

The prophet muhammad (pbuh) and urbanization of madinah

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Urbanization of Madinah Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spahic Omer Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design International Islamic University Malaysia Jalan Gombak, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia E-mail: spahico@yahoo. com Introduction The Islamic theory of general planning and development is as old as the Muslim community. Its fundamental principles have been comprehensively laid in the Holy Qur'an, as well as in the sayings and practices of the Prophet (PBUH)[i]. Certainly, the best example of the earliest Islamic development and city planning is the establishment of the Muslim community in Madinah in the wake of the migration (Hijrah) from Makkah. Henceforth, the matter was evolving steadily, corresponding with both the rapid spread of Islam throughout the world and the incredible growth of the civilization and cultures inspired by the Islamic worldview. In this study, I attempted to identify and examine some principles of Islamic urban planning and development, which the Prophet (PBUH) under the aegis of revelation had bequeathed to the subsequent Muslim generations. Central to the study are some vital city planning and development issues as advanced by the Islamic perception of reality, truth, the world, space and time, and which the young Muslim mind was then intensively acquainting itself with. The issues discussed are: the philosophy of the Islamic city, the mosque institution, provision of social amenities, spirituality and development, peaceful coexistence with the environment, housing, the marketplace, and open spaces. By exploring these subjects, the strength and soundness of the fundamentals of the first Muslim community clearly come into sight, as does the visionary disposition of the Prophet (PBUH) to development, leadership, sustainability and management.

The period covered by the study is the one which the first Muslims had spent in Madinah subsequent to the Hijrah, about the last ten years of the Prophet's heavenly mission. Studying this period from the perspective of urban planning and development is of great importance indeed, because at the time of the Hijrah the ongoing revelation of Islam was already about thirteen years old and the Muslims were yet to set up a free and autonomous state of their own. Once the city of Madinah with most of its inhabitants wholeheartedly welcomed the new religion - so fiercely disapproved of by many where it had originated - the wait finally came to an end and the stage was set for broadening the focus of the nascent community's undertakings. As a result, the focus of revelation was likewise widened. The religion of Islam thus began to assert itself as a universal code of life overlooking no segment of human existence, after having been portrayed essentially as an inclusive belief system during the entire precarious Makkan episode. From the point of planning and development, the entire Madinah period, the first half in particular, was exceptionally eventful too. This study aims, firstly, to help its readers identify and understand the essence, purpose and origins of the Islamic theory of general planning and development; secondly, to help its readers understand, appreciate and promote the extent of the Prophet's interest in the idea of planning and development and its objectives; and thirdly, to play a part in clarifying and removing some pervasive misconceptions/misunderstandings about Islam and its Prophet (PBUH), in general, and about the nature and achievements of the early Muslim community in Madinah, in particular. The city is an actual organic entity and so must be studied as such. If one wanted to understand really a city, its

form, function and spatial arrangement, plus the values and decisions on which the former rests, one must try hard to experience it as if he is one of its users, as if he is of those affected by the said values and decisions. One, furthermore, ought to possess some hands-on experience of the city core components: what are they exactly like; how do they function in their natural and socio-economic contexts; how are they related to each other; how are they related to the climate, topography and cultural history of an area, etc.?

A city cannot be properly studied from a distance: from pictures, videos, books, archives, and the like. The final outcome of this approach is bound to be an incomplete, patchy, and even unreliable and unscientific research output. Studying the city of Madinah, as it was during the Prophet's era, cannot be viewed as an exception to this research principle just because of its historical remoteness. Though it was totally different then from what it is now, yet a number of Madinah's earliest city elements, which were central to the planning and development process, are still traceable today. Besides, a few of the city's original physical features are still on hand these days - albeit in a completely different form and with different functions. And that's why in addition to an extensive library-based research, the outcome of which makes up the essence of this study, a field work (visiting the city of Madinah) was essential for collecting a bulk of indispensable data. Indeed, the data proved crucial for the successful completion of the project, and was obtained via observation, surveillance, taking photographs and conducting interviews.

Part One: Some Observations on the Phenomenon of the Islamic City (Madinah) From Yathrib to Madinah Prior to the Hijrah (migration) of the Prophet (PBUH) from Makkah to Madinah, the latter was called Yathrib

consisting of several loosely interrelated settlements. Its population was mainly made up of Arabs and Jews, the former being divided into the Aws and Khazraj tribes and the latter into Banu Qaynuqa', Banu al-Nadir and Banu Qurayzah tribes. Due to the delicate and incoherent social geography of the place in early days, it may be that the name Yathrib was not originally applied to the entire Madinah oasis, but rather only to a section thereof and to some of its settlements. However, after the arrival of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions from Makkah (Muhajirs or Migrants), as well as after the conversion of many a Madinah citizen to Islam, the city morphology and its population structure were set to change forever. The first stage of such a drastic transformation hit the road as early as during the instant building of the principal mosque — ahead of anything else - which at once assumed the role of the center of gravity in the affairs and developments instigated and flavored by the aspirations and goals of the new community - as we shall see later. The city's name was expectedly altered in the process. The name adopted for the prototype Islamic city was Madinah (simply " the City"), derived from the Arabic words maddana and tamaddun which mean to civilize (urbanize) and civilization respectively. From the same root the concepts madaniyy and mutamaddin, both of which denote civilized, civil and cultured, are derived too. The function, spatial arrangement and the content of Madinah - the prototype Islamic city - have been emulated for centuries by the Muslims all over their vast territories, as much as the indigenous geographical, climatic and other inherent factors and conditions permitted. The adoption of the name Madinah was a judicious, gradual and not at all a hasty and prejudiced course of action on the part of the Prophet

