

URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE BETWEEN LOCAL NETWORKS AND THE WIDER WORLD: THE TRAMWAY IN LATE-OTTOMAN ALEPPO*

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Abstract | Conflicts over infrastructure are highly informative to historians because they produce abundant archival material and constitute moments of explicit display of intention by the actors and institutions involved, and expose political, economic, institutional, factional and geopolitical rivalries. This chapter focuses on conflicts related to the construction of the first tram lines in Aleppo during the late Ottoman period. After presenting several methodological issues related to infrastructure studies in urban history including Ottoman cities, it is shown that in Aleppo, the study of tramway plans reveals the transformation of factional networks in an age of institutional and technical modernization. It centers on the ways in which local notables interacted with imperial governors and economic interests when negotiating the implementation of infrastructural works. It also investigates how urban planning, infrastructure, and networks of power and clientele were linked in a process that was crucial to the definition of new modalities of integration of Aleppo into the world economy. The discussion explores the notion of “public good” and its evolution in this context.

INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION AND INSTITUTIONAL MODERNITY AT THE URBAN LEVEL

The modernization of infrastructure is not only a context and a mirror, but also a tool and vector of institutional transformations. As such it has become one of the most vibrant fields of research in urban history in recent decades.¹ Infrastructural history is no longer simply administrative or economic history: as a particularly rich field of the social sciences it takes infrastructure as the point of departure for the study of social relations, and the anthro-

logical links between people and technology within the dynamics of urban change. This perspective has made it possible to unearth and analyze networks of power, the intertwining of technical, economic, and political logics, decision-making processes, and all the ambivalence associated with institutional transformations.² Researchers have emphasized the need to re-

* Author's note: This chapter is dedicated to the memory of my dear colleague and friend Lutz Rogler (1961–2020).

1 For a bibliography and methodological considerations on this issue, see Nora Lafi, “Tunis als Laboratorium osmanischer Modernität: das Beispiel der Vorstadtbahn, 1863–1881,” *Moderne Stadtgeschichte* 1 (2018), pp. 16–25.

2 See Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Denis Bocquet, “Les réseaux d'infrastructures urbaines au miroir de l'histoire: acquis et perspectives,” *Flux* 65 (2006), pp. 6–16; Matthew Gandy, “The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24/1 (1999), pp. 23–44; Antoine Picon, “Urban Infrastructure, Imagination and Politics,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42/2 (2018), pp. 263–275; Konstantinos Chatzis et al. (eds.), *Les métamorphoses des infrastructures* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017); Olivier Coutard and Jochen Monstadt, “Cities in an Era of Interfacing Infrastructure: Politics and Spatialities of the Urban Nexus,” *Urban Studies* 55/11 (2019), pp. 2191–2206.

interpret the relationship between geographic and cultural areas by revisiting the center-periphery dichotomy. In so doing, infrastructure has become the vector of innovative research directions in global history and a way to deconstruct overly simplistic categorizations.³

In the case of Bilad al-Sham, the modernization of its urban structure was shaped and complexified by European colonial ambitions in the region. This makes the study of its infrastructure modernization a particularly fruitful way to understanding how the relationship between the local and the wider world was reshaped during the late Ottoman era. In the case of Aleppo, Bruce Masters' works show not only how such factors were particularly crucial in the unfolding of decisive events for the city and the region, but also how a research perspective that embraces both the local and the global view leads to stimulating interpretations.⁴ Analysis of infrastructural change and the networks of power that were mobilized in this process is likely to unearth the logics of group relations and reveal the tensions, reconfigurations and renewed spatialities of the late Ottoman period.

A vast amount of research has been devoted to a reinterpretation of the Ottoman period of reforms. It has rejected simplistic visions based upon the idea that modernity could only be imported from Europe and has given renewed attention to the transformation of existing institutions, by pointing to the value of a closer look at the connections between infrastructure modernization and institutional change on a local scale from a different perspective.⁵ This

chapter adopts this line of thought by examining the dynamics of infrastructural and institutional change in Aleppo behind the construction of the first tram lines in the city.

LOCAL NOTABLES AND GOVERNANCE IN ALEPPO: INFRASTRUCTURE AS A CONTENTIOUS POINT OF FACTIONAL POLITICS

In Ottoman Aleppo,⁶ as was the case in all the cities of the Empire between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the provision of basic urban amenities and services was the responsibility of local institutions and in particular the group of notables who constituted the local governing body. These local municipal institutions for example were in charge of the daily supervision of services such as public ovens or baths, the water supply, and street cleaning. These public services were generally managed and financed by endowments. Major projects, such as the building of new commercial spaces or new infrastructure, tended to be agreed upon through negotiation with the imperial authorities, although they often remained in the hands of local notables who represented the interests of trade, confessional allegiances, guilds, and property. There was an element of euergetism in the functioning of this system: since notables had responsibilities in their respective neighborhoods and confessional communities, and

3 See, for example: Pierre-Yves Saunier and Shane Ewen (eds.), *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment, 1850–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

4 Bruce Masters, "The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the Capitalist World System," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1990), pp. 21–22; idem, "The Political Economy of Aleppo in an Age of Ottoman Reform," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53/1–2 (2010), pp. 290–316.

5 See İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat devrinde Osmanlı mahalli idareleri (1840–1880)* [Ottoman Local Administration in the Tanzimat Period (1840–1880)] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000) [in Turkish]; Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (eds.), *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late-Ottoman Empire* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2002); Nora Lafi, "The Ottoman Municipal Reforms between Old Regime and Modernity: Towards a New Interpretative Paradigm," *First Eminönü Interna-*

tional Symposium (Istanbul: Eminönü Belediyesi, 2007), pp. 448–455.

6 For more on the city during this phase of its history, see André Raymond, "Les grands waqfs et l'organisation de l'espace urbain à Alep et au Caire à l'époque ottomane," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 31 (1979), pp. 113–128; Antoine Abdel Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine de la Syrie ottomane* (Beirut: Université Libanaise, 1982); Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Margaret L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo (1770–1840)* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Stefan Knost, *Die Organisation des religiösen Raums in Aleppo: Die Rolle der islamischen religiösen Stiftungen (auqāf) in der Gesellschaft einer Provinzhauptstadt des Osmanischen Reiches an der Wende zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2009); Charles L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo 1640–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

as they had a moral duty to serve the common good, patronage was one of the most prominent expressions in the local civic arena.⁷

This system generally allowed for the regular provision of basic services to city dwellers and for the seamless functioning and daily management of the city's infrastructure. It was also part of the Ottoman method of governing through local diversity. However, conflicts could and did arise, most often against the backdrop of rivalries between urban factions. On some occasions, divergences over infrastructure or public service improvement projects led to heated conflicts, often arising from the financial implications of such projects, but also from the way they could lead to changes in the regulation of property and trade or challenge the authority and interests of a group of notables, a guild, or a confessional community. All these interests were located in specific neighborhoods of the city, which makes the analysis of such conflicts a good point of departure for understanding what was at stake on the local level.

