

Struggles Over the Shore: building the quay of Izmir, 1867–1875

SIBEL ZANDI-SAYEK
University of California at Berkeley

BEGINNING IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, the urban landscape of the Ottoman seaport of Izmir, like other centers on the eastern Mediterranean, was profoundly transformed by the advent of modern forms of urban institutions and infrastructure. Studies dealing with these transformations have been so immersed in structural processes of European economic penetration that little has been known on the ways in which local actors participated in these changes and reworked them to address their own urban concerns and ambitions. Focusing on the remaking of the quay in Izmir, this essay explores how the project triggered discursive and practical struggles among Ottoman administrators, shore owners, local merchants, and a progressive elite, by transforming land tenure patterns and modes of handling trade and shipping on the shore. In doing so, it demonstrates how existing power relations and the complexity of the local urban context reshaped and gave meaning to this urban modernization scheme. [Modernization, urban elite, public interest, Izmir, Turkey]

Smyrna [Izmir] is a façade of European regularity tacked on an Oriental confusion. . . . Landing on the beautiful majestic quay built by the French Company we are still in Europe. Passing through a narrow street, we cross a first block of houses. We reach Parallel Street, then Frank Street and from that point on Europe already begins to fade. . . . We take a few more steps: beautiful houses, western style stores vanish, we have changed countries. [de Launay 1913:245]

IN HIS GUIDE TO TURKEY, the French geologist and traveler Louis de Launay set off the space of the orderly quay from the irregular interiors of Izmir. In the eyes of many late-nineteenth-century visitors to Izmir, the newly built quay constituted an emblem of modernity and symbolized in many respects a European

implant on Anatolian soil. The new quay stretched over two and a half miles and added regular lots, uniform façades, and a wide and well-paved promenade (figure 1). As a work of urbanism, it endowed the port of Izmir with a modern and prestigious face much like its European counterparts. In addition, as a technological and financial endeavor, the quay of Izmir epitomized the success and expertise of two French capitalists from Marseilles, Joseph and Emile Dussaud, who brought the quay-works to completion between 1869–1875.

The project has also received attention from economic historians writing on nineteenth-century Izmir (Frangakis-Syrett 1996; Thobie 1977; Kurmus 1974). The building of the quay through French capital marked a shift in foreign interest in the region and countered the predominance of British investment in matters of international trade, infrastructure, and transportation. In the 1850s British firms had developed the two railways of the region

(the Izmir-Aydin and the Izmir-Kasaba lines) and had introduced gas lighting to the city. Although the initial concessions for the quay works were first granted to three British merchants, eventually, it was the French Dussaud brothers—already renowned for undertaking similar ventures in Trieste, Marseilles, Cherbourg, Algiers and the Suez Canal—who carried the project through.



Figure 1. Postcard view of the new quay of Izmir circa 1890s.
(Courtesy of the Suna Inan Kiraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations)

The role of European interests in the making of the quay is fairly well documented and reveals how, in mid-nineteenth-century Izmir, infrastructure projects became an important locus for competing foreign capital. Yet, the long and rather difficult process of implementing the project hints at equally complicated local politics. The shore of Izmir was not only a site of struggle for foreign capitalists, but also for Ottoman authorities and local residents. In this paper, I focus on the local debates surrounding the project and analyze the new quay as a site of discursive and practical struggles among groups of Ottoman administrators, shore owners, local merchants, and a progressive elite. These debates provide important clues about the residents of Izmir, their involvement in urban matters, and the

alliances and enmities they formed in addressing their individual concerns and ambitions. The new scheme was not a simple aesthetic improvement. It transformed land tenure patterns and modes of handling trade and shipping on the shore, bringing about profound changes in the conception and use of urban public space. Built on a long strip of land reclaimed from the sea, the development added over 150 new urban lots bounded by two long parallel avenues—the first and the second *cordon*. By adding a wide and continuous boulevard along the waterfront, the scheme opened the privately-owned seashore to public use. At the same time, it regulated the shore, ending free access to it for shipping and trade purposes. These anticipated changes produced anxiety among local residents and generated vehement protests about questions of land value, drainage, and wharf taxes. By focusing on the position of different groups vis-à-vis the project and the nature of the arguments raised for and against the scheme, I explore the meanings that Smyrneans have attached to the shore and to the idea of public space and public welfare.

A Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Port City

LOCATED ON THE EASTERN COAST of the Aegean Sea and endowed with a secure, deep-water anchorage at the junction of several trade routes, Izmir was an important destination port for long-distance caravans from Anatolia and one of the most plural urban centers of the Empire. Religious and ethnic heterogeneity characterized Ottoman Izmir since the early seventeenth century. Internal events and structural changes in world trade brought many Armenian, Greek, and Jewish Ottomans to the city.¹ Although in smaller numbers, Dutch, English, French, and Venetian merchants also gravitated to this growing trade post and established consular representation there (Goffman 1990:139). By the nineteenth century, Izmir like Beirut, Alexandria, Salonica, and other principal Ottoman port cities, boasted a multi-religious, multi-national and multi-lingual population. The physical landscape of the city expressed and sustained this social plurality through its varied residential quarters—Frank and the Greek to the North, the Armenian, the Jewish, the Muslim to the South—over a dozen foreign consulates, and several social and religious institutions for the different religious groups.