(PBUH), thus enabling everyone to come to terms with the new phenomenon and its far-reaching implications. This could be inferred from the substance of the Madinah Constitution written in the wake of the Hijrah. Therein it was still stated Yathrib rather than Madinah whenever the home of the migration and its general population was implied.[ii] The Prophet (PBUH) was not in favor of retaining Yathrib as the name of the novel and unique city-state for two major reasons: firstly, because its meaning was miles away from reflecting Madinah's lure, uniqueness and dynamism; and secondly, because the name Yathrib, conversely, bore a couple of connotations which were not only improper for naming the impending urban marvel but were also, to an extent, offensive. The most compelling, upsetting and attention-grabbing meanings of Yathrib are reproach (tathrib) and malevolence or ill will (tharb). While still in Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said: " I was ordered to (migrate to) a town which will eat up towns. They used to say, Yathrib, but it is Madinah. It removes the bad people like the blacksmith's furnace removes impurities from the iron. "[iii] Indeed, changing the name Yathrib was just one of the numerous examples in which the Prophet (PBUH) is seen altering the improper pre-Islamic names of the people and every so often of the places. Ibn Hajar al-' Asqalani remarked that the Prophet (PBUH) loved very much beautiful and meaningful names, but hated ugly and worthless ones.[iv] In one hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said that the dearest names to Allah are ' Abdullah (the servant of Allah) and ' Abdurrahman (the servant of the most Gracious).[v] As such, the two names were the ones which the Prophet (PBUH) gave most frequently to his newly converted-to-Islam companions. In Muslim b. al-Hajjaj's anthology of hadith (Sahih Muslim)

there is a chapter entitled " Excellence of changing ugly names to good names", which contains reports that the Prophet (PBUH) changed, for instance, the name of ' Asiya (Disobedient) to Jamilah (Beautiful).[vi] The original name of the Prophet's wife Zaynab was Barra (Pious), but he changed it to Zaynab saying: " I did not like that it should be said: " He had come out from Barra (Pious). "[vii] True to the expectations and anticipations of the Prophet (PBUH), the old name of Madinah, Yathrib, was occasionally the target of the Madinah hypocrites' undying attempts to sneer at and ridicule the Prophet (PBUH), Islam and the Muslims. While discoursing on the battle of the Ditch (Khandaq) or Confederates (al-Ahzab) - one of the most perilous confrontations between the Muslims and their diverse enemies inside as well as outside Madinah - the Holy Qur'an reveals that the hypocrites, who had already displayed their true colors in the course of the battle, have at one point said to the Muslims intending to poke fun at them: " Ye men of Yathrib! Ye cannot stand (the attack)! Therefore go back! " (al-Ahzab 13) It should be noted that the event of the unholy Confederacy against Islam took place in the fifth year following the Hijrah. By then, the Madinah community was already standing firmly as a sovereign city-state with no single ambiguity left as regards its philosophy, purpose and vision. And for one to call then the inhabitants of Madinah " the People of Yathrib", especially under the earlier-defined conditions, was really something of an oddity and could only mean covert mockery and ill intentions. The Prophet's words in the aforementioned hadith: "...They used to say, Yathrib, but it is Madinah...", some would rather link up with the Madinah hypocrites and nobody else. This way, yet another likelihood could be hewed, that is, the

Prophet (PBUH) did not pronounce this hadith while in Makkah, as contended by many, but rather after his arrival in Madinah and in an appropriate context. Because of this, some people felt tempted to argue that once the Prophet (PBUH) changed the name Yathrib to Madinah he completely prohibited the usage of the former. Infringing this norm meant committing a considerable offence.[viii] The Islamic city: a microcosm of Islamic civilization The name Madinah (the City) was not given at the dictates of chance, as the advent of the new worldview and those who had already exemplified it in their thoughts, words and deeds implied the advent of a whole bunch of new concepts and philosophies. Of them was the idea of the urban settlement or the city which transcended the conventional divinity-free idea that the same is a relatively permanent and highly organized center of population, of greater size or importance than a village. Similarly, the city as perceived by Islam easily transcends what some theorists attempt to say even today on the historical phenomenon of the city in general, that the same — for instance - is a mere unique, cumulative, historical process, which takes its particular form “ through a long chain of individual events, subject to a host of accidents of history and of site, and to the broad influences of culture, climate, and economic and political structure”; or that the city should be solely looked at as a pattern “ of activity in space which facilitate the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods”; or that the city is planted only “ to dominate a subject countryside, to prevent a resource from falling into enemy hands, or to defend a border”, etc.[ix] The philosophy of the city in Islam partially or wholly runs parallel with what is meant by all these definitions; nonetheless, it is far more than that. In addition to being

relatively that which the city phenomenon is and would always be thought of, the city in Islam, more importantly, stands for the ground for the people's interaction with Allah Almighty — their Creator and Lord -, space, the environment and, of course, with themselves at various levels, given that the city is a scene where they live, work, play, learn, worship, rise and fall. The outcome of these and other activities which the people engage themselves in cities — and other settlements of theirs - is what we call cultures and civilizations but which vary by reason of the principles and values on which they rest, as well as by reason of the objectives intended to be thereby achieved. In other words, the city in Islam is a microcosm of Islamic culture and civilization in that individuals, families and virtually every other unit in the hierarchy of the Islamic socio-political, economic and religious structure, are bred and nurtured therein. Regardless of which is the cause and which is the effect, civilization and the Islamic urbanism seem to be destined to rise together and fall together. Hence, it was very much suitable for the name of the prototype Islamic city to be derived from the word tamaddun, which denotes civilization. For al-Farabi, an outstanding Muslim philosopher of the fourth/tenth century, who wrote on the ideal city (al-Madinah al-Fadilah), " the fashioning of a city (state) is not the outcome of a natural process; it depends, like the moral life of individuals, on the right decision being taken, it makes all the difference whether ' will' and ' choice' are directed towards the true good or not. The result will be either a good or bad city (state). "[x] Furthermore, " the excellent city resembles the perfect and healthy body, all of whose limbs cooperate to make the life of the animal perfect and to preserve it in this state. "[xi] The ruler(s) of the excellent city, the foundation