The city of Aleppo experienced several such episodes of controversy between the beginning of the Ottoman era and the 18th century. In the 19th century, new interests and challenges emerged in the context of new modalities of incorporating the city into a changing geopolitical and economic situation involving the intersection of new forms of investment and commerce and new colonial ambitions. The first major conflict related to infrastructural works that illustrates this emerging logic occurred in 1819. It shows how local factions and actors from the wider world; i.e., the Ottoman Empire and Europe interacted in a new way over the issue of modernization. Some Aleppo notables rejected the mode of financing of a project supported by the Ottoman governor Khurshid Paşa to modernize the city's water supply system.⁸ The governor's plan was to increase taxes on urban notables to finance the modernization of the aqueducts. This constitut-

ed a two-pronged attack on the notables' main prerogatives: their right to negotiate their financial relationship with the Empire, and their responsibility for water provision under the old regime's norms of municipal governance.

The contemporary chronicler Abraham Kubilyan noted that this decision sparked a revolt on the part of some urban factions.⁹ The 1822 earthquake further aggravated the provision of public services in Aleppo: many amenities were damaged and the normal funding of their maintenance through endowments was not sufficient to cover their reconstruction and modernization. In the next few decades, the question of infrastructure modernization remained a key stumbling block in the negotiations over the agreement on imperial rule between the local elites and Istanbul. During the Egyptian period (1831–1840), other projects were proposed, but the notables were divided over them, not only with respect to their pros and cons, but also over their ties to certain business leaders and other networks of influence and interest. Each project reflected the geographic location and social make-up of particular factions; i.e., their specific physical base at the neighborhood level and their roots in the households of notables and their client circles. It also reflected the interaction between this local dimension and the changing international investment milieu.

The crisis of the mid-19th century that resulted in the destabilization of the whole region with its litany of major violent episodes, such as the Aleppo riots of 1850, led to a redefinition of confessional balances as well as relations with the outside world. It also prompted the extensive renegotiation of the duties of local notables. This process often involved controversies over taxation, public amenities and public works, and provides a good example of the intensity of negotiations between the local elites and the imperial government. At stake was not only infrastructure financing, but also the confirmation of local notables' prerogatives

7 See Nora Lafi, *Esprit civique et organisation citadine dans l'Empire ottoman* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

8 Nora Lafi, "From a Challenge to the Empire to a Challenge to Urban Cosmopolitanism? The 1819 Aleppo Riots and the Limits of the Imperial Domestication of Factional Violence," in Ulrike Freitag and Nora Lafi (eds.), *Urban Governance under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 58–75.

9 Abraham Kubilyan al-Armani (1786–1832), *Thawrat al-halabiyyin 'ala al-wali Khurshid Basha al-uthmani (1819–1820): Yawmiyyat al-mitrān Abraham Kubilian* [The Aleppo Revolt against the Ottoman Governor Khurshid Paşa (1819–1820): A Chronicle by Priest Abraham Kubilian], edited by M. Minassian (Aleppo: Manshurat mitranīyyat al-Arman min al-Kathulik bi-Halab, 2008), p. 171 [in Arabic].

in a time of institutional reform, as well as the transformation in firmly rooted networks of investment and clientelism that linked the locality to the wider world. In 1850, a petition to the Sultan by 66 Aleppo notables (*a'yan*) representing local civic institutions, shows how issues related to public works, infrastructure, property, and taxation were linked; for example, when it came to the redefinition of the *amwal al-miri* (imperial taxes).¹⁰

This is the context of the municipal reforms that were enacted between the 1850s and the 1877 Ottoman Law.¹¹ The reformed municipality of Aleppo – restructured according to the provision of the 1867 Ottoman Vilayet Law – was officially endorsed in 1868. In this process, factional politics on the micro-urban level interacted with larger interests on both the imperial and the geopolitical stage. In the municipal reformative agenda of the Tanzimat period, infrastructure modernization was part of the redefinition of the institutional order. Although the municipal and provincial reforms confirmed the prerogatives of the former municipality and redefined its organization, at the same time they gave more power to the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works in Istanbul for the granting of concessions for urban public service and infrastructure building. The tramway projects for Aleppo were enmeshed in these dynamics. Studies on other Ottoman cities have shown that the negotiation of concessions also constituted a crucial moment.

CONCESSIONS (IMTIYAZAT) IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: BETWEEN LOCAL NOTABILITY AND GLOBAL INVESTMENT

The study of various kinds of infrastructure, their construction and maintenance, and the institutional and economic solutions selected for their management, is key to understanding not only the mechanisms of urban transforma-

tion, but also the interests involved in urban governance in general.¹² Conflicts over infrastructure are useful material for historians since they produce abundant archives and a paper trail, and constitute moments of explicit display of intention by the actors and institutions involved in urban transformation, as well as the political, economic, institutional, factional, and geopolitical rivalries involved.

In virtually all Ottoman towns in the late 19th century and at the turn of the 20th, local business people and notables associated with foreign banks and infrastructure companies, using a variety of formulas and diverse coalitions of interests, set out and promoted proposals for infrastructural modernization. They lobbied the central government in Istanbul to obtain a concession and negotiated its implementation with the local municipality. Because all the actors in this negotiation process had complex identities, functions, and interests, the study of this moment says as much about infrastructure and urban history as it does about institutional, political, social and economic history. It also says a great deal about the tentacles of foreign domination (which was taking on an increasingly colonial nature with the aim of detaching Ottoman provinces from the Empire and establishing a relationship of subordination), since concessions were generally linked to the spheres of international investment, diplomatic pressure, indebtedness, and the establishment by foreign powers of local client networks. Geopolitics, business and local factional politics intermingled. The concession model served to spread new infrastructure technologies in cities. New modes of financing and new networks of influence were entwined. Modernization also meant a challenge to the governance scheme and to the very nature of the Ottoman reforms.¹³

10 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (henceforth BOA), İ. DH., 226/13493, 16 Safar 1267 (19 December 1850).

11 For more on this period, see Moshe Maoz, "Syrian Urban Politics in the Tanzimat Period Between 1840 and 1861," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29/2 (1996), pp. 281–282.

12 See Denis Varaschin, "De la concession en Espagne et en Italie, XIXe-XXe siècles," *Entreprises et Histoire* 31/4 (2002), pp. 54–70; Denis Bocquet and Samuel Fettah (eds.), *Réseaux techniques et conflits de pouvoir: Les dynamiques historiques des villes contemporaines* (Rome: EFR, 2007); Denis Bocquet, "Les réseaux d'infrastructures urbaines au miroir de l'histoire: acquis et perspectives," *Flux* 65 (2006), pp. 6–16.