The physical landscape of the city expressed and sustained this social plurality through its varied residential quarters—the Frank and the Greek to the North, the Armenian, the Jewish, the Muslim to the South

In Izmir, as in other eastern Mediterranean port cities, the introduction of foreign capital for the development of large-scale infrastructure projects (such as railroad lines, gas lighting and new docks) corresponded to a period of critical changes in Ottoman urban administration.² A series of reforms known as *Tanzimat* sought to modernize various spheres of life including urban management in the capital and the provinces. The reforms redefined local government structures and legal practices. At the same time, they acknowledged and in many ways facilitated the involvement of a religiously, ethnically, and nationally plural population in urban affairs. In the provinces, the reforms vested administrative power to a governor general (*vali*), appointed by the central government, and to his council—including representatives of the various communities of Orthodox Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Catholics. The reforms granted equal rights to non-Muslims and Muslims alike and abolished the longstanding legal and social differentiation among subject peoples, redefining the terms of religious and ethnic plurality in the Empire. Concurrently with the early *Tanzimat*, restrictions imposed on the settlement of foreign colonies were also relaxed. Until the early nineteenth century, foreign nationals were bound both by local codes and the rules of their respective nations regarding the duration of their stay, the location of their residence and, their relations or intermarrying with locals (Smyrnelis 1997). The easing of local and extraterritorial rules allowed foreign nationals to enjoy more personal freedom. As a result a non-Muslim Ottoman elite as well as the numerically small, but economically influential, foreigners began to partake more actively in local urban politics.³

In essence, *Tanzimat* reformers assumed that introducing modern forms and norms would strengthen central authority in the provinces, restore popular confidence in the government, and also respond to increasing foreign interference in local affairs. Achieving these ideals, however, was tied to how these reforms were perceived, contested, and reworked by the subject peoples. In 1866, Charles Wood, a member of the British colony of Izmir remarked that in a city

inhabited by a population of which the predominant element is Christian, and the distinguishing characteristic a very independent demeanor towards the local authority . . . it has ever been a difficulty with the governors of Smyrna to conciliate the impatient requirements of the Christian part of the population . . . with

the habits and notions of the Mussulman part. [*Levant Herald*, 2 May 1866]

In Izmir, the position of the vali was peculiar and difficult. Frequent turnover in the governor's office attested to this fact. Between 1872–1875, central authorities appointed ten valis to Izmir, hinting at both increased surveillance on provincial management and complicated local politics.⁴

At this particular juncture, new modes of managing urban affairs began to have a recognizable impact on the form and appearance of cities, while at the same time older practices and privileges continued to exert their influence. One result was the generation of contests and debates about ways of ordering urban spaces. The regularization of the shore provides an interesting example of how the tensions inherent to mid-nineteenth-century urban transformations were played out in the landscape of Izmir.

Politics of Space

ALTHOUGH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW quay started only in 1869, the question of improving the docks had been on the table since the early 1850s. Regularly, French and English newspapers, whose readership consisted mostly of a western-oriented and educated local elite, deplored the state of the shore. By the middle of the nineteenth century the shoreline of Izmir had developed a very jagged layout (figure 2). This tortuous pattern paralleled the legal and economic forces, which regulated the land adjacent to the shore. The sea of the Bay of Izmir belonged to the waqf of *Bezm-i Alem Valide Sultan* (the pious endowment of the Queen Mother) which held it on behalf of the



Figure 2. View of the old shore of Izmir circa 1865. Photograph by A. S. Svoboda. (Courtesy of the Suna Inan Kiraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations)

mosques.⁵ In principle, all waqf (vakif) property had the quality of being inalienable and untouchable. In 1826, after the reorganization of imperial waqfs into a Ministry of the Evkaf (plural of vakif), new land legislation allowed the acquisition and transfer of such property, giving the Evkaf absolute ownership of the most important resource for the city's commercial development. Aware of the demand for shorefront properties, the local office of the Evkaf took advantage of this new law to raise its own revenues. It auctioned off the water lots, selling them to the highest bidder. Having given virtually no forethought to this action, the Evkaf basically extended an open invitation to opportunism and real estate speculation. The new owners of water lots could, at their discretion, fill in the sea and carry existing wharves and lots out into deep water, producing an increasingly irregular configuration with long inlets and frequent breaks. A dispute reported to the Sublime Porte in 1859 provides an example of the speculation facilitated by the legal ambiguity surrounding the rules for the sale of the shore front. Polonie Allioty, a shore owner of Sardinian nationality, complained about Nishan Pishmishoglu an Armenian banker, who had apparently bought the water lot adjoining her property from the Evkaf and was trying to sell it to her. Allioty claimed to have already purchased that same lot from the Evkaf paying cash, though her permanent deed was still not issued (*Meclis-i Mahsus*, no. 801, 1276/1859). This case is complicated by the fact that in principle, until the decree of 1867, foreign nationals could not hold and transfer property. Practice, however, did not comply with the rule and foreigners residing in port cities acquired urban property either in the name of their wives, if they were of Ottoman nationality, or through Ottoman intermediaries (*Rougon* 1892:206–215; Rosenthal 1980:106). This practice, though known to local authorities, constituted an anomaly and was likely to generate abuses as well as questions about the security of foreign nationals' land tenure. It was probably no coincidence that a few months before the dispute, central authorities removed Ibrahim Bey, the director of the Evkaf office in Izmir, from office (*Dahiliye*, no. 27850, 1275/1858). The embezzlement of Evkaf funds, bribery, and the forgery of title deeds were common complaints in the provincial correspondence during this period.

In addition to being the focus of competition between landowners, the old shore line also epitomized the religious, ethnic, and national plurality of Izmir. In the 1850s the shore consisted of several clusters of small private jetties separated by narrow lanes and crooked alleys (figure 3). To the southern end were the

massive military barracks. Next stood the Turkish and the European customhouses, followed by typical appendages of a sea port including several marine store shops, ship chandlers, and drinking houses owned mainly by the local non-Muslim populations. Further north was the English Scala where the shore opened into a short esplanade. The British consular agencies, and the French and Austrian steamer lines were located here (figure 4). Next came a row of closely aggregated residences and drinking houses belonging mostly to Orthodox Greeks and partly to a colony of Maltese boatmen. This part of the shore had several wooden piers running out into the sea, suggesting private shipping activity. From there to Bella Vista corner in the North was another stretch of European houses including the French, Austrian, Prussian, Portuguese, and Greek consulates and ending at the French Hospital and the Turkish guard-house, which announced the limit of the built up zone. Beyond this area, houses became sparser and the town ended at the Point, the northern tip abutting the Bay of Bournabat (Rolleston 1856:8-9; Murray's Hand Book 1878:262-3).



Figure 3. Map of Izmir showing the urban fabric in the 1870s. Although the new shoreline is marked on the map, reclaimed land is not yet subdivided.

(Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Turkey in Asia. London: John Murray, 1878)

The form and the use of the old shore exhibited the commercial spirit of the nationally, and ethnically mixed population. At the same time, the layout of the shore hinted at local land practices, which regulated public property. Ottoman customary law, based on Islamic law, distinguished private property, belonging to individuals or a waqf, from common property belonging to a group of neighbors or a community. Unlike Roman law, the conception of public land in Islamic law did not always require such spaces to be used for public utility. On the contrary, in some cases the management of common property gave priority to and protected individual rights. A case in point is the conception of street systems. While a through street was considered public property serving the

interest of the whole community, a dead end street belonged mainly to the neighboring properties who were entitled to regulate its use (Yerasimos 1996:10). The administration of and access to the old shore of Izmir conformed to this notion of common land managed by the neighboring private properties. Consequently, the individual ambitions represented by the shore front owners led to complex and often conflicting interests.

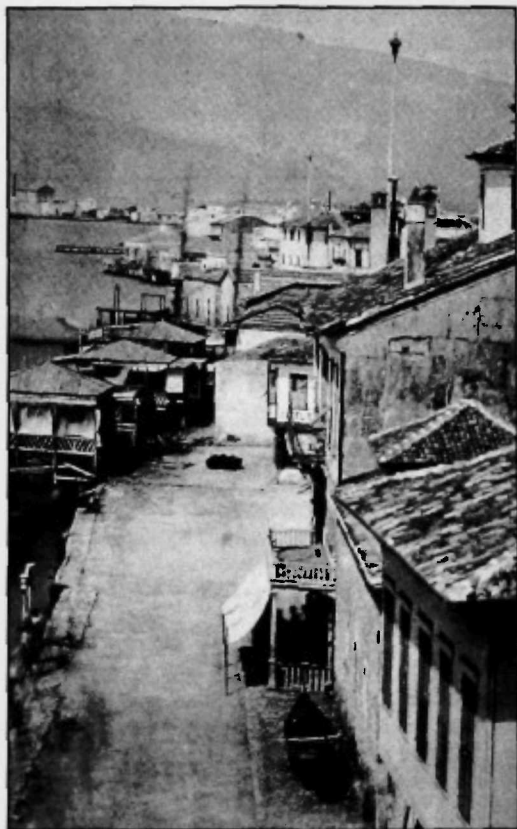


Figure 4. View of the English Scala and English Consulate circa 1854. (Photograph by E. Chardlyon. Courtesy of the Suna Inan Kiraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations)

Desire for greater order came not only from former seashore owners whose sea view and access were now blocked, but also from central Ottoman authorities, the local business community, and a progressive elite. For Ottoman authorities, the deformed and tortuous old wharves allowed easy and continuous smuggling. Rows of small coffee shops and drinking houses built on piles running out into the sea, numerous inaccessible inlets, and construction sites screened illegal activity along the seashore from the sight of custom officials and resulted in important losses of tax revenue (figure 5). Access to the shore to apprehend smugglers was severely impeded when the lots belonged to foreign residents. Foreign residents had privileges related to their persons and their residences, allowing them to refuse access to municipal officials (Rougon 1892:207–210). Disturbed by this state of affairs, and desiring to gain better control and an open line of vision on the wharves, in 1862 the central government asked local authorities for studies and cost estimates to build an improved quay on piles (Meclis-i Vala, no. 21555,

1279/1862).

For the business community of Izmir, the development of a new pier was perceived as an essential addition to the existing network of transportation. In the early 1860s, two railway lines connected the city to western Anatolia, greatly enhancing trade in that direction. However, hurricanes and storms periodically interrupted shipping activity at the landing facilities. A safe harbor would reduce the impact of variable weather conditions on com-

mercial activities on the wharves. In 1865, forty-four of the most influential indigenous and foreign merchants in the city sent a memorandum to the governor of Izmir in favor of building new wharves (*Levant Herald* 15 February 1868).⁶ This was not the first petition for improved facilities. In 1857, two commissions, including both European and Ottoman landowners, had studied the question. While all seemed to agree on the need for a new quay, there was considerable debate over where it should be located. One commission suggested that it be located toward the South, at the end of the "Turkish town" where warehouses, customs offices, and other port facilities were readily available (*Journal de Constantinople*, 16 February 1857). The other proposed the northern edge of the city close to the Izmir-Aydin station, suggesting that the quay would drive development in the direction of the Point. The Point was still largely a marshland, yet the construction of the railway had sparked land speculation in the area by British merchants. The ensuing debate in the local French-language newspapers reveals important attitudes. Fervently supporting the first location and talking on behalf of the "population of Smyrna," the reporter of *Journal de Constantinople* wrote that:



Figure 5. Postcard view of coffee-chops abutting the shore circa 1865.
(Courtesy of the Suna Inan Kıraç Research Institute on Mediterranean Civilizations)

It is true that the golden dreams of such and such individual fades away, but in counterpart the Turkish, Greek, and Jewish quarters gain more value, the working class is better off and an entire population is not sacrificed for the interest of three or four speculators. [*Journal de Constantinople*, 16 February 1857]

Fueled by anti-British sentiments, the French reporter disapproved of the opportunism, which dominated municipal questions, and promoted, instead, a notion of public welfare that transcended individual interest. Even though national feelings and sentiments persisted, some Smyrneans saw themselves as part of a

broader cosmopolitan public and the shore as a place to transcend some of the boundaries that otherwise divided them. Striving for improved urban facilities, a progressive group aspired to see the long line of water frontage turned into a broad quay throughout its entire length, "one that would serve not only the purposes of trade, but that would supply the want so much felt in Smyrna, of a public promenade where our carriages might roll . . . and our *flaneurs* might lounge." (*Levant Herald*, 17 August 1864).

