IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MASTERS THESIS

URBAN SPACES AND CONTENTIOUS ACTION IN SYRIA 2011

LINA SHAMY

THESIS SUPERVISOR

ASST. PROF. HEBA RAOUF MOHAMED EZZAT

ISTANBUL, 2021

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URBAN SPACES AND CONTENTIOUS ACTION IN SYRIA 2011

by

LINA SHAMY

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations

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APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

KENTSEL MEKANLAR VE SURİYE KENTLERİNDEKİ İHTİLAFLI EYLEM 2011

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Suriye devrimlerinin muzzam hareket gücüne rağmen, Tunus veya Mısır'daki durumun aksine, Şam ve Halep gibi büyük Suriye şehirleri devrim sahnesinden bir kenara itilmiş gibi görünmektedir. Suriye'deki ayaklanmalar Arap dünyasındaki daha kapsamlı olaylardan ilham almış olsa da Suriye, en başından beri devrimci eylemleri, seferberlik taktikleri ve mekansal doğası bakımından farklılık göstermiştir. Devrimlerin başlangıcında "Arap baharı" kavramı ile olayların üzerini örten büyük örtü pekçok faktörün gözden kaçırılmasına veya küçümsenmesine neden olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, bu sınırlandırmanın sonucunda analiz ve teori inşası için karşılaştırmalar yapılan devlet veya askeri yapılar gibi pek çok husus ve nitelik kentsel ayrışmayı kimi zaman gözden kaçırmıştır. Suriye literatüründe en çok dikkati çeken konu süregiden büyük değişimler ve askerileştirilen karmaşık yapılar olmuştur. Devrimin başlangıcına, özellikle kentsel doku ile ilişkili olarak sosyal dokuya ve hem kendi içinde hem de daha geniş çaplı Arap baharı olaylarının yaşandığı mekanlara kıyasla değişiklik gösteren farklı kentsel alanların eylem mantığına daha az dikkat edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Suriye şehirlerindeki farklı kentsel alanların devriminin başlangıcındaki eylem mantığını anlamlandırmak adına Suriye'nin dört ana kentindeki (Şam, Halep, Humus ve Hama) mekan, güç ve ihtilaf haritasını çıkararak, farklı ortamların sosyal ağlarını ve temelde bu ağların diğer alanlarla olan ilişkisini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ağlar, İhtilaflı Eylem, Kentsel Alan, Mekan, Seferberlik,

ABSTRACT

URBAN SPACES AND CONTENTIOUS ACTION IN THE SYRIAN CITIES 2011

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Despite the great momentum of the Syrian revolutions, big cities in Syria like Damascus and Aleppo- unlike the situation in Tunisia or Egypt- appeared to be pushed aside from the revolutionary scene. Despite the fact that the uprising in Syria was inspired by the events in the broader Arab world, the revolutionary action differed in its tactics of mobilization and in its spatial nature right from the beginning. The big blanket thrown by the term “Arab spring” at the beginning, led to overlooking or downplaying many factors. However, it is because of this framing many themes and features were contrasted and compared for analysis or theory building, such as state structures, or armies’ structures even sometimes overlooking the urban divergence. In the literature on Syria, the ongoing upheaval and the militarized complexities has seized the most attention. Less attention has been given to the onset of the revolution, particularly to the social fabric in relation to the urban fabric and the logics of action of the different urban settings that varied internally and also in comparison to the broader Arab spring scene. By mapping space, forces and contention in the four main cities in Syria (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama), this study examines the social networks of the different settings and their place mainly in relation to other settings in order to interpret the logics of action at the onset of the revolution of the different urban settings in the Syrian cities.

Keywords: Contentious action, Mobilization, Networks, Space, Urban settings.

To the darkest nights

Where there was no meaning on the road

And the lessons were hard

To those who chanted the forbidden hymn

And to those who tried

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2018 ended in a good way for me. I have been accepted at Ibn Haldun to start my master's degree, one of the most exciting opportunities of my life so far. It opened my sight to a different realm of thoughts and questions and introduced to me, in a perfect way, the keys to enter the world of social science which I have always wanted to explore closely. I will always remain thankful for this.

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Lina Shamy

İSTANBUL, 2021

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Syria now is a war-torn country. The unprecedented violence, carpet bombing of entire cities and villages, forced displacement, IDPs, and the refugees crisis have defined Syria for the last few years. What started as a peaceful uprising in March 2011 was suppressed violently by the Assad regime.

In March 2011, the protests started in Syria against the authoritarian repressive regime and the police state that have ruled Syria for over four decades. The signs for the contention in Syria started earlier in February as an interaction with the developments that took place in the broader Arab spring context. The spontaneous popular protests, where local communities started to engage at large, erupted on the 18th of March 2011 against the backdrop of the 'Daraa's children issue' when the security forces arrested 15 children for painting anti-government graffiti on the walls of a school, tortured them and rejected the mediating of Daraa's notables to release them. However, that was only the spark not the reason behind the uprising. Enormous resentment and deep sense of frustration accumulated over years for various reasons under the police state. Simultaneously, the peaceful demonstrations erupted across Syria and almost covered all the Syrian regions except for the major urban centers (Damascus and Aleppo) where the contentious action seemed to be circumscribed if not absent in most of the city. The protests raised demands for freedom and political demands. The frequent chants included phrases like "freedom", "the Syrian people can't be humiliated", "After this day, no more fear". With the escalation of the violence by the regime in suppressing the demonstrations, targeting protestors and activists and arbitrary arresting campaigns, the demands soon escalated to calls to topple the regime. Since the first day, regime forces used lethal weapons against the protesters. Two protestors were killed by live bullets in the first demonstration that took place in Daraa. The next day, the people of Daraa came out in their funeral march which transformed into another demonstration with larger numbers. Targeting protestors by the regime forces

and therefore casualties among protestors became frequent across all the Syrian regions. And each funeral was turning into another protest, more protestors were targeted by the regime in that protest and their funeral again will turn into another demonstration and so on. Local initiatives in the areas that engaged in the uprising started to organize and coordinate the demonstrations, and from these groups local coordinating committees emerged 'altansiqiyat' that marked this phase of the uprising.

With the increase of the use of excessive violence by the regime, armament manifestations started to appear in some local communities that participated in the uprising as a reaction toward the violence of the regime for self-defence and to protect the peaceful demonstrations. At first, armed manifestations appeared not as a change in the tactics, mostly they emerged spontaneously as part of the social nature of some local settings. The peaceful demonstrations remained the main highlight in the Syrian uprising for several months until it became realized by wide segments of the Syrian people that peaceful resistance tactics are not deterring the regime from lashing bloody violence against the protestors. The shift for armed tactics started to be more obvious in the late months of 2011, while peaceful tactics started to retreat. And the uprising was pushed to be concentrated in particular geography. By time, boundaries between regions that embraced the uprising and regions that did not, started to be distinct.

Iran officially announced its presence in Syria by the side of the Assad regime in 2013. But the existence of the Iranian militias who were fighting along with the Assad regime had already started earlier. Soon, after the beginning of the uprising, many international parties supported the regime politically by their Veto in the UN Security Council like China and Russia, or by direct supportive military strikes and providing militias on the ground by countries like Russia and Iran. With the rise and fall of ISIS, other regional and international powers drove by their interests and intervened mostly through using proxies. Ten years later, despite the lavish military support by Russia and Iran, Assad was unable to gain control over the entire country. Syria now is divided into a number of enclaves. The Assad regime, along with Russia and Iran, controls two-thirds of the country, including the major cities of Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus. Northwestern Syria has two distinguished control areas: the Idlib area, and northern borders areas. Idlib area is controlled mainly by HTS (*Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham*) formerly (*Al-Nusra Front*). Areas from Afrin to Jarablus are controlled by rebels under

Turkish auspices. Most of the northeast is controlled by Kurdish forces, with US backing. ISIS cells are still active in eastern Syria. Stabilization or recovery is unlikely to happen under the Assad regime, with a deteriorated economic situation and the support the Assad regime gets from many regional and international stakeholders who have strategic interests in that war.

Since March 2011, nearly a quarter of a million civilians were killed, mainly by Assad forces and its allies (Syrian Network for Human Rights 2021a). Over 100,000 forcedly disappeared, mainly killed or ending in Assad regime prisons (Syrian Network for Human Rights 2021b). Nearly half of the population were displaced, with 6.7 million internally and another 6.6 million outside the country who became refugees in many countries across the world (UNHCR, n.d.).

This thesis is focusing on the early phase of the uprising in Syria and the logics of action behind the proliferation of the performances of the contentious action' repertoires in particular settings rather than others. The tactics adopted at the onset of the revolution have transformed later and spread out in different geographies and different spatialities of that of the former tactics. This thesis examines the spatialities of the former tactics adopted at the onset of the revolution.

The uprising and subsequent war in Syria cannot be understood apart from the broader scene of the 'Arab spring'. Reasons for the uprising existed for decades, however, the revolution in Tunisia and the fall of Bin Ali, followed by the revolution in Egypt, directly drove the uprising in Syria and inspired the Syrian people to start their dissent movement. This framing of the events as an '*Arab Spring*' put the Arab world collectively under examination by researchers worldwide. The very term "*Arab Spring*" was initiated by western commentators to describe the contentious wave in the Arab world. The images of 1848's "*springtime of the people*" that started from the streets of Paris inspired the comparison (Weyland 2012). The concept of "*Arab Exceptionalism*," dominating the literature on the Arab world for long, was challenged. Many theories of social change and key concepts that developed in western contexts started to be applied to the events in the Arab world, analyzing the uprisings in terms of "*social movements*" and "*urban movements*." At the same time, the framing under one unifying term "the Arab Spring" led to overly generalizing explanations that

interpreted the events in the different Arab countries as collectively one change, overlooking the different logics of action between the diverse settings. Soon the different countries of the Arab Spring started to take very diverse trajectories. Moreover, different tactics could be noticed on a much more micro-scale between the varying settings within the same national boundaries, or even the same city. For example, factors such as the role of technologies and social media, as well as the role of youth and the economic situation were considered main variables and the driving conditions of the Arab Spring (Anderson 2013; Ghanem 2016; Smidi and Shahin 2017).[1] While each of these operates differently in the multiple settings, the different state structures, army positions, and international interests led to separate outcomes in the countries of the Arab Spring.

The differentiated positioning of military forces in relation different countries' revolutions played a decisive role in the track of events, hence the focus on civil-military relations within previous literature (Bishara 2017; Noueihed and Warren 2013). Other studies approached the changing situation in the Arab world by analyzing the regional and international security interests and focused on the impact on the political map of the region and the international scene (Gelvin 2012; Haas and Lesch 2017; Inbar 2014).

In the literature on Syria, the ongoing war and the militarized complexities seized the attention of most of the studies. The focus was on the regional conflict, with ISIS grasping most of the attention, as well as the international relations perspective (Hetou 2019; Hinnebusch and Saouli 2019; Rabinovich and Valensi 2021).

The subject of analysis was how a peaceful uprising turned into a militarized regional conflict with international interventions (Saleh 2017).[2] In order to comprehend the depth of that transition focused on analyzing the nature of the regime and the fierce police state (Dagher 2019). Others have analyzed the uprising and the events followed from a sectarian view (Van Dam 2017). Less attention has been given to the onset of the revolution, particularly to the social fabric in relation to the urban conditions, and the logics of action for the different urban settings that varied internally and could be compared to the broader Arab Spring spatial aspects.

This research attempts to explore the spatial dimension and the reconfigurations of the urban scenes usually overlooked. The urban/rural divide and the shared tactics or opposite ones did not gain enough attention. The spatial factors were indeed behind some actions or formed a barrier against further development of contestation.

While the big cities and capitals were the theatre for the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, the main cities in Syria seemed to be silent or absent in comparison to the peripheral areas at the onset of the Syrian uprising. The literature on Syria generally neglected this peculiarity about Syria.

In addition to the analysts and researchers at the beginning of the Arab spring, the participants of the uprisings fell to the temptation of the likelihood of the term "Arab Spring" to generalize analysis and themes, and often adopted similar tactics and repertoires following the movements in other countries. Genuine aspirations and a unique spirit were undeniably felt across the Arab countries and translated into occupying movements in the different streets and squares, as well as demonstrations and many other symbolic actions at first. The images circulating in the media looked amazingly similar if not identical sometimes. The revolutionary imagination in Syria was illustrated by magnificent scenes of unprecedented mass gatherings akin to capitals and cities elsewhere, particularly the scene of Tahrir Square in Cairo

This very scenery motivated breathtaking attempts by Syrian protestors to reach and occupy the central squares in the big cities. Undoubtedly, a Tahrir square replica in Syria was the Assad regime's nightmare. Some attempts succeeded in some cities to seize urban areas by protestors, but many failed. Despite the great momentum of the Syrian revolutions, big cities in Syria like Damascus and Aleppo – unlike in Tunisia or Egypt – appeared to be pushed aside from the revolutionary scene. There were different spatial dynamics and a different landscape.

This does not mean that the cities in Syria did not witness any opposition actions (as they did), however, not in all cities, and not everywhere by the same actors in each city. Many demonstrations took place in the city of Damascus, where several neighborhoods like Al-Midan in the middle of Damascus witnessed continuous revolutionary action. However, none of these actions made the capital a spearhead in

the revolution. In general, cities in Syria were the theatre where different localities had different logics of action. It was only by experiencing failures that the participants in the revolutions became aware of the dissimilarity and limitations of each Arab context, as well as the conditions of every urban or non-urban setting.

— **Based on the above this thesis is raising the following research questions: What enabled the collective action in some urban settings, and disabled it in others? Why did the protestors manage to storm the streets in specific neighborhoods, while they remained absent in others? How did the different settings in particular spaces enable the building of a multitude while it failed to build up in other areas?**

In his book 'Old regime and the revolution', Tocqueville (1856) asked what may seem a similar question: 'why the revolution has erupted in France and not in any other place in Europe'. Tocqueville examined the analogous feudal rights that were in force all over Europe at that time, and noticed that in France they were far less burdensome than in other parts of the continent. Yet it surprised him that these usages roused in France a hatred so fierce more than any other place in Europe. In his pursuit to address this issue, he analyzed closely the feudal relations, the conditions of the different classes and the social and political structure that prevailed at the eve of the revolution. He indicated to the deteriorating conditions of the French Peasantry and the neglect that the countryside have suffered from as one of the circumstances that paved the way for the revolution. While doing this, he was referring to the revolution that erupted in the urban center in Paris and not in the periphery. He illustrated how the Capital of France at that time had acquired more preponderance over the provinces and usurped more control over the nation, than any other Capital in Europe. He showed how the government was already highly centralized, very powerful, prodigiously active, and how Paris became the only mainspring of movement after it has swallowed up the provinces. France by 1789 was nothing but Paris. According to Tocqueville, its power was due less to its own exertions than to events beyond its walls. (Tocqueville 1856, 96).

By addressing this brief review of Tocqueville's book, I am not aiming to drag any comparisons between the conditions of France at that time in 1789 and the conditions

of Syria in 2011. while his inquiry may seem proximal to the problem of this thesis, the contexts are quite different in a way that barely dragging comparisons would be useful to explore the problem of this thesis. The course of the French revolution occurred within the European context in the eighteenth century where different social, political and economic organization prevailed locally and internationally.

What is important here is how Tocqueville approached his question about the reasons behind the eruption of the revolution in France only not in elsewhere in Europe. For this purpose, he has undertaken to grope into the heart of the old regime before the revolution. He examines the manner in which the way things were managed, of the social hierarchical relations between the various classes of society, of the conditions and feelings of those classes which were neither heard nor seen, of the actual opinions and customs of the day. As he says: "the proper way of studying the revolution was to forget, for a time, the France we see before us, and to examine, in its grave, the France that no longer exist". (Toqueville 1856, preface). As Tocqueville progressed in his labors, the nearer he drew to 1789, the more distinctly he noticed the spirit which brought about the revolution and the less surprised he became about the eruption of the revolution in France in particular and not in elsewhere in Europe.

In this thesis that is smaller in scope and more specific in inquiry I sought to go back to the social and urban conditions that prevailed at the eve of the revolution and to interrogate them in order to extract the logics of action that led to the proliferation of the uprising in particular settings rather than others.

The first replica of Tahrir square was in Homs in the clock square, where it ended quickly in a heinous massacre by Assad forces (Bishara 2013, 108-22). Adopted repertoires, though similar, had different trajectories in the different urban settings.

The debate about the locations of the demonstrations in the Arab Spring suggests that certain place characteristics are more favorable for mobilization. Throughout history, cities have been considered targeted sites for protest and expression of dissent. The emergence of specific forms of repertoires such as mass demonstrations and sit-ins have been linked to urban spaces, mainly aiming to interrupt traffic and circulation in

order to voice demands and attract media coverage (Rabbat 2012; Tilly, Ernesto, and Wood 2019, 114-17).

In the broader urban studies literature, the city is viewed as a provider of important resources and mobilizing capacities for activists, which makes it a key site for conflict and potential social change (Routledge 2010, 1172). Urban studies in the Arab world has focused on few cases of cities and mostly has been dominated by a form of "urban orientalism" (Allegra et al. 2013, 1678). Contention in the Arab world that started in 2010 provided samples for pre-existing, theoretically strong hypotheses. Still, the hypotheses failed to capture the diverse patterns of urban contention in cities that did not fit the western definitions of social movements, therefore depriving the study of the Middle East from exploring further complexity of the phenomena.

This thesis examines how the spatial nature of contention in Syria has been distinct from the focal cities of the Arab Spring of other Arab cases. It is important to recognize that the urban scale also matters in analyzing mobilization in the Arab cities in order to capture the urban dimension of dissent in the Arab spring. It is important to recognize how different Cairo is from a city like Damascus or Aleppo in terms of scale, to recognize the embeddedness of the city in a system of flows and networks that go beyond its physical borders (Allegra et al. 2013, 1678).

One can add that in order to capture the urban dimension of dissent within the city, it is crucial to recognize that different urban settings have diverse systems and patterns of networks that may also extend beyond their materiality. Not only is globalization important to include but the rural and the tribal factors as well.

Scope and Method:

The thesis will examine the maps of contention at the onset of the revolution in the four main cities in Syria (Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama), as most of the research has tracked the course of events later with the violent shift towards war. The inception of the Arab Spring in Syria at its early stages drew less attention.

Moving between the different case studies, I will examine the social networks of the different settings and explore the multiple logics of action. The fact that these logics

did not have a repertoire of cooperation or negotiation led to the failure to win more ground.

This study focuses on these cities for being considered the major urban centers in Syria and for their historical context in holding an urban and political significance across history. Historically these four main cities were the hubs of wealth and power in the region and had a notable political significance. During the Ottoman rule and the later French mandate, politics was in fact a phenomenon exclusive for elites in these particular cities. The aim is to understand the continuities and discontinuities in the context of these cities that led to divergent logics of action in the recent contentious times. This does not mean that these are the only considered cities in Syria. Many other urban centers are distributed across the Syrian map. In fact, urbanity is a phenomenon that can be perceived in wide areas across what is still nominally known as the Syrian countryside (This issue is further discussed in Chapter II, 23-4).

However, the context of other cities in the north, and the east like Dier-Ezzor and al-Hasakah for instance is different in its political significance, geographical and historical context and in its social structure. Moreover, the contention in these regions took a specific type. The centralization of the Kurdish population in these areas and the domination of the tribal structure are distinctive features in this region. Within the limited time determined for this study, the inclusion of all cities in the analysis and explaining all the contexts would not be possible. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on the major cities due to the time constraints in conducting this study. Other cities may share similarities with the urban fabric of the main four cities or with their social structure. The methodology and the theoretical framework provided in this research can be applied to analyze contention in more cities. This can be a suggestion to expand the study in the future.

My approach will draw on the analytical concept of ***Raum*** in German urban sociology. Thinking about the city as *Raum* expands the English or French meaning of space and allows us to grasp the social phenomenon on different levels and dimensions. The concept of *Raum* cannot be translated simply into space. According to Cahnman, *Raum* includes a political in addition to a social and cultural connotation. *Raum* is a multi-dimensional concept concerned with the physical and biological dimensions of space,

i.e., contains land and humans. Self-awareness and conception of time come into the construction of the concept according to the Heideggerean philosophical tradition (Bobeck translation of Heidegger, n.d.). In addition to the sociological dimension as it is concerned with events (forces in movement), *Raum* considers geography and history as the cause of each other.