and source of the policies by which the city will be governed, must align will, resourcefulness and energy with vision and pragmatism rooted in wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom and knowledge the ruler(s) must receive firstly by means of his predisposition to rulership by his inborn nature, and secondly from his fervent and fruitful relationship with the divine reality, i. e. the revelation conveyed to the Prophet (PBUH) and embodied in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. Due to his central qualities, such a ruler may well become something like a visionary forecaster capable of warning of things and problems that are yet to come and befall the city, as well as of telling of and solving particular predicaments which exist at present, unlike those who had detached themselves from divinity and through their faulty judgments missed the right path, bringing about, in consequence, nothing but ignorance and wickedness to their cities.[xii] Ibn Khaldun - one of the greatest Muslim historians, and also known as the father of modern social science and cultural history — wrote in his celebrated “ Muqaddimah" that apart from defense purposes cities are also built because people once risen above desert life and desert culture — as a necessary development in their civilizational growth - start seeking tranquility, restfulness and relaxation, and try to provide the aspects of civilization that were lacking in the desert. This unavoidably leads to the emergence of sedentary culture brought about by luxury and comforts, and which must be governed by someone who is superior over others and who shall act as a restraining influence and mediator, i. e. royal authority, upholding peace and order. Such developments can occur only in large and complex urban areas, hence, Ibn Khaldun proclaimed, while entitling some of the “ Muqaddimah" chapters,

that " Royal authority calls for urban settlement", that " Dynasties are prior to towns and cities; towns and cities are secondary (products) of royal authority", and that " Only a strong royal authority is able to construct large cities and high monuments".[xiii] It stands to reason, therefore, that the existence of Bedouins is prior to, and the basis of, the existence of towns and cities. Urbanization - and, as such, refined civilization - is found to be the goal of the Bedouin. The life and achievements of the city are the life and achievements of the dynasty: " If the dynasty is of short duration, life in the town will stop at the end of the dynasty. Its civilization will recede, and the town will fall into ruins. On the other hand, if the dynasty is of long duration and lasts a long time, new constructions will always go up in the town, the number of large mansions will increase, and the walls of the town will extend further and further. Eventually, the layout of the town will cover a wide area, and the town will extend so far and so wide as to be almost beyond measurement. "[xiv] The Islamic city: a place for total submission to God

One of the derivations of the word Madinah (the City) is the Arabic verb dana[xv] as well, which means to obey, to submit (to), to owe allegiance (to), whence the word din which means religion, faith. Thus, the city of the Prophet (PBUH) was dubbed Madinah so as to signify the Islamic pivotal precept that man is a vicegerent on earth and has not been created except to abide by and absolutely submit to the Will of the Lord of the universe. Since the Prophet's role was to receive revelation from God, convey it to men, and by educating them and applying the guidance divinely given, lead them forth from the depths of darkness into light, he is to be as unquestionably respected, followed and obeyed. Obeying him means

obeying God; rejecting and disobeying him means rejecting and disobeying God. Allah says to this effect in the Holy Qur'an: " He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: but if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over them. " (al-Nisa' 80) Also: " And obey Allah and His Messenger; and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart..." (al-Anfal 46) The same gist also applies to the notion of obeying ulul-amr minkum (those charged with authority, or responsibility, or decision, or the settlement of affairs among you). The Qur'an says: " O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and his Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination. " (al-Nisa' 59) Yusuf Ali, the translator and expositor of the Holy Qur'an, commented on the substance of this verse: " All ultimate authority rests in Allah. Prophets of Allah derive their authority from Him. As Islam makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it expects governments to be imbued with righteousness. Likewise Islam expects Muslims to respect the authority of such government for otherwise there can be no order or discipline. "[xvi] Thus, the city of the Prophet (PBUH) — and every other Islamic city and, indeed, any form of Islamic settlement in any time and place — was a hub of worship (serving). Worship (' ibadah) in Islam is a wide concept encompassing each and every action of man, irrespective of its nature and the level where it might be undertaken, on sole condition that God is intended to be pleased thereby and the divine norms pertinently conformed to. In such cities, Allah - be He exalted - is the only absolute authority and His words of guidance remain a

source from which virtually everything as to managing this terrestrial life originates. Accordingly, the job of those who are entrusted to administer such cities and settlements and rule over their populace would not exceed the perimeter of what is right and the most efficient implementation of what has been already prescribed, in order to preserve the religion, self, psychological and intellectual strength, progeny and wealth of their subjects. In other words, their task would be but ensuring the masses their general wellbeing by finding a feasible and effective modus operandi of putting into operation the set of infinite standards and values. Owing to this, the ruler in Islam — regardless of the amount of authority vested in him — is called al-ra'i, guardian, and the subjects al-ra'iyyah, those who are cared for. An authority on this, Ibn Taymiyah, wrote in his acclaimed Book " Public Duties in Islam": " The first essential is to understand that the aim of all authority in Islam is to ensure that all religion shall be God's, and that the Word of God shall be all-high. For God — be He glorified and exalted! — created His creation for this purpose alone. To make it known He revealed the Scriptures and sent the Messengers. In this cause the Messengers and the believers strove. "[xvii] The Islamic city and spiritual indebtedness Furthermore, of the meanings of the Arabic verb dana - which is one of the derivations of the word Madinah (the City) - is ' to be indebted to someone'. Having named the first capital of the Islamic state Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) indicated that by ceaselessly worshipping God, generating in the process civilizational components from which not only the followers of Islam but also the whole of mankind shall benefit, the people in fact embarked on returning the debt of creation and existence to their Creator and Sustainer. While the feat of