By the mid-nineteenth century the periodical press began to play an important role in formulating urban problems and demands. As spokesmen for a progressive elite, newspapers asked for more efficient interventions, took strong positions in municipal matters and were influential in promoting a sense of urban life. Accusing the few privileged shore owners of depriving the city of its "lungs," a reporter for the *Journal de Constantinople* suggested a fine and broad esplanade for the benefit and the gratification of the public. "Let's advance onto the water" argued one commentator, "granted that 6 pacs of quay is reserved to public use and sufficient easement is kept for the flow between the shore and the town" (*Journal de Constantinople*, 29 August 1860).⁷ Demands of this nature also received official support. In 1861, the Sublime Porte ordered the governor of Izmir to take measures against riparians who blocked sea views and to enforce a public easement on the seaside of such properties (Bab-i Ali Evrak Odasi, no. 3426/143, 15 1278/1861).

The making of the quay was an effort towards formulating a new form of urbanity and publicness. Local papers of the early 1860s, British and French alike, sought to create points of convergence and alliance among the educated local elite. They attempted to form a public opinion around the question of what the shore space should be and whom it should benefit. Different groups acknowledged the critical importance of the space for the benefit of the larger public. They advocated, however, different ways of ordering the space along the shore. Wanting to raise public revenues, Ottoman authorities prioritized spatial control, visibility, and order along the shore. Associating commercial interest with the welfare of the entire population, merchants and the business elite strove to improve shipping conditions. Advancing the rights of the public to recreation, a progressive elite demanded a space for genteel entertainment. While all these aspirations emulated a common desire to improve the space of the shore for the well-being of a broader public, they voiced different views and assumptions about who constituted the public. As the physical embodi-

ment of these contradictory views, the old shore became a discursive site for the negotiation of competing ideas about public good.

Public Goals and Private Interests

IN 1864, THREE BRITISH NATIONALS, who resided in Izmir and in Istanbul, submitted an initial plan calling for the construction of a continuous straight boulevard along the shore to the Sublime Porte. Building a straight boulevard along the uneven shoreline meant that some waterfront lots would end up as far as 300 meters from the shore, creating important disparities in the amount of terrain to be reclaimed and bought by owners. Aware of the multiple private interests at stake, and alleging that development along the shore required owners' approval, the central authorities asked the governor of Izmir, Ahmet Pasha, to form a committee of local notables and proprietors to evaluate the project (*Journal de Constantinople*, 22 January 1864). Understandably, shore owners whose property would depreciate viewed the project with disfavor. The denizens of one part of the shore line set themselves in opposition by submitting a counter-project, which was sarcastically described by a critic in the *Levant Herald* as a "deformed and tortuous wharf," in place of the straight boulevard originally proposed (*Levant Herald*, 17 August 1864). Seeking to minimize the amount of land reclamation, the counter-project maintained the geometry of the existing shore. In the eyes of this reporter, however, shore owners, including his compatriots, were conservative gentlemen lacking any sense of public spirit and "lay[ing] claim to vested rights in the scum and sludge which dampen the foundations of their tenements and which the broad straight quay, such as the projectors propose, would sweep away and clear up" (*Levant Herald*, 17 August 1864). For shore owners, however, it was important to protect their water access without incurring vast expenses to purchase and fill in the land.

Two opposing views about the purpose of the development underlay this dispute. For shore owners the project was a private enterprise that threatened their own rights and properties while serving the pecuniary interest of the three British entrepreneurs. For the *Levant Herald* commentator and his advocates, who saw themselves as representing the interest of the larger population, the new harbor was an enterprise of public benefit aimed at beautifying and transforming the city, providing employment to the

working class, and improving general prosperity. In addition, gaining new quays was a way to partake in the spirit of progress. They believed that these advantages easily offset private interests. These divergent attitudes about the purpose of the endeavor continued to arise during the various phases of the project, producing delays and complications in the implementation.

Although the Sublime Porte gave priority to shore owners for developing their own scheme, it proved impossible to coordinate such a costly endeavor and reconcile each proprietor's interest. Taking up to the more viable British proposal, but wanting to relieve shore owners' discontent, the central government asked Alfred Barker, one of the promoters of the original plan who was living in Izmir at the time, for suggestions for an alternate scheme. The suggested revisions broke the initial straight boulevard at five points according to the existing layout of the shore thus regulariz-

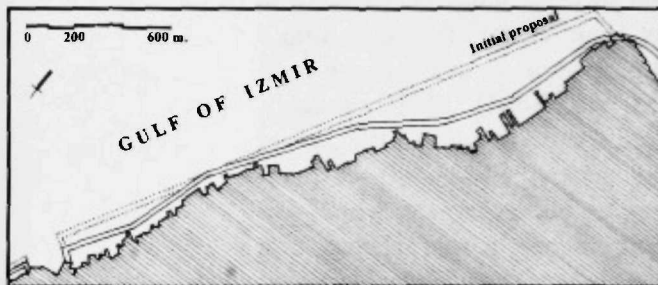


Figure 6. Map of the old shore line. The initial proposal for a straight quay is marked in dotted lines and later adjustments are in continuous line (Redrawn by author based on the map of Alfred Baker reproduced in Korkut, C., *Izmir Rihim İmtiyazi*, Izmir, 1992)

ing the amount of land filled in without destroying the sense of a continuous avenue (figure 6). This arrangement also conformed to the desires of the custom and tax offices for it allowed easy control and good visibility for guards placed at the break points (Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 1317, 1284/1867).

In November 1867, the Ministry of Public Works approved the modified scheme and the British entrepreneurs—John Charnaud, Alfred Barker, and George Guarracino—acquired the concession to build a new harbor with all required dependencies. A few months later, they launched the Smyrna Quay Company as a limited partnership with shares to be divided among upper-industrial classes of the city.⁸ Its capital was only 2,500,000 francs, while the cost of construction, estimated to be 6,000,000, was not so easy to earn for an enterprise recently launched. The French Dussaud brothers, selected as contractors for the works, invested 400,000 francs in the endeavor from the beginning. From its inception the project included local capitalists of different national and ethnic background. For example, in addition to the three British entrepreneurs, the administrative council included, Ange Cousinery, a local French merchant, and K. Abro and A. Spartali, two Ottoman merchants under British protection (Thobie 1977).