According to the above, space is often seen as framing action, but *Raum* is a creation of social forces if and when they attain political organization. Forces express themselves in movement and as such are comprehensible only in time. The concept of *Raum* can be interpreted as "life-space" or "field of force", or the amalgamation of the spatial and the spherical (Cahnman 1944).

There is a memory and genealogy included in this concept, which help us understand how the being of the human subject has been shaped by historical forces. Drawing on Foucault's conceptualization of Genealogy, the genealogy of a space works on the limits of what people think is possible and reveals the spaces of freedom people can yet experience and changes that can still be made (Crowley 2009). Accordingly, *Raum* helps us understand the history of societal structures that have produced and shaped the boundaries of knowledge, ideas, truths and believes and consequently the boundaries of the social action.

Raum has also governmental power in the Foucauldian meaning of government which is broader than the meaning that refer to political structures or to the management of states. To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others (Sokhi-Bulley 2014). *Raum* accordingly, designates the way in which the conduct of individuals or the groups might be directed.

I will look at cities as a space/*Raum* of multiple sub-life-worlds/sub-*lebenswelt* that are mutually shaped by their interactions and the interactions of their innate structure with wider life-worlds of the city. The life-world or *Lebenswelt* in German is a concept first used in a manuscript in 1907 by Husserl (1973; Scanlon 1974). Despite the existence of different multiple settings that appear to be separate and isolated within the city, the situation and the interactions between its inhabitants shape those settings and the social world of the city. Many important contributions to the theory of the life-

world were made later by many other thinkers (Grüny 2015). The life-world as described by Husserl is a sphere of the "universal field" in which we live, move, communicate, and theorize. For those who inhabit it, it is pre-given, always already there.

According to Schütz, the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) can be understood as "that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted as common sense." The everyday life-world provides us with a sense of the "real." It is through our position in, and experience of the life-world that we are social beings engaged and affected by the social and natural worlds. Looking at the city as a life-world helps us understand the logics of actions of its different settings. The most important characteristic of the life-world, according to Schütz, is that it is taken for granted. It is an unquestioned givenness of the life-world for its denizens. Drawing on Bourdieu's similar concept of "habitus," the city, accordingly, is not a given entity but rather a web of practices that form our primary means of relating to the world (Bourdieu 1971 cited in Grüny 2015). In this way, it is shaped by its interactions just as much as by its innate structure. Those who inhabit the city give meaning to what it stands for and represents. In social interaction, according to Bourdieu, the life-world shapes our way of acting, itself being shaped by previous interactions. Therefore, though social change is possible, the social action has to deal with the inertia of the life-world. That is why I would like to think of the multiple settings of the city as sub-life-worlds that are contiguous and together form an associated whole: the life-world of the city.

In all these writings theorizing *Raum* and life-worlds, the unlimited realm of potential social action is open to individuals, most potential actions are circumscribed by a taken-for-granted sense of what is possible and not possible in typical situations. Consequently, the social action becomes unproblematic and a matter of common sense or in other words logical, unless a breakup happens: hence a new conception emerges, and a shift takes place by a social or a political revolution.

Different settings within the city have different spatial logics or "re-figurations," a concept used to analyze social change, results from the collision, tensions, and conflict between these different spatial logics. According to Knoblauch and Löw (2020), the concept of logic is understood in the sense of a structure of the social, which permeates

everyday actions, emotions, and imaginations, as well as institutions and objectification.

This thesis will also address, in the conclusion, the strategies of the Assad regime, not in terms of warfare but in terms of military actions as urban planning according to the writings of Stephen Graham and Weizman. Urbicide took place in later stages that this thesis does not cover, yet one cannot look at the stages of the war in Syria as separate. Therefore, I will attempt in the conclusion to draw a line of "configurations" and see the map of events and how events unfolded later.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In recent years, there is increasing interest by geographers in the spatialities of contentious politics (Martin, McCann, and Purcell 2003, 113-21; Nicholls 2009; Pierce, Martin, and Murphy 2011, 54-70; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008). What has been interesting for geographers is the question of how "space matters" in the mobilization process, practices, and trajectories of contentious politics. Some scholars focused on place and local particularities that inform or motivate activism, and how the territorial factor informs collective action (Pierce, Martin, and Murphy 2011, 55-56). Places are sites of social engagement, and they also have distinct materiality that regulates and mediates relations and daily routines within a place. Spaces are thus imbued with power (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008, 161). It was impossible to demonstrate in the big squares in Damascus due to the huge deployment of security forces and militias affiliated to the Assad regime that emerged at the beginning of the uprising (Lijan El-shaa'biyya) known as *Shabbiha*. Any open area with wide boulevards leading to it would make the contentious action subject to attack and dismantling by force (Bishara 2013, 173).

The politics of place also change with different scales. The open area of Tahrir Square in Cairo enabled the gathering of millions and facilitated mobilization in a city that is connected to a wider global scale of flows and networks. In addition to place and scale, other factors mattered and shaped the space of contention such as the existence of active networks. Several researchers have suggested that place-based networks generate certain "relational attributes" such as trust, loyalty, and duty that facilitate the mobilization of resources and tighten solidarities (Nicholls 2009, 3). Networks play a pivotal role in coordinating principal activities and tasks of social movements (78). Gould (cited in Nicholls 2009) shows that neighborhood solidarities played a much more important role than class in motivating people to take risks for the sake of the cause. (Nicholls 2009, 79).[3]

Manuel Castells views the Arab spring as part of the new forms of social movements in the internet age that are erupting in the world today. He focuses on how the internet liberates individuals to shape a new autonomy, to exercise counterpower, leading to social change. According to Castells, social movements exercise counterpower by constructing themselves in the first place through a process of autonomous communication, free from the control of those holding institutional power. Digital social networks offer the possibility for largely unfettered deliberation and coordination of action (Castells 2015). In his analysis of the Arab spring, he focuses on the role of online-based mobilization as the pre-condition for the revolts and emphases that the original spaces of resistance were formed on the internet. Regarding Syria, he suggests that the decisive factor in the fate of the Syrian revolution was its geopolitical environment and the external interventions.

However, the dynamics of the Syrian revolution differed right from the beginning. Castells focuses on the importance of the space of autonomy facilitated by the internet to reconstruct trust as a foundation for human interaction. From the safety of the cyberspace individuals came together. And their togetherness helped them to overcome fear, this paralyzing emotion on which the powers that be rely in order to prosper and reproduce. In Syria where people used to say ‘walls have ears’, the high surveillance of the intelligence and security branches and their wide proliferation in society made it hard for individuals to reproduce trust through the cyberspace. The uprising was limited to spaces where trust has been already established by the structural nature of the social fabric. Some activists attempted to imitate the tactics brought up by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions by initiating call-outs for protests in central and symbolic places, but these calls gained little momentum and could not establish a movement.

The autonomous communication that emerged in contexts as in Egypt through the cyberspace and was able to break the barriers of isolation and made it possible to overcome fear by the act of joining and sharing, could not operate the same in the Syrian context. However, this is not to fully disregard the importance of the social media and the cyber communication in the uprising in Syria.The communication process that was available through the mass media and the cyberspace amounted to a one-way flow of the transmission of information. First when receiving the news from

the Arab uprisings that the unthinkable was actually happening. And second when the local protestors transmitted the images of the uprising that were spread through the internet and most importantly broadcasted by Al-Jazeera which reached the wider audience across Syria and the Arab audiences at large. These images fed the momentum of the uprising and helped in strengthening the sense of togetherness of the different local settings that participated in the uprising. However, what the communication process in the cyberspace could not achieve in Syria at the onset of the uprising was to create a networked *society* where trust relationships can be forged and help in overcoming fear and break the barriers of isolation. This, however, was achieved through different dynamics related to the nature of the already existing social networks in the social fabric.

Networks are important for social movements. While social movements build on deliberately forged networks, security surveillance and the police can easily block their channels of communication and mobilization. The alternative then becomes spontaneous contentious actions stemming from already established social networks that are rooted in everyday life, i.e., networks based on regionally rooted origins, family and kinship patterns and neighborhood ties. Some clustering may happen between different networks due to positionality and power relations in a particular setting which pushes certain vulnerable groups to cluster with each other across time and forge ties of trust and solidarity.

Social networks represent the way the social links of individuals in a society ramify through society. They are the overall structure of relationships in the society. According to Mitchell, by using network approaches some tend to see transactions, for example, as a consequence of network structure and do not see the network structure at the same time flows from these transactions. (Mitchell 1974). Networks are microstructural forms that socialize and connect individuals, facilitate information flows, help to create solidarity and shared identities, influence decision-making processes, and that, importantly, can limit membership if they fail to create brokerage opportunities to (potentially) new participants. (Pierce, Martin, and Murphy 2011, 56). The distinction of a network may not be visible in all times as Giuseppe noticed that different, regionally rooted, family and kinship patterns ‘react’ in contact with an

appropriate reagent, generating different patterns of demographic behaviour (Giuseppe 2000).

Most of the literature by geographers I examined mainly focused on studying the spatiality of the social movements where much of deliberate actions and networks are forged. This assumes a different political realm that is mainly liberal and democratic. Though it provides useful analytical tools that help understand the spatiality of the contentious action in general, it falls short of explaining the sequence of events at the start of the political changes before the war.

Multiple spatialities of scale, place, networks, positionality, and mobility all at once shape the contentious politics (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008, 157), yet the configurations differ in every situation, and the weight of every variable might vary in each case. Socio-spatial positionality means that unequal power relations exist between the diverse socio-spatial groups. Thus, positionality is simultaneously about difference and inequality. Everyday practices reproduce positionalities, giving them a durability that seemingly naturalizes them (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008, 164-5). Walter Nicholls (2009) argues that interactions happen within and between places and plays a crucial role in influencing the political identities and power relations of people. When diverse people interact in these settings, differences tend to be more openly negotiated and social boundaries eased. Here there can be an argument that many of the settings where interactions occur can also reinforce power relations. (Nicholls, 2009, 81). I will explain how the difference in scale shaped the contention in the Syrian context in comparison to the movements that occurred in other Arab Spring cities. Scale helps us understand how the revolutionary action in Syria differed in its tactics of mobilization and in its spatial nature. Comprehending the nature of place, networks, and positionality is important for the purpose of this research as it helps us understand the localization of the contentious action in the different settings within a city.

2.1. From an Urban Social Movement Perspective

The uprisings in the Arab world are viewed as an urban phenomenon where the urban centers (cities) took the lead in the contentious movement. Throughout history, cities

have been considered as prior sites for dissent due to their centrality in decision-making and the scale of change the action can reach. The Paris Commune of 1871 is the most obvious nineteenth-century example. Later events included for instance the Petrograd Soviet, the Shanghai Communes of 1927 and 1967, the Seattle General Strike of 1919, and the more general urban uprisings in the United States in the 1960s. More recently, there were mass protests, e.g., in Tahrir Square in Cairo, in Madison, Wisconsin, in the Plazas del Sol in Madrid, in Catalonia in Barcelona, etc (Harvey 2012, 115-7).

The history of demonstrations and contention in cities suggests, as David Harvey highlights, that there is something political in the city air that needs to be expressed (Harvey 2012). How much does this say about cities like Damascus or Aleppo? Or about (against/for) the contentious action that emerged in the periphery outside these urban centers? Streets are viewed as the place of visibility and spectacle where political struggles are "seen." David Harvey noticed that certain urban environment qualities facilitate mobilization and protesting more than others. He compares squares like Tahrir in Cairo, Tiananmen in Beijing, or the streets of Paris, in which it is easy to put barricades, unlike the streets of London or Los Angeles (Harvey 2012).
Protests in the Arab spring as an urban phenomenon and based on examination of the different repertoires have been widely approached from an urban social movements' perspective.

Social movements have been in the dominant literature an exclusive lens stemming from the experience of Western democratic countries. Both authoritarian countries and authoritarian segments of partly democratic countries remained marginal to the realm of social movements (Tilly, Ernesto, and Wood 2019, 116). In real circumstances in authoritarian regimes, campaigns and demonstrations drawing on established rights of association, assembly, and speech seem to be impossible (Tilly 2006, 186). However, despite the lack of civil liberties and political freedoms, social movements started notably to take place in new locations worldwide. According to Tilly (2006), the mass media have made the performances of social movements – especially their demonstrations- so visible throughout the world that dissidents in nondemocratic regimes often emulate their forms (188).

Many scholars attribute the proliferation of the social movement to structural characters in cities. In other words, they linked qualities of urban life to the emergence of specific forms of contention (Rabbat 2012; Tilly, Ernesto, and Wood 2019, 114-17). From an urban social movement perspective, the city is mainly seen as the environment that creates the structural conditions for dissent to emerge and be expressed (Allegra et al. 2013, 1679). Routledge (2010) argued, (neo-liberal) capitalism has been pursued particularly vehemently in cities, giving cities their strategic importance. The city provides important resources and mobilizing capacities for activists that make it a particularly key site for conflict and potential social change (1172). The strategic importance depends on scale. The resources available for activists and mobilizing capacities depend on the scale too. The politics of scale mattered for contention in mobilization, practices, and trajectories (Martin, McCann, and Purcell 2003, 114-15; Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008).

2.2. Different Scales, Similar Repertoires

Scale allowed the emergence of social movements in particular authoritarian contexts. For instance, international connections clearly mattered in the movement in Egypt. Economic ties and international nongovernmental organizations linked Egypt to a wider network of global scale. By using social media citizens were able to mobilize without forming bounded organizations and were able to communicate through their personal networks and to transmit news, then international media picked up the stories. Youth in cities in Egypt had integrated sufficiently into worldwide circuits of power and communication. The authoritarian rulers could not effectively control the domestic and international political activities of their citizens (Tilly, Ernesto, and Wood 2019, 114-7). There is also an iconic value of Tahrir square and Bourguiba avenue in Tunis and the ability of these sites in making it possible for hundreds of thousands of people to gather and build on repertoire actions, making it visible to both local and global audiences. How the city is embedded in a system of flows and networks that goes beyond its physical definition mattered in mobilization.

Building a general theory on mobilization in the cities in the region through the observation of few cases overlooked the significance of cities of different scales, that have differently oriented strategic importance, though they were less touched by

globalization and (neo-liberal) capitalism. The development of the urban scale in the region has surely been affected by European colonialism which favored coastal cities over inland ones (Silver 2010, 347). These cities represented a conduit between the European Mediterranean and the Arab world. Beirut, for instance, was a small town among many Mediterranean ports before the French arrived, and became of more strategic importance to the western powers than inland cities like Damascus for example.

At the onset of the Arab spring, the role of technologies and social media has been of great importance to enable mobilization and for connecting participants at different scales- locally, nationally, and internationally. In the Syrian context, communication technology did not play a decisive role in the mobilization at the beginning, nor was it able to create such virtual networks like in Egypt. The intense surveillance and the lack of trust between citizens downplayed the role of technologies in mobilization. Protesters could only mobilize through their actual (non-virtual) social networks that provided a degree of trust (Baczko et al. 2013). It was only after gathering in streets that technologies and media became important in providing impact and in framing the movement and creating solidarities across the already established active locales of contention. Though scales differed, in Syria, protestors sought similar repertoires to those in the Arab spring. However, the spatialities where these repertoires were performed were different.

2.3. Contentious Action (*Hirak*) Rather Than a Social Movement

Repertoires vary depending on the nature of regimes (Tilly 2006). However, it is certain that Bourguiba Avenue and Tahrir square inspired protestors in Syria. Generally, participants in the Arab spring have been inspired by leading examples at the beginning. It is mainly because the political opportunity was derived from the outside, from the broader scene of the Arab spring (the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt). Researchers or analysts have rarely used the social movement theory in analyzing Syria's uprising. Leenders suggested that on the eve of the Syrian uprising the regime was the same, but the perception of Syrians and their ability to challenge the regime increased. The example coming from revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia empowered local activists in Syria (Leenders 2013, 278-9).

Any regime, according to POS analyses, creates a specific environment of political opportunities and threats to which makers of claims necessarily respond. Changes in that environment produce different modes of contention (Tilly 2006, 43-4). According to Tilly (2006), regimes shape repertoires of contention by the way they engage with them. The extent to which the regime represses or facilitates claim-making changes the political opportunity structure. Regime variations in POS largely explain the enormous concentration of social movements in democratic regimes, especially high-capacity democratic regimes. This is because social-movement campaigns, performances, and WUNC displays concretely depend on regime-backed rights, notably rights of association, assembly, and speech. And without sturdy defense for such rights, powerful objects of unwelcome claims regularly retaliate against the claimants, call down governmental repression on the performances, and break up displays of WUNC (Tilly 2006, 186-8).

Social movements qualify as cosmopolitan because they facilitate making claims on scales far larger than locality: whole cities, regions, countries, and even international mobilizations (Tilly 2006, 54). In Syria, it started in Daraa, and very soon contention emerged in many other localities across Syria. However, in the Syrian context, early risers in the uprising such as Idlib, Deir ez-Zur, and Homs mobilized in a context sharing some important characteristics with Daraa. The nationwide protests did not "diffuse" as much as they occurred in parallel since protestors in these governorates similarly drew on the mechanisms and resources associated with and generated by their social networks (Leenders 2013, 282). Accordingly, there is a difference between the social movements and the contentious actions that Syrians have embraced, though they may share several similarities and may have adopted similar repertoires. For Tilly, regimes necessarily shape social movements, including the sheer possibility that social movements can occur at all. The violence deployed by the Assad regime from the beginning of the uprising broke up displays of WUNC across geographies. The repertoires inspired by the Arab Spring, when faced with the regime's retaliation in Syria, became confined with specific localities that enabled their success. Moreover, many settings had different reasons for taking an opposing stance against the regime.

In order to distinguish the movement in Syria from the concept of social movements explained above, I will use action or contentious action. and by action, I mean a

continuous activity over a period of time that constitutes multiple, repeated, and ongoing acts of dissent. In Arabic, it corresponds to the word "***hirak"***" When an urban setting embraces a ***hirak***, this indicates a successful mobilization that led to public actions demonstrating a WUNC model. Participants performed public representations of worthiness, unity numbers, and commitment.

2.4. Cities of Small Communities

While the diffusion of the demonstrations was attributed to the qualities of cities which facilitate political change like in Tunisia or Cairo (Al Sayyad and Guvenc 2015). The opposite thesis regarding Syria made more sense for many commentators and analysts. Many suggested that the diffusion of the protests in Syria have mainly occurred within the local communities in the urban periphery and the rural areas outside the big cities/the urban centers, and in some localities within the urban centers, and that it is mainly attributed to the social network's qualities of trust and solidarity that existed in these communities (Baczko et al. 2013; Leenders 2013; Abazeid 2013). Some others viewed the uprising in Syria as the revolution of the urban periphery against the centres for economic reasons, by explaining how the periphery was marginalized in terms of economy and development for the benefit of the urban centres (Barout 2012).

Big cities like Damascus and Aleppo did not top the headlines as much as the peripheral urban and smaller cities in Syria. However, particular settings within the big cities have participated in the uprising. However, none of these actions labeled the city as a participatory agent in the revolution. In general, cities in Syria were the theatre where different localities had different logics of action.

Some have explained that the early mobilization happened in Daraa because of the social networks associated with Daraa's clan structure that provided an important sense of solidarity which helps explain the protestors' success in gaining critical mass while withstanding intense regime violence. And similarly, pointing to the early risers in Syria's uprising in Idlib, Deir az-Zur, and Homs illustrates how they mobilized in a context sharing with Daraa with some important characteristics (Leenders 2013; Abazeid 2013).

