saharan Africa federations. The agencies operated committees that were charged with the responsibility of advising colonial governors on matters relating to sanitation, hygiene and disease prevention.

However, it is undeniable that most pieces of planning legislation sought to attain other important but often covert objectives of the colonial project. One such objective had to do with embellishing the notion of European superiority over 'racial others.' This was a critical element in the broader scheme to reinforce the power of Europeans over other groups. Box 8.2 contains material showing how French colonial authorities reinforced their power over colonial subjects through racially segregated spatial structures. To the extent that such spatial structures were considered effective in this and other regards, French colonial authorities spared no opportunity to establish exclusive European enclaves in their colonies.

Immediately subsequent to the official onset of the colonial era in Africa, colonial authorities began to seriously entertain the notion of racially segregating populations. The bubonic plague epidemic that hit Dakar in 1914 offered French colonial authorities a pretext for instituting the plan to articulate this notion in built space (Njoh 2012; Bigon 2009a, b; Betts 1971). In September and October of that year the Governor-General William Ponty, gave orders for Dakar's African population—some 2900-strong—to be relocated beyond the city limits. The residential units of these relocated or displaced members of the native population were concomitantly destroyed. Thenceforth, only European-style buildings *(construction à l'europeène)* were permitted within the city limits. Thus, as of 1914, Dakar had effectively become a racially segregated city, with the European population occupying the inner core, while Africans occupied the outskirts.

Box 8.2: Segregation as a Tool of Power

Racially segregated residential space came to be viewed as an identifying characteristic of colonial Africa. However, such space was not racially segregated in pre-colonial Africa. For instance, prior to the nineteenth century, French traders and Africans lived side-by-side in Gorée, present-day Senegal. This changed in concert with the emergence of the political ideology of racial and cultural superiority in Western Europe in the nineteenth century (Njoh 2008). The change also came about because racial segregation proved to be a potent tool of power. It facilitated social control in built space. By racially segregating colonial towns, colonial officials were able to control the movement of members of the native population. It is thanks to racial segregation that French colonial authorities in Brazzaville were able to restrict the movement of Africans despite the meager colonial municipal budget. Racial segregation also enhanced the power of the colonizer over the colonized by facilitating the former's surveillance of the latter. Interning the colonized within a geographically or physically delineated space, and focalizing surveillance equipment and/or personnel on this space was typically enough as a control measure. The potency of racial spatial segregation to boost the power of the colonizer can be appreciated at yet another level. Native-only districts occasioned by racial segregation meant that colonial authorities could use military tactics to quell anti-colonial and other riots without incurring any European casualty. Finally, segregation facilitated the use of basic service provisioning to native-only districts for political patronage purposes. Thus, basic services could be supplied as a reward for compliance, and withheld as punishment for recalcitrance.

Source: Adapted from Njoh (2008).

In colonial Brazzaville, authorities used as pretext for racial residential segregation the propensity for drumming, singing and dancing that is part of indigenous African ethos (Martin 1995). The authorities claimed that the noise generated by these activities had serious negative health consequences for Europeans. Consequently, on 23 March 1908, Brazzaville's colonial municipal government enacted legislation to racially segregate the town. This legislation mandated the creation in 1909 of two exclusively African villages, namely Bacongo and Poto-Poto. Both villages were located in a swampy area in the low-lying part of the town. The same legislation also commissioned the creation of an exclusive European enclave. This enclave was co-located with the colonial government station on a hill-top. Prior to the creation of these two racially segregated districts, many steps had been taken to discourage African cultural activities within the city limits of Brazzaville. In this connection a decree had been promulgated in 1904 to forbid Africans from indulging in any form of merrymaking, particularly drum-beating, singing and dancing anywhere in Brazzaville. Another law of 15 December 1926 placed a 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew on the natives.

Concluding Remarks

French urbanism in colonial sub-Saharan Africa is best understood within the context of France's colonial project in the region. Colonialism itself was part of a larger project by Europeans to consolidate intellectual, cultural, ideological and economic power and control over 'racial others' (Njoh 2007: 224). Thus, the colonial project was multifaceted with each facet encompassing a set of inextricably interrelated elements. While the goals of colonialism were largely similar, the means summoned to attain them differed from one European power to another. Sometimes the means adopted by one colonial power differed from one territory to another. Vast gaps exist with respect to knowledge of the specific measures adopted by colonial powers in efforts to achieve the goals of their colonial projects in Africa. These gaps are more pronounced with regards to the viability and use of urbanism as a tool for attaining colonialism's grand goals. This chapter has highlighted major ways in which French colonial authorities employed urbanism to foster attainment of these goals in sub-Saharan Africa.