Negotiating an agreement with the central authority did not guarantee local support for the project. To the contrary, the very stipulations granted to the Company produced serious distrust about the endeavor. The Company hoped to earn revenue through the sale of reclaimed land and the dues levied upon all goods shipped or landed. Yet both of these threatened shore owners' and merchants' financial interests. The schedule of work granted the Company substantial power over shore properties allowing it to fill in the water and to dispose of such land in the manner "most advantageous to its interests" (Article 4, *Levant Herald*, 8 January 1868). Yet this part of the sea belonged, in large part, to individuals who now had to comply with the directives of the Company to keep their water access. In case actual shore-owners failed to fill in their water lot within a period ranging from one to three years, depending on how long they had owned the property, the company could use the provisions of the recent Imperial law of "expropriation for purposes of public utility" and take over such properties, reimbursing the owners the purchase price shown on their title deeds (Articles 7 and 10, *Levant Herald*, 8 January 1868).⁹ Landowners did not believe they were being fairly compensated, either monetarily or through the improvements in public utility. In their own terms, they were simply the victims of the "appetite of a vampire public company aiming for lawless gain" (*La Turquie*, 2 July 1868).

Would . . . Ottoman notables [of Istanbul] consent to see their charming view and their fresh breeze of the Bosphorus be seized, to be relegated to a back street and have their magnificent property ruined in the personal interest of concessionaires? [*La Turquie*, 2 July 1868]

sarcastically asked an Anglo-Smyrniote, calling the attention of the Ministry of Public Works in his editorial in *La Turquie*. Getting no compensation to balance out the loss of water view and free embarking and disembarking facilities, owners whose properties would be stranded inland saw their conditions only deteriorating. While their property would lose value, the new parcel they would acquire, if they could afford to do so, would be subject to very high taxes without generating any revenue unless they spent substantially more money to build on it. Landowners felt threatened by the privileges granted to the Company and were convinced that promoters would put a large portion of the land on the market as building sites. Consequently, landowners denounced

the greed of the Company, blaming it for promoting its private interests over general welfare.

Objections to the scheme came not only from landowners, but also from local merchant classes. The Imperial government conceded the Company the privilege of levying dues upon all goods landed or shipped along the quay for the period of the contract, initially set at twenty-five years, with the condition of receiving 12% of the total revenues (Article 15, *Levant Herald*, 8 January 1868). The provision for a wharf tax became the object of the longest and most heated public debate. For landowners, as well as the mercantile community, the quay project was a private affair defined by a contract between Ottoman authorities and the Quay Company. In their eyes, such an engagement should not raise obstacles to shipping activity or become a threat to the general prosperity of trade, which they equated with the interest of all (*La Turquie*, 16 January 1873).

The claims that the developers were greedily interested in acquiring rapid wealth to the detriment of the general well being of the city was clearly expressed in the local media. In 1868, the newspaper *La Turquie* launched a series of attacks rejecting the scheme based on arguments centered on issues of public wealth and public health. The paper advanced potential disturbance in the real estate market, harms inflicted on the general welfare and hygiene in town (*La Turquie*, 15 April 1868).¹⁰ If shore owners, merchants, and newspaper commentators unanimously denounced the greed of the enterprise, there was no immediate agreement in their vision of who constituted the public, what public good entailed and how it related to individual interest. Shore owners, most of whom were also part of the mercantile community, understood public good as the protection of their private property and free trade rights. The Izmir reporter of *La Turquie*, however, promoted a vision based on a more inclusive understanding of the public, in which the promotion of the general welfare eclipsed the interests of a privileged few.

Attempting to formulate a critical discourse against the project and awakened to its deleterious effects upon urban hygiene, *La Turquie* also attacked the enterprise for compromising public health for the sake of filling a few private pockets. The paper accused the promoters of imperiling the health of the city and of its people in exchange for maximum return on their investment. The new structures, consisting of continuous and tall buildings (three to four stories) along the water, would prevent the flow of fresh air from the sea to the inner quarters of town, infecting the

Attempting to
formulate a
critical dis-
course against
the project and
awakened to its
deleterious
effects upon
urban hygiene,
La Turquie
also attacked
the enterprise
for compromis-
ing public
health for the
sake of filling a
few private
pockets.

city, particularly during hot periods. In addition, the difficulties of draining the lower parts of town would escalate. Extending the existing pipes to the new shore, as the promoters intended, would be very inefficient and would cause severe sanitation problems in the heart of town. The paper used the opinion of the medical practitioners of Izmir to support these claims and announced with unprecedented gravity that all would be lost if the scheme was allowed to go on as suggested (*La Turquie*, 11 April 1868).

La Turquie not only criticized the Company, but the views it advanced occasionally conflicted with those of the merchant classes. While the merchant elite assumed that increased trade would benefit the general good, the reporters of *La Turquie* saw increased trade as contaminating the place and spoiling the quality of a modern spectacular urban space. For example, the discussion about the new tramway along the quay represents a conflict of this sort. To lay a tramway running the full length of the quay and with direct access to the custom house, the Company had to set aside a space of three to six meters all along the quay (Article 12, *Levant Herald* 8 January 1868). The tramway was to carry both freight and passengers, serving the Company as well as the more general public. Those who strove for an exclusively recreational public space despised the idea that the tramway was to transport merchandise, for it would prevent free circulation along the waterfront and crowd the whole area. In their eyes, this would ruin the quay and deprive all classes from enjoying the beautiful public promenade (*La Turquie*, 15 April 1868). By articulating conflicting positions and views about the project, the periodical press opened a new social space to confront “publicly” reasoning elites.

Sites of Friction

SUSTAINED ANTAGONISM AGAINST WHARF DUES led to an unexpected turn in the project. At the beginning, merchants of foreign nationalities contended that they were not liable under the custom treaties that their nations had with the Ottoman State. Yet, according to the convention, all merchandise landing at and shipped from the quay was subject to dues regardless of the nationality of the vessel. Troubled by these terms, a few months after the signing of the contract, local merchants of foreign nationality raised their protest to the Porte. To alleviate discontent, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Pasha,

announced in an official note that ships loading and unloading directly at the Customhouse would be exempt from charges. This ministerial note was in conflict with the stipulations of the concession and required modifications to the agreement with the Quay Company. Additional articles added to the convention allowed a 100 pic (about 75 meters) zone on both sides of the customhouse for free access. In exchange, the government surrendered its 12% royalty to the Company until the completion of the works.