Regarding cities, some have attributed the diffusion of the protests in particular settings within the city to the rural dimension embedded in the city, distinguishing between the city "locals" (*ahali*) and the city "dwellers" (*sukkan*). The former refers to the urban origins of the inhabitants, the latter refers to their rural origins. And each had their separated enclaves in the city. This view suggests that the ruralization process that created these enclaves of dwellers of rural origins in the city has provided the city with the segments eligible to protest (Bishara 2017). Such analysis suggests that the contentious action, in some settings in the city, was based on the city dwellers who were provoked mainly by the injustices and marginalization in their urban periphery of origin and who maintain more cohesion networks of trust and solidarity attributed to their rural culture. But the map of demonstrations in the four cities shows how this view remains very simplifying. Contentious action in Midan was mainly carried by its locals and was supported by the merchants (*Tujjar*) of Midan. On the other hand, city dwellers of Aleppo, who occupied wide neighborhoods of its eastern part, did not show similar enthusiasm at the beginning of the uprising like in some neighborhoods (in Homs for instance) that also consisted of city dwellers. Hama city was the least among the Syrian cities affected by the ruralization process. It maintained its social structure of its locals, despite what the city has witnessed in the 1980s of a mass massacre that killed thousands of its people, displaced many families, and destroyed whole neighborhoods to the ground. In 2011, Hama did participate in mass numbers in the demonstrations of that year in continuous action in its wide boulevards in the center of the city.

Solidarity networks did matter in mobilization. However, explaining the participation of particular urban settings solely by the existence of solidarity networks mainly provided by familial or clan ties, somehow is suggestive that urban spaces which did not witness popular mobilization lacked these strong ties of solidarity and trust. However, that is not precise. similar networks existed, but the positioning of these networks in the web of power led to a different logic of action. Moreover, viewing the divisions within the city through the urban/rural divide is also a simplifying view of a much more complex situation.

As a final note here, it is worth to be mentioned that the use of rural/urban in the Syrian context refers to cities and the urban periphery that once in the past was considered a rural area. The use of rural/urban is nostalgic somehow, as many dramatic changes took place not just in the city, but in the countryside too. The Ba'ath party wanted to have its roots in the peasant communities while also aiming to paralyze the city political life by weakening the city elites who mostly were the big landowners. Agrarian reform law that was deepened by the Ba'ath party in the 1960s accelerated the redistribution of land ownership (Batatu 1999). The building of the Euphrates dam which started in 1968 in Tabaqa had a huge impact in changing the rural areas. By 1992 around 95% of all villages were electrified. Safe water networks proliferated in the rural areas. More than 70% of the healthcare centers that were established by the state between the 70s and 90s were located in rural areas. Rural areas became accessible and connected. Phone networks expanded and reached many rural areas. Growth in the education sector in the rural areas definitely improved the economic opportunities and standard of living for a lot of peasants. (Batatu 1999). What is called a city or a countryside is affected by merely administrative categories followed by the government that usually classify the districts depending on the number of inhabitants which cannot correctly identify the differences in the urban and rural settings.[4] The binary of rural/urban has been used to suggest both different types of social structure and a conflict between assumptions about an urban, modern lifestyle of the city and the rural, traditional lifestyle. Many small towns grew in number and in urban fabric which became more alike cities with variety in careers and businesses. The category rural continued to be used even if it was outdated and did not fit the changing reality in many urbanized settings.

The urbanization process took place in the region during the twentieth century and transformed the social and urban fabric dramatically. Urbanization, as defined in the Oxford dictionary, is the process that increases the number of those residing in non-rural areas and work in non-agricultural activities, and causes the decline of numbers of those residing in rural areas and depend on agriculture (Oxford Reference, n.d.). However, urbanization in the region took place differently from the process of urban development in the western context. To identify the rural or the urban in the western context is problematic too. Lefebvre (Harvey 2012, preface) saw the relationship between urban and rural (or countryside and city) was being radically transformed: the

rural was being urbanized and the traditional peasantry was disappearing, in a way that offered a new consumerist approach to the relation to nature and a capitalist, productivist approach to the supply of agricultural commodities to urban markets, as opposed to self-sustaining peasant agriculture. And this process was going global (Harvey 2012, preface).

The process of urbanization took place in the Middle East via a different mechanism from the western contexts. It was not a response to the manufacturing movement or the domination of the capitalist productivist approach to agricultural commodities. It was urbanization accompanied by little development.

CHAPTER III

CITIES OF SEGRAGATION

3.1. Localism in the Syrian Cities Historically

The four cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama were the hubs of wealth and power in the region. During the late Ottoman rule, cities maintained a stable social structure. On the top of the social hierarchy were the Sunni notable families who maintained their social and political position during the Ottoman rule and the French mandate.

Historically, cities in Syria had a notable political significance. Politics have been a phenomenon exclusive to city elites. The Arabism movement that emerged in the late Ottoman empire was confined to cities and its Syrian elites who formed later the leaders of the national bloc. The national mood that tinted the political atmosphere during the years of independence was an exceptional episode of Syrian history and mainly was imposed by the existence of an external power of the French mandate, which was viewed by the population as an illegal one. It also was affected by the surrounding political atmosphere that contributed to rationalizing the national tendency in the newly imposed borders of the leftovers of natural Syria, and to favor the nationalism stance no matter how unintelligible it remained, over the transnational ideologies. Despite the sophisticated forms of political organization during the French mandate, most of the national leaders could not cross beyond their local bases in their four cities. and disputes emerged between the competing cities especially Aleppo and Damascus (Khoury 1987, 622, 623).

During Ottoman rule, the city represented the joint node between the countryside and the capital of the empire. For centuries, a patron/client structure supported the political and socio-economic organization of the city. Ottoman rule had to depend on local agents who maintained a strong local social influence and position to enforce the rule

of Istanbul. This "Politics of Notables," as Albert Hourani presents it, gave more power to already powerful families of the city notables who dominated the political life for a long time. The city notables gained their power and importance for the ottomans because of their rooted local influence. They had to keep their local connections strong in order to maintain their legitimacy. Therefore, they did not act merely as executives for the Ottoman rulers. When they sensed a rising discontent by their local public they also acted as mediators between the local population and the authority, and they had to oppose the authorities in some situations but not to the point that could flip the status quo. Naturally, their localism and their local interests shaped their politics. And their localism was the source of their power. The influential families in the city inherited prestige for social or religious status. City notables used to belong to families who enjoyed a local religious status and controlled tax district. In the late period of Ottoman rule, the influence of the city notables depended on more concrete bases that gathered between landowning and possessing positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy (Khoury 2003, 3).

Historically, neighborhoods were an important focal location for political and social organization. Each neighborhood had its own local leaders who were the notables of the rich landowners and merchants, as well as the religious figures of the neighborhood. This structure functioned like a small government that protected its residents from the extreme interference of the state and mediated in resolving disputes. Despite the many structural changes that started to weaken the cohesion of the neighborhoods, they managed to maintain their distinctiveness at the beginning of the twentieth century and they were the providers of the majority of the public support that the competing political elites were seeking to gain. The social organization that depended on familial ties and religious groups in these neighborhoods and the long period of sharing the same space strengthened the relations of its locals and created this tendency of collective action (Khoury 1987, 289).

3.2. Syrian Cities Development Context

Historically, the city has been home for various groups of different origins who formed minorities in the social fabric in comparison to the majority Muslim Sunni Arabs. Over

time, many groups of different origins who inhabited the city across the long years have integrated well into the social fabric and shared political and social positions with other city notables, particularly the Sunni groups of the different minorities, like the Kurds, Turks, and Balkans in Damascus who over time abandoned their languages and became Arabic speakers (Khoury 1987, 292). Those long term-residents of the city formed the city locals "*ahali,*" who sought to distinguish themselves from the newcomer *"city dwellers,*" who had started to come to the city in large numbers in the second half of the twentieth century, laying down the most distinguished division in cities: the division between city locals and city dwellers that reflected the urban/rural divide that dominated the social organization for so long. This division imposed a social hierarchy along the urban and rural lines, resembling a continuation of a traditional hierarchy that privileged the urban and that had dominated and ruled the rural for centuries.

Changes in the political power balance started during the French mandate who counted on rural minorities to balance against the city Sunni political elites. The city's dominance over political life started to decay. The countryside was described as being politically subjugated for centuries under Ottoman rule. Only by the beginning of the twentieth century, these marginalized rural communities started to be aware of their political power, especially the rural minorities which gained importance during the French mandate with the administration who favored them to the political city elites.

The huge immigration from the rural areas to the cities took place over time for many reasons including natural disasters across history. But the major structural changes started with changes in the modes of production and the political atmosphere. When the rural migration to the cities became associated with the rise of the Ba'ath party and its assumption of power in 1963. It became a phenomenon happening in larger numbers since the agrarian reform took place in the region. The urban population grew noticeably, while the rural population declined during those years of agrarian reform (Alnaqib 1996, 236-8).

This may suggest a relationship between the agricultural devolvement and urbanization, but that was not the case in the region. In fact, the agrarian reform policies run counter to the logical relationship between agricultural development and

urbanization. Migration, as Tuma (1970) argued, occurs in response to two main factors: a demand pull resulting from attractive opportunities in town, and a push factor due to deteriorating conditions in rural areas. The push due to deterioration in rural areas seemed more relative to the context in the Middle East (Tuma 1970).

A UNDP report on poverty and inequality in Syria (1997-2007) found unprecedented levels of rising poverty in Syria since the early 2000s. The report (Abu-Ismail, Abdel-Gadir, and El-Laithy 2012) also found that poverty in 2004 was generally more prevalent in rural than in urban areas of Syria (62% in rural areas).

Due to the radical changes in the past few decades, many small towns grew in number and the urban fabric in these regions grew and became more like cities with variety in careers and businesses. In parallel to this change in rural areas, the big cities in Syria also have been changing. Paradoxically the urbanization process that is defined as "the increase in the proportion of a population living in urban areas as a consequence mainly of rural migration to urban areas" (Tuma 1970) is described by many observers as a "Ruralization" process (Alnaqib 1996, Bogaert 2011, Batatu 1999, Bishara 2017). It was mainly because these groups of migrants were excluded and isolated in their own spaces in the city and were kept seen as strangers even if they inhabited the city for generations.

Many factors nurtured the resentment between the city locals and the newcomers. The state policies sought to depend heavily on the rural component who dominated the state apparatuses in bureaucracy, security, and army. The loss of the political and social prestige and the retract of the city domination over the countryside, all were translated into social hierarchies in the city that considered the city locals as superior and city dwellers inferior mainly were treated as intruders.

Social dynamics in both the city and the countryside had changes and urban and rural characteristics overlapped. The sharp separation merely by administrative numerical classifications fails to take into account the overlapping of the exchanged social dynamics, i.e., of urban and rural characteristics. The uprising took place in an urban space, whether it was in the urban centers or the periphery. Considering that the

definition of rural and urban spaces needs to be revisited helps us understand the shared dynamics of the logics of the collective action in the different settings in Syria.

3.3. Mapping the Social and Urban Fabric in the Main Cities

Specialists in the Middle East often complained that contemporary urban sociology has bypassed cities in the region (Allegra et al. 2013). The Western gaze had Orientalized the Middle Eastern cities and the use of "Islamic city" flattened the differences between the cities of the Middle East and provided general assumptions. Many stereotypical images by Europeans imagine the cities in the region as places of division based on religion and sects (Silver 2010). Some have criticized how most studies in this regard still focus on a single case and try to generalize, as well as questioned the validity of the term "Islamic city," considering it a historic myth that dubbed old historic cities as Islamic cities (Abu-Lughod 1987). According to Abu-Lughod (1987), the Islamic or the traditional city was created by several forces that include: a terrain/climate, a technology of production, distribution and transportation, a system of social organization, and a legal/political system in which Islamic places and times could vary considerably. The modern era has dramatically changed the fabric nature of the cities of the region. Unquestionably, European colonialism had the main and most direct impact on colonized cities. The old fabric of the traditional city was cut through wide straight boulevards that radiated from open plazas or squares, mostly imposed by the colonial authorities, either to provide the colonial settlers with a familiar European urban environment (as was the case in cities of the Maghrib from Morocco to Algeria to Tunisia), or to enact a system of spatial control, distinguishing accordingly the new urban fabric from the old traditional one (Rabbat 2012). Even before the direct interventions of colonial powers, the urban growth in the late Ottoman empire in Syria was also affected by the European style of multi-story buildings with European facades and grid planning of wide straight intersected streets, especially after the Turkish reorganizations (*tanzimat*). Despite the fact that cities in Syria did not attract large numbers of European settlers like other cities in north Africa, cities of Damascus and Aleppo mainly were noticeably affected by the French urban planners and experts in the years during the French mandate (Khoury 1987, 293).

Cities expanded later especially after rural migration from the countryside to the city, which increased during Ba'ath rule, according to two main modes: The formal urban growth (Modern neighborhoods) and the spontaneous growth (*Ashwaiyyat*) that appeared much more noticeably in the big cities of Damascus and Aleppo and to a lesser degree in the city of Homs.

Accordingly, until 2011, three main types of urban fabric can be distinguished visually in the city:

The old traditional neighborhood fabric: Characterized by high density, narrow winding alleyways, and low building heights, mostly opened toward inside through inner open spaces forming the courtyard houses. This fabric takes an organic dense shape in the urban maps.
The planned fabric: Newly established formal neighborhoods, usually following the western modern style of multi-story buildings and grid patterns of straight wide streets. Usually provides better services.
The slums fabric: Newly established informal neighborhoods, built spontaneously by the city dwellers who cannot afford to live elsewhere in the city. Usually, the fabric consists of relatively low multi-story buildings, with a straight, narrow grid of streets and a lack of services. It can be detected on the map as it takes the shape of a distorted irregular shape of a dense fabric.

The multiple urban fabrics that divided the city visually, have intertwined with the diverse social fabric resulting in most cases multiple urban settings within the same city space but distinctive from each other in their cultural, social, and political identity and in their logics of action.

Damascus city, the biggest city in Syria and the capital, occupies larger place in this analysis. Capitals always seize more attention than other cities. It is not just due to their size, which is important, but also being the seat of the government and the location of the decision making. Due to their centrality, they gain power and practice more control over their regional surroundings. Economic growth also concentrates in capitals and big cities as well, providing these cities of their power of attraction. Due

to their centrality, capitals attract populations. Also, they call for research because of their complexity and importance. Therefore, information and literature available on capitals is larger than that available for smaller cities.

Population diversity is richer in the capital cities which makes the structure of their social fabric more complex. The juxtapositioning of the different social groups in the city space create complex structure, power relations, and constant reconfiguration of the social fabric that requires more space in the analysis. Big cities as they form important economic centres follow the capital in this regard, as in the case of Aleppo.

While mapping the social and the urban fabric in the main cities, I will be focusing on the reconfiguration of the social structure and the social networks across time, and the relation of that to the social behaviour at the beginning of the revolution. The less the changes in the social fabric across time and the less diverse it was, the less amount the city will occupy in the text (e.g. Hama city).

Figure 3.1. Damascus During the French Mandate

Source: Damascus during the French mandate, circa 1936. In: P. Khoury. Syria and the French mandate: The politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987, 290.

3.3.1. Damascus the Capital

The city of Damascus is both the capital of Syria and its largest city, having expanded largely due to population growth and most importantly rural migration from the countryside to the city. The city fabric had welded with the fabric of the suburbs. And many regions that were previously suburbs have been integrated into the recent organizational schemes of the city as constituent neighborhoods of Damascus city.

3.3.1.1. Old Neighbourhoods Inside the City Walls:

The old neighborhoods of Damascus are distributed inside and outside the city walls. Within the city walls is the neighborhood of Bab Tuma, which used to be mostly inhabited by the Christian minority. To the south of Bab Tuma is Hay Al-Yahud, a Jewish quarter. The remaining fabric is comprised of Muslim quarters. These are Al-Qaymiriyya, Al-Amara Juwaniya, and Shaghur l-Juwani wherein a citadel and markets such as the souq Al-Hamiddiya and souq Medhat Pasha are located (Khoury 1987).

During the French occupation, the population of Damascus had a twofold increase and the old neighborhoods became crowded due to the migration of peasants and Bedouins to the city which consequently affected the intimate character of its neighborhoods. Close-knit relations that used to characterize its patron/client structure started to fade. The wealthy families who were disturbed by the changes in their neighborhoods started to relocate to other suburbs such as those modern neighborhoods that were established at the beginning of the twentieth century outside the city walls. These families lived in modern houses designed according to the European style that became the desirable trend among the notable families at that period of time (Khouri 1987).

Before the 1990s, the old city was categorized as an economically depressed and socially conservative neighborhood within greater Damascus. It was estimated that 67 percent of the 45,000 residents of the old city were tenants, many of whom live in slum-like conditions in houses that once belonged to the locals, *the Shuwam*. However, a few locals continued to live in their ancestral neighborhoods and courtyard houses, but they were indexed as poor and marginal (Totah 2014).

The old city of Damascus has been declared as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979 (UNESCO, n.d.,*a*). However, this declaration started only in the beginning of the 1990s to exert urban changes when the Syrian government initiated economic liberalization policies. Courtyard houses in the old city became the locus of private entrepreneurship seeking to promote a local urban heritage for global consumption (Totah 2014). Many houses were converted into restaurants, hotels, and other structures for non-residential use.

The residential area in the old city has decreased since 1936 when its land area was estimated at 94.3 hectares and it was then significantly reduced to 62.2 hectares in 2008. The gentrification of the old city led to the displacement of many of its long-term residents. The old city that was in the past an urban space that engendered neighborhood solidarity and community cohesiveness has been dramatically changed. The residential quarters in the old city lost their social status. Rural migrants who inhabited the old city were perceived as intruders who did not belong to the old city and who lacked a sense of social solidarity. These were used to justify their dislocation by the landowners when gentrification started to take place. Many *Shuwam* blamed the decay of their city, the decline of urban civility, and neglect of heritage sites on the rural migrants whose migration since 1963 was associated with the Ba'ath party's ascendence to power (Totah 2014).

3.3.1.2. Old Neighbourhoods Outside the City Walls:

Historically, some neighborhoods expanded outside the city walls forming Shaghur al-Barrani, and Al-Amara al-Barraniyye. Outside the city walls, the souq Sarujeh neighborhood served prosperous families. It dates back to the fourteenth century and by the mid-thirties it started to be known as small Istanbul as it used to accommodate the Ottoman bureaucracy. There is also the Al-Qanawat neighborhood that was established in the sixteenth century and was inhabited by government officials and politicians in the late Ottoman era and during the French mandate. To the south, there is the Al-Midan neighborhood, which used to be a suburb near Damascus in the sixteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was different in terms of its heterogeneity and had more intermixed social components. It was inhabited by peasants coming from Horan in the south, and by Druze and some Arab tribes in

addition to a small Christian minority in its northern part near Bab Musalla. It was the poorest among the other neighborhoods in Damascus, but at the same time, it was inhabited by wealthy families of cattle and grain merchants who descended from the Janissary forces that dominated the Al-Midan neighborhood in the mid-nineteenth century (Khoury 1987, 291).

On the slopes of Mount Qasioun, the Al-Salihiyah neighborhood was originally a small village built in the middle ages and was formed by successive migrations during the crusades. To the left, there is the Muhajireen neighborhood which was originally a suburb inhabited by Muslim migrants who came from Crete during the thirty-year war in the late nineteenth century (Khoury 1987, 292). These neighborhoods as they were originally formed of migrants were more open to welcome whatever would have been deemed new. Their houses were built in western style and later attracted middle-class families from Damascus (Fadel 2019, 139).

The final important historic quarter is the Ruknuddin neighborhood which is also known as the Al-Akrad neighborhood. It evolved out of a military settlement located on the slopes of Mount Qasioun in the twelfth century during the Salah Addin Al-Ayyubi era. It was expanded later by the migrations of Kurds in the nineteenth century who were not welcomed inside Damascus (Khouri, n.d.). It was a poor neighborhood, unlike the Al-Muhajireen or Al-Salihiyah neighborhoods. Over time, many Kurds, who inhabited the neighborhood historically, were Arabized and abandoned their language and social habits but kept leaning on their tribal structure for social organization. The Al-Akrad neighborhood shared with other Damascene neighborhoods a quarter-based patron/client structure which for centuries had supported the political and socio-economic organization in the city. Notables resorted to their tribal bonds mostly when dealing with their clientele in Akrad, while their lifestyle elsewhere was assimilated to that of the urban elite in Damascus in general, whether Ottoman or Syrian. Many of them lived outside the quarter, as notable members of the city (Fuccaro 2003, 214-7). It is worth mentioning that the old souks in the old fabric remained owned by Damascenes.