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Chapter 9
Continuity and Change in French International Urbanism

Abstract The diffusion of French urbanism to foreign lands is often discussed as an ancillary of French colonialism. However, it is erroneous to consider colonialism the only conduit through which French urbanism has been exported abroad. This chapter underscores this point and shows how urbanism rose to become a leading French export commodity since the early-twentieth century. It focuses especially on how and why French ideas on physical and spatial organization rose to prominence. This, it is argued, was an upshot of the fact that French architects and urban planners had won many internationally coveted design competitions at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Keywords Boomerang effect • Cultural diversification • Contemporary North America • Exportation of French urbanism • French colonial urban social control measures • French planning agencies • French urbanism • Social control of urban France

Introduction

One point that can be easily gleaned from this book is that urbanism is an important export commodity of France. This observation is certainly not novel. Rather, it echoes that of previous researchers (e.g., Home 2013; Ward 2005; King 1980). The systematic diffusion of French urbanism to foreign lands dates back to the First French Empire in the sixteenth century. At that time, French urbanism and related initiatives were mainly ancillaries of the colonial project. These initiatives later found expression in the Second French Empire (1830–1960). This time, however, the 'commodity,' particularly French expertise in architecture and urban planning were not destined exclusively to French colonies. Rather, French architects and planners had gained respectability and became highly sought-after in the spatial design profession. Stephen Ward (2005) identified the late-nineteenth century as marking the rise of French architects and urban planners in the international urban planning intelligentsia corps. The rise was made possible by the many achievements that these architects/planners had registered at the time. Seven of the most prominent of these deserve further mention (also see Ward 2005).

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First, a Frenchman, Leon Jaussely's entry won first prize in the competition to plan Barcelona in 1904. Second, André Bérard won the contract to plan Guayaquil, Ecuador 2 years later in 1906. Third, Joseph Bouvard, at the time, the city engineer for Paris, was invited to participate in the planning of Buenos Aires's road system. It is necessary to note that Bouvard was also invited to contribute his expertise to São Paulo's park planning project. Fourth, Henri Prost won first prize in the Antwerp planning competition in 1910. Prost was later (1913) appointed to head the Architecture and Planning Office in what was at the time, the newly acquired French Protectorate of Morocco. Fifth, and coinciding with Prost's appointment, was Donat Alfred Agaché's winning of the third prize in the competition to plan Australia's capital city, Canberra. Sixth, Jacques Gréber was hired to prepare the plan for the Fairmount Parkway in Philadelphia, USA. This plan was completed in 1917. Seventh, Ernest Hebrard was invited in 1917 to participate alongside Thomas Mawson to draw up the reconstruction plan for Thessaloniki. This was subsequent to the fire that destroyed about two-thirds of the city in 1917.

If nothing else, these examples underscore the international appeal of French urban planning expertise and schemes especially beginning in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century. It is therefore safe to argue that urbanism remains an important export commodity of France. This can be accurately considered an aspect of continuity even if the exportation is now an ancillary of bilateral development assistance packages. At the same time, one would be remiss by ignoring two important changes that have occurred in French international urbanism since the demise of the Second French Empire (circa, 1960s). The first of these relates to the involvement of French municipal planning agencies in the exportation of French urban planning expertise. This involvement has been under the aegis of the *Fedération Nationale des Agences d'Urbanisme* (FNAU). The second relates to the adoption in France of the spatial planning schemes that were developed and refined for use in French colonies. Specifically, it relates to the deployment of colonial spatial control schemes to restrict the movement of post-colonial migrants in France. This contemporary use of strategies originally intended to control colonial subjects is characterized in the relevant literature as 'colonial mimicry' or the 'boomerang effect of colonialism.' This chapter discusses this unorthodox use of colonial spatial control strategies. France is not the only developed country in which elements of French colonial urbanism remain in current use. Paradoxically, the built space in the North American region contains such elements. This chapter begins by examining traces of French urbanism in this region. Then, it discusses the role of French urban planning agencies in exporting planning expertise especially during the last two decades. Finally, and before concluding, the chapter discusses the boomerang effect of French colonial urbanism in France.