13 For further analysis of this issue, see Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities (1800–1912)* (New-York: Palgrave, 2011). See also Florian Riedler, "Building Modern Infrastructures on Ancient Routes: Road and Rail Development in 19th-Century Edirne," in Birgit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (eds.), *The Her-*

It thus comes as no surprise that Osman Nuri Ergin (1883–1961), the father of Ottoman municipal history, in his influential work on the Ottoman reforms, dedicated considerable attention to this issue. Ergin, a clerk in the Istanbul municipality and province, was active in the later stages of the adaptation of the Ottoman administrative heritage in the 20th century. The presentation of the administrative and legal framework of Ottoman concessions for urban public services, including horse-drawn and then electric trams, takes up a significant part of his monumental book on municipalities.¹⁴ For example, the question of the occupation and commercial use of public street space by a private company is the subject of a precise legal expert opinion,¹⁵ as is the definition of the nature, form, and duration of concessions.

Throughout the Empire, foreign companies endeavored to implement new infrastructure solutions.¹⁶ The personnel in their local branches generally included members of notable households or individuals well placed in the local urban governance scene. In Istanbul, their representatives were instrumental in acquiring ministerial exploitation permits. European consulates also lobbied for their national companies. During the 1860s, several entrepreneurs, such as Hutchinson in 1863, made efforts to lay tram lines in Istanbul.¹⁷ In 1864, a regulatory framework was prepared and the first tentative map of a possible network for the capital city was drafted, but no actual line was built.¹⁸ In 1869, after the failure of another concession granted to Rüstem Bey, a French company was

granted a 40-year concession for the construction of tram lines.¹⁹

This 1869–1870 concession reflected the complex interweaving of foreign investment, technical expertise, and the Ottoman elite: the Greek-Ottoman businessman Constantin Karapanos led the project, with support from the Banque impériale ottomane²⁰ and the bankers Avram Camondo, Hristaki Zagrofos Efendi, and Yorgi Zarifi.²¹ The Albanian-Catholic-Ottoman statesman Wassâ Efendi (1825–1892), formerly a prominent imperial administrator in Edirne and in Bilad al-Sham, was nominated director of the *Société des Tramways de Constantinople*.²² Texts related to the official regulation of the service were issued in 1869,²³ 1881,²⁴ 1907,²⁵ 1911,²⁶ and 1916,²⁷ and the 1911 concession was extended for 75 more years.²⁸

The first line for horse-drawn trams started to operate in 1872 and, by 1873, the *Société* was operating four omnibus lines and three horse-drawn tram lines. The construction of the tram lines was supervised by the *Société*, which also

itage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 435–468.

14 Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye* [Book of Municipal Affairs], 9 vols. (Istanbul: Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 1995; 1st edition 1914–1922) [in Turkish].

15 *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 2474.

16 Jacques Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l'empire ottoman (1895–1914)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1977). See also, on public lighting in Istanbul, Nurcin İleri, "A Nocturnal History of Fin de Siècle Istanbul" (PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2015), p. 327.

17 See İbrahim Murat Bozkurt, "İstanbul Kentiçi kara toplu ulaşım hizmetlerinin başlaması ve gelişimi (1850–1900) [Start and Development of Istanbul Land Transport Services (1850–1900)]" (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2004) [in Turkish].

18 Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), p. 90.

19 Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 5, pp. 2398–2418 for the years 1869–1871; see also O. Iskender, *Manuel du capitaliste en Turquie* (Constantinople: Typographie et Lithographie Centrales, 1872–1874), vol. 3, pp. 13–16; Philip Ernest Schoenberg, "The Evolution of Transport in Turkey (Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor) under Ottoman Rule, 1856–1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* 13/3 (1977), pp. 359–372.

20 On the actions of this bank, see Edhem Eldem, *Banque impériale ottomane: Inventaire commenté des archives* (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 1994); André Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1996); Edhem Eldem, "The Imperial Ottoman Bank: Actor or Instrument of Ottoman Modernization," in Kostas Kostis (ed.), *Modern Banking in the Balkans and West-European Capital in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), pp. 50–61.

21 For the full text of the concession, see Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 5, pp. 2408–2417. On the financial context, see Vesile Necla Geyikdagi, "French Direct Investments in the Ottoman Empire before World War I," *Enterprise and Society* 12/3 (2011), pp. 525–561; see also idem, *Foreign Investment in the Ottoman Empire: International Trade and Relations 1854–1914* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); see especially p. 117 for a table of the tramway companies in the Ottoman Empire.

22 *Le Journal des Débats*, 5 February 1877.

23 Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 5, p. 2398.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 2418, 2420.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 2425–2429.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 2429–2442.

27 *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 4322–4324.

28 Çelik, *Remaking of Istanbul*, p. 91.

played a role in urban planning in altering the width of the streets as required.

This example points to the value of analyzing the design and building of tram networks in conjunction with urban planning projects, while taking the value of real estate properties belonging to elite circles into account. Osman Nuri Ergin describes the complex negotiations that took place between the *Société*, the municipality, and the state. The lines were electrified at the beginning of the 20th century, a process that opened up new debates and led to changes in the distribution of the shares of the *Société*.²⁹ In Istanbul, the tram system also constituted concrete evidence of the new relationship between European finances, imperial supervision, and local projects. The local municipality inherited a situation that had been decided upon with the circles of imperial institutions (the legal form of concessions, the financing networks, and the choice of technology). These institutions were themselves subject to complex interactions with foreign influences and had to be negotiated in terms of local realities and interests. Intense political conflicts about the tram network arose after World War I in the context of a redefinition of the relationship between Istanbul and the world of international finance.³⁰

The case of the construction of the tram network of Salonica illustrates this tangled web of levels and interests in a very revealing way. The *Compagnie ottomane des tramways de Salonique* was created in 1892 on the basis of an 1889 concession granted to Hamdy Bey.³¹ The evolution of this company at the turn of the 20th century illustrates the growth of Belgian interests in the financing and operation of tram routes,³² and particularly the action of admin-

istrator Fernand Guillon, who personifies the global dimension of electric tram operations: he was the president of tram companies in Verona, Buenos Aires, Odessa, and Madrid.³³ In late-Ottoman Salonica, the management and modernization of the tram network was linked to ongoing works in the harbor.³⁴ Electrification was also a major factor that led to the renegotiation of the financial relationship between local notables and Belgian and French interests after the English businessman who first obtained the electrification concession for Salonica in 1899 sold it to a French company.³⁵ The first electric line opened in 1908. During the same period, a concession for new lines was granted to the *Compagnie*, in close conjunction with real estate speculation around the construction of new neighborhoods.