3.3.1.3. The Planned Formal Fabric:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, especially during the French mandate, several modern neighborhoods were established and subsequently expanded the city to the north and west. Among these neighborhoods is Al-Qassa', established at the beginning of the twentieth century in the late Ottoman period. It was considered as an extension of Bab Tuma and it was inhabited by the wealthier Christian families who left Bab Tuma to reside in less crowded and more modern neighborhood. During the French mandate, many new neighborhoods with gardens were established between Al-Salihiyah and the old city of Damascus. The most famous are Al-Shuhada, Al-Sha'lan, Arnus, and Al-Jisr. In addition to the wealthy Muslim families of the Damascene, French officials and a small European community that came to Syria at that time inhabited these quarters (Khoury 1987, 292). Later these neighborhoods became inhabited by locals and dwellers from other cities, such as public employees and military staff (Fadel 2019, 121). More recent modern planned neighborhoods like Al-Malki, Abu Rummane, and Al-Baramkeh were established in the second half of the twentieth century and connected the city fabric with the surrounding suburbs. These neighborhoods sheltered most of the councils and embassies in addition to large areas designated for the Damascus university. Most departments of Damascus university are located in the Baramkeh neighborhood (refer to Figure 3.2 on page 38).

Later, many suburbs and villages that welded with the expanding city fabric were annexed and integrated into the organizational scheme of the city as constituent neighborhoods like Al-Mazzeh. Dummar, Kafar Susa, Qabun, Jobar, and Barzeh, many of which were parts of Eastern and Western Ghouta (Damascus countryside/Rif Dimashq).

3.3.1.4. Informal Fabric

In 2004, about 40% of the population of Damascus - approximately 1.3 million of a total of 3 million - lived in informal settlements (Clerc 2014). Informal settlements were developed mainly in the second half of the twentieth century due to inadequate urban policies, inefficient response to large rural migration to the city, and the waves of displaced people and refugees from regional conflicts as such in the case of

Palestinians, inhabitants of Golan, and Iraqis. The informal settlements are mostly inhabited by city dwellers of different geographic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. While the various different social families of dwellers of the upper class and wealthier families could co-exist in the modern neighborhoods along with the wealthy Damascenes families, the poor dwellers associated with the informal settlements tend to live in quarters of similar social distinctiveness. For example, informal quarters of Tabbala and Duayl'a at the southeast of the old Christian quarter of Bab-Tuma are mostly inhabited by Christians of rural origins. The Alawites are concentrated in Ish Al-Warwar, Mazzeh 86, and Hayy Al-Wurud. Most Kurds are in Wadi Al-Mashari' or Al-Ruzz mountain known as 'Zoravar' adjacent to the Dummar project and near the Rukn Aldin neighborhood. The majority of Sunni dwellers are concentrated in quarters like Barzeh Al-balad, Kafar Suseh, and Al-qadam. Palestinians are mostly in Yarmuk camp, which started as a separate settlement and then was annexed to the city. Very few informal quarters were mixed of different sects, religions, and origins such as in Al-Tadamun which was a mixed community of Sunni, Alawi, Druze, Syrians, and Palestinians (Alawsat, "Silah Tanẓim Alʿashwaʾīat").

As Clerc (2014) noted, informal settlements in Syria were a lot like formal settlements physically. They were served to a large extent by public infrastructures on a normal legal basis. During the 2000s, the government put in some service infrastructure such as schools, healthcare centers, etc. In 2004, some 97% of the informal neighborhoods in Damascus had running water and most streets were tarred. However, taps ran only for a few hours a week, schools were overcrowded, and public spaces like parks were virtually inexistent. Many of the inhabitants were not recent rural migrants or refugees and had lived in the city for a long time – sometimes for several decades in formal or informal housing. Some middle-income families, civil servants, and military personnel, sometimes even high-ranking, have lived there (Clerc 2014). Physical boundaries sometimes blurred between formal and informal settlements. For example, many informal constructions took place on Qasioun slopes adjacent to the neighborhoods of Muhajirin, Salihiyah, and Rukn Alddin.

Many of the informal settlements were built on state property (Masha') on the mountain slopes or on the agricultural land of Ghouta. Some were on private lands. For instance, Ish Al-Warwar inhabited mostly by Alawi dwellers was built on

agricultural lands (Basatin) belonging to the locals of Barzeh. Similarly, Mazzeh 86 that is adjacent to Mazzeh, was initially formed by a military group (*Liwa' 86*) affiliated to Rifaat Al-Assad in the 70s, then developed into an informal quarter for Alawites that came mainly from Latakia mountains and Homs. This quarter was built on agricultural lands that belonged to the locals of Mazzeh in the past (Aawsat, "Silah Tanẓim Alʿashwaʾīat").[5]

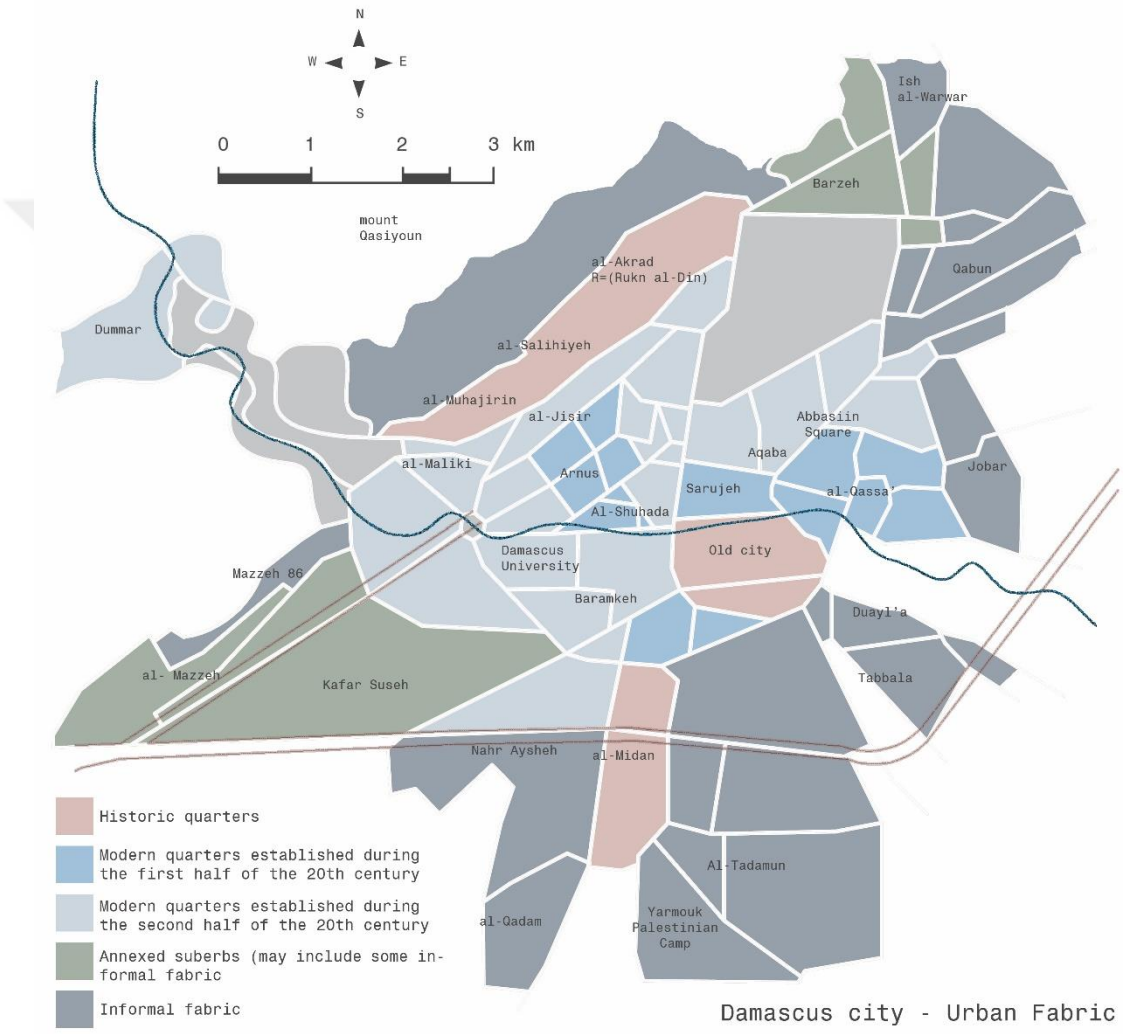

Figure 3.2. Damascus City - Urban Fabric 2010

Source: The map is generated by Lina Shamy using google earth, AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. (July 2021).

3.3.1.5. Notes on the Damascene Socio-Urban Identity

The distribution of the informal settlements surrounding the city has created particular balances that the regime used for its interests in contentious times. The city was fragmented into multiple urban and social identities, sometimes hostile to each other. Not only was the urban society fragmented along religious, ethnic, or sectarian lines, but there was also the damascene-rural binary that informed social hierarchy in the city in addition to class division. The city dwellers who migrated to the city during the twentieth century were viewed as intruders by the city locals, and could not have a sense of belonging to the city. There were times in the past when a number of notable families in Damascus with strong ties to the city quarters dominated the social and political life for centuries. The nationalization process in the second half of the twentieth century and with the rise of the Ba'ath party largely shifted the political power to non-Damascene who used to be considered social inferiors. As Salamandra (2000) noted Damascenes found themselves outnumbered by those distinct from them in social class, regional background, and religious sect. The most incisive question to a potential bride or groom is no longer "Who is your father?" or "What do you do?" but rather, "Where do you live?".

The loss of the social, political, and religious prestige that the city elites benefitted from in the past had an impact on the new damascene identity after the Ba'ath party. What a damascene identity started to mean reflected an imagined idea of the city and its past. Many Shuwam blamed the decay of their city and the neglect of heritage sites on the rural migrants who came in the wake of the Ba'ath party. The nostalgic yearning for the past is reflected in a series of memories written by damascenes, mostly from notable families about the social life in the old Damascus of their youth. For example, there is 'Ya mal al-sham' (O Wealth of Damascus) by Siham Turjuman, *'Al-Hijra min al-janna'* (Exodus from Paradise) by Nadiya Khust, and "Dimashq al-Asrar' (Damascus of Secrets) by Nasr al-Din al-Bahra. All share a sense of loss. Materially, this nostalgic yearning reflected in the interest of restoring the old city of Damascus that was ruined by the invaders who corrupted the majesty of their old city. Old Damascus refers to a lifestyle associated with the city as it was – or supposedly was – before the major social, political, and economic transformations that began in the early 1960s.

Most old notable families left their Old City houses decades ago, in favor of modern-style apartments in the elite districts of New Damascus. Their children and grandchildren are returning to the Old City now not to live as their ancestors did, or to shop during the day, but to spend leisure hours in the evening. Old damascenes now find themselves a minority in their own city. As David Lowenthal notes, minorities often deploy heritage not to opt out of nation-states but to achieve gains within them (Salamandra 2000).

The social and political loss of the domination of the city on its surroundings and the portrayal of the newcomers as invaders led to the loss of openness, communication, and trust. In one of the interviews of Salamandra (2000, 182-202) with a damascene, he said: "Damascenes are very closed, they don't visit non-Damascenes, they don't invite non-Damascenes to their houses. You can't make friendships with the women, and with the men you can only make friendships that are not friendships at the same time.'

3.3.2. Aleppo, Homs, and Hama

3.3.2.1. Aleppo

Aleppo is the second-largest city in Syria that has connected Syria to the world through its location on several trade routes for many centuries since the second millennium B.C. Its old part represents a unique urban fabric formed of the Citadel, the twelfth-century Great Mosque and various sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries madrasas, residences, hans, souks, and public baths (UNESCO, n.d.,*b*).

During the French mandate in Syria, several master plans decided for Aleppo relied heavily on internationally-inspired, modernist urban-renewal type blueprints and valued the grid as a pattern for organizing urban blocks. However, various factors inhibited the completion of these plans, particularly the automobile, which was not yet a major means of transportation in Syria. Until the 1950s, the old city remained as the social, cultural, and business center with the majority of Aleppo's population still living within the historic fabric. Later with the proliferation of the automobile, and with the new master plan of 1952 by the French architect, Andre Gutton, the exodus

of the wealthy families accelerated. Living in more spacious areas in modern houses made according to the European style has attracted wealthy Aleppines to move outside the old city that became more crowded.

The new plan has opened wide boulevards in the old fabric connected its old city to the new expansion by wide roads. As a result of this intervention, the fluid organic fabric of the old city became isolated into islands. High-rise apartment buildings surrounded the old fabric, exposing the private courtyard of many houses. This plan led to the destruction of the entire neighborhoods in the old historic quarters.

During Hafez Assad's rule in the 1970s, a new master plan was conceived by a French-Japanese architect Banshoya that called for an additional transportation axis to intersect the old city. The ongoing destruction of the old fabric sent a direct message from the government to residents that the old city fabric and community were less valuable and inferior to the city's modern quarters where middle and upper-class citizens lived. Class division was obviously contrasted in the urban fabric. Furthermore, the social fabric started to be mixed and replaced by rural migrants. As more and more people moved from the old fabric for the modern quarters, many houses were abandoned, rented out to lower-income families, or were occupied by migrants from the city's rural hinterland whose migration accelerated after 1963. Similar to the situation in Damascus, the original inhabitants of the city sought to distinguish themselves from the newcomers and leaving the old city was pursued once moving to the modern neighborhoods became affordable.

Historically, Aleppo has always competed and contested Damascus for social and political prestige. The independent economic dynamics that Aleppo city enjoyed have encouraged this contest with the city of Damascus. Despite losing many of its commercial advantages with the enforcement of state-formation that imposed anarchical geographic divisions and cut the city access to its natural port in Iskenderun, the city had another economic boost by new trade routes through north and east toward Iraq. It also benefitted from the growth in the agrarian sector in Al-Jazeera (Khoury 1987). This contestation manifested in the conflicts and divisions between the political elites of the national movement and the national mass (Al-Kutla Al-Wataniya) that led Syria through independence (Khoury 1987, 620).

However, the sharp degradation of the city started when the Ba'ath party came to power in March 1963, and Damascus became the central administrative and military capital of the state (Surah 2017, 287). With nationalization policies, the city's economic power was curbed and marginalized. The position of the old class of the elites in all the Syrian cities weakened during the Ba'ath rule. And new components of rural origin and particularly the Alawites have dominated the power. However, the gap of frustration between cities was obvious during the urban protests in late 1979 and the beginning of 1980 which were concentrated in cities like Aleppo and Hama while the capital Damascus seemed almost calm (Surah 2017, 286).

Aleppo was a hub for the activities of the Muslim brotherhood against the regime, particularly Al-Talia al-muqatilah. The protest against the regime in the 1980s gained public support from the locals of the city in the shape of demonstrations and strike that the Tujjar of Aleppo committed in February and March in 1980 (Surah 2017, 124). Al-Rawda mosque located in the modern quarter that is inhabited mainly by Aleppian families, hosted the secret meeting of leaders from the Muslim brotherhood and witnessed a year before strong Khutbas (Speaches) that fed the movement at that time by the Imam of Al-Rawda mosque, sheikh Tahir Khairullah who was popular in the city.[6] This indicated to the existence of a supportive social network base located in the city.

The protest did not end until several outbreaks of violence took place in the city such as the Midfaiyyah incident where approximately 50 cadets, most of them Alawites, were killed at a military academy in Aleppo by an operation led by Ibrahim al-Yusef whose group was associated with the Al-Talia al-muqatilah. The regime responded with a massive military deployment to Aleppo in 1980, and several hundred people were killed by special forces hunting militants in the city (Britannica, n.d.). In addition to many arrests, many families fled outside the country.

The country was in economic stagnation. During the 1980s, Hafez al-Assad and his regime were threatened by a loss of legitimacy as the result of political and economic problems. The government had to limit state control of trade and currency by encouraging domestic and foreign private capital. Accordingly, the first Syrian infitah

policies took place in the second half of the 1980s which encouraged private investment mainly in the commercial and service sectors (Perthes 1992).

Table 3.1. Indicators of Foreign Trade and Private Sector Contributions (Billion Syrian Pounds)

	1980	1985	1986	1988	1989
Total Imports	16.2	15.6	10.7	25.0	23.3
Private sector	4.2	2.5	2.7	6.7	n.a.
Total Imports	8.3	6.4	5.2	15.1	33.7
Private sector	0.6	0.5	1.6	5.5	16.2
* Foreign trade data are calculated on the basis of L.S 11.20 to the US dollar from 1987 on, instead of L.S. 4.05 to the dollar.					

Source: The table was adopted from: The Syrian Economy in the 1980s Author(s): Volker Perthes From Middle East Journal, Winter, 1992, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), pp. 49 Published by: Middle East Institute Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328392

In 1986, the Ancient city of Aleppo was listed as a world heritage site by UNESCO (Everything Everywhere Travel Media, n.d.). Providing the city with opportunities in the light of a growing interest encouraged by the government to invest in tourism (Perthes 1992, 50). However, the major economic boost was when the shifting in policies toward more economic liberalization started when Bashar Al-Assad ruled after his father. Close relations between Turkey and Syria were established. A free trade agreement that allowed the flow of goods in both directions was signed between the two countries in addition to the establishment of joint projects. The trade volume between the two states has tripled in five years since 2001 (Bacık 2007). According to the deputy head of the Damascus chamber of commerce, Bahaa El-Din Hassan, the trade exchange volume amounted to 400 million USD in 2004, while after the agreements, it recorded two billion and 200 million USD in 2010. The amount of Turkish investments in Syria was increased particularly in Aleppo city where 40% of the foreign investment was from Turkey according to data from Aleppo Chamber of Commerce (ʿinab Baladi: "Alʿalaqat Aliqtishadīah Alsūrīah Alturkīah" 2017).

In the decade before the uprising, Aleppo city was experiencing remarkable economic growth. In 2006, Aleppo was chosen as the Arab world's capital of Islamic culture by the ISESCO of the Islamic Culture Foundation (Islamic Culture Foundation 2006). In the early 2000s, the establishment of the industrial city of Sheikh Najjar to the northeast of Aleppo started. In 2010, the area of industrial activities of Sheikh Najjar reached 4,500 hectares (Daher 2019). The rural migration further increased as jobs opportunities were found in the newly established manufacturing industries. However, migration to the city from the hinterland started decades before for various reasons. The newcomers could not afford to live in the modern neighborhoods and most of them found shelter in the old city fabric and its surrounding informal settlements. The informal settlements started to expand largely in the direction of the industrial city of Shiekh Najjar, the destination of many workers located in east Aleppo.

3.3.2.1.1. The Old Fabric

At the center of the old city sits the medieval citadel. To the west of the citadel is the Umayyad Grand Mosque and one of the largest souks in the old city (*Al-Madina*). The old neighborhoods are distributed around the citadel (refer to figure 3.4 on page 45). The residential areas, as Qudsi (cited in Graves 1999) describes them, are "clusters of dwellings with narrow, often dead-end alleyways, drew neighbors together in a feeling of human closeness and safety." The houses are centered around courtyards and are organized adjacent to each other and share supporting walls creating an organic pattern of form in residential areas (Vincent 2004).

As many from the middle and upper class of the original inhabitants were leaving the old city for modern quarters, the old city was left to decay, and it was more associated with lower standards of quality of life. Despite enlisting the old city as a world site heritage by UNESCO in 1986, proprietors and homeowners were reluctant to invest in property maintenance or sometimes were incapable financially to do so. One main reason was the fragmented property ownership in the old city (Vincent 2004, 20). A house could be owned by up to eleven members of an extended family (Gangler and Gaube 1991, 162). In 1992, the old city became the subject of a rehabilitation project by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit— - the German Technical

Cooperation (GTZ). Increased attention to the historic fabric shifted government policies and urban plans for the old city.