French Urbanism in Contemporary North America

One of the first elements of French culture to gain expression on the North American landscape was the notion of spatial order and aesthetic beauty. Paradoxically, agriculture served as a conduit for the transmission of this aspect of French culture that

remains visible in the region's contemporary built space. French farmers, unlike their indigenous counterparts or other European migrants, typically created farms that precisely conformed to regular geometric shapes. As Johnson (1974) noted, the farms were designed to extend inland at right angles to any waterway that afforded access to the farming communities.

The idea of creating farms in conformity with precise geometrical forms has its roots in what is known in France as *jardin à la française* or the French formal garden (Allain and Christiany 2006; Wenzler 2003). Its name notwithstanding, this farming style actually originated as a product of the Renaissance Garden in Italy and was only imported to France at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The French formal garden was designed to impose spatial order on the natural environment. It gained widespread reputation in the seventeenth century when, at the request of King Louis XIV, landscape architect, André Le Nôtre, created the Gardens of Versailles. To the extent that land throughout North America was sparsely occupied, the importation of the French formal garden as a farming style by early French settlers in the region is explicable at two levels. One explanation relates to the need to implement productive farming techniques. This need compelled the settlers to resort to the only techniques they were conversant with, namely the French formal garden. An alternative explanation relates to a desire by French settlers to show off what they perceived as superior farming skills to the native Indians.

In any case, it is true that the French proclivity for spatial order was already evident in early French farming communities throughout North America as far back as the seventeenth century. Spatial order also became a conspicuous feature of human settlements once the French immigrants began creating permanent communities. Accordingly, houses in these communities were typically clustered together along the waterways. While these houses have long been replaced by modern structures, the survey pattern initially set in place to demarcate farmland and residential property by the early French settlers remains intact. The historic French Parishes of Louisiana (particularly those encompassing New Orleans and Baton Rouge), and to some extent, Green Bay, and Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin reveal traces of this pattern. Other American cities reflecting spatial patterns rooted in the design structures of early French farming communities include St. Paul, Minnesota and St. Louis, Missouri.

Thus, French influence on built space in North America did not co-terminate with the demise of French colonialism in the region. Rather, this influence continued a long time thereafter. Yet, not all of the marks of French urbanism that richly lace the region's landscape are traceable to the French colonial era. Some of these owe their origins to the work in North America by French and/or French-influenced urban planners, architects and designers. Few personalities are more prominent in this respect than Le Corbusier (1887–1965). Le Corbusier who was named Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at birth, was not of French nativity. Rather, he was born in Switzerland and did not become a French citizen until 1930. He is perhaps best known for employing design solutions to address the slum and squalor problems of France in the 1920s. Here, he won acclaim in 1922 with his *Immeubles Villas* project. Major elements of this project included vertically-arranged self-contained

apartments, each of which housed a single family. Each apartment, which formed part of a large block, was provided with space for gardening. The communities were organized by socio-economic strata. Le Corbusier also gained prominence with his bold theories and proposals for large-scale human settlements such as cities. His 1922 proposal for *la ville contemporaine* or 'the contemporary city' for three million residents is noteworthy in this regard. This scheme comprised mainly skyscrapers built of steel, plate-glass and reinforced concrete. It also made a generous allowance for the automobile. With these features, the project placed Le Corbusier way ahead of his time. What Le Corbusier envisioned strikingly resembles a typical contemporary city in North America or anywhere else in the industrialized world for that matter.

Le Corbusier continued to work tirelessly and eventually refined his ideas on urbanism. His publication, *La Ville Radieuse* or 'The Radiant City' (1935) summarizes his ideas towards the end of his life. A perusal of the work reveals a marked evolution in his thinking on urbanism. For instance, in this work, he abandoned the idea of socio-economic segregation, which he advocated in *La Ville Contemporaine*. Instead, he recommended that housing be configured based on demographic considerations, especially family size. However, subsequent to the conclusion of World War II, he re-embraced his earlier fervor for small-scale human settlement design. In this connection, he developed a series of small blocks of pre-fabricated high-rise housing units as part of his broader Radiant City concept in France. The best known of these small-scale blocks or what he called *'Unités d'Habitation'* were developed in Marseilles between 1946 and 1952. What Le Corbusier had envisioned as a product of implementing his concept of *unité d'habitation*, were densely packed cities of large blocks of park or grassland. The buildings were expected to be of the high-rise variety, with enough amenities, including land for gardening that would make the facilities self-sufficient and sustainable.

