

Maarouf Quarter in Cairo

Maarouf is a centrally located quarter abutting the modern CBD. It was originally laid out at the turn of the century as residential subdivision with villas wedged between the commercial zone to the east and the elite residential areas to the southwest. The expansion of commercial activities in the 20's and 30's led to radical transformations in all these districts as the city center expanded westward. Villas were torn down and replaced by multi-storied buildings with shops, department stores, offices, banks and large apartments. The small apartment buildings in Maarouf housed a mixed middle income population of foreigners and Egyptians employed in the modern sector.

Independence and the end of World War II brought an exodus of foreigners but timely renewal bypassed a large segment of Maarouf encumbered by restrictions on the transfer of titles.

Since the early 50's the area has experienced steady deterioration. Better off residents have left for newer accommodations elsewhere in the city. Commercial uses, mostly small shops, workshops and warehouses have proliferated, attracted by the area's central location and the cheap rents for premises in the dilapidated structures.

They offer a range of business and personal services. Garages and auto mechanics and other automotive services attract a wide clientele.

A 1988 survey of activities recorded 2,200 businesses in the district. Public sector establishments line the major avenue to the north and formal private sector enterprises stretch along the commercial artery to the south. These border zones are not part of Maarouf proper where over 1,000 small scale mostly informal activities cluster.

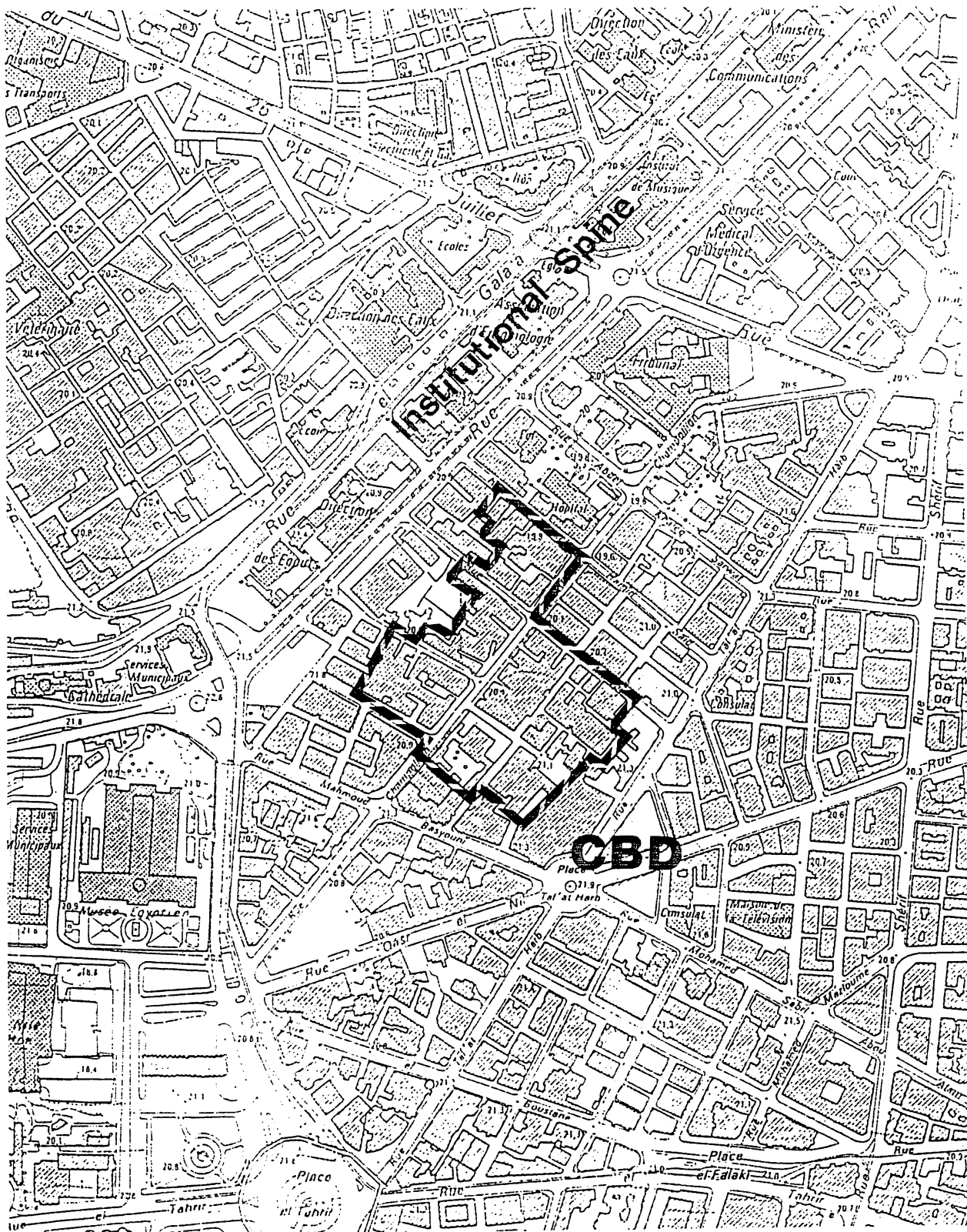
35% of these informal activities consist of street vendors selling produce, foodstuffs and household utensils and craftsmen working out of movable stalls. They are mostly illiterate rural migrants and older men and women assisted by children.

However 65% of the informal activities are micro enterprises shops and workshops employing 1,100 workers equally split among services and crafts. Mechanized production remains limited in scope but over half the premises have telephones. Family and community bonds still underlie the structure of the workplace but wages are becoming the predominant form of remuneration.

Maarouf's resident population continues to decline from 10,400 in 1960 to 5,700 in 1986. New arrivals are mostly rural migrants crowding in the dilapidated structures.

Complicated tenure patterns and rent controls have impeded private renovation and redevelopment. The city planning authorities have designated the area as a renewal zone to be cleared and redeveloped in a manner reflecting its strategic location.





CAIRO - MAAROUF DISTRICT