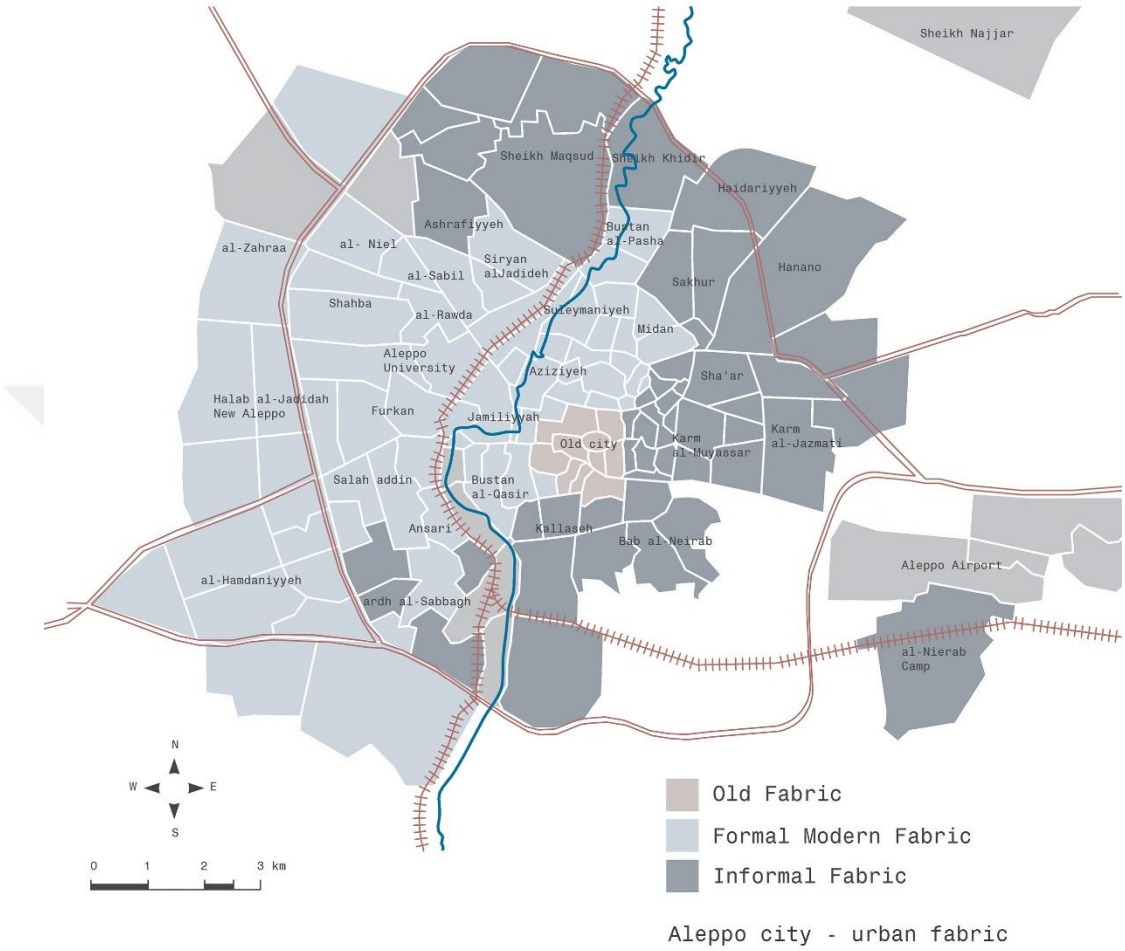

Figure 3.3. Aleppo City – Urban Fabric. 2010.

Source: The map was developed and edited based on the map: City Urban Composition. In: City Profile Aleppo. UN HABITAT, May 2014. <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-05/aleppo_city_profile.pdf> Page: 8. The map was developed and edited by Lina Shamy using google earth, AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. (July 2021).

However, residents living in the historic quarters distrusted any type of government interventions that had already demolished 20% of the old fabric for what it portrayed as for the purpose of development. Fund was initiated by GTZ with 100,000 USD for rehabilitation by providing micro-loans to the residents of the old city. The loans were dispersed through a lengthy bureaucratic process and for purposes that did not meet

the priorities of the low-income residents of the old city. Therefore, they had minimum impact on upgrading the historic fabric (Vincent 2004).

Gentrification of the old city of Aleppo was very limited unlike the gentrification process in the old city of Damascus. The original inhabitants of the old city who moved to modern quarters did later show the same interest or enthusiasm toward the old city like their Damascene peers. The enlisting of the old city as a world site heritage was attributed to local efforts of lobbying and campaigning to preserve the old city at the national and international level (Graves 1999). However, these efforts were mainly led by a small elite group of conservationists. Ali Qudsi for instance, who led the campaign for the preservation of the old city and later became an expert advisor to the UNESCO, was from a notable family in Aleppo and grew up in a courtyard house at the heart of the old city. He had his university degree in Architecture from the United States in the early 1960s. He practiced architecture in Seattle until 1975, then returned to Aleppo and with a small group of architects to led the efforts to preserve the old city through the creative use of an international platform, the UNESCO (Vincent 2004, 62).

Gentrification only occurred in few sections within the old city that were most accessible to tourists, especially the historical Al-Jdaydeh quarter wherein the majority of its residents were Christians. Mainly because this quarter used to accommodate the wealthier families in the city. The courtyard houses were bigger in size than the houses in the other historical quarters which made them more suitable to be transformed into restaurants or hotels. Many of its wealthy Christian families moved into the adjacent modern quarters like Al-Aziziyyeh. The other neighborhood, which shares similar advantages with Al-Jdaydah, is Bab Qinnisrin quarter. It contains several spacious courtyard houses with rich aesthetic architectural features and whose residents were more conservative and resisted the transformation of the quarter into a tourist attraction (Masri 2021).

3.3.2.1.2. Modern Formal Fabric:

Planned neighborhoods in accordance with modern design are concentrated to the west of the old city. These neighborhoods were built on a grid network of intersected wide streets and high-rise apartment buildings following the European style during the

twentieth century. The Aleppien families who first left the old cities resided in the first newly established modern neighborhoods like Al-Jamiliyyeh, and Al-Sabil. The Christians and Armenians were concentrated in quarters like Al-Siryane, Al-Suleymaniyyeh, Al-Aziziyeh, and Al-Midan. Kurdish inhabitants of the formal settlements were concentrated in the north in Al-Ashrafiyyeh. As the population grew more during the second half of the twentieth century, the planned quarters expanded more to the west forming the quarters of Al-Zahraa and Al-Shahaba which accommodated the upper class. This was in addition to the New Aleppo neighborhood (*Haleb Al-Jadidah*) which accommodated the middle and upper classes.

In 1960, the Engineering faculty in Aleppo became independent from Damascus and a new university was established in Aleppo. Several other faculties were added and the university expanded quickly in the succeeding years. The neighborhoods to the south of the university, like Sayf Al-Dawlah and Salah Addin, were considered more modest in comparison to other quarters in the west of the city. The rental average for an apartment in these quarters was considered more affordable for students and government employees who mostly came from other cities and rural areas. In 1979, the Al-Assad Military Academy was established by Hafez Al-Assad. It was located seven kilometers to the southwest of Aleppo. The establishment of the Al-Hamdaniyyah neighborhood, one of the largest in Aleppo, was associated with the military academy. It was mainly established to accommodate military and police staff. It was considered a middle class neighborhood.

3.3.2.1.3. Informal Fabric

Informal constructions were concentrated around the eastern perimeter of the old city. The accelerated migrations from both rural hinterlands and nearby smaller cities were increased during the 1960s. The policies of the ruling Ba'ath party encouraged this migration by prioritizing affiliations of applicants based on their rural origin to fill in positions in state institutions. However, migration also happened for many other reasons. The series of droughts that hit the agriculture-dependent countryside forced waves of migration of the poor and those who sought jobs in the urban areas. With the growth of the city as an important industrial and economic center, many workers whose labor was paid cheaply flowed to the city and could only find residences in

informal districts. Informal constructions expanded to the east in the direction of the industrial city of Shiekh Najjar which attracted hundreds of thousands of workers. By 2010, 50 percent of the populations of cities like Damascus and Aleppo lived in informal areas (State of Syrian Cities 2017).

The migrants' social and geographical backgrounds varied and were reflected in their geographical distribution in the informal neighborhoods. The Kurdish migrants were concentrated in the slums of Shiekh Maqsoud near Al-Ashrafiyyeh. The migrants from the southern countryside were concentrated in the south informal settlements of Al-Sukkari, Al-Salhin, Shiekh Saeed, and Ferdous. The eastern countryside residents were concentrated in the eastern slums of Karm Al-Muyassar, Al-Sha'ar, Tariq Al-Bab, and Al-Sakhur. Migrants from the northern countryside of Aleppo resided at the quarters of Al-Haidaryyeh, Al-Hilluk, and Shiekh Khudr. The geographical background of the migrants carried with it the social structure and the social distinctiveness of these geographies, i.e., being Turkman, Kurd, Mardil, or belonging to Arab tribes were also reflected in their geographical distribution (Sham News Network: "Harb Alhawāmish Alhalabīah" 2016).

The social cohesiveness of rural migrants who identify with a strong clan structure is differentiated from rural migrants whose association is limited to their geographical origins. For instance, rural migrants especially those who lived in the city for decades and settled in planned formal quarters did not have much association with their place of origin. They maintained loose ties or no ties at all with their original geographical districts and sought to urbanize and integrate into the city fabric. They defined themselves as Aleppiens regardless of their origins, even if the original locals of Aleppo did not address themselves as such.

Depending on their respective tribe, their preferences for the strong tribal structure have been maintained for their social organization. Usually, they are concentrated in particular quarters and maintained their social solidarity and allegiance to their tribal leaders. However, their urban life and the detachment of their economic reliance from their tribe structure have affected many members of their tribe. At contentious times, this has resulted in divisions and different alignments within the same tribes in the city (Hussien 2020).

In the last few decades, the streets of Aleppo have witnessed episodes of violent retaliations between two opposing influential clans who suddenly became powerful and had the upper hand in the city. The *Al -Berry* (آل بري) family who descended from *Al-Jis* (الچيس) clan. They resided in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, mainly in the Al-Neirab neighborhood which was considered as their central area for their drug and cigarette smuggling business. They were armed and one of the most influential clans in the city. The other family is the Hamide family. They were from the Al-Neirab neighborhood. Omar Hamide who was the previous head of the state security branch in Aleppo from the late 1970s until the early 1990s is from this family. With the head of the military branch of Aleppo, General Mustafa Altajer, they formed the duo of terror in the city over three decades, especially in the 1980s (Zaman Alwasl: "Omar Himidah Nihayat Qatil Athar Alroʿb Fi Halab ʿishrin ʿama" 2021).

Assad regime sought to reinforce the weight of certain families of each clan by facilitating their illegal activities, and their businesses in general or by offering them powerful positions. The *al-Berri* family used to inherit a seat in the Parliament. Their famous leader Sha'ban Berry who died in the 1970s had a close relationship with Hafez Assad.

In order to understand the power dynamics that the regime has established in the city, I will review some incidents of revenge war that took place in the city between the Hamide and Al-Berry clans. The war started with a conflict between Omar Hamide's nephew, Abdulwahab Hamide, and Zeino Berry, son of Sha'ban and the brother of Mahmoud Berry, the leader of Al-Berry and the Jis (الچيس) clan in Aleppo. The conflict ended with the murder of Omar Hamide's nephew. It was circulated that he was at a medical clinic when members of the Berry clan entered. open fired and killed him along with one female nurse who was working there (Atli 2021; Alrifaʿi 2013; ʿaks Alsir "Dahaya ʿala Mathbah Althaʾr" 2008; Zaman Alwasl: "Omar Himidah Nihayat Qatil Athar Alroʿb Fi Halab ʿishrin ʿama" 2021). The police did not interfere.

The Hamide family controlled the drug dealing lines from Lebanon and were the only obstacle in front of the Al-Berry clan's influence. Omar Hamide, who previously had a good relationship with Hafez Assad, at that time was out of service. Patiently, he waited for four years, slowly planning the revenge that targeted the head of the rival

clan, Mahmoud Berry. The assassination occurred just days after Mahmoud Berry had left the parliament and his immunity had expired. He was assassinated by ambushing his car. The death of the head of the clan drove other members to seek immediate retaliation by targeting any members of the Hamide family. Most of these armed conflicts took place in the Al-Neirab neighborhood in full view of the police department in the neighborhood which did not interfere at all. Tens were killed from both families. Even members of these families who were not armed and did not directly participate in the shootings were killed. Among the victims were civilians. The bus incident was one of the infamous incidents in that armed feud, when one of the Berry members opened fire in a public transportation bus because he saw one of Al-Hamide among the passengers. Many of the other passengers were killed. Al-Berry sought to kill Omar Hamide who kept himself protected. Al-Berry killed many of the members of the Hamide family. They even tried to assassinate Omar Hamide by spotting his presence in one of the funerals but they failed. Until he was spotted by Al-Berry while he was visiting one of his family members who was injured and being treated in Al-Tib Al-Araby hospital, a private hospital in Al-Neil Street in Western Aleppo. It was then when Al-Berry opened fired at the hospital killing several people including several hospital staff. Omar Hamide survived that incident and the situation accelerated until Bashar Al-Assad himself intervened and threatened Al-Berry that if this war continued, they would lose their seat in the parliament. No measures were taken against Omar Hamide even after he killed the second leader of Al-Berry a few days after he finished his service in the parliament. Assad regime sponsored reconciliations between the two families, prisoners from both families got released as a goodwill gesture, even if some of them had multiple death sentences (Atli 2021; Alrifaʿi 2013; ʿaks Alsir "Dahaya ʿala Mathbah Althaʾr" 2008; Zaman Alwasl: "Omar Himidah Nihayat Qatil Athar Alroʿb Fi Halab ʿishrin ʿama" 2021).

The regime allowed the use of violence by both parties as long as their affiliations were guaranteed for the regime. It is worthy to be mentioned that the Al-Berry family participated largely in suppressing the protesters at the beginning of the 2011 uprising. Further, wealthier families of these clans resided in the modern quarters in the west of Aleppo. Their fortune was mainly derived from illegal activities depending on their associations with the regime. The clash of clans in the city that was tolerated by the Assad regime has reinforced the mistrust and the gap between the city locals and

dwellers. The city locals, the Aleppiens, considered themselves superior and viewed the residents whose geographical origins are from the outside of the city as inferiors and kept them away from their inner groups.

3.3.2.2. Homs

Homs is the third-largest city in Syria, after Aleppo and Damascus. Mixed groups of populations co-existed within the city fabric. Before the uprising, the population of Homs was approximately 800,000. The majority were Sunni Arabs. Several minorities lived in the city and grouped together in certain quarters such as the Shia, the Alawites, and Christians. The inhabitants of the city can also be divided according to their geographical origins. There are the original city locals and the city dwellers who settled in the city in the second half of the twentieth century.

There is an oil refinery east south of the city in addition to several industries. Nearly 198 large industries were located in Homs, mainly on the city's western ring road and its surrounding buffer areas. The city occupied a central location in the country's transportation network linking all major urban centers and providing the country with strategic industrial products. In addition to the government facilities concentrated in the city, the main economic drivers in the Homs Governorate were industry, agriculture, and transportation as well as major world heritage destinations for international tourism such as Palmyra. Hence, the city attracted a significantly high proportion of rural migrants in the last few decades before the uprising. These migrants mainly settled in their own informal quarters which were mainly concentrated at the east of the city. Before 2011, the informal housing areas occupied 59% of the city (UN-Habitat 2014).

Many city dwellers also came with their tribal associations. Many Bedouins who used to live in isolated desert areas settled in Homs city. And some of these affiliations continued to organize the social structure for many families in Homs. The old fabric in Homs at the center of the city is still inhabited by its original locals, the planned modern neighborhoods represented the natural expansion of the city and were mainly inhabited by the city's original locals (UN-Habitat Syria Office 2014). The old city center went through gentrification projects in 1985. The most antique part of the old

city was demolished and replaced by a modern city centre with high-rise commercial and administrative buildings. The remaining fabric was reconstructed with multi-story apartment buildings with commercial shops on the ground floors. The old city area is both residential and commercial. The Old City was a hub for most of the city's private sectors' commercial activities. Formal and informal city expansions did not develop new markets and were fully dependent on these central neighborhoods. Seventy percent of Homs' specialized professionals and business class were working in the old city and its markets (UN-Habitat Syria Office 2014).

The Alawites migrants in Homs constitute a noticeable presence. They are grouped in particular quarters in the informal fabric like Al-Zahraa, and they also reside in the formal fabric quarters of Al-Nuzha and Ekrimah (ʿinab Baladi: "Thalathat Ahyaʾ Toʿad Khazzan Moqatili Alasad Fi Homs" 2016; Alraziq 2012). Most of them worked at different bureaucratic agencies. Large numbers of them occupied positions in security apparatuses and in the army. According to Surah (2017), Assad regime sought to settle the Alawite minority in the city of Homs to initiate a breakthrough in the social structure of the city and hence break the city resistance (Surah 2017).

However, this attempt had, on the contrary, the opposite effect on the city locals' identity. The divisions in the city were more based on sectarian grounds than on the urban-rural binary. Particularly, the enmity and suspicion by the city locals were directed toward the Alawites minority who maintained the upper hand in the city being of the president's sect.

Sectarian tension was illustrated in many incidents in the city since the 1960s. Revenge raids on the Alzahraa neighborhood by the Bedouins were repeated many times. They sought revenge whenever someone from Al-Zahra killed someone from their community. In 2006, three men slew a member of a political security branch from the Alawite minority inside a mosque in Bab Dreib neighborhood and then fled to Saudi Arabia (Bishara 2013, 120-22).

In 2007, the government announced a new urban project for Homs city called 'Homs dream'. The project caused resentment among the population of the city particularly the poor who resides in Baba Amr and Jobar. The project suggested dramatic

gentrification for many quarters of the city. Many buildings would have been erased and replaced with skyscrapers, multi-story modern designs, and shopping malls (MsSyriano 2010). The city locals felt directly threatened by this project as it suggested the transformation of their private properties into a public one and, in return, they would receive compensation with no housing solutions (MsSyriano, "Mashroʿ Holm Homs," 2:00; Zaman Alwasl: "Jannat Homs" 2008).

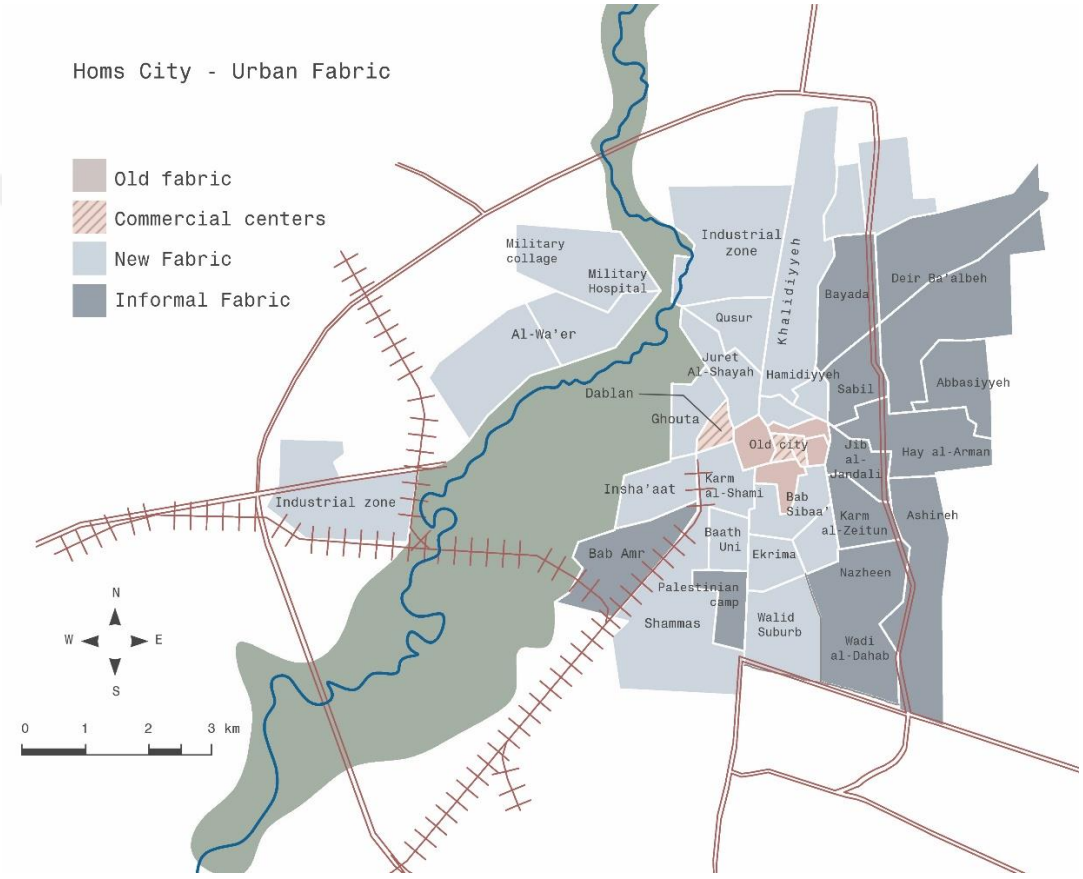

Figure 3.4. Homs City – Urban Fabric. 2010

Source: The map was developed and edited based on the map: City Urban Composition. In: City Profile Homs. UN HABITAT, May 2014. <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/Homs%20RCP.pdf > Page: 7. The map was developed and edited by Lina Shamy using google earth, AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. (July 2021).