In Bilad al-Sham as well, the creation of tram lines sheds light on the new forms of relationship between local notables and the wider world. As the newspaper *La Correspondance d'Orient* stated in 1914 in an article on Tripoli, the tram concession was given to “a group of notables and capitalists.”³⁶ In Beirut, after granting concessions for horse-drawn services during the late 19th century, electrification pointed to the growing influence of Belgian

29 Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 5, p. 2486; see also *Le Journal des Débats*, 5 June 1910; Duygu Aysal Cin, “The European Competition to Electrify Istanbul,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 21 (2015), pp. 95–116; Emine Öztamer, “Technology as a Multi-Directional Construction: Electrification of Istanbul in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., İstanbul Şehir Üniversitesi, 2014).

30 See Erol Ülker, “Mayıs 1920 tramvay grevi türkiye sosyalist fırkası ve işçi hareketi üzerine bir değerlendirme [The May 1920 Tram Strike, the Turkish Socialists and the Worker’s Movement],” *Kebikeç* 36 (2013), pp. 243–258 [in Turkish].

31 Edgar Puech, *Manuel des sociétés anonymes fonctionnant en Turquie* (Constantinople: Editions Gérard, 1906).

32 See Mehmet Yetişgin and Toroshan Özdamar,

“Osmanlı şehirlerinde belçika şirketlerinin altyapı faaliyetleri [Belgian Companies’ Infrastructural Work in Ottoman Cities],” *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 64 (2018), pp. 273–308 [in Turkish]. See also Alberte Martínez Lopez, “Belgian Investment in Tramways and Light Railways: An International Approach,” *The Journal of Transport History* 24 (2003), pp. 59–77.

33 Les entreprises coloniales françaises, *Électricité d’Alep (EDAP)*, 13 April 2020. http://entreprises-coloniales.fr/proche-orient/Electricite_d'Alep.pdf (accessed 21 September 2021).

34 Vilma Hastaoglu-Martinidis, “The Cartography of Harbour Construction in Eastern Mediterranean Cities: Technical and Urban Modernization in the Late 19th Century,” in Biray Kolluoglu and Meltem Toksöz (eds.), *Cities of the Mediterranean: From the Ottomans to the Present Day* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 78–99.

35 Yetişgin and Özdamar, “Osmanlı şehirlerinde belçika şirketlerinin altyapı faaliyetleri,” p. 283; an illustration of the importance of the negotiations around the stakes of electrification is also provided in Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 5, pp. 2720–2728, which discusses the concession of the electrical service to Belgian investor Leopold Stark (Şitark) in 1911.

36 *La correspondance d'Orient*, 16 June 1914, see collection of newspaper reports in *Les entreprises coloniales françaises* (<http://entreprises-coloniales.fr/proche-orient.html>, accessed on 21 September 2021).

financial interests.³⁷ These groups interacted with the municipal notables to create coalitions of interest.³⁸ Stefan Weber's work for example showed how the construction of tram lines in Damascus was a subject of contention between various notables, private investors, and representatives of the Empire.³⁹

During the 1890s, Yusuf Matran / Mutran (also known as Joseph Moutran in the French literature of the time) obtained a concession from the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works in Istanbul for the construction of five tram lines in the city. Here again, a decision in Istanbul, made after intense lobbying by both international and local Damascene players, paved the way for the creation of a private firm, which negotiated with the municipality. This network of influence was active at various levels, from local to imperial and international. In 1891, a *firman* by the sultan granted the concession, which was transferred in 1893 to Mehmed Arslan Bey, a member of one of the most prominent local households and advisor to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul, who made an agreement with Belgian investors.

The investors in Damascus, however, did not manage to raise the necessary funds for the implementation of the project. The relationship between businessmen, foreign banks, and local notables illustrates the importance of new networks and the changing relationship between local administrators and the wider world. After passing through the hands of businessman 'Izzat Paşa al-'Abid (1851–1924), the Damascus concession ended up being bought by a Belgian company belonging to A. Rouffart and Charles Cicogna.⁴⁰ Local notables served as

relays for foreign investments. This is how the *Société Anonyme Impériale Ottomane des Tramways et d'Eclairage Electrique de Damas* was created in 1904, with Belgian capital and a 10 percent participation by the *Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas*.⁴¹ The *Société* was presided over by 'Izzat Paşa.⁴² The board was composed of the Belgian investors Edouard Empain (1852–1929) and his brother François Empain (1862–1935),⁴³ Georges de Bauer, Ernest Urban, Jules Jacobs, Léon Janssen, Hermann Stern, and banker Auguste de la Hault, who was also on the board of tram companies in Cairo, Spain, and Tashkent.⁴⁴ The first part of the first line was opened in 1907. The high price of the electricity produced by the company for public lighting led the municipality, which was forced to buy it under the initial contract, to attempt to revoke the concession. This was the start of a long-lasting conflict in which urban factions, controlled by urban notables, played a crucial role. At one point, one of these factions allowed young hooligans to trash tram vehicles to put pressure on decision-makers. The conflict was later resolved, and the municipality and the company reached an agreement, but, as Stefan Weber commented, “the tramway remained the symbol of the position of subordination of the municipality to a foreign private company.”⁴⁵ The deterioration of the financial situation of the municipality before World War I exacerbated these debates.

THE ALEPPO TRAMWAY

In Aleppo between the 1870s and World War I, municipal notables and imperial governors were involved in complex and multifaceted

37 *Le Journal des Finances*, 6 October 1906.

38 On the political and institutional context, see Hasan Hallaq, *Baladiyyat Beirut al-Mahrusa (1840–1943)* [The Municipality of Beirut, 1840–1943], vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, 2013) [in Arabic].

39 Stefan Weber, “La municipalité de Damas à la fin de l'époque ottomane,” in Nora Lafi (ed.), *Municipalités méditerranéennes: Les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d'une histoire comparée* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 2005), pp. 177–227; see also idem, *Damascus: Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation, 1808–1918* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2009), vol. 1, p. 93, Fig. 32 (“Section of tramway map”); Atakul Sarper, “The Impact of Tanzimat Policies on the 19th Century Civil Turmoil in the Vilayet of Şam and the 1860 Civil War in Lebanon” (Master thesis, Middle East Technical University, Istanbul, 2012).

40 Weber, *Damascus*.

41 *Recueil financier belge*, 1906. For more on these investments, see Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme français*.

42 On 'Izzat Paşa's activities in water companies and conflicts related to their management and taxation, see Ergin, *Mecelle-i umur-i belediye*, vol. 8, pp. 4185–4186.

43 For more on this dynasty of investors, see Yvon Toussaint, *Les barons Empain* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); on their work in Egypt, see Robert Ilbert, *Héliopolis, Le Caire (1905–1922): Genèse d'une ville* (Paris: CNRS, 1991).