Le Corbusier had disciples throughout the world. However, it is important to note that only his urban planning as opposed to his architectural schemes won the hearts of some in North America. As an architect, Le Corbusier had very little influence on architecture in the region. One reason for this is that North American architects and architectural critiques were quick to characterize Le Corbusierian structures as monotonous, drab and devoid of any aesthetic appeal. The fact that only one building in the US, the Carpenter Center at Harvard University, is credited to Le Corbusier is telling in this regard. Box 9.1 contains a brief description of this facility.

Le Corbusier's urban vision was also the subject of criticism. According to one critic, the vision was not only authoritarian and inflexible, it was also inhumane, disorienting, inhospitable, simplistic and tended to fail wherever it was tried (Harlembespoke Online). As examples where Le Corbusier's project failed, critics often cite respectively the Corbisieran schemes in Chandigarh (by Le Corbusier himself) and Brasilia (by his disciples). Yet, it is true that Le Corbusier's ideas were articulated in built space in North America by his colleagues and associates. The many critically acclaimed buildings in Boston that were designed by José Sert, a colleague of Le Corbusier and one-time dean of the Harvard architecture program are noteworthy in this connection. It is also true that Le Corbusier had a significant

Box 9.1: The Only Le Corbusier-Designed Building in the US

The Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts is the only building Le Corbusier designed for a US client. Completed in 1963, the building has been characterized as a "wonderful collection of concrete forms" (Galinsky online). The forms were inspired by Le Corbusier's earlier works. For instance, the windows *(ondulatoires)* (see Fig. 9.1) is borrowed verbatim from the building he designed for La Tourette Monastery, which was built between 1953 and 1957, at a location about 25 km northwest of Lyon, France. The *brise soleils* has its roots in his *unité d'habitation* project in Marseille, France. The roots of the form of the glazed portions of the walls on the upper levels are detectable in the Refuge City of the Salvation Army which was constructed in Paris in 1920.

Source: Galinksky (Online).

Fig. 9.1 The Carpenter Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA. (Notice the brise soleil and the glazed windows) (Source: Wikimedia.org. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carpenter_Center_Harvard_University.jpg)

impact on urban planning and neighbourhood design in North America. For instance, the major urban renewal and subsequent regimented public housing projects that were undertaken in many major cities in the US in the 1960s and 1970s were based on Le Corbusier's ideas, especially as embodied in his concept of *la Ville Radieuse*. In Canada, as Phyllis Lambert (1992) noted, these same ideas influ-

enced the thinking of Humphrey Carver who was a prominent planner and chief advisor to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association.

French Planning Agencies and the Exportation of French Urbanism

Efforts to export French urbanism might have actually been accelerated during the post-colonial period. Two noteworthy developments have occurred in this connection. The first has to do with the more active role of France in international activities with implications for urban development. This role is better appreciated as part of post-World War II efforts by developed nations to ameliorate living conditions in their less developed counterparts. Jean-Louis Venard (1986) has done a fine job cataloguing France's initiatives in this regard in Francophone Africa. However, it must be noted that the initiatives have targeted developing nations of all stripes and not exclusively those that experienced French colonialism. Of interest for the purpose of the discussion in this book are only those initiatives with implications for, urban development. Most of France's post-World War II efforts in this connection have been in the form of technical assistance. In particular, and in concert with her colonial initiatives, the French government has typically included French urban planners on the ground in developing countries. Hardly any other developed country is on par with France in this regard. As Jean-Louis Venard (1986: 47) noted,

> *La mise à disposition de personnel dans le cadre des accords de coopération bilatérale est une longue tradition de la coopération française et une des ses particuliarités par rapport aux autres pays industrialisés.*

French technical assistance projects typically occur under the aegis of two ministerial bodies, namely the Ministry of External Relations *(Ministère des Relations Extérieures),* and the Ministry of urban planning, housing and transport *(Ministère de l'urbanisme, du logement et des transports)*. The specific institutional entity within this ministry that is charged with directly overseeing these projects is the cultural relations, scientific and technical service unit (i.e., *la Direction des relations culturelles, scientifiques et techniques,* DRCST). French planning and cognate experts in developing nations report to the economic and international affairs unit of the Ministry of urban planning, housing and transport.