3.3.2.3. Hama

Hama is the fourth largest city in Syria. It is located on the banks of the Al-Asi river which split the city naturally in two halves. These halves are known as *Al-Hadhir* in the north and *Al-souk* in the south. The aerial footage of the city show some old fabric in the middle of the city in an organic shape surrounded by planned modern fabric. The modern fabric is considered the natural expansion of the city. The city is inhabited by the locals mainly. Informal settlements can hardly be spotted on the map. They were limited to very few small informal quarters as such in Mashaa Al Arbi'in and Wadi al-Joz which both have been recently demolished by the Assad regime (ʿinab Baladi: "Mohafiz Hamah Yaʾmor Bitadmir Momtalakat Suriyyin bihojjat Anha ʿashwaʾīah" 2020).

Before 2011, Hama represented a commercial center for agricultural and animal products. It is known for its markets like *souk Al-hadhir*, *souk al-Ghanam* (gout market), and *souk al-Hal*. It also is an administrative center where many government facilities are concentrated. Public sector employees who came mainly from the countryside regularly commute to the city for work, but they remained in their villages and towns and did not reside in the city. The city's social fabric did not welcome any newcomers and the rural-urban division emphasized the superiority of the city locals. The local social fabric remained associated with its original urban fabric. The old quarters and the new quarters were dominated by the city's original inhabitants. The majority of the city locals are Sunni Arabs. A small proportion of the Christian minority inhabited the city historically and are grouped together at the quarter of *Al-Madina.*

The city is known for its enmity against the Ba'ath party since it had claimed power. Most of the Hama old fabric was destroyed when Hafez al-Assad deployed the military to crush widespread protests in the city in 1982. Hama city was sealed off for three weeks as artillery pounded opposition strongholds. Troops backed by tanks invaded the city. Destroying whole neighborhoods, including much of the old city, and leaving many thousands dead (BBC News 2012).

Hama, unlike other cities, did not receive waves of migrants. Therefore, its social fabric remained intact until the 1980s. The massacre ordered by Hafez Assad killed thousands in the city, and whole families were forced to flee the country, ripping Hama's social fabric. The material loss would remain alive in the memories of the city inhabitants providing a stark reason for the city to take an opposition stance at the onset of the 2011 uprising.

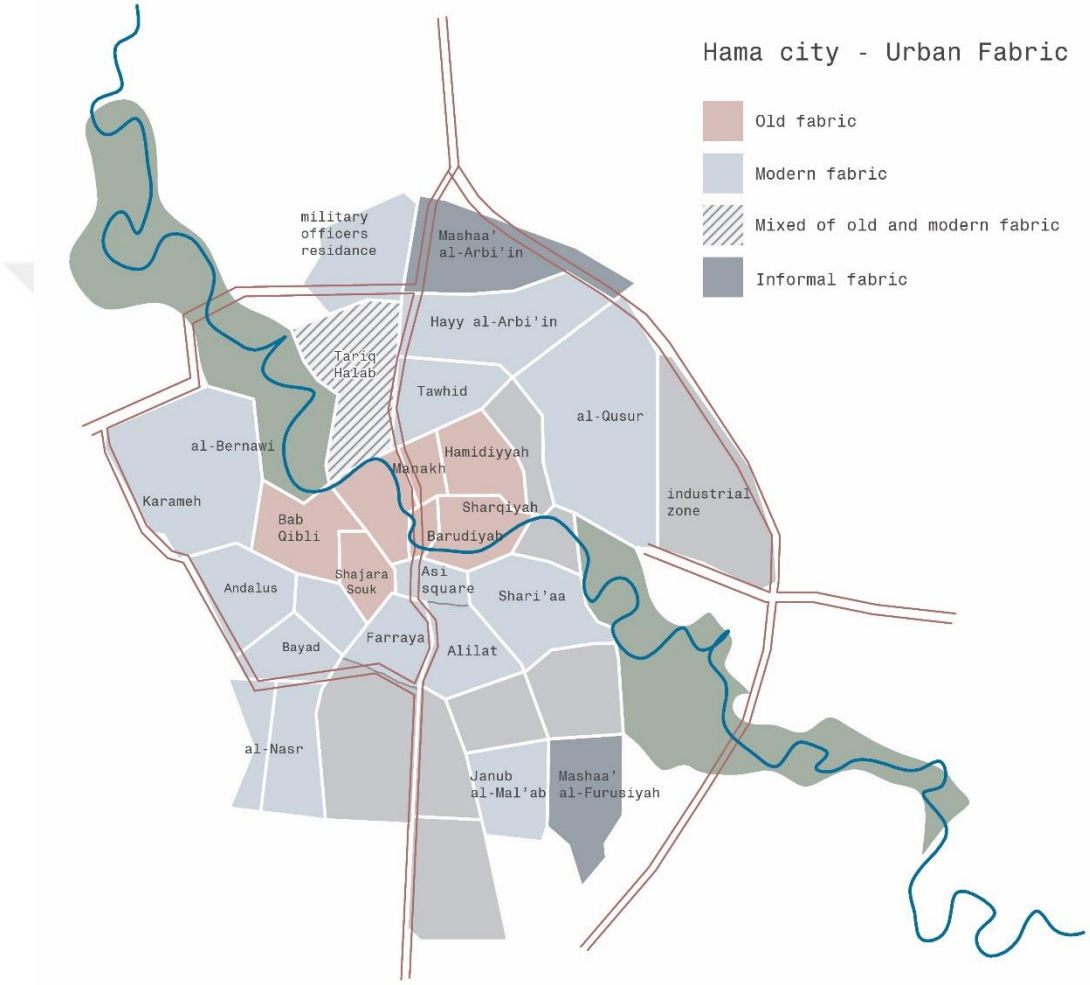

Figure 3.5. Hama City – Urban Fabric. 2010

Source: The map was developed and edited based on the map: Assessed zone of Hama city. In: Urban Area Humanitarian Profile: Hama. REACH, October 2014. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/REACH_SYR_Hama_UrbanProfile_FoodHealthWater_Oct2014.pdf > Page: 3. The map was developed and edited by Lina Shamy using google earth, AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. (July 2021).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYZING MOBILIZATION IN CITIES

The uprising in Syria is viewed as sectarian—the movement of the majority Sunni against the Alawite minority. This view focuses on some sectarian aspects of the contention but overlooks the logics of action among the Sunni majority varied in the Syrian cities, and many Sunni regions did not participate at all in the uprising. The uprising may also be interpreted as the movement of the marginalized. But the map of the uprising (*hirak*) shows how many marginalized settings in cities took different trajectories. While disadvantaged economic conditions may lead to protest, but they can never be considered as a sufficient explanatory factor.

I will analyze the action (*Hirak*) at the onset of the uprisings in cities by looking at similar fabrics among these cities. By contrasting the different mobilization outcomes from these similar fabrics, we will be able to realize how a place matters, and to what extent it matters. This is aimed to realize the limitation of the influence of a place in favor of other related spatialities. It also intends to describe how the different social networks are distributed, expanded, and how these affected the logics of action. My analysis hence considers socio-spatial positionality and how the surrounding places and the surrounding networks or forces affect the logics of action of a certain urban space.

Under the police state that maintained a strong security grip by deploying a huge network of informants-*Mukhabarat*- the only opportunity for assembly was Friday prayers, which is the only 'time' when it is possible to find large masses of people in the same place and at the same time (Fadel 2019, 124). Initiating protests from mosques was out of purely functional reasons in the first place. Multiple settings have witnessed attempts to mobilize, but not all of them embraced a sustained continuous action (*hirak*). It is axiomatic in an authoritarian context that for mobilization to evolve into *hirak,* it must have its strong grassroots.

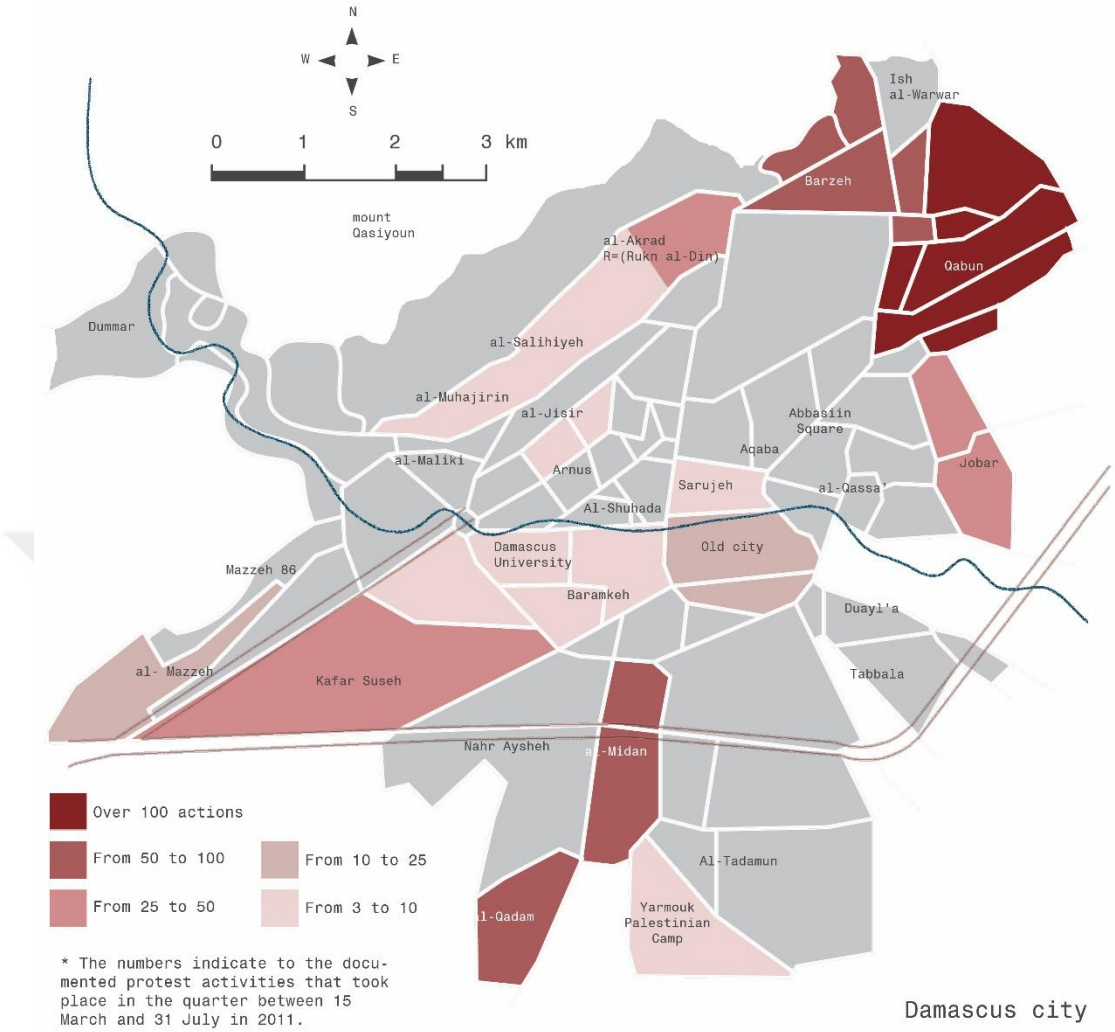

Figure 4.1. Damascus City – Map of Demonstrations From 15 March to 31 July 2011

Source: Damascus city – Map of demonstrations from 15 March to 31 July 2011. [computer map]. Mashroʿ Tarikh Althwarah Alsūrīah: Aldhakirah Alsūrīah – Ahdath Madinat Dimashq Databases. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (unpublished yet). Created by Lina Shamy using [AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop software], 2021.

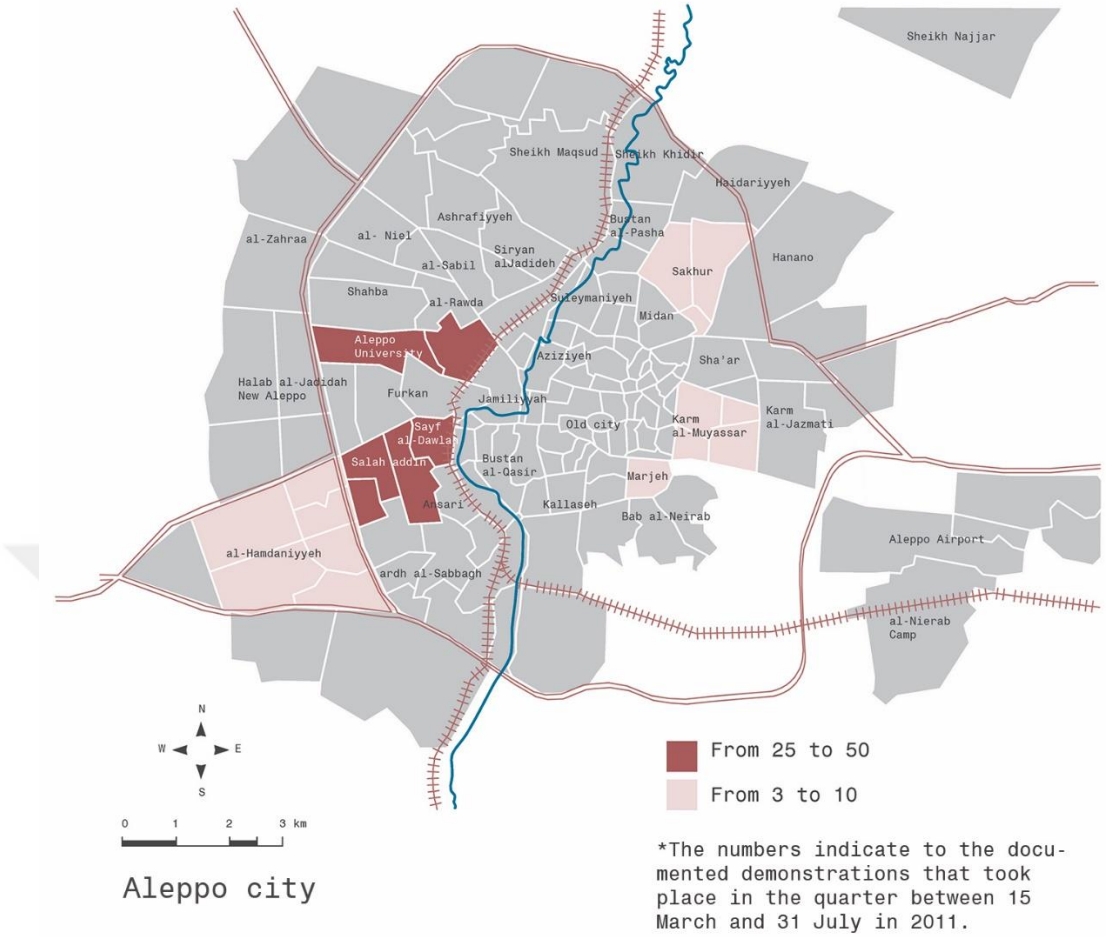

Figure 4.2. Aleppo City – Map of Demonstrations From 15 March to 31 July 2011

Source: Aleppo city – Map of demonstrations from 15 March to 31 July 2011. [computer map]. Mashroʿ Tarikh Althwarah Alsūrīah: Aldhakirah Alsūrīah – Ahdath Madinat Halab Databases. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (unpublished yet). Created by Lina Shamy using [AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop software], 2021.

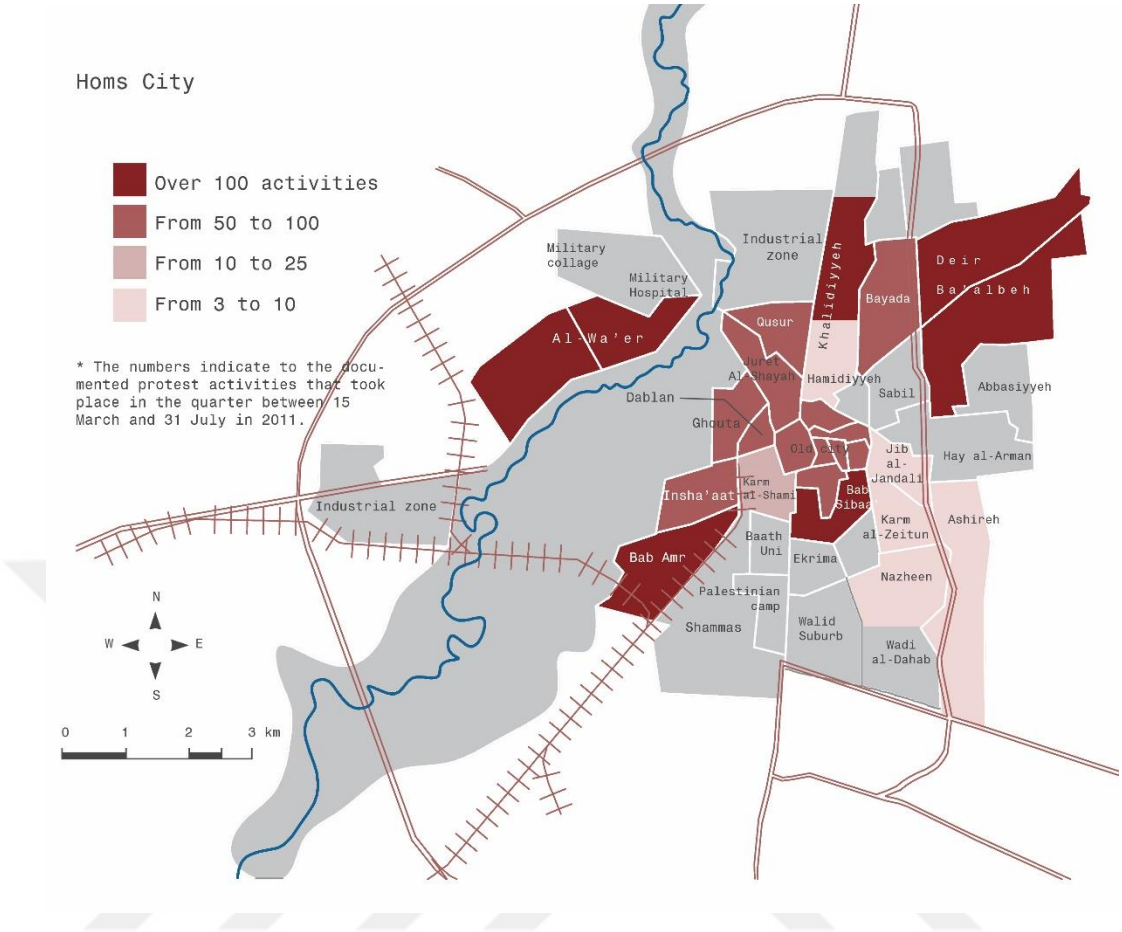

Figure 4.3. Homs City – Map of Demonstrations From 15 March to 31 July 2011

Source: Homs city – Map of demonstrations from 15 March to 31 July 2011 [computer map]. Mashroʿ Tarikh Althwarah Alsūrīah: Aldhakirah Alsūrīah – Ahdath Madinat Homs Databases. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (unpublished yet). Created by Lina Shamy using [AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop software], 2021.