44 *Recueil financier belge*, 1906, p. 996. See collection of newspaper reports in *Les entreprises coloniales françaises* (<http://entreprises-coloniales.fr/proche-orient.html>, accessed on 21 September 2021).

45 Weber, *Damascus*, p. 195.

negotiations over various aspects of urban modernization that included infrastructure projects, planning, and institutional organization. Rivalries developed, based upon diverging interests, factional and confessional allegiances, and membership in competing networks of economic influence, with some episodes of conflict. This period was marked by an ambitious program of urban extensions that included new neighborhoods around the old city, modern infrastructure projects (water supply, sewerage, transport, electricity, gas) and collective equipment.⁴⁶ The context was that of the modernization of the imperial technical methodologies such as the development of the network of modern routes between cities.

The case of the upgrading of the route connecting Aleppo to Alexandretta in 1910–1911 is particularly revealing of this intense investment and the logic of the geographic distribution of technology and responsibilities.⁴⁷ As far as the city of Aleppo itself is concerned, the chronicler Muhammad al-Tabbakh provides detailed information on the geography and implementation of city extensions;⁴⁸ his chronicle helps untangle the various coalitions of interest at play. These factors were particularly revealing of the connections between the local situation and the wider world under ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1855–1902),⁴⁹ who served as the mayor of Aleppo from 1892 to 1895. A former editor of *al-Furat*, the official Ottoman newspaper of Aleppo during key phases of the Tanzimat in the late 1870s, al-Kawakibi also founded the newspaper *al-Shahba* in 1878.⁵⁰ He embodied the local opposition to the abolition of the Ottoman constitution and wrote various essays, including one on the nature of despo-

tism and the end of slavery.⁵¹ In 1886, when he was head of the provincial registry office and deputy manager of the city’s *waqfs*, his conflicts with the governor, Jamil Paşa led to his temporary arrest.⁵² Al-Kawakibi represented the opinion and interests of some of the major factions of local notables who opposed the governor’s fiscal and speculative real estate policies. After a second major phase of conflict, he resigned from the office of mayor in 1895 and, after a stay in Istanbul, became the administrator of the *Régie des Tabacs* in Aleppo in 1896. He left Aleppo for Cairo in 1899. When he was in office in the Aleppo municipality (ar. *baladiyya*, tr. *belediye*), he promoted the modernization of the urban landscape and the construction of new avenues. In 1893, a project for a wide boulevard along the northern part of the city walls was made public.

As far as the tramway is concerned, the chronicler al-Tabbakh states that al-Kawakibi first opposed the installation of metal rails in the streets which in his opinion would prevent camel access to the downtown area: the rails, he argued, could cause the animals to stumble. Furthermore, camels could access the city’s narrow streets, unlike the trams.⁵³ Kawakibi’s reaction might have been prompted by his ties to the networks of the merchant caravans and to the guilds and urban factions that controlled them. His arguments might also indicate that the local notables were against concessions granted by the central government and its local representatives. This political interpretation is supported by the fact that, beyond his general status as a dissident, the mayor championed civic values and the public good over the dominance of private interests. Thus, in the opinion of the chronicler al-Tabbakh, when opposing private interests, al-Kawakibi acted for the public good (*al-maslaha al-amma*)⁵⁴ and the

46 See Jean-Claude David and Thierry Boissière (eds.), *Alep et ses territoires: Fabrique et politique d'une ville, 1868-2011* (Beirut: Presses de l’Ifpo, 2014).

47 BOA, PLK, p., 6045. *Ministère du Commerce et des Travaux Publics, Ponts et Chaussées, Vilayet d'Alep, Entreprise d'études, de construction et de parachèvement des routes d'Etat dans l'Empire Ottoman, Route n.4 d'Alep à Alexandrette*, 27 December 1910 (11 December 1326), Ingénieur de la 9e division: Younès.

48 Muhammad Raghīb al-Tabbakh al-Halabi, *Ilam al-nubala’ bi-tārikh Halab al-Shahba* [Great Figures in the History of Aleppo], ed. Mohammad Kamal, 7 vols. (Aleppo: Dar al-Qalam al-‘Arabi, 1923–1926) [in Arabic].

49 For al-Kawakibi’s biography, see Itzhak Weismann, *Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi: Islamic Reform and Arab Revival* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

50 al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala’*, vol. 7, pp. 473–490.

51 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, *Taba’i al-istiḥḍar wa-masari’ al-istiḥḍar* [The Nature of Despotism and the Fight Against Exploitation] (Cologne/Baghdad: El-Kamel Verlag, 2006) [in Arabic].

52 Weismann, *Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi*, p. 46; for details of the nature of the conflict, see al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala’*, vol. 7, p. 481.

53 al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala’*, vol. 7, p. 478.

54 For more on this notion, see Nora Lafi, “Urbanity as an Ethic: Reflections on the Cities of the Arab World,” in Moritz Ege and Johannes Moser (eds.), *Urban Ethics: Conflicts over the Good and Proper Life in Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 80–95.

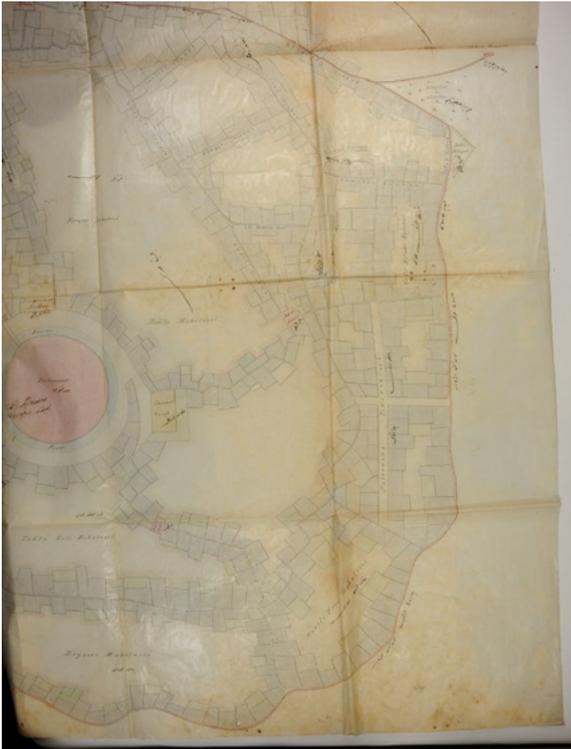


Figure 1: City Walls of Aleppo.
Source: BOA, T. HFN., 666/76, 26 Zilhicce 1307 (13 August 1890), Halep, Tramway Projesi.

people of Aleppo he protected (*dabata hadhihi al-maslaha*) against the central government's inability to prevent corruption (*al-fasad*).⁵⁵

The chronicler's view of the mayor is supported by the fact that al-Kawakibi could claim membership in a famous lineage from whom for long periods Aleppo's *naqib al-ashraf* (the administrative head of the group socially defined as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) derived.⁵⁶ In cities of the Islamic world, the *naqib al-ashraf* headed the group of notables whose religious and civic authority relied on their purported descent from the Prophet and, historically, often played the role of *tribunus plebis*, defending the common good and the urban poor.⁵⁷ Al-Kawakibi's political status in the era of institutional modernization was clearly linked to civic norms inherited from the old regime. He was known for voicing popular claims and, despite the possibly populist di-

mension of this stance, his membership in the urban elite and his proximity to commercial interests, he personified values of civic ethics in Aleppo. This explains the conflicts in the 1890s over the concessions not only for the tram lines, but also for the water supply and public lighting in the city. The mayor eventually officially stated he was in favor of such services, but he remained suspicious of the concessions system itself,⁵⁸ and refused to pay bribes for concessions, which delayed many projects. An archival file dated 1905 contains an 1889 tramway project that was never developed.⁵⁹ The depot was planned to be built behind the Christian cemetery and the line would have followed the walls around the old city (Figure 1).

