A STRUGGLE OF PERSPECTIVES

An analysis of space in textual and visual representations of the city of Homs in the midst of siege

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Abstract

In this thesis, I research three different sources representing the space of Homs in the midst of siege. I look at differences and similarities between Marwa al-Sabouni's book *The Battle for Home*, photographs on the Facebook page *Lens Young Homsi*, and drone footage made by Russian media outlet *Russia Today*. Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's theories form the basis for my readings of the city space in Homs as it is visualized and described. Lefebvre's concepts of conceived space, perceived space and lived space and De Certeau's notions of walker and voyeur are central in my analysis.

First, I analyse Marwa al-Sabouni's book *The Battle for Home*. I look at her descriptions of space and her drawings of the city in terms of perspective and focalisation, thinking from and elaborating on the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. I also explain Mario Gandelsonas' writing *The City as the Object of Architecture* and link it to the book. For my analysis it is important to understand in what way space and architecture are related. Marwa al-Sabouni's viewpoint and representation of space will be linked to her being an architect, but also to her being a citizen of Homs.

Hereafter I look at six different photographs taken by amateur photographers from Homs, shared on the Facebook page *Lens Young Homsi*. I interpret and analyse these photographs following the principles of semiotics, as described by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. In analysing formal aspects I have taken into account traditions of war photography and De Certeau's and Lefebvre's concepts. I use my findings to see whether the photographs express *Lens Young Homsi*'s goal of expressing people's experiences and life, or something else.

Thirdly I analyse drone footage made by Russian state-funded media outlet *Russia Today* by looking at perspective. *RT* claims to show a documentation of the war, but they actually show destruction as a metaphor. This metaphor is created via the connotations of the drone, the viewpoint of the destroyer and ruins, which I will analyse and combine. In all connotations, depiction of space is researched via and linked to understanding of space as developed by Lefebvre and De Certeau.

All three representations of Homs I analyse in this thesis show that during the war spatial structures are disturbed, which causes chaos. Both Lefebvre's and De Certeau's notions are reversed or not sufficient. Representations are very subjective. Marwa al-Sabouni and *Lens Young Homsi* show us another perspective on the war than *Russia Today* does. All objects of research are struggling to comprehend and assign meaning to the space around them.

Everyone in Syria has lived this war.

Every day people have fought for their lives, every day has brought a bid for survival, but it is not only bodies that suffer: souls, too, go through these battles, dying a thousand times in anticipation, only to rise up wearily to face another day. Hundreds of thousands of these excruciating battles have been fought, and are still being fought, for when the drums of war are beaten no one can escape the sound.[1]

Marwa al-Sabouni, *The Battle for Home*

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[1] Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 11.

Contents

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix

Introduction

Introduction

Syria, its ongoing war and its destroyed cities have been in the news a lot lately. Different sources show differing representations of war-torn spaces, focussing on how those have changed in the last few years. Tonio Hölsscher writes in *Images of War in Greece and Rome: Between Military Practice, Public Memory and Cultural Symbolism* about the importance of war representations: 'The images of war in all cultures are no mere (…) fictions: they refer to hard, profound and complex experiences in real life, to a world of killing and dying.'[2] Through representations, we get an impression of the world and circumstances people are living in. In our understanding of the world around us and the way people live, space is key. It is important to look at how space has changed and what effect it has had on people.

Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau are very important theorists in the spatial field of study. They argue, amongst others, that spaces are always signified and structured. We can understand space through looking at the intersection of spatial organisation and power relations. Spatial organization is always determined by certain institutions, as will be further explained in chapter two. People enact spatial signs and structures in their behaviour, they produce and reproduce the city space. This means that space and people are always interrelated. Theoretical conceptualizations about cities and urban life, such as Lefebvre's and De Certeau's, have often emerged in response to Western experiences of cities. By applying them to the Middle East and particularly war-torn Homs in Syria new challenges may arise, and new insights might be developed, enriching the conceptual framework at hand.

I chose to research three different sources representing the city space of Homs in the midst of siege. I will look at how the same city is depicted from different points of view, in differing aesthetics, evoking different reactions. First, I will analyse Marwa al-Sabouni's book *The Battle for Home*. She was born, raised and educated to be architect in Homs. Hereafter I will look at six different photographs taken by amateur photographers from Homs, shared on the Facebook page *Lens Young Homsi*. Thirdly I shall analyse drone footage made by Russian state-funded media outlet *Russia Today*. I chose to research representations by three in certain respects contrasting sources to see whether their representations differ or correspond, and in what way.