returning and settling the debt to God had commenced for many individuals long ago when in Makkah, yet neither the full realization of the same by the Muslims as an organic, autonomous and self-directed entity, nor the sanctioned methods of the successful debt repayment, could materialize until the historic migration (Hijrah) to Madinah came to pass. However, the nature of the debt is so total that man seeing that everything around him and in him and from him is what the Creator owns has no choice but to abase himself before his Lord and Master and give himself up in unconditional and complete service to Him, should he harbor any hope of avoiding living in a state of utter loss:[xviii] “ By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual enjoining of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy. ” (al-‘ Asr 2-3) Even before one’s coming to this world did one’s very self, his soul, acknowledge God as his Lord together with other souls when they all testified before Him as regards themselves, thus drawing upon himself the burden of the debt as early as then: “ When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam — from their loins — their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): ‘ Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?’ — They said: ‘ Yea! We do testify!’ (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: ‘ Of this we were never mindful. ” (al-A’raf 172) “ Seeing that he owns absolutely nothing to ‘ repay’ his debt, except his own consciousness of the fact that he is himself the very substance of the debt, so must he ‘ repay’ with himself, so must he ‘ return’ himself to Him Who owns him absolutely. He is himself the debt to be returned to the Owner. “[xix] No sooner is man born than he sets out displaying his inherent

readiness to benefit (borrow) from this world: to breathe, to wear apparel, to drink, albeit without possessing anything, save his very self, to give away in return. Man is therefore born, in a way, as an inveterate and insolvent consumer. Not only does he own nothing, but also he remains forever short of enjoying a power of bringing into being anything without making use of the available raw materials and elements created for him in nature. Creating ex nihilo (from absolute nothingness), as a sign of genuine richness, sovereignty and might, is the right and power of God alone. Indeed, everything that man invents, conceives, concocts and creates is possible only because of the unbounded bounties and munificence from God which man only discovers, manages, processes, uses and reuses in different ways most convenient and efficient for him. The upshots of man's myriad civilizational pursuits on earth are never really his own possession and, as such, in no way could be solely utilized for returning the debt of creation and existence to God. Hence, being prudent, modest and grateful when dealing with God's gifts, as well as with one's own accomplishments, are of the virtues most appreciated, and the opposite of the vices most detested, in man. In short, whenever he rebels against God and His guidance, man becomes truly a destitute and helpless creature in every sense of the word. He needs God, depending on Him every moment of his life. God has no need of him: " O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allah: but Allah is the One Free of all wants, Worthy of all praise. " (Fatir 15) The only formula for man to survive and enrich himself, both spiritually and materially, is thus to give himself up humbly and appreciatively in unconditional and complete service to Him, the Creator, Lord and Sustainer of the worlds. Man cannot turn his

back on this amazingly pressing reality best described as a wonderful bargain in which man, in point of fact, is asked to give so little but promised in return so much. About this Allah says: " O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Chastisement? That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your wealth and your persons: that will be best for you, if ye but knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful Mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the supreme Triumph. And another (favor will He bestow), which ye do love, - help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers. " (al-Saff 10-13) " If ye loan to Allah a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness: for Allah is All-Thankful, most Forbearing, - Knower of what is hidden and what is open, Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom. " (al-Taghabun 17-18) " And remember, your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): ' If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly my punishment is terrible indeed. " (Ibrahim 7) The Islamic city and the societal dimension of Islam Islam is so much concerned about quenching man's thirst for socializing and interacting that some people could not help observing — albeit erroneously — that the Islamic ideals have a preference for the sedentary over the nomad and for the city dweller over the villager.[xx] This assertion is not totally baseless, though. To be sure, Islam's treatment of human settlements and the standards as well as values that nurture and sustain them is such as no other religion or ideology is able to parallel it. Islam in its capacity as the only religion in the sight of God (Alu ' Imran 19)

carefully strikes a balance between its precepts and values meant for the personal and family realm, on the one hand, and such as are meant for the whole society (humankind), on the other. While a number of them govern each of the two poles, a big portion of the tenets of Islam is still shared by both. Unless propounded at the societal scale, Islam, a universal way of life and a religion that came to raze people's erring living patterns and furnish them with those based upon the tawhidic paradigm instead, will, therefore, fail to materialize as such. Its real colors will thus be given no adequate ground to exhibit their glow and aptitude, and people will be left short of perceiving and experiencing fully the excellence, beauty and pragmatism of its worldview. Joel Kotkin also observed: " From its origins in the 7th century, Islam has always been a profoundly urban faith. The need to gather the community of believers required a settlement of some size for the full performance of one's duty as a Muslim. The Prophet Muhammad did not want his people to return to the desert and its clan-oriented value system. Islam virtually demanded cities to serve as ' the places where men pray together'. This urban orientation came naturally for a religion that first sprang to life in a city of successful merchants. "[xxi] For this reason, no sooner had the Prophet (PBUH) migrated to Madinah than a shift in the focus of revelation occurred, from that dealing with the issues concerning faith (iman) and individual spiritual upbringing - as witnessed in Makkah - to that of creating a solid community and all the issues related thereto - as witnessed in Madinah. Having thus changed the milieu, from that dominated by his foes and the foes of Truth in Makkah to that dominated by his supporters and the supporters of the Islamic cause in Madinah, of the things

that right away obsessed the Prophet's mind was the urbanization and development of the first capital of the just-formed Islamic state, something that he could only dream of during the entire duration of his stay as Allah's Messenger in Makkah. So significant was this far-reaching change in the pattern of the earliest Islamic mission that the Muslims during the reign of the second caliph ' Umar b. al-Khattab concurred that it should mark the commencement of the Muslim calendar, taking precedence over a host of other decisive occurrences which the young and dynamic Islamic society was never devoid of. The realization of the Muslim community in Madinah was viable in that the ground for it was exceptionally fertile. The elementary ingredients essential for creating a sovereign state and its ability to flourish, such as freedom, land, the people (followers), the solitary cause, the cohesive struggle, and legislation, were on hand ready to be utilized by the visionary leadership headed by the Prophet (PBUH) and guided by the heavenly will exemplified in revelation. The significance of this turnaround in the fortune of the nascent Islamic community in fact had some far more extensive consequences than it first appeared. The new beginning for Madinah signified a new beginning for a large portion of the human race and its socio-political and ideological configuration, since the Prophet (PBUH) was the seal of prophets and his message the final one suited to be applied in every place and time till the end of this terrestrial life. However, at that particular juncture, i. e. during and immediately after the Hijrah, such an astounding truth was yet to become a common and widespread mass conviction either because the Prophet (PBUH) was yet to spell out some vital aspects thereof, or he did - as much as the first Muslims were in need of it -