The chronicler Kamil al-Ghazzi, who edited the local *salname* (official annals) of Aleppo during the Tanzimat period (first issue in 1284 H/1867),⁶⁰ gives additional information about what was at stake between notables, institutions, and investors at this time.⁶¹ He stresses that, after 1882 (1300H), new types of building and urban planning were adopted that involved construction of wide avenues (*fiha iftah jawad 'azima*), such as the one connecting Bab al-Jadid to the station of the Damascus railway line, which resulted in a major change in architectural styles and techniques, and ways of living.⁶² He describes how such changes impacted urban life in detail, with the development of new habits and customs, as well as new businesses. The chronicler is enthusiastic about the changes affecting the Bab al-Faraj neighborhood, which became the symbol of this phase of urban modernization, with its new hospital, new square, and a new avenue,⁶³ and how new luxurious apartment buildings, new commercial spaces, new cafés and shops and promenades (*al-muntazahat*)

58 al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala'*, vol. 7, p. 479.

59 BOA, T. HFN., 666/76, 26 Zilhicce 1307 (13 August 1890), Halep, Tramway Projesi [Aleppo, Tramway Project].

60 Farid Juha, *al-Hayat al-fikriyya fi Halab fi l-qarn al-tasi' ashar* [History of Intellectual Life in 19th-Century Aleppo] (Damascus: al-Hali, 1988), p. 131 [in Arabic].

61 Kamil ibn Husayn al-Ghazzi, *Kitab Nahr al-dhahab fi tarikh Halab* [The Book of the Golden River on the History of Aleppo], 3 vols. (Aleppo: Dar al-Qalam al-'Arabi, 1923–1926) [in Arabic].

62 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 82–86.

63 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 321, Muharram 1309.

55 al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala'*, vol. 7, p. 478.

56 *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 480. The chronicler gives a biography of his ancestors as well.

57 Lafi, *Esprit civique*.

had transformed Aleppo into one of the most beautiful cities in the Ottoman provinces.

Facing old Aleppo, which al-Ghazzi also praises for its beauty, with its narrow lanes and shops, the new neighborhoods corresponded to new forms of urban living. Al-Ghazzi discusses how an early phase of the work on the new route to Alexandretta and the opening of a new branch of the water supply system was accompanied by the granting of a license by Sultan Abdülhamid II to urbanize a new neighborhood (al-Sulaymaniyya) and by speculation on investment in the plots constituting the new quarter.⁶⁴ He also analyzes how the building of these new neighborhoods reinforced the geographic separation between confessional communities, because investments were made along confessional lines. He considers this with some anxiety, as it represented a potential limitation of everyday contact between these communities. In addition to notes about the planning of the avenue leading to the station,⁶⁵ al-Ghazzi's chronicle also provides information about the context of the electrification of the city, which was a key factor in the debates over the tram lines.⁶⁶ The chronicle illustrates the impact of imperial measures against foreign capitulations in 1914.⁶⁷ In general, the chronicler shows how infrastructural modernization changed urban social life. During the old regime, it was regulated by the principles laid down in treatises on *hisba* or public order by Muslim jurists. *Hisba* manuals regularly included a chapter on the regulation of traffic between pedestrians, delivery services and animal-drawn carts.⁶⁸ The arrival of the tramway did not disrupt this way of life in the inner city. However, the relationship to speed and velocity changed for everyone, whether or not they took the tram, along the new avenues. The construction of wide roads and avenues also took place in a very tense context. Al-Ghazzi notes that the fire that broke out in the summer of 1870 in the jewellers' suq was believed to be arson, designed to burn down houses and shops to make the area more accessible.⁶⁹

64 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 315, 1304 (1886).

65 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 364, 1324 (1906).

66 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 365, 1325 (1907).

67 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 447, 1333 (1914).

68 See Lafi, "Urbanity as an Ethic," p. 86.

69 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 303, 1287 (1870).

This is the context of the construction of the first tram line, whose history cannot be separated from the history of urban expansion and the real estate speculation that fueled it, since being on the tram line was an asset for properties. Decision-making processes in urban planning and transport planning are linked, with many points of overlap, for example as concerns the role of leading notables (who were also major landowners) and investors. These debates took place at a crucial moment in the implementation of institutional reforms and were part of that process. They constituted not only a context, but also a point of redefinition of the relationship between the local elites, their access to urban governance, the imperial sphere, and local or foreign private investors. In a time of redefinition of the municipality's responsibilities, and the relationship between governors, notables, business people, and investors, debates over the tramway were thus central. The Ottoman Provincial Code (*Vilayet Nizamnamesi*) stated that the new municipalities were in charge of public works, public infrastructure, and public transport. These reforms were formalized in 1868 on the basis of earlier configurations of institutional reform enacted as of the 1840s. The structure of municipality, which comprised a council of notables with various administrative responsibilities under the old regime, was also taken into account. The negotiations with both Istanbul and private firms thus represented a decisive moment in the definition of the relationship between Ottoman modernization, the local administration, and foreign capital. The granting of concessions for public services to private companies owned by foreign banks was particularly sensitive.

The 1868 formalization of municipal reform also marked a turning point for the organization of municipal technical services, as did the beginning of the 1890s under mayor al-Kawakibi. In this delicate phase, during 'Arif Paşa's governorship, a serious conflict erupted between the mayor and the governor, which resulted in the sacking of the latter after the mayor was cleared of the charges brought against him.⁷⁰ Under 'Arif Paşa's successors, Osman

70 On such episodes, see al-Tabbakh, *Ilam al-nubala'*, vol. 7, p. 480: "Arif Paşa was upset when certain persons wrote a petition to the Porte [...] This resulted in al-Kawakibi's imprisonment."



Figure 2: Masterplan of Aleppo, Probably by Engineers Chartier, Raghib, and Bekir.
Source: BOA, PLK. p. 2599, no date indicated.