Additional provisions created a loophole in the rationale of the agreement, substantially diminishing the revenues contemplated by the Company. The new conditions signified a compromise for all parties. The additional act was disagreeable to the Quay Company as well as to merchants who continued to demand further extension of the 100 pic free zone.¹¹ With heavy dependence on the disposition of the business community for building its capital, but unable to withstand local distrust, the Company could not raise funds and eventually went bankrupt. In the meantime, the Dussaud brothers had already begun executing their agreement. More experienced in dealing with a large-scale venture and less dependent on the support of the mercantile community, they took on the concessions previously granted to Barker, Charnaud, and Guarracino, acquiring all the shares to become the sole owners of the Smyrna Quay Company.¹²

While the revised contract and the takeover by the Dussaud brothers allowed the new quay to reach completion in 1875, it did not eliminate the difficulties and resentment that had marred the project since its inception. The enterprise faced mounting difficulties in enforcing the stipulations of the contract. In 1872, three years after the project began the Company met with landowners' resistance to filling in the land or paying for its cost. Months after the official expropriation of their land, coffee-shop owners and other small businesses refused to give away their establishments or to vacate the premises. Forced expropriation produced not only discontent and delay tactics among owners, but also a heightened level of opportunism. Business owners, knowing that they ultimately had to vacate their properties, no longer bothered to maintain their structures. On at least one occasion this led to a tragic accident. On February 9, 1873, at around 10 o'clock in the evening, the coffee-shop built on piles off shore, known as Kivoto, gave way suddenly during an acrobatic performance and the crowded audience was thrown into the deep water, causing the loss of one hundred lives (*Levant Herald*, 19 February 1873). Six weeks

before the disaster, the Dussauds had officially paid for the purchase of Kivoto. They had ordered the owner to vacate the premises because the structure was in a dangerous condition and it was necessary to demolish it to facilitate the quay works (*La Turquie*, 15 February 1873). Although central authorities sent two orders for taking down such structures, all remained unheeded until the grievous event forced local authorities to demolish all other wooden coffee-shops running out into the sea.

Resistance also came from seemingly progressive owners. In 1874, a group of landowners sent a petition to Constantinople to complain about the "uniform plan" that the Dussaud brothers imposed on buildings along the quay. More than the uniformity of the plan, it was, however, having to make room for a two-meter footpath that produced strong resentment in this case. The street along the quay was to be twenty meters broad. Considering that a tramway was laid down about five meters from the sea, the remainder was insufficient for the construction of a suitable footpath. The Dussaud plan proposed that all the proprietors should sacrifice two meters of grounds. As compensation they would be allowed to extend their first stories for four meters over the width of the footpath (*Levant Herald*, 25 November 1874). According to the Dussauds the proprietors would in the end lose nothing. Landowners, however, reluctant to incur extra expenses and resenting the project from the outset, fought the plan, advancing various arguments and thereby attacking its regimented aesthetic.

The laying out of sewers was another site of friction. In 1872, as government approval of the sewer lines was pending, the Company put off the embankment works along the shore and started building the outer wall of the quay, which was a priority in order to fulfill the terms of the contract. The process of construction produced long and stagnant water pools between the old shore and the new quay wall. This wet zone, perceived as a source of disease and infection, raised questions of public hygiene and health. The difficulties of drainage preceded the quay works. Given the topography of the city, the discharge of refuse water had been a constant concern for inhabitants of the lower town. Part of the city, built on acclivity, naturally drained itself. The lower parts, however, which had experienced a rapid population increase within the prior thirty years, had either no drains at all, or poor drains kept open most of the year. Typically, during rainstorms, sewers would stop flowing and winds would drive the slops back, blocking the ducts and flooding the streets. For lack of sufficient study or by omission there was no clear agreement between the

On February
9, 1873, at
around 10
o'clock in the
evening, the
coffee-shop
built on piles
off shore,
known as
Kivoto, gave
way suddenly
during an acro-
batic perform-
ance and the
crowded audi-
ence was
thrown into the
deep water,
causing the loss
of one hundred
lives

local authorities and the Company about the tasks related to the sewer lines and embankment works. The only stipulated matter in the work schedule was that the Company should be bound to establish drains down to the sea within the limits of its works (Article 18). In the past, streets and houses bordering the water had small private sewers flowing freely into the sea, with discharge washed off by sea currents. During construction, however, these sewers emptied into a narrow pool that no longer had a connection to the open sea. All sorts of deposits accumulated and neither the Company nor the authorities took effective measures to alleviate this unhygienic situation. In the spring of 1872, the foul smell in the area alarmed many people, particularly waterside residents and the foreign consuls whose houses were near this wet zone. Twelve consuls (Great Britain, Spain, Netherlands, France, Italy, Greece, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, and Russia) sent an official note to their respective embassies in Istanbul to protest against the Company leaving sewers open during hot weather and thus poisoning the atmosphere (Bab-i Ali, no. 112/44, 1872). Their hope was to urge the Sublime Porte to delay the quay wall until the embankments were completed. In the note, the consular body decried the threats that the project presented to the public health of the city and to the commercial interests of all nations. To relieve the town from the noxious discharges, the consuls asked the Company to build temporary sewers connecting the unhealthy water pool to the sea.

