ON THE DETERIORATION OF THE HISTORICAL 'EUROPEAN QUARTER' IN ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

This paper discusses the present deterioration in 1997 of the historical 'European Quarter' in Alexandria, in comparison with the 'Insurance Plan' in 1905. The European Quarter is analyzed according to the criteria of 1) urban structure, 2) building ownership and function, and 3) insurance and taxation policies. The street pattern and buildings in 1905 were defined by the regulation of 1834 and the bylaws in 1891, as well as kept maintained by the insurance against a various items of building. After the nationalization in 1952, the quarter has been forced to the deterioration by the 'Rent Control' policy and the change of the bylaws related to urban planning and building.

Keywords: Alexandria, European Quarter, Deterioration, Insurance

INTRODUCTION

The French expedition by Napoleon in 1798, gradually disengaged Egypt from the Turkish Empire towards Europe. The port town of Alexandria was the fundamental link in this new colonial order. The town was cored in 1834 through a new European Quarter, located along the Eastern Harbor and centered by a square named 'Place des Consuls'. Later, the British occupation in 1882 marked the political colonization of Egypt. In Alexandria, the political instabilities encouraged the European nationals to insure their properties of the European Quarter against the nationalist movements and riots that were on the rise. This political climate created an 'Insurance Plan' in 1905 for the European Quarter, which became an insured European settlement. There was, however, a mass exodus of Europeans from Egypt due to the nationalization policies of the revolution in 1952 by President G. Abd El-Naser. Since then, the European Quarter has been declining, to cause a physical deterioration in the quarter. Meanwhile, there has been a growing tendency since 1984 by Alexandria Governorate to conserve the historical architecture of the European Quarter. The building condition was surveyed in 1984, but without specifying the future policy based on the survey results, and still the buildings are deteriorated today.

In this paper, a survey on the present deterioration of the quarter carried out by the researcher in 1997 is compared with the 'Insurance Plan' in 1905 which was expired by the nationalization in 1952. The objective is to specify the causes of deterioration due to changes during these ninety years. The Quarter is analyzed in terms of 1) urban structure, 2) building ownership and function, and 3) insurance and taxation policies. Those issues when discussed together are important for the European Quarter, because they reflect the importance of the correlation between the physical condition of urbanism and the real estate management for the future conservation policies of the quarter.

1. THE 'INSURANCE PLAN' IN 1905

The Urban Planning Department of Alexandria was founded in 1834 by an Italian engineer, Francesco Mancini, who himself designed the first plan of the European Quarter in the same year. The main street named 'Rue Ibrahim' was set just outside of the old Turkish Town, to link the military base on the Western Harbor to the Eastern one. Parallel to the Eastern Harbor and at right angle to 'Rue Ibrahim', the plaza named 'Place des Consuls' was built, which in turn became a commercial center of the city. On this grid pattern defined by 'Rue Ibrahim' and 'Place des Consuls', another grid was superimposed. From the point of the old gate of the Arab Wall (built in 811 AD), 'Rue Rosette' run west towards 'Rue Ibrahim'. At right angle to it, 'Rue Nebi Daniel' run north-south where the 'Cairo Station' and its front square was built at the south end, while 'Ramleh Square', the terminal of tram line located on the north end.
The width of these streets was regulated a minimum 6m in 1834, and later in 1891 was changed to 15m by bylaw of the Municipality (founded in 1890). In 1904 the eastern gate of the Arab Wall was replaced by the Municipal Garden of El-Shallalat, and in 1905 the Arab Wall itself was replaced by a boulevards that demarcated the European Quarter. The new seaside quay began in 1884 and completed in 1904 by the Italian contractor, Gli Almagia, had a promenade along the Eastern Harbor. In addition, an electricity and gas company (1869), a sewerage company (1878) and a water company (1879) developed their networks along the streets of the European Quarter. The height of the buildings surrounding ‘Place des Consuls’ was regulated a maximum 22m, that functioned for a commercial/residential activities and developed masonry ‘gallerias’ of Neo-Renaissance style with pink and yellow tones. The height along the Eastern Harbor was regulated in 1891 a maximum 30m, that developed Neo-Gothic buildings with Venetian style mosaic patterns of red brick. Also 15m was the maximum height in the eastern zone of the European Quarter, which developed for Baroque style masonry houses of white tones. Meanwhile, in the southern zone accommodating the low-income housing, the internal narrow alleys was regulated minimum 3m.