Nuri and Hasan Paşa, debates over concessions were intense. After al-Kawakibi's resignation, Ra'if Paşa, a former member of the reformist team active in Istanbul around Midhat Paşa (1822–1883) (who himself had served as governor in the region between 1878 and 1881), became imperial governor (*wali*) (1895–1900).⁷¹

The modernization and extension of the city, as well as negotiations over infrastructure management were again central issues. Ra'if Paşa worked closely on the extension of the city outside its walls (Figure 2) with engineer and architect Charles Chartier, who had been instrumental in the implementation of new planning regulations in the 1880s.⁷² Charles Chartier was appointed chief provincial technician.⁷³ Under mayor Bashir Efendi al-Ibri, he also built the city's municipal Clock Tower in 1898–1899

(with 'Ali Sahrij and Bakr Sidqi),⁷⁴ which soon became a symbol of urban modernization, as in all major Ottoman cities. The vision developed by the actors in this phase of the city's modernization was very ambitious, as it anticipated huge growth and the creation (*insha'*) of vast new neighborhoods (Figure 3).⁷⁵ It served as the basis for later developments and was followed in 1899 and 1903 by a new master plan for the municipality by architect Jung.⁷⁶ During all these years, Aleppo was the subject of numerous debates about the construction of tram lines.

In the minds of the modernizers, tramways had been part and parcel of the image of the

71 *Aleppo Salname*, Complete Collection, Atatürk Library, Istanbul, pp. 68–69; see also Ruth Roded "Ottoman Service as a Vehicle for the Rise of New Upstart among the Urban Elite Families of Syria," *Asia and African Studies* 17 (1983), pp. 63–94.

72 BOA, PLK. p., 2599, no date indicated.

73 Juha, *al-Hayat al-fikriyya fi Halab*, p. 150.

74 Amer Rachid Mobayyed, *Athar Halab* [Vestiges of Aleppo] (Aleppo: Dar al-Qalam al-'Arabi, 2009), p. 208 [in Arabic].

75 Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des cartes et plans, Ge F Carte 2118, *Plan général de la ville d'Halep dressé par les ingénieurs des ponts et chaussées du vilayet Chartier, Raghib, Bekir. Hommage dédié à Son Excellence Mohamed Raïf Pacha*.

76 See Abdallah Hadjar, *Monuments historiques d'Alep* (Aleppo: Automobile et Touring Club de Syrie, 2005).



Figure 3: Masterplan of Aleppo by Engineers Chartier, Raghid, and Bekir.
 Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des cartes et plans, Ge F Carte 2118, Plan général de la ville d'Ha-
 lep dressé par les ingénieurs des ponts et chaussées du vilayet Chartier, Raghid, Bekir. Hommage dédié à Son Excellence
 Mohamed Raïf Pacha.

modern city since the beginnings of the modernization program. They were also a marketing tool for the new avenues and created added value to certain properties. Tram lines were thus a key part of the negotiations over urban expansion. In Aleppo, however, unlike other Ottoman cities, the first generation of tram projects was never implemented because of the conflict between the municipality and the governor. It was only with the opening of the railway station in 1905 that discussions on tram lines were relaunched, at a time when other cities were already considering the electrification of existing tram lines. Between 1905 and 1920, two lines were constructed. The construction of the new Aleppo-Hama railway line, negotiated by Nazım Paşa, provided the opportunity to rethink the link between the new station and downtown. Various meetings with landowners were organized to discuss expropriations and the precise route of the new line in the peri-urban neighborhoods.⁷⁷ Petitions were sent protesting the new taxes linked to this infrastructure program.⁷⁸ The governor's first attempt to get the project approved in 1905 failed,⁷⁹ but a second attempt a few months later was more successful. The first electric line, which represented de facto the first tramway line in general, started its operations at the end of the first decade of the 20th century.

The main tram line linked Bab al-Faraj Square to Tilal Street and another line ran along Khandaq Street.⁸⁰ The operation of the electric tram and the provision of electricity were included in the same concession, as was the case in many cities of the Empire.⁸¹ Archival evidence shows that the Ministry of Public Works in Istanbul exerted strong pressure on the decision-making process for the construction of the tram lines.⁸² The fact that the Minis-

try granted the concession empowered its local actors with influence in Aleppo, both notables and business people, but Istanbul was worried about possible interference that could alter the nature of the concession and the power of its networks of influence to control local negotiations about imperial control. In this situation, the Aleppo municipality was both influenced from above (international finance, decisions made in Istanbul) and the forum for negotiation on the local level (local notables, business people). A file in the BOA provides information on the content of this sphere of local negotiation. It deals with the major points in the key phases of tram line construction: the 1907 concession to a private company for the tram line and street lighting services.⁸³ This file shows how investors built up a local coalition of interests which largely reflected the existing factions. The major issues were not only investment in the infrastructure but also the value of properties. After operations began at the end of the 1900s, the municipality had a recurring problem with the tramway and power company: as one of the company's main clients, the municipality felt that it paid too much for electricity. Such specific situations, when a municipality was the main client of a private concession that operated on its own territory, have been analyzed by urban historians as key moments in the very definition of the relationship between institutions and the private sector.⁸⁴

The private interests of the company were well-represented and defended on the municipal council, since several council members were involved in the circle of investment and clientele, showing again the entanglement of interests and networks, both local and in the wider world. The year 1909 constituted an interesting moment in the construction of networks of urban cooperation at the scale of the Empire. Various Ottoman municipalities, from Edirne to Adana and Aleppo, worked together to redefine the role of the institution of the municipality with regard to the concession system. They exchanged letters, compared prices and

77 al-Ghazzi, *Kitab Nahr al-dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 360 (1905).

78 *Ibid.*, p. 361.

79 Jacques Thobie, "L'électrification dans l'aire syro-libanaise des origines à la fin du Mandat français," *Outre-Mers* 89/334-335 (2009), p. 540.

80 Ebru Aras Miroğlu, "The Transformation of Urban Space at the Conjunction of the Old and New Districts: The City Aleppo" (Master thesis, METU, 2005).

81 Erol Emine, "Osmanlı devleti'nde aydınlatma uygulamaları ve verilen imtiyazlar (1850-1914) [Concessions for Public Lighting in the Ottoman Empire]," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 175 (2008), pp. 201-224 [in Turkish].