Meanwhile, the Governor, Hamdi Pasha, asked Margossian Efendi, the chief engineer of the province of Aydin, and Mr. Williamson, municipal engineer, to draft a detailed report on how to improve urban hygiene. Initially the Company's scheme provided only thirteen sewers to the sea. The municipal engineers rejected the scheme and suggested instead a hierarchical web with one large collector sewer along the second Cordon, thirty-one sewers connecting the collector sewer to the sea, and smaller private sewers from the waterside buildings connecting to these thirty-one sewers (Bab-i Ali, no. 112/44, 1872).¹³ Although the Company recognized the importance of a collector sewer as the engineers proposed, it refused to build the sewers, public as well as private, which were outside the scope of the contract unless the government extended the terms of the concessions and provided compensation for the work. The spaces under construction, except the projected streets, were in part the property of waterside residents and in large part the property of the Company. The Company becoming a major owner of the shore was also part of the common

rights regulating these properties. According to the Ministry of Public Works, it was the responsibility of individual owners to improve their property and make the connection between street sewers and private lots. If landowners chose not to act, authorities had the right to perform the necessary work and charge landowners according to the length of their street façade. The Dussauds went to Istanbul to negotiate new terms with authorities and obtained a prolongation of the contract in order to extend the public and private sewers from the old shore to the sea and to complete the embankment work in conjunction with the quay walls.

The problem of drainage not only revealed the negotiation of the responsibilities implicated in carrying through public works. It also exhibited the entangled private interests and allegiances. Richard Van Lennep, the administrator of the Quay Company, was also the consul of the Dutch community and an established merchant in Izmir. While interacting with Ottoman authorities, Van Lennep downplayed the accusations of damages inflicted by the Company during the construction as mere exaggeration. In his letter to the Imperial Commissioner, Nihad Efendi, he dismissed on "scientific" grounds the view that the water pools constituted a threat to public health (Bab-i Ali, no. 112/44, 1872). Yet, the same day, the name of Van Lennep appeared in the diplomatic note sent to Istanbul by the consular body deploring the state of the water pools.

The Company acknowledged, but was not bound to, a notion of public utility. It defined its responsibilities based on the conditions of the contract and on the desire to build up a profitable business. As it did with the question of sewers, the quay enterprise sought to get a better deal on the terms of the agreement. The free zone left around the Customhouse had temporarily but not satisfactorily settled the issue of wharf dues. In 1875, after the completion of the contracted works, the question of the 100 pic free area was again brought to the fore. The Dussaud Company wanted to extend the quay works in front of the customhouse and abolish the 100 pic free zone. In exchange, it proposed to give merchants a considerable reduction in quay dues and to provide several urban improvements in the city if they agreed to forfeit their rights to land goods at the Customhouse free of quay dues (*Levant Herald*, 31 March 1877).¹⁴ On this basis, a special committee that sought the opinion of experienced local merchants developed a new reduced tariff. Among those who contributed their views were Psiachi, Paterson, Pierre Allioty, Farkoa, Henriquez, Yenisehirlizade Ahmet Efendi, and Evliyazade Mehmed Efendi,

Striving to cope with the privileges granted to the Company, urban elite groups marshaled critical rational arguments and reformulated ideas of common good to suit their immediate needs and actions. As such, the project opened a discursive space to define who the public is and what public interest entails.

which reminds us again that the local merchant community was ethnically and nationally diverse (*La Turquie*, 24 March 1880). The issue of quay dues, however, would not be fully settled for another decade.

The Public

PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROJECT AND OPINIONS about its merit were divided and shifted even within one group. In 1880, twelve years after its initial attack against the scheme, *La Turquie* glorified the project, arguing that it not only improved the level of hygiene in town, but also led to notable changes in the habits of the population.

New streets, new quarters, new buildings have produced open-mindedness, elegance, and comfort . . . improved streets now straighter, wider, better paved and better ventilated lead the mind to seek enhancement . . . and all these changes cost the city an insignificant duty levied on goods. [*La Turquie*, 23 March 1880]

The construction of a new quay was neither a simple stamp of European modernity nor an easy foreign implant. The project was inscribed within a complicated urban landscape and was reshaped by the circumstances that characterized nineteenth-century Izmir. The delays, changes and frictions, experienced through the conception and implementation of the quay, attest to this fact. The strenuous process of remaking the shore also hints at the difficulty of defining a single dominant urban elite group. Throughout the project, the space of the shore became a site of struggle for various elite groups to play out their ambitions and aspirations. Striving to cope with the privileges granted to the Company, urban elite groups marshaled critical rational arguments and reformulated ideas of common good to suit their immediate needs and actions. Ottoman authorities strove to increase their control over the space of the shore and defined public good in terms of increased municipal revenue. The mercantile community prioritized its own economic interest and promoted trade as a necessary step for public welfare. Landowners saw public interest as the protection of their individual property rights, while a progressive elite advanced notions of public good that transcended individual interests. These competing positions about public good were complicated by the

fact that local elite groups were not easily divided along ethnic or national interests. Generally, studies dealing with Ottoman urban landscapes address questions beginning with a who in terms of simple ethnic and/or religious categories. In practice, however, these groups overlapped in multiple ways. Many landowners, including Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans and foreign residents, were also part of the mercantile community while the progressive-minded elite consisted not only of European nationals but also of Ottoman administrators.

The struggles over the physical urban landscape, however, shed light to the presence of a different level of social and political complexity that gave shape and meaning to mid-nineteenth century Izmir. More importantly, they bring to the fore the various parties and the multiple interests, which are too often flattened by generic story lines that emphasize structural changes. Such a reading of the project of the quay, which focuses on the process of its making, extends and complicates top-down histories of nineteenth-century urban transformations. It demonstrates that even seemingly imported urban interventions are necessarily inscribed within existing relations of power and reshaped by the complexity of the local urban context. Inquiries into the meanings of and the struggles over the urban landscape are critical not only for the study of nineteenth-century Ottoman cities, but for non-western and colonial landscapes at large for they help restore the agency of local populations as active participants in shaping the choice, adaptation and implementation of urban planning ideas, and in formulating new visions of urbanity and modernity.

Notes

¹ According to Ottoman registers in 1580, the city consisted of eight Muslim and one Greek Orthodox neighborhood and counted about 2000 inhabitants. By 1650 its population had increased to thirty or forty thousand (Goffman 1990).

² This case bears many similarities to the more recent example of Doha's Corniche described by Sharon Nagy in this volume.

³ In the early 1860s, the *Levant Herald* and other local newspapers continually referred to European residents' and consular involvement in local municipal affairs.