but too new to the new worldview and code of life were some people that they could hardly come to terms with what that really meant. When the Prophet (PBUH) arrived in the town of Madinah, while getting down from his camel he uttered four times the following Qur'anic supplication: " O my Lord! Enable me to disembark with Thy blessing: for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark. " (al-Mu'minun 29) Now, the Prophet (PBUH) had scores of supplications and prayers to chose from and pronounce at this particular occasion, but by no accident did he chose exactly this one. The Prophet Nuh (Noah) was the one who had uttered the supplication in question. He did so when the flood, by which Allah — be He exalted — punished and wiped out the immoral and rebellious section of mankind, subsided and the time came for Nuh and all those who were with him on the Ark - of both animals and humans - to disembark. Under the guardianship of revelation and its tawhidic paradigm they were to start afresh their life on earth, free from every pain and anxiety which the agnostics and polytheists formerly used to generate. By saying the supplication of Nuh, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) seems to have insinuated that his migration to Madinah marked the beginning of the brightest and most significant epoch in the history of mankind. He knew that his followers before long will start playing a prominent role in shaping developments pertaining to the religious convictions, worldviews, and socio-political and economic structure of world societies. What's more, the followers of the Prophet (PBUH) were bound to begin in a little while laying their claims to world dominion, aspiring to magnetize someday the center of gravity in all constructive human engagements to the territories that will be under their permanent control. Thus, it stands to reason that the Prophet's

arrival in Madinah entailed no less revolutionary connotations than the Prophet Nuh's disembarkation from the Ark following the great flood, hence the same prayer having been uttered on both occasions. It must be said at this juncture that this striking philosophy of the city in Islam, and to an extent the morphological characteristics assigned to it - such as having a principle mosque in the center (jami'), having a central market (suq), etc. - are not distinctive to complex urban settlements alone. Every settlement, big or small, urban or rural, enjoyed the same character throughout different eras. Settlements have been created to function as a field for fulfilling the same purpose, in that they are created by man (in this case the Muslims) and are meant for man whose solitary task on earth ought to be the execution of his vicegarency mission, regardless of where and how he may live and what legitimate means he may have at his disposal. The only divergence found among these settlements, for the most part, is in the lines of the contextual functions of their components and the scale and intensity of such functions. Certainly, it was this reality that compelled I. M. Lapidus to assert that the city and the rural village in Islam are homogenous.[xxii] By promoting the idea of " the excellent settlement" in both urban and rural contexts, rather than " the excellent urban settlement" only at the expense of the rural ones, Islam advanced an effective plan to do away with some persistent depressing social trends which are as old as the emergence of human urban settlements. Perhaps, one of the most disturbing trends is unremitting and hardly controllable migration from rural to urban areas. Via creating conducive and " excellent" not only urban but also rural settlements throughout the land - each settlement evenhandedly and equitably catering

for the needs of its citizens who share the same vision and strive for the same set of goals - there would be no reason for the people to abandon en masse certain places in favor of the others. Since there would seldom be highly appealing and highly unappealing areas (settlements), nor will there be chance for inferiority complex to establish itself as an awkward psychological syndrome of a group. However, at the individual and even family level, a limited tendency towards dissatisfaction and desire to move from one place to another shall still remain a possibility, but then again that would thus be only on the strength of certain individual judgments normally influenced by lots of other human as well as natural factors. La darar wa la dirar (There is no inflicting nor returning of harm) One of the most important Islamic principles that govern the relationship between the residents of the Islamic city (Madinah), and between them and the government is the one highlighted in a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): " There is no harming nor reciprocating harm", or " There is no injury nor return of injury. "[xxiii] The message of the hadith is that everyone should exercise his full rights in what is rightfully his providing the decisions/actions do not generate harm to others.[xxiv] Likewise, none shall return injury in case it has been inflicted on him, intentionally or otherwise. People are instead encouraged to share both their happiness and problems, care for each other, respect the rule of law and settle peacefully their disputes. This way, they will secure sound and friendly relations, as well as a healthy environment conducive to all kinds of human constructive engagements. Islam not only guarantees its followers the right to freely and honorably live and act, but also does everything to ensure that they enjoy a decent, healthy, peaceful, joyous, prosperous and

quality life, contributing in the process to sustaining the welfare of mankind and the universe as a whole. In Islam, the concepts of equality, justice, righteousness and decency are universal and immutable, permeating and governing every aspect of human existence. Not in the slightest can anything thereof be compromised for whatever reason and by anybody. These are the rights God has ensured man under the aegis of His religion Islam, and they stand for some of the vital ingredients needed for the successful accomplishment of man's vicegerency mission. Such are not the objectives of man's life, as it always turns out to be following man's abandonment of the heavenly guidance and direction. Likewise, of the rights which have been divinely assigned to man before he was even created, is freedom of worship, freedom of spiritual and intellectual enhancement, freedom of pursuing God's bountiful gifts which God had bestowed on His vicegerent, right to honorably live in the shadow of ultimate justice, equality and security. It follows that unduly denying a person any of these favors by means of deliberate injustice, oppression and haughtiness falls in the category of greatest sins that one can perpetrate. This is fairly so because the perpetrators by such actions " encroach", so to speak, onto the divine plan meant for the whole of mankind, thereby attempting to tamper with it for the sake of their own egoistic and shallow aspirations. So perilous is the evil of loose and unbridled tyranny and conceit that if aided by other grave vices it may easily turn into a form of shirk, or associating other gods with God. The best witness to this effect is definitely history many instances of which the Holy Qur'an keeps highlighting to mankind so that they may reflect on. Allah — be He exalted — says on the divinely given rights enjoyed