Shortly, my central question is: how is the city of Homs in the midst of siege represented by architect Marwa al-Sabouni in her book *The Battle for Home*, by young photographers from Homs on the Facebook page *Lens Young Homsi*, and by Russian media outlet *Russia Today* in their drone footage, and how do the representations differ from each other or show similarities?

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[2] Hölscher, Tonio. (2003) 'Images of War in Greece and Rome: Between Military Practice, Public Memory, and Cultural Symbolism', in: *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 93, pp. 1-17: 2.

The Syrian regime

I will be looking at space in three representations of Homs. As mentioned above, space is always organized by certain institutions. Power relations are at work between these institutions and people enacting space. To be able to understand the power relations in Syria and Homs, I shall first explain the political situation in Syria.

The current war in Syria essentially is an insurrection against the policies of Hafiz al-Assad's regime. Al-Assad has been president of Syria since 1970. In his chapter 'The Consolidation of Authoritarian Rule in Syria and Iraq: The Regimes of Hafiz al-Asad and Saddam Husayn', William L. Cleveland explains how and why Al-Assad came into power, and how he rules.[3] In 1963, Al-Assad, at that moment officer and pilot in the Syrian army, organized a coup with other Syrian officers that wanted a revival of the Ba'ath Party. This party stood for social reform and national revival. With the coup, a group of Alawites came into power: Al-Assad was born and raised an Alawite, 'a Shi'a sect whose beliefs and rituals diverged so much of from mainstream Islam that members of the Sunni establishment occasionally referred to them as infidels.'[4] This caused unrest among the Sunni majority within Syria, which would only grow.

Although Al-Assad's regime tried to follow the principles of the Ba'ath Party and implemented social transformations, Cleveland writes:

> it also imposed political rigidity, cultural uniformity, and intellectual obedience. This was the contradiction of a government committed on the one hand to principles of reform and on the other to the preservation of an authoritarian military regime. The transformation of Syria was to be controlled by the state, not fuelled by the creative energy of individuals. And in the end the state was stifling, inefficient, and oppressive.[5]

The regime's authoritarianism, favouritism and corruption, but also its secularization and reformations led to opposition movement and protests. Favouritism occurred along sectarian lines: the secularization had to safeguard the rights of religious minorities, but only in the interest of the ruling sect (the Alawites).[6] This evoked resistance. In reaction to the protests, Al-Assad developed a personality cult by 'raising the image of the president to the level of one whose wisdom was beyond comprehension of the average citizen.'[7] To be able to maintain power, a politics of 'as if' evolved, as Lisa Wedeen calls it in her article 'Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria':

> The official rhetoric in Syria consistently include[s] patently absurd statements whose explicit content cannot possibly be intended to produce belief or generate emotional commitment, reactions presupposed by the concepts of legitimacy, charisma, and hegemony. Citizens in Syria are not required to believe the cult's flagrantly fictitious statements, and, as a rule, do not. But they are required to act *as if* they do.[8]

Al-Assad's goal is to make people obey him out of fear, whether they think his way of ruling, his perspective and actions are right or not. According to Wedeen, this obedience is of a higher level than obedience through belief – when we are only following our own judgement. The sort of obeying Al-

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[3] Cleveland, William L. (1994) 'The Consolidation of Authoritarian Rule in Syria and Iraq: The Regimes of Haifz al-Asad and Saddam Husayn', in: *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder; San Francisco; Oxford: Westview Press: 353-376.

[4] Cleveland. (1994): 354.

[5] Cleveland. (1994): 359.

[6] Cleveland. (1994): 362.

[7] Cleveland. (1994): 363.

[8] Wedeen, Lisa. (1998) 'Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 503-523: 506.

Assad intends, 'requires a self-conscious submission to authority'.[9] When people believe the authority ruling makes the right decisions, they obey because they agree with their authorities. They are not necessarily aware of their power. Protests do not arise since people do not see any reason to. In Al-Assad's regime, people do not need to agree with their authorities. Due to a very strong awareness of the regime's power and out of fear for this power, people obey even if they think what authority demands is wrong.