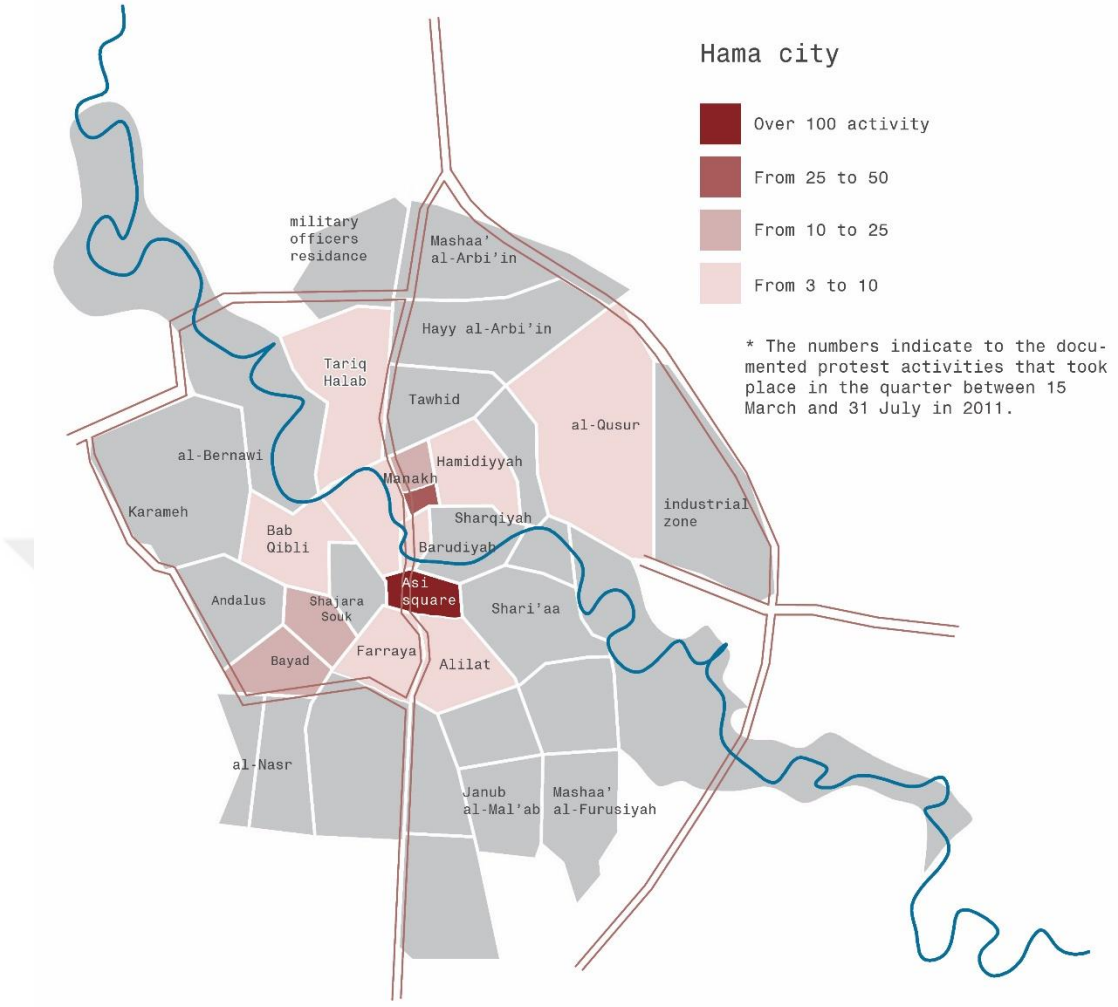

Figure 4.4. Hama city – Map of Demonstrations From 15 March to 31 July 2011

Source: Hama city – Map of demonstrations from 15 March to 31 July 2011. [computer map]. Mashroʿ Tarikh Althwarah Alsūrīah: Aldhakirah Alsūrīah – Ahdath Madinat Hama Databases. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. (unpublished yet). Created by Lina Shamy using [AutoCAD, Adobe illustrator and Adobe Photoshop software], 2021.

4.1. Mobilization in the Old City Fabric

The relation between the contentious action *hirak* at the beginning of the uprising and the old city fabric took different patterns in the respective cities. The old neighborhoods in Aleppo have witnessed few attempts to mobilize by activists who initiated several singular actions that did not evolve into a sustained action *hirak* and could not gain the grassroots support needed for confronting the state's suppression of protests. Such as the attempt to protest at the Grand Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo in May 2011 in solidarity with Daraa. The protest was mobilized by few activists. It did not succeed and was suppressed inside the mosque square even before it spread to the street (freedomaleppo 2011, Shamy 2021).

Varied interactions took place in the old fabric of the city of Damascus. The interaction of the fabric inside the walls differed from the old fabric outside the walls. The old city inside the walls has witnessed the first demonstration in Syria on March 15, 2011, at the historic Al-Hariqah market. Few other attempts to mobilize demonstrations at the Syrian streets took place after Friday prayer at the Grand Umayyad Mosque. (Bishara 2013). These attempts were organized and initiated by activists who were of mixed groups of locals and dwellers. Choosing the historic old city and the Grand Omayyad Mosque as probable protest spots was mainly for their iconic meaning. Activists sought to prove the existence of mobilization in the old historic city of Damascus for its ideal meaning and exposure that would mobilize others and halt the regime, but lacking the grassroots, these attempts could not develop into a *hirak*.

Al-Midan neighborhood was a hub for almost daily demonstrations since the beginning of the uprising. Within 122 days, 85 acts of protest were documented between April and August. These actions included demonstrations, raising banners, graffiti, distributing leaflets, and public statements (ACRPS: "Mashroʿ Tarikh Althwarah Alsūrīah: Aldhakirah Alsūrīah – Ahdath Madinat Dimashq"). In the beginning, Al-Hasan Mosque was the center of the mobilization. It is located in the wider grid streets of al-Midan near the old fabric. Later, security forces reinforced their deployment in the area surrounding al-Hasan Mosque, forcing protesters to limit their actions into the neighborhood's interior streets wherein narrower alleyways enabled

escape from security forces and facilitated hiding (Fadel 2019, 124). Al-Midan is considered a popular neighborhood, mainly inhabited by locals.

Another old neighborhood that embraced a movement *hirak* is Rukn al-Din or *al-Akrad* neighborhood. The hirak in this neighborhood may be understood within the broader Kurd movement which is not quite true. Hirak in al-Akrad was part of the uprising and it happened within the national frame that the uprising produced, unlike other urban spaces with a Kurdish majority that lined up with other transnational parties with separatism ideology. Why al-Kurd took this direction? Historically, Al-Kurd is a neighborhood with a Kurdish majority. The nature of their solidarity is often taken for granted and analyzed through an understanding of "ethnic identity." However, this labeling of 'ethnic clusters' is problematic as Fuccaro (2003) argued. The inhabitants are not all newcomers. The quarter does accommodate locals and dwellers. The locals, however, are considered old damascenes. For centuries, space and community in the Kurdish quarter emphasized the separation between urban and rural. Al-Akrad shared with other Damascene neighborhoods the patron-client structure which for centuries have supported the political and social-economic organization of the city (Fuccaro 2003, 213-4).

Historically, Al-Akrad was drawn increasingly into the orbit of Ottoman and Arab Damascus. Many of its inhabitants were Arabized. Notables in the quarter resorted to their tribal bonds mostly when dealing with their clientele in al-Akrad, while their lifestyle elsewhere was assimilated to that of the urban elite. Recent immigrants, once they arrived in Damascus, newcomers from small tribal units or with no tribal background would come under the protection of the most powerful Kurdish notable. The urban-rural relations strengthened the position of the quarter as an intermediary between the city and the countryside during the colonial era (Fuccaro 2003, 213-4, 224). Probably similar dynamics continued. The notables in the succeeding decades were more associated with religious and government positions. In this sense, al-Akrad remained very much part of the 'localist' sphere of the city which has always played a prominent role in urban politics thanks to its links to rural districts inhabited by Kurds and its mediating role.

During the 2011 uprising, protestors in Al-Kurd were subjected to some pressure from the notables who tried to calm the situation by mediating meetings between protesters and regime representatives. Connections were also established between veteran Kurdish activists from al-Qamishli, a Kurdish district in northern Syria, and members of large families in Al-Akrad whose contributions to the mobilization were very prominent (Fadel 2019, 129-30).

Most of the old city fabric in Homs has witnessed continuous action during the peaceful uprising, except for the quarter of the Christian majority, *Al-Hamidia*. The old city fabric of Homs was not recognized as having the same historical value as that of Aleppo or parts of the old fabric in Damascus. The locals who inhabited the old city were less bothered with their homes becoming a world heritage site and the effects of such recognition on their future. However, their future was uncertain due to different reasons. The 2007 *Homs Dream* project that was introduced by the governor of Homs, Iyad Ghazzal, provoked resentment among the poor population of the city who were mainly concentrated in the old fabric in addition to other areas. The project suggests gentrification in many poor neighborhoods including the old city by removing existing buildings and replacing them with skyscrapers, multi-story modern buildings, restaurants, and shopping malls. Dubbed as the "Homs nightmare" by locals, the project suggests transferring property ownership from private to public and paying the necessary compensation (Zaman alwasl: "Jannat Homs", 2008). The locals would not be able to afford to live where their homes used to be, as these new buildings with Dubai-like urban architecture would be open for foreign investment and no alternative affordable housing areas in the city were available nor housing initiatives were suggested (MsSyriano 2010). Both the locals and inhabitants of the modern neighborhoods felt threatened by this project. The old city center was the only economic center for the city of Homs and it was a hub for most of the city's business and private sector activities. Seventy percent of Homs' specialized professionals and business class including retailers, business and souk owners, engineers, doctors, pharmacists, and private health professionals were working in the old city and its markets (UN-Habitat Syria Office 2014).

Mobilization in the old fabric of the city of Hama was part of a broader mobilization at the scale of the whole city. The participation of the entire city of Hama in the

uprising is remarkable. The homogeneity of the social fabric across the old and new urban fabric showed how the influence of the place was merely functional. The *hirak* started in the modern fabric at Al-Asi, one of the largest squares in the city. When Assad forces deployed heavy weapons and snipers, protesting in the wide exposed streets became impossible and the protesters withdrew into the narrow alleyways and mini squares in the dense old fabric that provided cover and a safer environment.

The fabric of the old cities reflected the social organization in prior times. The clustered residential areas with narrow alleyways, surrounded by walls, drew neighbors together with a sense of closeness and safety. In the past, the patron-client structure created several quarters that sought to distinguish itself from each other, sometimes by having their own walls and gates that used to be shut at night to control mobility in the neighborhood, like the old quarters of Damascus. Over time, as familial and professional relations developed in the quarter, it created solidarity among residents who have resided in the neighborhood for a long period of time. A sense of localism dominated the identity of the quarter's inhabitants creating a tendency for collective action (Khoury 1987, 289).

Recently, the social structure in the old neighborhoods has been dramatically changed in most of the old quarters. The gentrification of the old fabric inside the walls and the rural-urban divisions caused alienation between residents who were mostly renters of rural origins and the place. They did not belong to the old city.

However, some old quarters in Damascus maintained their local inhabitants across the decades after independence. Preserving this sense of belonging to the neighborhood and trust relations among its inhabitants. In neighborhoods like Al-Akrad in Damascus, the patron-client structure, though mitigated, has many factors leading to its continuation. Similarly in the Al-Midan neighborhood, the influences of religious notable figures remained a distinctive feature of these neighborhoods (Alrifaʿi 2018).

In the old quarters of Aleppo, though many locals remained, the migration of notable figures, as well as the middle and upper-class families, genuinely affected the trust and solidarity networks. The social stigma attached to the old city and the uncertainty about the future of the old fabric was caused by the announcement that the city would become

a world site heritage by UNESCO, the contradicting measures taken by the government in the late decades, and the many breakthroughs and demolitions in the old fabric. These have fragmented the social networks of the old city and broke its resistance.

When people reside within the same place over time, a stable base exists for repeated collaborations between these groups. Repeated encounters between different agents in a geographically stable environment increase the likelihood that their networks tighten into relatively coherent clusters or cliques (Coleman cited in Nicholls 2009). These stronger ties generate forms of social capital that enable diverse actors to mobilize and coordinate their resources in contentious political enterprises. When common grievances arise, the stored social capital draws on norms, trust, frames, and solidarities to quickly regroup (Nicholls 2009, 84). Such dynamics can be sensed in the case of the old city of Homs. Only with strong social networks that the dynamics of the place appeared to be important for mobilization. The narrow curved and forked alleyways and the dense urban fabric provided a perfect cover for protesters and mobilization against security forces.

The socio-spatial positionality of the different networks casts its effect on the logics of action. The Al-Midan and Al-Akrad quarters in Damascus, though old in the city, historically have been the quarters outside the city walls. For example, in the past, Al-Midan was not considered a Damascene urban neighborhood. Many peasants and Arab tribes from the south and some minorities have inhabited the neighborhood. However, it gained its importance through the Janissary forces who dominated Al-Midan and their descendants who became big wealthy families of merchants trading cattle and grains, continuing to do so in the mid-nineteenth century. Since it was different in terms of its heterogeneity and had more intermixed social components, as well as being a relatively poor quarter, with some wealthy families of Tujjar from Al-Midan continued to live in it, it usually was more tolerant with strangers and newcomers. In addition to its location being near Yarmouk quarter the Palestinian camp, Al-Qadam, and other informal quarters, it maintained its distinctiveness and localism. Many activists in the 2011 uprising invoked a Midani identity (Ismail 2013, 886).

The importance of the old city of Homs to its residents as the economic center of the city, and the association and relations between the old city and the networks outside its boundaries in the modern quarters, created a bond and solidarity between the locals in the old city and the locals and dwellers outside of it. An opposite case is the situation in Aleppo. The old city was abandoned by its original locals and it was marginalized. The economic dependence of the city locals in the modern neighborhoods was not concentrated in the old city markets, even though these markets continued to be owned by the people of Aleppo. Those big merchants' economic networks were extended beyond the old city markets as they were mostly wholesalers and depended on manufacturing in Shiekh Najjar and on outside trading (Masri 2021). Therefore, this fostered the urban-rural divisions as the old city became more contaminated with rural migrants who settled on the eastern peripheries.

4.2. Mobilization in the Modern Formal Fabric

Modern neighborhoods which were more open and exposed with wide streets, and where most of the administrative and government facilities were concentrated were not supportive of creating strong trust and solidarity social networks. Most of these neighborhoods were constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Families who resided there spent a shorter time span than their ancestors who lived in the old neighborhoods, which were usually mixed. People who resided in modern neighborhoods had different regional backgrounds mixed between city locals and dwellers. However, some of these settings embraced a contentious action *hirak* in some cities as we can see from the maps of the contention.

Hirak did not take place in the modern neighborhoods of Damascus city. However, many attempts to mobilize by activists of both locals and dwellers from these neighborhoods took place. These activists aimed to prove the participation of their neighborhoods in the revolution using tactics that lacked *public displays of numbers* (Tilly 2006), such as dying the water of the fountains at the rotaries with the color red, referring to the ongoing bloodshed or what was known as "flying demonstrations," *al-muzaharat al-tayyara*, which lasted only minutes (Fadel 2019, 124, 138). The activists

from modern neighborhoods later started to head to other settings in the city that embraced the *hirak*.

In Aleppo, the majority of the modern residential quarters took stances similar to that of the modern quarters in Damascus. Several similar attempts by activists from these neighborhoods to mobilize occurred but failed in mobilizing at these settings. However, it is important to recognize the social clustering of the locals in modern neighborhoods. The idea that the inhabitants of the modern neighborhoods lack the social clustering in trust and solidarity networks is misguiding. Locals in Damascus and Aleppo sought to distinguish themselves from the city dwellers. Even though they shared the space of the modern neighborhoods with the middle and upper class of the city dwellers, and the local business class had to do business with the rising regime-associated business class, these locals tended mostly to cluster together and maintained the sense of superiority over the city dwellers. This is evidently reflected in their social life as in marriages and personal relations forming closed communities.

In Aleppo's modern settings, the *hirak*, though it came late — after almost a month from the beginning of the uprising, appeared in Salah Addin and Sayf al-Dawleh quarters at the southwest, in addition to the hirak at Aleppo University.

Salah Addin and Sayf Al-Dawlah are considered average neighborhoods. Attributed to their location within the city, they represent a feasible destination for city dwellers, particularly government employees and middle-class students, who can afford to rent houses near the university. These neighborhoods are mainly inhabited by city dwellers, many came decades ago and established more relations in the city than in their original districts. Their long-term residency in the city did not change their status in relation to the city locals who viewed them as strangers and inferiors. They were unable to integrate fully, and at the same time, they maintained loose ties with their original districts in the peripheral cities and hinterlands. This marginalization by the city has framed their distinctiveness. Their resistance can be read as claiming their right to the city (Harvey 2012).

According to Nicholls (2009), Interactions between the different inhabitants of different statuses, geographical ties, and mobilities in the places within the city play a

crucial role in influencing the political identities and power relations of people. When diverse people interact in these settings, differences tend to be more openly negotiated and social boundaries eased. Others have pointed out that many of the spaces where interactions occur can also reinforce power relations. The different settings have their own distinct rules which reflect the power relations found in general society. When diverse people interact in these settings, the prevailing rules governing social interactions often reinforce hierarchies rather than break them down (Nicholls 2009, 81). Aleppo University, for example, was a place where many students of different statuses, geographical ties, and mobilities interacted in the university space. Outside the university, the rule of the urban-rural divide had more influence. Inside the university, different dynamics of power took place. The number of students who came from the surrounding cities and countryside dominates the university. The interactions in the university are more routinized in a way that eased the social boundaries. The power hierarchy that exists in the university is directly associated with the regime. The Ba'ath party dominates the university and public institutions in general. The divisions in the university among students took the shape of that hierarchy, i.e., being pro-regime or pro-revolution. In addition to this, the students were connected to different geographies where the uprising escalated and were not alienated from the news about the violence of the regime carried in these geographies.

Many of the modern neighborhoods in Homs participated in the *hirak*. The city integrated a mixed population of multi-religions and various geographic and social backgrounds. The division lines do not emphasize the rural-urban or tribal-urban divides, but rather emphasize a more sectarian distinction. The reason for that goes back to the Hafez Assad era when the regime allocated an Alawite minority creating Alawite enclaves within the city. With this, it sought to break the resistance of the city (Surah 2017, 288-9). The newcomers of the Alawites dominated the power hierarchy and maintained the upper hand in the city. The city inhabitants of both locals and dwellers maintained careful behavior in relation to the Alawites. Some incidents illustrated the resentment and how the Alawites viewed the Sunni inhabitants of the city as their enemies. Similarly, they were viewed by the Sunni population as intruders and outsiders. An example of an incidents that illustrates such dynamics: on June 10, 2000, when Hafez Assad died, many of the Alawites in the cities across Syria felt threatened as they tied their fate with the regime's fate which appeared for them

mysterious at that time. Many on that day started to leave Damascus and cities into their villages as a precautionary measure. That day, the Alawites in Homs from Al-Zahraa, Ekrima, and Al-Hadharah neighborhoods, which are Alawite enclaves, went out in what looked like a public display in the streets armed with light weapons, sticks, and chains (Bishara 2013 120-2).

The interaction between the mixed population reinforced power relations. When the revolution started, there was a violent backlash from the residents of the Alawite neighbourhoods who right from the beginning organized armed militias and participated with the regime forces in violent suppression of the protesters. This has contributed to the quick alignment of the Sunnis of Homs to resist the power used against them. This Sunni alignment included mixed Sunni population of various social, geographic and class background. The prevailing rules governing social interaction has reinforced social boundaries with the group in power. At the same time, they have eased the social boundaries between others who have enmity toward the group in power.