by man: " Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favor to you, that ye may be grateful. " (al-Ma'idah 6) " Say who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who know. " (al-A'raf 32) " And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation)..." (al-Hajj 78) Sadly, though, the aforementioned divinely-given rights and privileges of man have since time immemorial been disappearing from the scene of reality owing to different man-hewed factors. Due to their pertinence to man's physical, spiritual and psychological survival, striving for securing a degree or amount of the same rights and privileges - as a consequence - had to become in the end the sole obsession and goal of a good number of ancient as well as recent ideologies, philosophies and movements with diverse characters and outlooks. Being thus excessively obsessed with the subject of means, man possesses neither enough energy nor productive time to spare for distinguishing and realizing the objectives to which such means may eventually lead. The essence of life for ordinary people - a majority in every society that has adopted and implemented the devious and vagrant philosophies, ideologies and movements — is perhaps the best illustration of how all-encompassing and dominant the said state of affairs and its distressing consequences are. If

one thing is to be learnt by examining the present reality, then it would be the fact that people's aspirations and, as such, aims of life do not exceed the parameters of enjoying a decent and proper dwelling, a decent job, enough nourishment, undemanding access to education, entertainment and other amenities, as well as enjoying an essential degree of justice, equality and security. Taking into consideration everything, however, human logic and consciousness cannot help inferring that man must have been created for something more virtuous and dignified to strive for and dream of; man's life ought to be lived for the sake of fulfilling worthier and much more rewarding ideals. God says: " I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me. " (al-Dhariyat 56) Also: " Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: " I will create a vicegerent on earth. " They said: " Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name) ? " He said: " I know what ye know not. " And He thought Adam the names of all things; then he placed them before the angels, and said: " Tell Me the names of these if ye are right. " They said: " Glory to Thee: of knowledge We have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom. " He said: " O Adam! tell them their names. " When he had told them their names, Allah said: " Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal, and what ye conceal? " (al-Baqarah 30-33) Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi wrote on this: " It is certainly the duty of the khalifah to make everything possible to enable every member of the ummah to earn and enjoy God's bounty on earth. But this purpose, noble and necessary as it may, quickly degenerates into crass animality and degradation, a warping of

human personality and betrayal of the whole divine will, once it is regarded as the sole or final end of human life. The material needs of life are innocent and indeed good; they are to be satisfied to as high a degree as possible. But they and the whole material aspect of life which they are to sustain are only a means, an instrument, a carrier for the spiritual, whether for the individual or for the ummah as a whole. To hold the material pursuits as the final end is to deny the spiritual. "[xxv] Every rebellion against God and His words of guidance creates costly and painful repercussions for man, not only in the Hereafter but also in this world. The Qur'an says: " But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein. " (al-Baqarah 39) " But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment. " (Ta Ha 124) By rebelling against God man commits nothing but injustice to himself, as he denies his soul its essential right and gift granted to it by its Lord in eternity, i. e. the right and predisposition to worship its Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer. Moreover, by virtue of his possession of the primordial disposition (fitrah) to worship, on the one hand, and by virtue of his fundamental qualities such as intellectual limitation, psychological feebleness, mortality, haste etc., on the other, man will have no choice but to seek an alternative for what he has previously repudiated. He will desperately attempt to furnish his demanding soul with the appeasing answers on a large number of compelling questions with respect to his existence and the existence of other surrounding animate and inanimate beings. However, this will only result in fashioning the myriad superstitions, cults and contrasting ideologies and religions, which will add

nothing constructive to human knowledge or human well-being; they will only increase error and wrong-doing always associated with mutual hatred and enmity among people. In abandoning God and revelation, man is bound to abandon his inherent role and status on earth too. The quintessence of his existence in the end will be gravely distorted and at times relegated to that of animal kingdom - and sometimes even lower: " Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: they have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, - nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning). " (al-A'raf 179) Allah also says: " Or thinkest thou that most of them listen or understand? They are only like cattle; - nay, they are farther astray from the way. " (al-Furqan 44) Verily, the city in Islam (Madinah) is a place where the word of Islam — a comprehensive way of life - is thoroughly implemented at every scale. Hence, regardless of cultures, historical and geographical elements, Islamic cities always shared many common characteristics, such as form and function, unifying symbol systems, and individual, family and societal values, in addition to their inhabitants having one and the same perception of life, of reality, of space and time, of history, of man, and of the community. It must be also borne in mind that Islam with the hierarchy of its teachings and values was the sole force which furnished the Islamic city with both its essence and identity, relegating the indigenous geographical, climatic and other inherited factors and features to almost nonessential. When studying the Islamic city, proper attention ought to be paid also to the implications of the fact that such a phenomenon, which originated with the advent of Islam on the world scene, has never existed before, even though

the peoples that became instrumental in molding and perpetuating its conspicuous identity lived where they were for centuries before embracing Islam and possessed the cultures and civilizations of their own. To be sure, studying the Islamic city by no means can be separated from the total framework of Islam: its genesis, history, ethos, worldview, doctrines, laws and practices. Any approach by anybody and at any point of time to disconnect the Islamic city from that which held sway over its conception and formation would undoubtedly result in failure and, worse yet, may distort the real picture of the entire subject matter and with it the picture of Islam. With the provision and organization of its vital components, the city in Islam aims to accommodate the social, economic and religious requirements of its populace. It furthermore facilitates various highly dynamic activities meant for satisfying such requirements. That is not all, though. On account of the verity that comprehensive excellence and the Islamic notion of worship (the whole life of the devoted Muslim is worship, ' ibadah) are inseparable, cities in Islam are created in such a way that various productive human engagements are not only accommodated and facilitated, but also stimulated and made attractive. This is done via the introduction and augmentation of sundry aesthetic elements, via the recognition of every citizen's role and stature in the community (city) development process, and via the transparent unreserved exertion of both the government and public to ensure that the immutable values championed by revelation are duly attended to and applied. All the said values and amenities are essential in the city. If they are made available, only then will it be fair to ask its dwellers to listen, obey and embark on contributing their expected share in the long