In 1834 the cluster of land in the European Quarter was granted by the Turkish viceroy, Mohammed Ali, to the European nationals for a new socio-economic development. It was a part of the modernization policy of the country and was based on the law specifying ‘the freedom of acquiring properties and immunity from taxation, arrest, and the local judicial system’. The rents and transfer of property ownership were left to the free real estate business. This caused the property ownership of mixed nationalities, and the quarter continued to expand towards the enclosure of the Arab Wall with an alluvial topography and a few dispersed dunes.

Insurance business was correlated with the shipping business and the real estate management in Alexandria. The rising nationalistic ideologies, especially after the British occupation in 1882, was met by the insurance of the European Quarter in the year 1905, and the quarter turned into an insured settlement (figs. 1-4). In the ‘Insurance Plan’ in 1905, the building items were categorized into 1) Colors (finishing materials of brick, stone or concrete), 2) Walls (party wall, wall, defect wall and others), 3) Openings (including gates and passages), 4) Windows (unprotected, protected by wired glass, or protected by shutters), 5) Floors (number of stories, basements and attics), 6) Skylights (glazed with or without holes), 7) Hoists and Lifts (enclosed or open to street), 8) Roofs (material and profiles), and 9) Sun-dries (steam boilers, steam engines, auto fire alarm, water hydrants, chimneys, stand pipes, and others)

Meanwhile, the increase of foreign population from 16,000 in 1834 to 52,000 in 1890 caused a legislative reform by the Municipality to impose taxes on Europeans for the first time in 1890. The Real Estate Tax states: ‘A 16% income tax shall be levied on the income derived from the real estate rentals, and a 2.5% tax rate on the annual land value’. The revenues were invested in the new infrastructures and public facilities. Also one third of the maintenance cost of the European low-income housing was annually granted by the Municipality. Besides, in 1892 the ‘Societe Anonyme des Immeubles D’Egypt’ began to collect a tax of 1.5% from the income over 24 Egyptian pound. This tax revenue was directed for the beautification of the European Quarter such as greenery, fountains and maintaining the ornaments of buildings.

2. THE PRESENT DETERIORATION IN 1997

The revolution in 1952 triggered crucial transformations of the European Quarter, and its result can be seen in the present condition. The major public squares of the European Quarter have been changed into public bus terminals, and the seaside promenade has become a busy vehicular road (fig. 5). Since 1952 the original regulations of the European Quarter have been replaced by the present regulations of urbanism by the Central Government in Cairo, which describes ‘a minimum setback ratios of one third the street widths up to 12m, and a one fourth the street widths up to 15m’, and ‘a maximum building height of one and a half times the widest street of the building’s site’. The redevelopment after the present regulations destroyed the uniform relation between the street and the building height in the quarter, while the historical building facades are ignored and their conservation are not planned (fig. 6).

The survey of the European Quarter by Alexandria Governorate was, however, carried out in 1984. In contrast to the insufficient survey, the researcher has done a survey based on the criteria as follows: first to evaluate the building items listed in the ‘Insurance Plan’ in 1905. Second classify the deterioration of the building into three degrees of the ‘most deteriorated’, ‘less deteriorated’ and ‘least deteriorated’, which was defined by the present building law as ‘1) Most deterioration for more than 2/3 items of decay observed in a building, 2) Less deterioration for more than 1/3 items, and 3) Least deterioration for a 1/3 or less’. Although the deterioration degrees defined by the present building law are of numerous building items. The building items listed in the ‘Insurance Plan’ in 1905 are here taken, because they are included in the items of the present building law. This makes the possibility of comparing the building conditions of 1905 and 1997 with each other.