82 BOA, T. HFN., 666/76, 26 Zilhicce 1307 (13 August 1890), Halep, Tramway Projesi.

83 BOA, İ. İMT., 5/1324, 4 Zilkade 1324 (20 December 1906), Halep tramvayı imtiyazı [Aleppo tramway concession].

84 See Alvaro Ferreira da Silva, "The Peculiar Customer," in Denis Bocquet and Samuel Fettah (eds.), *Réseaux techniques et conflits de pouvoir* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2007), pp. 203-224.

methods of organization, and negotiated fiscal arrangements.⁸⁵ This illustrates the importance of local-to-local-dialogue in the Ottoman Empire and the circulation of information at a pan-municipal level. It also shows that the Ottoman municipalities were worried about the evolution of the concession system insofar as it affected their relations to the wider world. In 1913, a new conflict between the Aleppo municipality and the private tram company erupted, which required central government intervention.⁸⁶ The major player in this episode was engineer Osman Vehbi Bey, who ended up buying the concession from Muhtar Bey.⁸⁷ On 8 January 1914, Vehbi Bey obtained a 50-year extension of the initial concession, to end in 1964.⁸⁸ This decision was confirmed a few days later by the government in Istanbul⁸⁹ following negotiations between the company, Istanbul, and the local municipality. A new phase of negotiations took place in 1915.⁹⁰

After World War I, Osman Vehbi Bey was confirmed as the beneficiary of the concession.⁹¹ Here again, archival evidence on this decision shows the nature of the networks of influence between Aleppo, Istanbul, and the wider world.⁹² At the local level, the construction of the first tramway lines had a significant impact in terms of social history. The tramway company represented a new kind of employer, with new professions, new relationships to work and new networks of patronage that re-interpreted those inherited from the world of guilds.⁹³ Further, the speed of travel of the tram

changed the relationship between individual identities and the urban geography, both confessional and social. Confessional boundaries did not vanish, but were reinterpreted in terms of new forms of spatiality and temporality. The tram itself represented a kind of new theater of society in which men and women cohabited and reproduced or reinterpreted previous modalities and behaviors of social and confessional distinction.

After the fall of the Empire and the various phases of military occupation by France that led to a Mandate by the new-born League of Nations, French investors took over the sector of public transportation and electricity provision. As Jacques Thobie has shown, the concession on water, power, and tramways was granted by the colonial authorities to a company owned by the colonial bank *Crédit foncier d'Algérie et de Tunisie*.⁹⁴ The same was true in Damascus, where in 1919 this financial institution representing and embodying French colonial interests acquired a share in the tramway company.⁹⁵ This represented a turn in the history of the sector, but also a form of continuation, since the concession system from the beginning and by its very nature had favored the financial penetration of the sector by foreigners. Aleppo Mayor Ibrahim Hananu (1869–1935) joined the resistance against French colonization. In 1921, the French authorities produced a propaganda film about Aleppo,⁹⁶ but all the symbols of modernity it showed, from the “European” neighborhoods to the clock tower, were clearly Ottoman. Trams appeared in almost every scene.

85 Mehmet Karayaman, “Ankara elektrik turk anonim şirketi tarihçesi (1929–1939) [History of the Ankara Electrical Company (1929–1939)],” *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* 16/1 (2014), pp. 50–72 [in Turkish].

86 BOA, DH. İD., 191/5, 25 Zilhicce 1331 (25 November 1913).

87 BOA, DH. İD., 191/8, 23 Safar 1332 (16 January 1914).

88 BOA, MV., 237/12, 10 Zilkade 1332 (30 September 1914).

89 BOA, İ. DÜİT., 34/13, 14 Zilkade 1332 (4 October 1914). This document has also been published in Uğur Ünal (ed.), *Osmanlı belgelerinde Suriye* [Syria in Ottoman Documents] (Istanbul: BOA, 2013), p. 220 [in Turkish].

90 BOA, MV., 241/203, 25 Muharrem 1333 (13 December 1914).

91 BOA, ŞD., 508/11, 21 Muharrem 1341 (13 September 1922).

92 BOA, ŞD., 510/21, 21 Muharrem 1341 (13 September 1922); 514/5, 21 Muharrem 1341 (13 September 1922) (Adana and Aleppo).

93 For more on the ways in which wage employment in utilities changed labor relations, see Donald Reid, *Paris*

CONCLUSION

The history of the construction of the Aleppo tramway suggests that infrastructure modernization, institutional modernity, and the

Sewers and Sewermen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

94 Thobie, “L'électrification.”

95 See collection of newspaper reports from Les entreprises coloniales françaises (<http://entreprises-coloniales.fr/proche-orient.html>, accessed on 21 September 2021).

96 Anon, *Alep*, video. 1 January 1921. Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (<https://www.ina.fr/video/AFE07000318/alep-video.html>, accessed on 21 September 2021).

reshaping of power networks are linked. Decision-making processes about infrastructural modernization reflect and embody complex dynamics of change in which the locality and a new form of globalization interacted in ways that gave new meanings, forms, and functions to older modalities of negotiation, accommodation, and conflict resolution. At their core was the idea of the common good, the relationship with the outside world, and the reinterpretation of local forms of power and the status of the notables. In the case of Aleppo, a city already marked by various conflicts over infrastructure and amenities, tramway projects provided the opportunity to reshape the

relationship between local notables and the Empire, define private interests in a new way, and give new impetus to old factional rivalries. All this eventually created a challenge to the Empire from European interests. The fragile pact of imperialism expressed through negotiation between successive governors and local notables was challenged by growing external pressures. Although tramways in Aleppo were not an immediate symbol of subordination or a tool of domination, they soon represented, with the imposition of the French colonial interpretation of the Mandates, a way to coopt the local economy into the framework of colonial capitalism.

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CIVIC CHRONICLES IN MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT FORM: CONTINUITIES ACROSS THE WATERSHED OF OTTOMAN REFORM

In addition to an analysis of the scholarly literature on the subject, this chapter is based on two main types of historical sources: chronicles and Ottoman administrative documents. The latter comprise files pertaining to Aleppo found in the archives of the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works in the central Ottoman Archive in Istanbul. They include projects, letters, plans, maps, petitions, and reports.

Recent archival research has revealed that in many Ottoman cities, before the reforms of the mid-19th century, one of the members of the 'old regime' municipal council took down the minutes of all meetings and summarized them in the form of a civic chronicle in which in addition to events that took place in the city he also noted issues related to governance: properties, lists of notables, euergetism, civic endowments, petitions, conflicts and their resolution, col-

lective projects, relationships with guilds and confessional communities, public order, and the like. This instrument of local urban governance, which constitutes both a literary genre and a valuable source for urban historians, did not completely disappear with the modernization of the municipal administration that took place between 1840 and 1880 and some chroniclers continued to write chronicles. Sometimes, a former chronicler simply became the editor of the official municipal or provincial newspaper, or continued to publish books inspired by the style of the chronicles. This accounts for the abundance of such sources for both Ottoman and post-Ottoman cities.¹

1 A more detailed discussion of the institution of the civic chronicle can be found in Lafi, *Esprit civique et organisation citadine*, chapter 2 ("La chronique comme annale civique de l'ancien régime urbain").