and demanding community building and sustaining process. By the same token, only then will it be fair to ask the people to guard the city (state) and the ideals upon which it has been founded against both internal and external threats, sacrificing in the process their personal whims and aspirations, and if necessary, lives. With its overall atmosphere, form and function, the city in Islam is bound to mirror the only Islamic criterion for discriminating between people, i. e. "... the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. " (al-Hujurat 13) Never and under no circumstances can this criterion be violated. Anything else served by anybody and at any point of time as an alternative to this divinely prescribed standard to man is deemed alien to the Islamic tawhidic worldview, and as such ought to be rejected outright. If assented to, such alternatives, customarily shrouded in infidelity, materialism and egotism, will soon prove an obstacle in man's genuine civilizational headway, adding nothing constructive to human well-being and increasing but error and wrong-doing. The Muslims are brothers to each other and their similitude is like a wall whose bricks enforce and rely on each other; or like a solid cemented structure held together in unity and strength, each part contributing strength in its own way, and the whole held together not like a mass but like a living organism.[xxvi] Highly creative and visionary urban planning concepts and models need to be put forth as the corporeal manifestations of the relationship that ought to exist among the Muslims, as well as the manifestations of the spirit that must pervade all the departments of their daily interaction. What makes a city Islamic? An ideal Islamic city is the one whose layout, urban form, design and function are inspired primarily by

Islam, are permeated with the Islamic spirit, and stand for the embodiment of Islamic principles and values. It facilitates, fosters and stimulates man's ceaseless 'ibadah (worship) activities entrusted to him by his Lord, helping him thus to elevate his status over that of the angels and honorably live up to his reputation as the vicegerent on earth. Central to the standards by which a city may be categorized as Islamic is the holiness and purity of its philosophy, vision and utility, accompanied by convenience, efficiency, security, sustainable development, and anything else that Islam reckons as indispensable for living a decent and accountable life. The overall physical appearance is therefore inferior and matters only when it comes into complete conformity with the said criterion. Since it accounts for both a worldview and a comprehensive way of life, Islam draws no distinction between the religious and secular realm along ideological lines. God's words of guidance are bidden to be evenly exalted, adhered to, implemented and made supreme in each and every department of human existence. The word 'Islamic' employed before 'city' thus does not denote a mere cultural phenomenon, philosophy or just another religious conviction, but a genuine faith and its enduring all-inclusive belief and value system. The word 'Islamic' is an adjective delineating a phenomenon vital for human socio-political, economic, psychological and spiritual advancement. That phenomenon is a settlement that imbibes and reflects the special qualities inherent in Islam, and whose outline, design and form are — to a large extent - dictated by the latter. In view of that, the idea of the Islamic city (Madinah) encompasses both its conception and the structural elements which make up its morphology, starting from mosques, madrasahs (schools),

dwellings, and mausoleums, to what remains of the indispensable built environment constituents, such as markets, caravanserais, palaces, citadels, hospitals, gardens, street networks, open spaces, etc. Religious and secular functions are not separable in Islam, and, as such, not in the Islamic city either. If one wanted to understand really the Islamic city, one first and foremost must possess an intimate knowledge of Islam whose major precepts and values it exemplifies. Next, one ought to disengage himself for a moment and as much as he could from whatever he has formerly perused or has been told about the Islamic city, exerting an effort himself to experience it in its totality as if he is one of its users/inhabitants. One is to try really hard via hands-on experiences if one really wants to feel the spiritual and sensory aura the Islamic city exudes within its realm. Not to one or a few of its aspects, and not to a single and static moment of time, should one's comprehension and appreciation of the Islamic city be restricted. Rather, one's thoughts and interest must encompass all its aspects and dimensions, honoring in the process its remarkable spiritedness and dynamism conditioned by neither the time nor space factors. Finally, whatever one's approach in studying the Islamic city might be, one should never try to extricate it from the contexts which governed its commencement, rise, dominance and survival. The Islamic city ought to be viewed as a revolutionary world phenomenon as universal, omnipresent, perpetual and revealing as the standards and values that gave rise to it. It was as responsive to the climatic, geographical and cultural requirements as any other urban settlement, nevertheless, it never treated them apart from exigencies of a higher order. By means of skills, creativity and imagination,

on the one hand, and by its distinctive combination of aesthetic and utilitarian ends, on the other, the Islamic city never, even by a whisker, dissociated man's corporeal, psychic and spiritual needs. That relying solely on the five senses while studying the phenomenon of the Islamic city would be an inapt method could be corroborated by the following statement of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali with regard to investigating, grasping and experiencing the essence or the fundamental nature of a thing: " The eye perceives the outer and the surface of things, but not their inner essence; moreover, it perceives only their shapes and their forms, not their real nature. "[xxvii] Life in every city is dynamic and diverse. Consequently, the city must cope with the demands of ever increasing changes and developments, if it were to live up fully to the purpose of its establishment, and if it were to fulfill the trust " assigned" to it and, in consequence, be of assistance to man in discharging that which he has been created for. Hence, it can be safely asserted that the Islamic city is an educational and training ground or center. The solitary aim of its institutions is to produce in concert with each other a people qualified to be dubbed as real vicegerents on earth. Regardless of minor disparities in their intellectual, spiritual and socio-economic commitments and so accomplishments - which are, all things considered, unavoidable and inexorable - the same people's efforts will enforce and rely on each other, holding together in unity and strength and each part contributing strength in its own way. Among every people there always exist a group of exceptionally devout, enlightened and visionary individuals capable of transforming entire communities they belong to. Thence, the same persons will contribute somehow or other their decent share to making this earth a better place for