The French government employed and assigned as many as eight hundred (800) professionals with technical expertise to overseas locales in 1984 alone (Venard 1986). The breakdown of these professionals is as follows (Ibid, pp. 47–48):

– 300 technical teachers;
– 150 road construction specialists;
– 100 port maintenance and maritime experts;
– 180 urban planners; and
– 70 technicians of assorted specialties.

Of the 800 professionals, 25 % or 200 were assigned to the Maghreb region, non-francophone Africa, Asia and Latin America. The rest, or lion's share of these professionals, were assigned to Francophone sub-Saharan Africa.

The second development relates to the activities of French urban planning agencies. These agencies, including all planning agencies, are often invited to work in foreign countries especially because of their broad and profound expertise in planning. Most projects involving these agencies taken place in the context of the 'decentralized' cooperative foreign aid programmes of individual agencies. Many of the projects occurred as part of commissioned studies that have, in some cases, been financed by international funding bodies. France boasted a total of 51 planning agencies in 2008. Four of these were located in French overseas territories (or *territoires d'outre mer,* TOM). The agencies are organized under the institutional umbrella of the *Fédération Nationale des agences d'Urbanisme* (FNAU). This latter is a network of French urban planning agencies. Established in 1979, FNAU avows its responsibilities to include:

- Informing the agency network;
- Defending the agencies' professional interests;
- Exchanging experiences and improving know-how; and
- Producing and publishing informational material.

FNAU's international work since 1990 has involved sixteen public planning agencies. This is a third of FNAU's total membership. The international work of the FNAU network has mostly been an element of overseas aid or international urban network projects. Here, it is important to note that the agencies operate as non-profit entities under a piece of 1901 legislation. Most funds for the activities of these agencies come from member authorities and the state. Agencies are at liberty to seek additional funding sources through contracts and specific missions. By some estimates, the agencies command a force the equivalence of a consultancy with a potential of up to 1500 professionals (FNAU 2008).

Three specific areas or themes are often targeted by French planning agencies in their overseas ventures. These include (FNAU 2008: 8):

- Planning, particularly the drawing up of master plans;
- Provisioning of guidance for the development of land use law;
- Providing guidance in matters of land development; (This latter entails the preparation of terms of reference for city planning documents in full or part, and reviewing, and revising the documents if necessary);
- Public policy back-up: this includes input for sectors such as transportation, land, housing, the environment, heritage, and tourism; it also includes assistance in setting up urban management bodies (e.g., agency inter-municipal groupings), and management tools;
- Preparation of urban projects in local participation ventures, major facilities projects for neighbourhoods, and even entire districts, management of international competition, and technical assistance.

Geographical Areas of Main Focus

As much as 50 % of the countries of interest fall in the sub-Saharan region, the Maghreb and the Middle-East. Asia, a region in which France's interest has been growing in recent years, accounts for 23 % of the activities of FNAU. Latin America is the locale of 11 % of these activities. The former Eastern Bloc countries of Europe account for the rest of these activities.

The practice of exporting French urban planning practice to the foregoing and other regions, as discussed throughout this book, dates back to the sixteenth century. The practice peaked in the late-nineteenth century at the height of the Second French Empire. Some of the questions that remain unanswered have to do with why or how urbanism became a major 'export commodity' of France. In an attempt to address these questions, some (e.g., FNAU 2008: 9) have advanced the following points.

- First, there has always been a tendency on the part of authorities involved in the urban domain in France to internationalize their know-how or *savoir-faire*.
- Second, the wealth of experience that French planning agencies and authorities have amassed in the international planning domain over the centuries make them uniquely positioned to mobilize partners with the skill set necessary to conduct meaningful international planning.
- Finally, French agencies, it is argued, are able to guarantee a level of continuity that similar agencies from other countries cannot match.