It is important to understand that and how the government controls Syria to grasp the contexts of the representations researched in this thesis. The political situation of Syria has formed the seed for the revolution and war that cause the destruction of Homs. Contextual information is also necessary to understand what Marwa al-Sabouni writes in her book about the uncontrolled real estate development driven by private interests of a ruling corrupt elite. This has been determinative for the way Homs was architecturally shaped before the war. Comprehension of Syria's political situation will also be necessary to understand my findings and readings of *The Battle for Home*, the photographs made by *Lens Young Homsi* and drone footage distributed by *Russia Today*. Since I will focus on the city of Homs in my research, I will now explain its position in Syria and role in the war.

The city of Homs

Homs used to be the third city of Syria, after Damascus and Aleppo. Due to its position halfway the route between these cities, at a crossroads of north-south and east-west routes, and with easy access to the Mediterranean Sea, Homs has always been an important trading post.[10] The city was built on the shores of the Orontes river and two railways ran through it: one that linked Homs to Aleppo and another that linked it to Tripoli.[11] As Michael Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley write in *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa*, Homs was also important in blocking attackers from the seaside:

> It also provided security services for the hinterland of Syria, protecting it from the Crusaders, the Byzantines, and the Egyptians. A centre for paganism, Christianity, and Islam, the city has long articulated transport flows across greater Syria while providing empires with vast foodstuffs and textiles.[12]

Along the Orontes river exists a large region of agricultural fertility, which influenced the agriculture around Homs positively. The city also had a large textile production and oil refinery: it was not only an agricultural, but also an industrial centre. Dumper and Stanley conclude in their text that 'local people have learned skills, along with habits of work and patterns of thought, that equip them to compete in the world of modern industry.'[13]

The importance of Homs for the trade was not only due to its geographic location, but also to its accepted and respected variety in religion. This variety still existed in the 21st century: most of the population of Homs, around 1.5 million people, was Sunni Muslim, but ten percent was Christian and

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[9] Wedeen. (1998): 510.
[10] Dumper, Michael & Bruce E. Stanley. (2007) *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopaedia*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO: 171.
[11] Dumper & Stanley. (2007): 174.
[12] Dumper & Stanley. (2007): 171.
[13] Dumper & Stanley. (2007): 174.

25 percent was member of the Alawite sect.[14] Homs' residents intersected in public and private life, although they were largely divided into their own religious neighbourhoods.[15]

In 2011, when the demonstrations against president Al-Assad started, Homs formed the 'capital of the revolution', since the city fell largely under the control of the opposition and residents responded positively to the call to overthrow the president. BBC states that 'thousands of Homs residents were taking part in demonstrations despite a brutal crackdown by security forces and pro-Assad militiamen that left dozens dead.'[16] These kinds of protests were not seen in other cities, where people did not want to overthrow Al-Assad, but protested peacefully against their lack of freedom.[17]

In 2012, 15 percent of Homs - the districts of the Old City, Khalidiya and Deir Baalbah - fell under opposition control. The government launched an operation and sent tanks to Homs, to suppress and crush the resistance. The district Baba Amr was heavily bombed and left deserted and destroyed. During 2013, government forces retook Khalidiya and Deir Baalbah through bombardments. Thousands of citizens became trapped in their own neighbourhoods, in their own houses. Whomever tried to flee the besieged areas were sure to be killed, whether he or she was a member of the Free Syrian Army or not. The UN managed to arrange a ceasefire in 2014, to be able to evacuate non-combatants from the besieged areas and deliver humanitarian aid. By this time, only the Old City and al-Waer still belonged to the opposition.[18]

By the end of 2015, president Al-Assad had retaken most of the city and 'rebels began evacuating the last district they held [al-Waer], returning the city to government hands.'[19] People had been able to return to their homes in the districts that were retaken by the government since the first half of 2014.[20] Although the government affirmed that Homs was safe and stable again, returning to the normal way of life, Homs' residents were having trouble to move on:

> Years of fighting, bombardment and siege not only destroyed the streets and buildings of central Homs, they say, but deepened sectarian tensions. Today, Sunnis stay in majority-Sunni areas for fear of kidnappings and arrest. Alawites and Shiites likewise. Children and young people no longer interact freely and make friends across sectarian lines at schools and universities as they once did.[21]

The crisis might politically be over for Homs, emotionally and physically it is definitely not. Looking at representations of the war is relevant and necessary to understand how the war was and is experienced.