The most deteriorated buildings are clustered in the several zones of the European Quarter, such as west of ‘Rue Ibrahim’, along ‘Place des Consuls’, south of ‘Ramleh Square’, east of ‘Rue Rossette’, and west of ‘Cairo Station’, while the least deteriorated
Fig. 1 'Insurance Plan' in 1905 of the European Quarter

Fig. 3 Major Streets and Open Spaces of the European Quarter in 1952

Fig. 4 Building Ownership and Function of the European Quarter in 1905
buildings are concentrated in the north-east zone of the European Quarter (fig. 7). The comparison between the building condition of 1997 and the pattern of building ownership (fig. 8) reveals the close relationship between the most deteriorated zones and the buildings of governmental ownership. The European exodus in 1952 left their buildings without ownership, and the National Government became the new owner, except the buildings that were sold to natives before the Europeans leave the country. The National Government then established the 'Rent Control' for their property ownership in the European Quarter to accommodate the low-income native population. This policy continued to the present time and its law states: 'The monthly rents in Egyptian pound$^{mm}$ for building spaces of governmental ownership are fixed according to their year built as follows: A) 0.035/m² before 1890, B) 0.06/m² from 1890 to 1952, C) 0.18/m² from 1953 to 1977, and D) 0.5/m² from 1978 after$^{mm}$. The amounts of collected low rents could not afford the maintenance for buildings and correlated with the most deterioration in the European Quarter. While the concentration of private building ownership in the north-eastern zone is freed from the rent control and characterized by a majority the least deteriorated buildings.

Another comparison is between the building condition of 1997 and the building function. The law of urbanism which designates the buildings of the European Quarter to function for 'commercial, residential, recreational and cultural facilities$^{mm}$', while in reality the buildings in the central zone function with a mixture.

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Fig. 5 The Plan of the European Quarter in 1997

Fig. 6 The Buildings of the European Quarter in 1997
Fig. 7 The Building Condition of the European Quarter in 1997

Fig. 8 The Ownership Pattern of the European Quarter's Buildings in 1997

Fig. 9 Functions of the European Quarter's Buildings in 1997
of private medical clinics, workshops, governmental offices and others in a laissez-faire manner (fig. 9) which obviously cause the most deteriorated building. It suggests the law is too general to control the functions of the building in the quarter. In contrast, the north-eastern zone which accommodates housing activities consist of the least building deterioration.

Insurance of the European Quarter's buildings in 1997 is 'zero' in number311. Meanwhile, taxation of real estate is regulated by the law which states 'luxury buildings are subject to a monthly real estate tax of 7% of what is equal to the building's rental value'22. It is, however, ambiguous because the term 'luxury' is not clearly defined to leave the decision by the local authorities, and the land itself has no taxation. The term 'rental value' does not specify how to evaluate this rental value. The European Quarter has no governmental grants to renovate the properties of the most deterioration, and the law of urban renewal specifies: A) Total redevelopment for areas that suffer from over population and the majority of deteriorated buildings. B) Partial redevelopment for areas that have some deteriorated buildings and a lack of basic infrastructures39. This criteria, however, does not specify the funding policies for the redeveloping processes such as by taxation, insurance, grants, or private investment.

3. CONCLUSION

The present deterioration of the European Quarter in 1997 and the building conditions in the 'Insurance Plan' in 1905 can be compared as follows:

1. The present regulation defines the height and setback of the building according to the width of its facing streets. The minimum width of the streets were regulated 6m in 1834 and then 15m in 1891, while the maximum building height was regulated 22m around the 'Place des Consuls', 30m along the seaside, and 15m in the north-eastern zone. The redevelopment after the present regulation has destroyed the uniform relationship between the street width and the building height formed in each zone of the European Quarter.

2. The ownership by the National Government regulated by the low-income 'Rent Control' policy and the present speculative mixture of building functions are considered as the major forces of the deterioration of the European Quarter. On the contrary, the ownership of properties was left to the free real estate business. The private ownership of a mixed nationalities and the covering 'Insurance Plan' in 1905 worked effectively for the maintenance of the building.

3. At the present, the buildings are neither insured nor taxed. The urban renewal law does not specify the funding policies for renewing the deteriorated areas. But the 'insurance' in 1905 of European properties that included the buildings' maintenance works, and the imposed taxes in 1890 by the Municipality on the Europeans, raised the funds to develop the public facilities as well as to upkeep the properties.