There have been sixteen French urban public planning agencies—that is, one-third of the FNAU membership—participating in the international arena since 1990. Table 9.1 shows a sample of the projects and geographic regions in which these agencies have been involved. As much as 43 % of the assignments of these agencies have typically been part of an overseas aid or network project. These assignments have typically resulted from local contracts or commissions from the French public aid development. Occasionally, they have originated in an international development body such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Cultural Diversification and Social Control of Urban France

France was largely homogeneous in racial and cultural terms until the Second World War. However, this situation changed dramatically subsequent to the conclusion of the war (see Box 9.2). This is when a massive wave of migration with implications for urban cultural diversity occurred in the country. The immigrants were mainly from the erstwhile French colonies of Asia and Africa. Thus, the modern history of immigrants in French cities is intimately connected to France's history as a colonial power. At the time of a high demand for labour power to sustain her vast industrial complex, France found it convenient to turn to her erstwhile colonies. Consequently,

Table 9.1 The international reach of French planning agencies

Item	Region	Country	Project
1.	Sub-Saharan Africa	Benin	Porto Novo tourism project.
		Mali	Sofara master plan.
		Ethiopia	Assistance with revising the master plan for Addis Ababa
		Niger	Niamey Downtown revitalization project.
2.	North Africa	Morocco	Urban social regeneration plan for Marrakech.
			Plan for the city and the coast, Casablanca.
		Algeria	Metropolitan development plan for Constantine.
			Creation of a city planning agency in Annaba City.
3.	Middle-East	Lebanon	Territorial planning (including Beirut master plan & transport plan).
		Jordan	Developing eastern corridor, Amman.
		Iran	Assistance with the development plan of Teheran.
4.	South-East Asia	Philippines	Land use mapping for Manila.
		China	Franco-Chinese Exhibition and technical colloquium, Beijing.
			China consultancy, Shanghai.
		Vietnam	Technical assistance for planning and regulation, Ho Chi Minh City.
5.	Latin America	Venezuela	Urban management plan for Rio de Janeiro

Source: Compiled from FNAU 2008

several immigrants from erstwhile French colonies, and especially from North and sub-Saharan Africa was transported and conscripted into the expanding French labour market. The demand for labour power in the French economy peaked at the conclusion of World War II but soon waned. By the 1960s, France's labour requirement, like those of other European countries had significantly dwindled. This decline was initially in the manufacturing and service sectors, and later, the construction industry.

At any rate, French authorities found themselves increasingly having to deal with a diverse population and a growing unemployed urban migrant population. The migrants were usually the first to lose their jobs and had the fewest opportunities in comparison to traditional communities. Consequently, immigrant communities suffered a disproportionately high level of unemployment. Commensurate with this were high levels of social problems. Immigrant communities, such as the string of Pakistani and Bangladeshi enclaves of the Pennines experience problems of physical and functional obsolescence, particularly dilapidated housing and the lack of urban amenities. Other problems such as ethnic resentment of economic marginalization, social deprivation and competing claims to public space, soon ensued. Tensions ran high in French urban centres and reached boiling point between 1991 and 2007. Summer 1991 or what came to be known as *"l'été chaud,"* witnessed youth revolts in the suburbs of Lyon, Paris and Marseilles (Siciliano 2007). The years 2005 and 2007, also witnessed bloody riots. The roots of these riots were

Box 9.2: Post-World War II International Immigration to French Cities

After World War II France, needed many workers to help with the reconstruction process. To meet this need, France turned to its erstwhile colonies in Africa, and to some extent, Asia. The response was overwhelming as many Africans, especially from North Africa, migrated to France. The African immigrants differed from the natives of their host country by race, culture and tradition. Immigrant families were consistently larger, with some in polygamous relationships despite antipathy and even legislative acts against such relations in France. By the 1990s, there were five million North African immigrants in France. Current estimates place the population of persons with immigrant roots in France at about 40 % of the country's total population, making France the most ethnically diverse European country. One major and seemingly irreconcilable difference between the North African immigrants, most of whom are Muslims, and Europeans, who are mainly Christians, is religion. This difference is often cited as a basis for the discrimination in built space, especially with respect to housing, employment and other spheres of life in French cities. Unemployment rates are two times as high in immigrant ghettos as in native communities. The ghettos are characterized by overcrowding, squalid and dilapidated housing conditions, high crime rates, destitution and institutional neglect (including lack of security and police protection). These ghettos, particularly Seine-Saint-Denis in the northeast of Paris (also known as the*'93 departement'*), and neighbourhoods labelled as 'hot zones' including Aulnay-sous-Bois, Clichy-sous-Bois, Bobigny, La Courneuve, witnessed severe and bloody riots in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Friday November 13, 2015 witnessed the terrorist masacre of 129 people in Paris. Many of the victims of this masacre for which the Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility, were at the Stade de France, just around the corner from Saint-Denis. Conceivably, some of the roots of the growing wave of terrorism in France are traceable to her colonial legacy and the marginalization of members of her minority populations. It is no coincidence that some of the organizers of the November 13 terrorist acts lived in Saint-Denis, where they were found and killed in an early morning raid on November 18, 2015 by the French Police.