⁴ Three governors were successively appointed in 1872: Mehmet Sadik Pasha, Mehmet Sabri Pasha, Hüseyin Avni Pasha; two in 1873: Mustafa Süreyya Pasha, Ahmet Hamdi Pasha; one in 1874: Ahmet Rasim

Pasha; and four in 1875: Hüseyin Avni Pasha, Kayserili Ahmet Pasha, Ahmet Esat Pasha, Hursit Pasha (Okurer 1970: 117–123).

⁵ In Ottoman legislation waqf (or vakif) refers to buildings or lands that were purchased and set aside as a religious endowment. Waqf property was revenue-bearing property as it was rented for fixed period of time for its use, and the yield in the revenue was given to the object of the endowment. Unlike the manner in which real estate is commonly understood to have value, that is by possessing buildings or lands whose value would increase over time, or in their purchase and sale, waqf property belonged to that institution in perpetuity.

⁶ The forty-four merchants included British merchants such as J.B. Patterson, F. Whitall and holders of steamboat companies such as J. Gout. A few years later, however, many of these merchants and their local partners and agents would oppose the project.

⁷ One pic, or arsin, is equivalent to 0.75 meters.

⁸ The hundred preference shares were finally sold in London to foreign investors producing resentment among locals.

⁹ The law of expropriation for public utility was passed in 1856, providing a legal basis for the acquisition of private lands for public use (*La Turquie*, 27 April 1856).

¹⁰ The linking of issues of hygiene with urban planning and development debates is common throughout the literature on planning. For other examples within this volume see Archer and Yeoh.

¹¹ Beginning on January 1, 1873, the Dussaud enterprise began to charge wharf dues on the completed parts of the quay. The commercial body felt aggrieved and a petition signed by 13 foreign consuls tried, with no success, to urge the Government to extend the 100 pics to 500 (*Levant Herald*, 22 January 1873).

¹² On the history of the Smyrna Quay Company see Georgiades (1885), Thobie (1977), Kütükoglu (1979), Korkut (1992).

¹³ In addition, Margossian and Williamson suggested an alternative proposal to dig out the ancient galleries built by the Genoese and develop magnificent sewers connecting the upper castle area to the lower city. The report advocated a modern urban planning vision based on an efficient and systematic underground web for the overall city. Invoking the methods and the practices used in European cities, the two engineers proposed a triple duct system with sewer, water and gas conduits to be conceived concurrently. Developing a grand sewer plan was certainly beyond the scope of the problem that the Company had to resolve, yet it revealed local authorities' awareness and ambition to promote a modernity that suited the second city of the Empire.

¹⁴ The Company would reduce the tariff by 30%, transfer the custom house, join the two lines of the railway with the quay by means of a tramway, build stores for the wares embarked or disembarked, give a bonus of 50% on the reduced tariff to merchants whose ships do not use the quays, repair the streets and supervise the sewage of the town.

References Cited

- Aristarchi Bey, G.
1873–88 *Législation Ottomane: recueil des lois, règlements, ordonances, traités, capitulations et autres documents officiels de l'empire Ottoman*. Constantinople: Imprimerie Frères Nicolaidès, 7 vols.
- Atay, Ç.
1997 19. Yüzyıl İzmir Fotoğrafları. İstanbul: AKMED.
- Barnes, J.R.
1986 *An introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Basbakanlık Ottoman Archives [B.O.A] İstanbul.
Bab-i Ali Evrak Odası
İradeler Dahiliye
İradeler Meclis-i Mahsus
İradeler Meclis-i Vala
- Frangakis-Syrett, E.
1996 *Concurrence commerciale et financière entre les pays occidentaux à Izmir. In Enjeux et rapports de force en Turquie et en Méditerranée orientale*. J. Thobie, R. Perez and S. Kañçal, eds. Pp. 118–127. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Georgiades, D.
1885 *Smyrne et l'Asie Mineure du point de vue économique et commercial*. Paris: Chaix.
- Goffman, D.
1990 *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550–1650*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Heidborn, A.
1912 *Manuel de droit publique et administratif de l'empire Ottoman*. Leipzig: C.W. Stern, 2 vols.
- Hilmi, Ö.
1889 *Ithaf ül-ahlaf fi ahkam ül-evkaf*, İstanbul.
- Journal de Constantinople*
1856–1865 İstanbul.
- Kasaba, R.
1988 *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Korkut, C.
1992 *Belgelerle İzmir rihtim imtiyazı*. İzmir.
- Kurmus, O.
1974 *Emparyalizmin Türkiye'ye girisi*. İstanbul: Bilim Yayınları.
- Kütükoglu, M.
1979 *Izmir rihtimi inşa ve işletme imtiyazı*. *Tarih Dergisi* 32: 495–553.

- de Launay, L.
1913 *La Turquie que l'on voit*. Paris.
Levant Herald.
1860–1890 Istanbul
Murray's Handbook for Travellers in Turkey in Asia.
1878 London: John Murray.
- Okurer, M.
1970 *Izmir Kurulustan Kurtulusa*. Izmir: Ticaret Matbaasi.
- Padel, W. and L. Steeg
1904 *Législation foncière ottomane*. Paris: A. Pédone.
- Rolleston, G.
1856 *Report on Smyrna*. London.
- Rosenthal, S.
1980 *The Politics of Dependency*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Rougon, F.
1892 *Smyrne: Situation commerciale et économique*, Paris.
- Smyrnelis, M.C.
1997 *Colonies européennes et communautés ethno-confessionnelle à Smyrne*. In *Vivre dans l'empire Ottoman: sociabilité et relations intercommunautaires*, F. Georgeon and P. Dumont, eds. Pp. 173–194. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- La Turquie.
1866–1890 Istanbul
- Thobie, J.
1977 *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l'Empire Ottoman (1895–1914)*. Paris.
- Tute, R.C.
1927 *The Ottoman Land Laws*. Jerusalem: Greek Conv. Press.
- Yerasimos, S.
1996 *Tanzimat'in kent reformlari üzerine*. In *Modernleşme sürecinde Osmanlı kentleri*. Istanbul: Türk Tarih Vakfı, 1–18.