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[14] [Author unknown]. (9 December 2015) 'Homs: Syrian revolution's fallen 'capital'', in: *BBC News* http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15625642 (17 December 2016).

[15] Zeid, Osama Abu & Maria Nelson. (1 December 2016) 'Life in the aftermath: A wounded Homs city struggles to reconcile its past', in: *SYRIA: direct* http://syriadirect.org/news/life-in-the-aftermath-a-wounded-homs-city-struggles-to-reconcile-its-past/ (19 January 2017).

[16] [Author unknown]. (9 December 2015) 'Homs: Syrian revolution's fallen 'capital'', in: *BBC News* http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15625642 (17 December 2016).

[17] [Author unknown]. (14 December 2016) 'Syria's Civil War Explained', in: *Al Jazeera* http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html (18 December 2016).

[18] [Author unknown]. (9 December 2015) 'Homs: Syrian revolution's fallen 'capital'', in: *BBC News* http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15625642 (17 December 2016).

[19] [Author unknown]. (9 December 2015) 'Homs: Syrian revolution's fallen 'capital'', in: *BBC News* http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15625642 (17 December 2016).

[20] Bloom, Dan. (9 May 2014) 'Back to Homs: Thousands of Syrians return to scenes of horrendous destruction after surrender of 'capital of the revolution'', in: *MailOnline* http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2624235/return-homs-thousands-syrians-scenes-horrendous-destruction.html (18 December 2016).

[21] Zeid, Osama Abu & Maria Nelson. (1 December 2016) 'Life in the aftermath: A wounded Homs city struggles to reconcile its past', in: *SYRIA: direct* http://syriadirect.org/news/life-in-the-aftermath-a-wounded-homs-city-struggles-to-reconcile-its-past/ (19 January 2017).

Chapter 1

Methodology

As explained in the introduction, I will focus on the concept of space in this thesis. Henri Lefebvre's and Michel de Certeau's theories form the basis for my readings of the city space in Homs as it is visualized or described in three representations.

In my first chapter, I shall look into the book *The Battle for Home*, written by Syrian architect Marwa al-Sabouni. I will analyse her descriptions of space and her drawings of the city. First, I shall focus on the words she uses in her observations of the city space to find out whether she portrays the city positively or negatively. Later I will focus on perspective and focalisation in descriptions of space and in the images of the book, thinking from and elaborating on the spatial theories mentioned above. I will also explain Mario Gandelsonas' writing *The City as the Object of Architecture* and link it to the book, since I think Marwa al-Sabouni's view at the city cannot be dissociated from her profession. Besides, as Gandelsonas writes, architecture is always related to space. For my analysis it is important to understand in what way these are related. Marwa al-Sabouni's viewpoint and representation of space will be linked to her being an architect, but also to her being a citizen of Homs.

The second chapter covers the photographs made by *Lens Young Homsi*. I will interpret and analyse these photographs following the principles of semiotics, as described by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. In analysing colour, contrasts, composition, perspective and style to address the viewer I have taken into account the tradition of war photography, based on Robin Andersen's text 'Images of War: Photojournalism, Ideology, and Central America', Judith Butler's 'Photography, War, Outrage' and Jason Francisco's 'War Photography in the Twentieth Century: A Short Critical History'. I will compare my findings to the conventions these texts appoint to see whether the photographs express *Lens Young Homsi*'s goal of expressing people's experiences and life, or something else. Formal aspects and perspectives of the photographs shall also be linked to De Certeau's and Lefebvre's concepts.

For the visual analysis of drone footage made by *Russia Today*, I will also use Sturken and Cartwright and the principles of semiotics. Through framing, selection and viewpoint, all images and films invoke connotations. *RT* claims to show a documentation of the war, but they actually show destruction as a metaphor. This metaphor is created via the connotations of the drone, the viewpoint of the destroyer and ruins, which I will analyse and combine. I will use *A Theory of the Drone*, written by Grégoire Chamayou, to research the connotations of this device. To understand the point of view, it needs to be taken into account that Russia has been bombing Homs and is a destroyer. I will use Stephen Graham's 'Cities as Strategic Sites: Place Annihilation and Urban Geopolitics' to understand what this means. The way Homs is depicted also relates to the tradition of ruins, as analysed by Andreas Huyssen in 'Nostalgia for Ruins'. In all connotations, perspective and depiction of space are important.