Source: ABC News (Online).

traceable to a feeling of relative deprivation on the part of immigrant urbanites. Such riots were not unique to France. In fact, during the same decade, more precisely, 2001, Asian youths in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in Britain were also involved in street violence.

This situation—a multicultural, ethnically diverse unemployed population that was growing increasingly agitated—was unlike anything French authorities had ever dealt with at the domestic level. The situation was rendered more complex with

an unprecedented influx of new immigrants from the global south as well as East and Central Europe in the early-1990s. The influx was essentially part of the on-going globalization process. It has had five major implications for urban social order in France. First, there has been a significant quantitative increase in urban populations. This is because immigrants have uniformly elected to live in urban areas. Such areas guarantee immigrants the greatest chance of securing gainful employment in an increasingly tight job market. Perhaps more importantly, urban areas contain the social support networks necessary for survival in a foreign land. It therefore comes as no surprise that urban centres throughout Western Europe contain a high percentage of foreign-born residents. For instance, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the foreign-born populations of select major cities in Western Europe were as follows (Benton-Short et al. 2006): Amsterdam (47 %), Geneva (38 %), Brussels (30 %), Frankfurt (28 %), London, (27 %), and Rotterdam (20 %). Second, members of immigrant populations often elect to congregate in maximum proximity. However, it would be misleading to claim that immigrant concentration resulting in racial spatial segregation is exclusively due to immigrant location preference alone. In fact, a more thorough examination of urbanization trends especially in France would invariably culminate in the attribution of a significant proportion of this spatial configuration to institutional policies. Such policies effectively decant immigrants and minorities into the least desirable areas of the city. Third, immigrants are wont to gravitate towards members of their homelands as an initial step in efforts to establish themselves in their host communities. Fourth, new immigrants generally seek to integrate themselves within the most accommodating rungs of society. For instance, they typically seek the least expensive housing, jobs without stringent entry and exit requirements, and the most socially tolerant neighbourhoods. Finally, not only are the immigrants racially different, they are, perhaps most importantly, culturally different, from the native French.

A multicultural urban population, a significant part of which was considered vituperative, was unfamiliar to French authorities at the domestic level prior to World War II. However, French colonial authorities were considerably familiar with bi-racial urban centres—comprising Europeans and members of indigenous populations—in the colonies. Thus, it took little time for their domestic counterparts to realize the similarities between post-War French cities and colonial towns. This realization led the French state to introduce in France the spatial control strategies that had been employed with resounding success in the colonies.

The 'Boomerang effect' of French Colonial Urban Social Control Measures

Paradoxically, more continuity than change has characterized the manner in which the French state has employed social control strategies in built space. Some of the strategies that were developed exclusively for use in the colonies now find utility on

the French mainland. To understand how this situation came about, one needs to appreciate the demographic, political and socio-economic changes that have occurred in France during the post-World War II period. As noted earlier, the most fundamental of these changes had to do with the influx of immigrants especially from France's erstwhile colonies in sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb region. One consequence of this has been the re-creation in France of the 'metropole-subject relationship' that was omnipresent in the colonies. If nothing else, a number of riots within the past decade (e.g., the 2005 and 2007 riots) in France have served to highlight the French state's creative abilities in governmentality. The state's deployment of colonial tools of social control in response to these riots suggests an enduring logic of colonial rule in post-colonial contexts. One cannot but conclude that Michel Foucault was prophetic in his lecture of February 6, 1976 under the caption *'Il faut défendre la société'* (or society must be defended). Foucault was never preoccupied with colonialism (Graham 2013). However, he drew attention to the increasing tendency to utilize tools of colonization to maintain desired power structures and social order in the West. The use of these tools, proponents are wont to argue, is necessitated by the new economic realities occasioned by contemporary globalization trends. Seen from this perspective, the new economic realities have resulted in the nullification of orthodox concepts of sovereignty and commensurate territorial delineations *inter alia*. In concert with this has been a reconceptualization of the notion of external and internal threats and the security tools necessary to address them.