living. Without a doubt, the larger this group the smaller and thus less troublesome is the group on the diametrically opposite side of the scale. The latter group stands for the community liabilities rather than its assets, and so recurrently gets in the way of the community spiritual and material progress. On the other hand, the smaller the group of extremely devout, erudite, committed and visionary persons in a community, the more favorable the conditions become for mediocrity, incompetence, backwardness and ignorance to triumph and hold sway over people's affairs. So therefore, if misconstrued and its role perverted, the city has a potential to become a breeding ground for diverse social and psychological diseases which if left unchecked could proliferate and one day paralyze entire communities — the whole of mankind indeed - dragging them to the bottommost. In this case, the only remedy for the predicament will be the restoration of the original position and role of the city, that is to say, the recognition and restoration of the position and role of individuals, the family, and all the concepts and components of which the city phenomenon is made up. Certainly, it was because of what we have said thus far about the character of the Islamic city (Madinah), that the ' Abbasid caliph al-Mansur, while starting off the mammoth project of building the city of Baghdad in the year 145/762, by placing the first brick with his own hand uttered: " In the name of Allah; praise be to Allah; the earth is Allah's, to give as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleases, and the end is best for those who are righteous. "[xxviii] The message conveyed in the supplication appears very clear: everything belongs to Allah — the only Creator, Sustainer and Ruler. He is the only Creator, the rest is His magnificent creation, His servants. Moreover,

He is the real Owner of everything. Man possesses de facto nothing; everything around him has been subjected to him not that he may " own" it, or in the worse scenario play " god" with it, but that he in a responsible and unhindered manner may carry out his duties of vicegerency, returning then to his Creator clean and honorable - no more than that. Even his very self, i. e. his life, man does not own. It belongs to his Lord, and if needed he is to sacrifice it for Him and His cause: " Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain; a promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: and who is more faithful to His covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme. " (al-Tawbah 111)

What's more, the prayer of the caliph al-Mansur indicated that whatever the Muslims may build - and at whatever scale - the appropriated space will never be regarded as exclusively for man, nor will its owner(s) and tenant(s) do. Rather, the appropriated space will be viewed as something temporarily loaned to man, so as soon as he goes back to his Creator nobody but he alone will be held accountable for what he did to the loan, how he handled it, and what he managed to achieve with it. Thus, it is not surprising that the Muslims often store in their hearts and minds the following Qur'anic supplication: " Say: " O Allah! Lord of Power (and Rule), Thou givest Power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest of Power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honor whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: in Thy hand is all Good. Verily, over all things Thou hast power. Thou causest the Night to gain on the Day. And Thou causest the Day

to gain on the Night; Thou bringest the Living out of the Dead, and Thou bringest the Dead out of the Living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest, without measure. " (Alu ' Imran 26-27) The Muslims keep their tongues busy reciting this supplication in their daily prayers, as well as during their individual and collective dhikr (remembrance of God) sessions. They even adorn their private abodes and public buildings and spaces with it, thereby reminding themselves constantly of this substantial - albeit often disregarded by many - truth. The same is true with other Qur'anic verses containing the similar message, such as: " Allah! There is no god but He, - the Living, the Self-subsisting, Supporter of all; no slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth... " (al-Baqarah 255); or: " To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth. Whatever ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah calleth you to account for it... " (al-Baqarah 284) Surely, due to such an inimitable heavenly dimension, which Islam instituted in the field of building and urbanization, did the caliph al-Mansur engage a group of people endowed with virtue, integrity and fidelity from different regions in order to supervise the project of building the city of Baghdad, apart from one hundred thousand craftsmen, engineers, architects, masons, carpenters and blacksmiths whom he had hired from every province. The most prominent among the caliph's workmen were Abu Hanifah of Kufah, one of the four most illustrious jurists in Islam, and al-Hajjaj b. Artah, a traditionalist and jurist who lived in Kufah along with Abu Hanifah and later served as the judge of Basrah. The latter was, furthermore, the architect of the Baghdad's principal mosque, laying its foundations by himself. He also played a prominent role in planning the northern suburbs of

the city of Baghdad.[xxix] Also, when Mawlay Idris decided to build the city of Fas (Fez) in northern Africa (Morocco), having sketched the groundplan of the city and before construction got underway, he recited the following prayer: “ O my Lord! You know that I do not intend by building this city to gain pride or to show off; nor do I intend hypocrisy, or reputation, or arrogance. But I want You to be worshipped in it, Your laws, limits and the principles of Your Qur’an and the guidance of Your Prophet to be upheld in it, as long as this world exists. Almighty, help its dwellers to do righteousness and guide them to fulfill that. Almighty, prevent them from the evil of their enemies, bestow Your bounties upon them and protect them from the sword of evil. You are able to do all things. “[xxx] Enjoining good and forbidding evil (al-amr bi al-ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘ an al-munkar) In addition to being a training ground for both individuals and groups, the Islamic city (Madinah) is at the same time the field of the inexhaustible confrontation between good and evil. The originators and advocates of sin may come from either within or without. Their damaging feat may be either transparent and direct, or opaque and indirect under the guise of modernity, development, leisure, freedom, emancipation, globalization, and the like. Nobody but the citizens whose vision and demeanor stand as the embodiment of the Islamic worldview and its value system will be able to grasp the essence of the conflict and, hence, rise to the task of engendering and spearheading the defense of the dignity, aspirations, and intellectual, spiritual, cultural and physical sovereignty of the community. Indeed, participation in t