

## THE EMPIRE, THE PROVINCE AND THE RESHAPING OF CITIES IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The enduring survival of the empire and its appropriation of the modernisation project in the long nineteenth century have recently experienced a revival in the historical scholarship. Empires are central to our understanding of the condition of modernity and how it came into being in its diverse forms across the globe and time. However, the imperial role in the reshaping of cities into their modern form either in response to the urbanisation pressures or simply to fit a particular form of public representation requires careful consideration. While the interest in locality has always been one of the historian's strongest points, and a large body of literature has engaged with the role of the municipality and other urban actors in the restructuring of the cities in modern times, and the subsequent making of national capitals, it has sometimes been overlooked that these projects were often restricted in their capacity and their freedom of action by the higher powers. Haussmannisation was a global phenomenon, but it was the most comprehensive and far reaching exactly in places where the imperial hand was the strongest and where it had the greatest consolidating power. Boulevards, ring roads and public places that had fundamentally changed the cityscapes in the long nineteenth century were used for particular representation in architecture, public politics and official ceremony that more often than not glorified the empire's modernising efforts and celebrated its efforts in the urban improvement and beautification. This representation did not run unrestricted or unchallenged, especially in the provinces and the borderlands, but it is important to remember that it was the empire, and not the nation, the commune, or a particular social class who established the setting and the rules for this political game. This session will aim at addressing the generalities and the specificities of this complex phenomenon by analysing particular case studies and the degree to which the imperial authorities, the provincial and municipal governments and other urban actors competed over the reshaping of cities and the extent to which the resulting imperial representation was unchallenged, internalised, and formed the basis for the emerging modern urban identity.