In addition to this, the consequences of the Homs Dream Project helped the different groups to go beyond their social boundaries. The residents of the modern neighborhoods shared the uncertainty with the residents of the old city and the informal settlements. They were threatened with this project too, as the modern neighborhoods depended economically on the city center of the old city.

For Hama city, as previously mentioned, the *hirak* took place in Hama at the scale of the whole city and the participation of the entire city of Hama in the uprising is remarkable. And represent a distinct case from the other cities. The cohesive social structure in addition to the framing and marginalization of the city by the regime for long decades emphasized a distinctive identity of Hama inhabitants.

The *hirak* in Hama became noticeable particularly in the second half of April 2011. The *Great Friday*, as it is called by the Syrian activists, on April 22, 2011, represented the defining moment when security forces killed a protester in Hama. The first successful attempt to reach the Asi square was on April 29, 2011. The hirak in Asi square grew in number by time until it reached the biggest in its number of protesters

during the peaceful phase of the uprising. A massive number of around a hundred thousand protesters would gather at the square for multiple weeks usually after Friday prayers, raising banners and flags, singing and chanting, and reciting statements. The American and the French ambassadors' trip, which passed through the Asi Square in July where these massive demonstrations were taking place, captured more global attention to what was going on in Hama.

Protesters in Hama used to begin their march from the mosques of the different quarters in Hama. They would cross several neighborhoods to reach Al-Asi square where demonstrations took place. Their ability to reach the square and pass through several neighborhoods amidst many dangerous security challenges would not have occurred if there was no strong grassroots support for the uprising through networks of trust and strong solidarity.

The regime was clearly disorganized about how to deal with the situation in Hama at the beginning of the uprising. When the excessive use of violence by the security forces was revealed, people became very angry and more of them went out to the streets. When the government forces refrained from displaying intense violent behavior, people would sense a security breakthrough and feel more comfortable to go out in more numbers.

Johnston (2011) argued that the relationship between repression and collective action may seem according to rational choice theory an inverse linear relationship, i.e., as long as repression increases, and the protests cost is high and in some cases included loss of lives, collective action decreases. However, empirical studies showed that many factors intervene and make such a rational choice complicated. As repression increases to moderate levels, both through police actions and through closing institutional access, protest increases, stimulated because state actions are seen as unjust and intrusive. However, if repression continues to increase, a threshold is reached at which point the costs become increasingly unsustainable by the public, the line of deterrence (Johnston 2011).

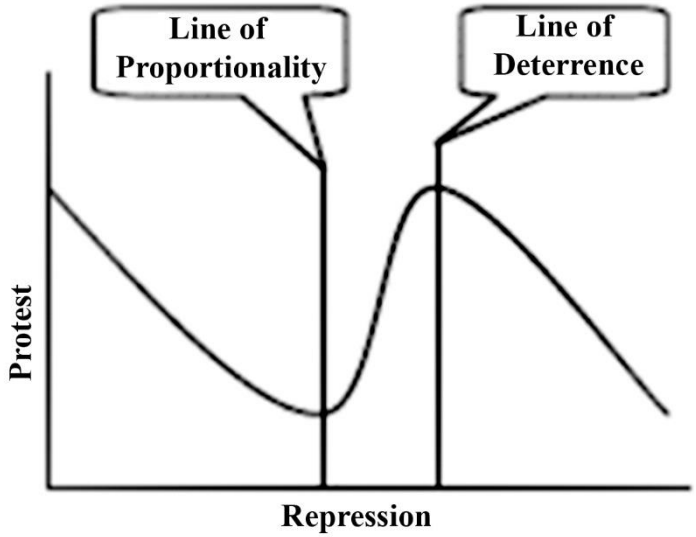

Figure 4.5. S Curve of One of the Models of Repression - Protest Relationship

Source: Adopted from Hank Johnston (2011) *States and Social Movements*: *Repressive states and protest* – figure 4.3 in the book.

In the first few months, regime forces suppressed the protests by police deployment in the streets, campaigns of mass arrest, use of tear gas, beating, and in many occasions police have used live bullets against protesters, but this did not stop the protesters of Hama. Later, the regime realized that it did not impose enough repression. By July 2011, regime forces left the city in preparation for storming it with tanks and heavy weapons. The city was stormed and bombed for several days. The *hirak* action withdrew to the inner fabric of the city in quarters like *Bab Qibli*. However, hesitation was sensed at the beginning of the uprising, which is why the city got relatively late in its involvement in the hirak at the onset of the revolution. The uprising in Syria started on March 18, 2011, and the first demonstration took place in Hama city on March 25, 2011. The memory of the violent massacre of 1982 was the main reason for this hesitation. Though Aleppo city may share with Hama similar history of massacres and violent suppression in the 1980s, the social dynamics differed as illustrated earlier.

4.3. Mobilization in Informal Fabric

The emergence of the protests in particular parts of a city might be read as a way of questioning an unequal division of resources. Accordingly, the places are viewed as producers of division and therefore create conflicting networks of economic classes attached to particular places. We assume by this that urban spaces with such characteristics of the dissent produced by unequal division of resources will seize the moment and participate in the uprising. Such a perspective may downplay other factors that explain the logics of action of the different informal urban settings in the early risings.

Informal settlements are places where inequality, marginalization, sense of social injustice, and dissent are highly sensed. However, when we look at the maps of contention in the informal settlements of cities, we find that different alignments took place. For instance, the positioning of these settings created different logic of action at the onset of the revolution. Ismail (2013) explains how when we look at the differentiated positioning of informal quarters of Damascus vis-à-vis the uprising, we find that occupying informal space does not necessarily translate into opposition to the regime, some informal settlements actually acted as mediating forces against revolutionary action. 'Ish al-Warwar, a shanty neighborhood in Damascus, stood by the regime while Barzeh an adjacent shanty neighborhood was the space for many demonstrations against the regime. Ish al-Warwar mainly constitutes the Alawite minority who were relocated in Damascus during the Ba'ath rule. They took shelter on occupied lands and farms of Barzeh. Barzeh inhabitants are Sunni locals, and they mainly viewed the dwellers in Ish al-Warwar as illegal. Clashes and assault incidents between the two neighborhoods were frequent. Similar to this is the positioning of al-Mazzeh in Damascus next to Mazzeh 86, which was established by troops affiliated to Rifaat al-Assad in the 1980s. It was created across the years and with it came growing tension and dissatisfaction among Mazzeh locals.

Protests can come with disadvantaged economic conditions, but that can never be considered a sufficient explanatory factor (Allegra et al. 2013). The social structure in the cities and in Syria, in general, is imbued with many divides: urban-rural divide, religion, sect, class, and geography, in addition to familial and clan divides. All of

these divides are in play altogether. The logic of action for an urban setting is not merely determined by just one of them.

When the informal quarter is an Alawite quarter, its alignment with the regime explains itself and it is axiomatic. Being members of the regime's sect that depended heavily on sectarian policies and have depended on its own sect that formed the ruling elite, the majority of the Alawites were convinced that any opposition to the regime represents an existential threat to all of them regardless of their class divisions.The Alawite enclaves are mostly concentrated in the cities of Damascus and Homs. Hama did not accommodate such enclaves. In Aleppo, there were some Alawites mainly of high-ranking officers associated with the military academy, but they did not form a large community nor an enclave in the city. In Aleppo, the contentious maps show how large areas in the informal settlements in the east remained inactive in relation to the hirak.

Tribal affiliations cast their shadow on the situation. Some clans in the eastern Aleppo are aligned with the regime and they are organized as militias known as *al-Shabihha.* Many members of the *Berry* clan are part of this militia. Since the area is inhabited by many different clans who were not necessarily benefiting from or protected by the regime, their participation in the uprising would lead to a direct clash of their clan with other pro-regime clans.

However, clans structures did not dominate everything in east Aleppo. Many clans also lost their cohesion in the dense city fabric and the lack of a binding economic structure. Many of the low-income groups have to rely on themselves to survive. The majority of the inhabitants of East Aleppo are poor. Some view the urban poor as essentially disruptive and imbued with sentiments of anomie, and consider the poor as a politically passive group. Bayat (2010) rejected this view, illustrating how a quiet encroachment strategy put the poor in an active position to change their circumstances. Referring to Islamic movements, he illustrated how uncertainty and utilitarianism characterize the relationship between the urban poor and middle-class movements. He argued how the poor cannot afford to be ideological (Bayat 2010, 33-56, 188-202). This may give part of the explanation for the passiveness of many informal quarters at the beginning of the uprising in the first months. However, these quarters at the same

time will turn, months later, into a hub for the revolutionaries after the uprising entered a second phase and become an armed revolution.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The atrocities of the prolonged war in Syria and the amount of mass destruction can be compared to that in World War II. The destruction in Aleppo reminded the world of Dresden in 1945 (BBC News 2016). The wiping out of homes and cities as a war technique and the mass expulsion of populations is an integral part of the strategies of war. Countless massacres, carpet bombings, and significant population displacement resulted in major changes in the urban and social fabric, as Bashar al-Assad has announced making Syria more 'homogeneous' (Syrian Arab Republic 2017).

A main feature of contemporary asymmetric wars, as highlighted by Sassen (2010), is that they often involve forced urbanization or de-urbanization. The main strategy is to control territory through terror and the expulsion of "the others" as defined by their political affiliation, or religious identity as in the case of Syria (Sassen 2010). This succeeded in eliminating and ending many manifestations of rebellion in many urban settings and rendered the repertoires used by the revolutionaries gradually obsolete. The geographies of the new tactics differed from those at the onset of the revolution. The involvement of armed tactics had to evolve in particular urban settings. Understanding the multiple spatialities and their role in determining the logics of action in an urban setting, and how they shaped contentious actions '*hirak*' is important to understand the developments that happened later. Also, considering the multiple reconfigurations of space is important to understand the proliferation of the new tactics adopted later in a particular urban setting more than another. The direct and deliberate targeting of civilians, residential areas, and vital facilities like hospitals and education centers using artillery shelling and missiles at first, then aircraft later, were meant to instill shock and awe. Killing people in a city is a different type of horror from killing people – far more people – in wider open areas. As Sassen (2010) argues it is because of the context of the city and the fact of the witnesses. It was in the Second World War when the city entered the war theatre, not as a site but as a technology for instilling

fear. Assad belongs to this history of brutality. Bashar al-Assad, in order to secure himself in power, used the "Hama rules" strategy which Hafez Assad began (Friedman 2001). "Hama rules" means no rules at all, even if it takes levelling whole cities to the ground and replacing the whole population.

When we view the maps of destruction today, we find that it does not quite correspond with the maps of 'hirak' at the onset of the revolution. We read the levelling of the many cities and targeted urban areas as a collective punishment to revolting populations in these areas, while it is more precise to say that these were the areas where resistance lasted longer. It is mainly because the geographies of the contention shifted as the tactics have been shaped mainly by the violence of the regime. Months later after the outbreak of the uprising, many urban settings witnessed an escalation of resistance while many others surrendered. Looking at the different spatialities across time helps understand the complex dynamics. For instance, some urban settings provided a better physical environment for armed resistance than others. Networks and the availability of supply lines for weapons and basic needs played a crucial role in the duration of resistance in some settings. The analysis of the different urban spaces at the onset of the revolution is crucial to understand what happened in the cities later.

"Cleansing" based on political affiliation that had been going on during the past ten years has killed the resistance of some cities. Some cities were vulnerable and had narrow defensive potentials even before 2011. The very urban design served as a technology of separation and ghettoizing and facilitated targeting some areas while neighboring ones remained untouched. As Sassen (2010) argues, cities have long had the capacity to bring together people of different classes, ethnicities, and religions through commerce, politics, and civic practices. But besides the sophisticated technology of war, the very architecture has been weaponized by over-securitization for many decades to weaken this cultural and social fabric of diversity in the city. And therefore, cities as diverse as Damascus and Aleppo became an assemblage of separate urban ghettoes, destroying their civic character and thereby the potential of collective massive resistance to armed strategies of the regime.

Through the chapters of this thesis, I examined the logics of action of the diverse urban settings. Urban spaces do not simply frame actions. They are constantly being re-

created by social forces. And this is why viewing space as *raum* is crucial as illustrated in the introduction. The concept of Raum includes history and memory. It takes time and events for a space to gain its particularity. The historical analysis was crucial to illustrate the dynamic nature of the space as field of force. The different urban settings provide different life experiences to its inhabitants. Each setting / lebenswelt or life-world forms the primary means of relating to the world of its inhabitants and shapes their way of acting, itself being shaped by previous interactions. Each setting has its different logic of action. from the analysis above we can see how the social action is contingent on these logics. The war has caused interruption in the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) of the human individuals. The military force not just only killed individual humans, erased buildings and displaced its residents, but also caused interruption in the social fabric and the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) that shapes the ideas, believes and the boundaries of the social action of its inhabitants.

The logics of action of the diverse urban settings at the onset of the revolution, as explained in the theoretical framework, were determined by a number of spatialities. The politics of place played a crucial role under a repressive government, as they facilitate advocacy and activism, or sometimes obstructed their potential. The politics of place matters to mobilization but only when other dynamics are in play together. The social networks interaction within the urban fabric determined the logic of action of each urban space. The maps of contention when intersected with the urban and social maps showed how different areas are in a complex relation to determine the logics of action of a certain urban setting. I focused on this study on three factors: place, networks, and socio-spatial positioning. Each of these factors was in turn shaped by many local conditions.

Local networks are important for mobilization. When people reside in the same place for a long time, they become able to generate trust bonds and loyalty. When grievances arise, they draw on this social capital to group and establish solidarity that facilitates mobilization (Alkan and Maksudyan 2020, 1-10). However, these networks no matter how strong do not necessarily facilitate mobilization. Many cases show how closed groups maintained such strong ties within the group but were unable to identify with others outside the group who participated in the uprisings. For example, we can look at the positioning in the uprising of many Christian minorities and the Alawite

communities who are mainly aligned with the regime. Even if these communities may be considered marginalized and have similar struggle motives with other communities who took part in the uprising, the lack of shared social capital between them plays a decisive role in their preferences during actions. Strong social networks matter, but also the openness of these networks is important to facilitate the identification of a group with parallel struggles. Localism dominated the politics of different settings. However, the uprising was occurring within the national frame.

The ability to cross the inner group ties to forge social capital with other groups was necessary to strengthen the momentum of the *hirak.* The social and power hierarchies established in the cities shaped the groups' identities on different levels. Cities in Syria went through dramatic changes during the twentieth century and the state formation era. The distinctive political role that used to be limited to these four cities in Syria corroded since the Ba'ath party assumed power in Syria. Cities became paralyzed politically. The rural migration to the cities in masses created particular dynamics and balances that limited the political potential despite the many rising grievances. Initiating trust bonds and social capital between different groups who share the city space was difficult when everyday interaction reinforced the power hierarchies that emphasized the divisions in the social fabric.

Cities in Syria are composed of different groups that are subject to diverse divisions. The city barely could develop an identity as it is a composition of multiple different groups who have different and sometimes conflicting belongings. The urban-rural divide has created a social hierarchy that considered the original locals of the city superior. When the urban settings of the city dwellers (those of rural origins) participated in the uprising, their Syrian (imagined) identity could not rise to a revolutionary benchmark as we saw in Aleppo for instance.

Similar social structures existed in different cities but had different effects on the social dynamics. For instance, both Homs and Aleppo's social fabric was penetrated by the tribal component. The locals of Homs established social capital with the Sunni tribes who inhabited the city. Both groups participated in the uprising from the beginning. The existence of an Alawite community in the city who aligned with the regime and participated largely in suppressing the protests facilitated the Sunni alignment

regardless of their geographical background. The prevailing rules governing social interaction reinforced social solidarity within the group in power (*the Alawites*). At the same time, it mitigated the boundaries between other groups who were subject to this ruling power dynamic.

In contrast, the tribal component in Aleppo-and the rural component in general-enforced separation between locals and dwellers and led to more isolation tendency by the original locals who formed close groups that share little or no social capital with others in the city. The social dynamics in Homs built the Homs identity against the Alawite minority. It took more of a sectarian character due to many practices by the Alawites that enjoyed immunity and protection by the regime. On the contrary, the Aleppo identity was built against the others who were not from the city, which contributed to building socially distant and closed groups.

Hama represents a model for a city that could maintain a shared social identity. Unlike the other cities studied here, Hama's social fabric was the least breached by new components. However, the tearing of its social fabric in the 1980s and the framing of the city by the regime and its marginalization policies for the city and its inhabitants strengthened the city's identity and reshaped it to be based against the regime. Successful mobilization in the different urban settings favored strong relations within the group and the ability to identify and establish bonds with others of different groups, i.e., the openness of the group and the ties with other networks was one of the factors important for mobilization.

The urban periphery in Syria that participated in the uprising heavily with its grassroots have known Syrian cities very well more than what city locals know about the periphery. Due to several factors, some groups in the city were able to maintain such openness, but many remained closed.

The intersection between the maps of contention and the city needs more exploration. For instance, the differentiated positioning in the Syrian uprising of the different Palestinian camps that were established within or close to these cities is an interesting topic. Moreover, to what extent can the theoretical framework presented in this

research explain the conditions of Syrian cities today after their status has been significantly transformed and, in some cases, completely.

Today, measures are taken by the Assad regime to fixate the new demographic change after massive emigration and dislocation, as well as the alteration of the built environment. New organizational plans for cities are being designed for reconstruction. Laws are being issued to deprive the displaced populations during the war of their properties and rights which are similar to the Israeli laws on the absentees' property (The Day After 2018). The settlement achieved by "cleansing" cannot build lasting peace. Issues of property rights and homes of IDPs and refugees and their ability to return to their country of origin need to be linked to discussions on reconstruction in Syria, as one of the important reports on mass forced displacement and its consequences under a "reconciliation agreement" concluded (The Day After 2019).

Continuing to consider the multiple configurations of space and their role in shaping and strengthening the city's resistance and the civic character of the city will also help understand the dynamics needed for rebuilding those cities on sound civic pillars and enable the reconciliation processes to be "cemented" in spatial conditions that are envisioning civil peace. Rebuilding cities should adopt qualities of multi-cultural city life. Public spaces have a positive role in enhancing civic engagement, conviviality, and the gradual development of a shared sense of belonging and conviviality (Ganji and Rishbeth 2020).

Rebuilding Syria in the future should protect the freedom of people through active cooperation with communities, as Sendra and Sennett (2020) argued, enabling the production of effective presences of city dwellers in urban spaces or spheres. This is an ultimate, inalienable, "disorderly" prerogative that people in cities have the right to hold. In a just society, freedom can only be guaranteed by actively challenging order (Sendra and Sennett 2020). This should be embedded in the design of the reconstruction of Syrian cities when the war ends.

ENDNOTES

[1] See Anderson (2013) and Smidi and Shahin (2017) on the role of youth. For economic analysis of the roots of the Arab spring, see Ghanem (2016). (Page 4).

[2]. *Impossible Revolution* by Yassin Al-Haj Saleh describes with precision and fervor the events that led to the Syrian uprising of 2011—the metamorphosis of the popular revolution into a regional war. (Page 4).

[3]. Gould (1993, 751 referenced within Nicholls 2009, 3-4) in his study for the Paris commune: 'What tied workers from different occupations together in the Commune were the tangible bonds they experienced as neighbours, not the abstract bonds of joint structural position in the capitalist mode of production'. (Page 13).

[4] Check: the administrative divisions of Syria as per an official website of the government in Syria. Hayʾat Alistithmar Alsūrīah. ʿan Sūrīah: Khamisan: Altaqsimat Aledarīah. http://sia.gov.sy/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9 (Page 23).

[5] In the past, Mazzeh and Barzeh were villages near Damascus, and later they were annexed to Damascus and informal settlements grew in the region. However, they are mostly inhabited by its original locals. (page 38).

[6] Sheikh Taher Khairullah is the father in law of Husni Abo who is a prominent figure among the leaders of the Muslim brotherhood group. Sheikh Khairulllah was arrested in 1979 and then exiled. Husni Abo was executed later by the Assad regime. (Page 42).

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