That the tools have been utilized with increasing regularity and success suggests significant changes in the demographic structure of Western societies. These changes, particularly the immigration of citizens of erstwhile European colonies to the West, have produced a novel and unprecedented phenomenon. Urban centres in France are increasingly mimicking colonial cities. Without these changes, it would have been difficult, if not needless to employ colonial urban control tools. As was the case in the colonies, French and other Western cities now boast racially diverse populations. In other words, urban centres in the West have been increasingly mimicking colonial cities. Consequently, there have been increasing levels of fear of 'racial others' among the majority group. This has led to the adoption of racialized security practices. Here, the social construction of race codifies the suspect group as inherently inferior, barbaric, savage, rebellious, wayward, obstinate, insubordinate and culturally threatening. In fact, France's colonial project was premised on a belief that these attributes constituted part of non-European cultures, and must be supplanted. This non-scientifically verified hierarchized racial dichotomy is at the root of the codification schema described above. Within the framework of this schema the majority group is viewed as inherently vulnerable, and their culture as increasingly under threat from 'cultural others.' Accordingly, the spatial segregation of Europeans from 'racial others' in French urban areas is now deemed necessary to protect the former's culture. It would be recalled that this same pretext was advanced as a rationale for racial spatial segregation in colonial Algiers, Dakar, Brazzaville, Antananarivo, and Da Lat (Indochina). Similarly, the use of military force to respond to urban crises, a common tactic in the colonies, is being used with increasing fre-

quency in France. Here, it is necessary to note that France is not unique in the industrialized world for the use of military-style force to deal with urban crisis. Rather, such use of force or what has been called military urbanism or 'militarization and securitization' is growing increasingly commonplace throughout the world, including developing nations.

Military urbanism was epitomized in the measures deployed to deal with the urban riots that gripped major French cities in 2005 and 2007 (see Box 9.2). These measures mirrored those that were deployed forty years earlier to quell urban unrest in colonial Algeria (Dikeç 2007). The effectiveness of these measures in France, as was the case in colonial Algeria, depended on racially segregated spatial structures. This structure amply facilitated the containment and targeting of the suspect population for security surveillance and cognate measures. Other tactics that the French state lifted straight out of their colonial playbook for use in France include monitoring and surveillance of members of suspect groups. One case in point involves the *Service de Renseignements* (i.e., the French Military Intelligence Unit) and the French colonial special police forces (or *la Sûrété Generale*) (Sandor Online). These two bodies were charged with the responsibility for monitoring the movement of rural-based people of Berber and Bedouin heritage in colonial Algeria. In a similar manner, *la Sûrété* is said to maintain a programme that systematically

monitors the movement and activities of persons of North African origins with temporary worker status in France (Ibid).

Conclusion

This chapter is about the continuities and changes in the diffusion of French urbanism subsequent to the conclusion of France's second colonial project. One obvious aspect of continuity is the fact that urban planning remains a leading export commodity of France. Thus, the exportation of French urbanism did not co-terminate with the demise of colonialism, or more precisely, the demise of the Second French Empire. Rather, the post-World War II era has actually witnessed an acceleration in activities to export French urbanism. This has occurred mainly as part of France's efforts to ameliorate living conditions in the developing world. From this vantage point, particularly with respect to the rationale for exporting French urbanism, a change is detectable. Instead of assimilation and acculturation, the exportation of French urbanism now has as its avowed objective the amelioration of living conditions abroad. Another noteworthy change is the notion of bilateralism. At least in theory, this means that some attempt is made to elicit the input of the primary beneficiaries of French urbanism projects in foreign lands. This element was completely absent, and context was largely ignored, when urbanism was exported as part of the French colonial project. Furthermore, contemporary efforts to export French urbanism have largely been part of multi-national development initiatives. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the exportation of French urbanism has been characterized by both continuity and change. Finally and paradoxically, tools the French had

developed to socially control urban areas in the colonies are increasingly employed for similar purposes in France. This phenomenon constitutes a 'boomerang effect in French colonialism.'

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