NOTES:
6) Data obtained in 1995 from the Archives Department, the Municipality of Alexandria, Alexandria Governorate.
12) Ibid.
14) E.M. Forster, op. cit., p.98.
17) Hoists and lifts open to street are those enclosed by recessed walls from the perimeter of a building and open to a facing street.
18) The detailed insurance processes, and the insured items for each building, can be shown in a separate version of this study. This insurance for the upkeep of building details were supervised and controlled by the Municipality, and practiced through a private insurance companies that are listed in: Insurance Plan of Alexandria, Volume II, London, E. Good Press, 1905.
20) E.V. Breccia, cp. cit., p.2.
21) Archives of the Taxation Department, Cairo, 1997.
23) Ibid.
24) Ibid.
28) One Egyptian pound is approximately 32 Japanese Yen, in 1997.
29) The Law Number 136, Issued by the Decision of the President in 1981, and Prepared by the Administration of Legal Affairs, Republic of...


31) Surveyed by the researcher in 1997.

32) The Law Number 136, op.cit., p.66.


**FIGURES:**

Fig. 1: Insurance Plan, op. cit., sheets 31-37.

Fig. 2: Insurance Plan, op. cit., sheets 31-37.

Fig. 3: Prepared by the researcher, based on: *The Department of Survey, Cairo, Map of Alexandria City in 1952.*

Fig. 4: Insurance Plan, op. cit., sheets 31-37.

Fig. 5: *The Department of Survey, Alexandria, Map of Alexandria City in 1997* (Sheet E-6)

Fig. 6-9: Surveys by the researcher in 1997 (May—October).
1905年の「保険計画」

1905年時点での「ヨーロッパ地区」は、2つのグリッドが重ね合わせられた構造をもつ。一つは、1834年にイタリア人技師フラツィオ・マキーニによってコンソール広場とそれに直結するイプラム通り、もう一つは古いアラブ市街の西端から市庁舎に至るロゼット通りとそれに直結するネビル・デュニエ通りである。後者ネビル・デュニエ通りの北側にはラリスタ広場と路地電車のターミナルが、南側にはイドリ駅と駅前広場が設けられている。こうした道路の幅員は、都市計画局1834年制定によって最小6mと定められたが、市制施行（1890年）により、最小15mに変更された。また建物高さは、コンソール広場周辺ゾーンでは22m、東港周辺ゾーンでは30m、東部ゾーンでは15mに規制された。低所得者住宅の集中する南部ゾーンでは、路地の最小幅員が3mに規制された。

「ヨーロッパ地区」における不動産の所有と貸賃は、自由放任に任されていたが、そこに海運業から保険制度がもたらされた。1905年に施行された「保険計画」は、「ヨーロッパ地区」の建物について、1）色彩、2）壁、3）開口部、4）窓、5）床、6）天窓、7）ホイスト及びエレベーター、8）屋根、9）造の9項目別に保険をかけたものであった。一方、市制施行以降ヨーロッパ人による購せられた不動産騒は、都市基盤整備に囲された。この両者が「ヨーロッパ地区」の保全に寄与していた。

1997年の劣化状況

1997年時点での「ヨーロッパ地区」では、地区構造そのものの変化はないが、主要な広場、公園にパス・アクセスルが設けられ、歩行者用オープンスペースとして機能を喪失している。また現行法規（1952年）では、前面道路幅員に応じて建物の高さとセクトブルックが定められ、それに基づく再開発が進められることにより、1905年時点でのゾーンごとに一定であった道路幅員/建物高さの関係が否定され、道路景観が大きく変化している。

2. 「家賃抑制」政策（1952年—）による建物の政府所有と現行の投機的な機能複合が、建物利用を促す要因の一つであると考えられる。1952年時点の自由な不動産取引においては、ヨーロッパ人のみならず自国国民の自営が認められ、その上に建物があれば建物の保全が図られてきた。

3. 現在、地区の建物には保険がかけられておらず、税も徴収されていない。また現行の都市改良法（1982年）では、劣等化した都市ゾーンの更新に要する費用が特定されていない。

しかしながら、1995年の「保険計画」と1890年以降の不動産税は、都市基盤整備と建物保全を促すものであった。こうした点を踏まえ、アレクサンドリア市「ヨーロッパ地区」の将来のあり方を今後検討していくべきである。

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