As becomes clear from the previous descriptions, I will provide a link between my analyses and Lefebvre's and De Certeau's theories of space for every object of analysis. In my conclusion I will

resume how the city of Homs is represented in the three different objects and explain what the differences and similarities in these representations are.

Theoretical framework

Henry Lefebvre is a twentieth century sociologist, urbanist and social theorist and leading French intellectual.[22] His most important work, *The Production of Space*, builds on the important philosophers Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Leibnitz and Kant.[23] He has been a key thinker for the discussion of 'spatial dialectics' and the 'spatial turn': the idea that space is not just something existent, but something produced and producing. Not everyone has the same rights or possibilities to act in space: there are institutions in power who produce space, and people who practice it according to the rules and design of the producers. By producers, Lefebvre thinks of for example politicians, urban planners and architects. To elucidate his ideas and explain the relations between different groups acting in space, Lefebvre developed three different spaces: conceived space (also named representations of space by Lefebvre), perceived space (or spatial practices) and lived space (or representational space).[24] In *Writings on Cities*, he reads this space in terms of cities and vice versa.[25]

The notion of conceived space signifies the way space is formed or equipped according to its purposes, the way space is discursively constructed for us to live in, as Andrew Merrifield describes in his article 'Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation'.[26] Conceived space is imposed by an order, making decisions whereby discourse is constructed and signs are created. This order cannot be part of the society, but needs to be superficial.[27] It acts on the level of signs, instructing people for action and creating unity.[28] The person acting in space acts on the level of consumption of signs. He needs to have knowledge of these signs to understand how and for what purpose a certain space is constructed. By acting in space, he follows sings to produces unity, to realize the discourse.

Perceived space is according to Merrifield (explaining Lefebvre) the production and reproduction that structures daily life and the urban reality.[29] Henri Lefebvre writes in *Writings on Cities* that

> everyday life and the urban, indissolubly linked, at one and the same time products and production, occupy a social space generated through them and inversely. The analysis is concerned with the whole of practico-social activities, as they are entangled in a complex space, urban and everyday, ensuring up to a point the reproduction of relations of production (that is, social relations).[30]

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[22] Aronowitz, Stanley. (2007) 'The Ignored Philosopher and Social Theorist: The Work of Henry Lefebvre', in: *Situations*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 133-155: 133.

[23] Simonsen, Kirsten. (1992) 'Review: The Production of Space by Henri Lefebvre', in: *Geografiska Annaler*, series B, *Human Geography*, vol. 74, no. 1, pp. 81-82.

[24] Lecture 'City Culture: Social space', László Munteán & Timotheus Vermeulen. (24 November 2015) Nijmegen: Radboud University, Cultural Studies.

[25] Lefebvre, Henri. (1996) *Writings on Cities*. Oxford, Blackwell.

[26] Merrifield, Andrew. (1993) 'Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation' in: *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 516-531: 523.

[27] Lefebvre. (1996): 179.

[28] Lefebvre. (1996): 114.

[29] Merrifield. (1993): 524.

[30] Lefebvre. (1996): 185.

Perceived space is the space in which practico-social activities take place. The production of space is no conscious activity, but ideologically determined. Performativity makes a certain way of enacting space seem natural.

The term lived space can be explained as the way people experience a certain space in symbols, codes, dreams and memories. It 'is the dominated, passively experienced space that the conceived, ordered, hegemonic space will intervene in, codify, rationalize and ultimately attempt to usurp', according to Andrew Merrifield.[31] Dreams and memories that are not accepted in conceived space will disturb perceived space, so conceived space will always try to suppress them. They cannot be shown or enacted everywhere,

In his texts, Lefebvre does not only explain and substantiate his ideas and theory. While writing, he asks himself questions and answers positively as well as negatively. He uses semiology in his analysis of space, but also argues that 'space is not produced to be read and grasped, but first of all in order to be lived by people with bodies and lives in their own particular context', as Kirsten Simonsen writes in her review of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*.[32] Lefebvre's way of writing asks the reader to reflect critically on his theories and concepts, to change and develop them.

Michel de Certeau is a versatile French theorist. He was cultural sociologist, historian, philosopher, semiotician, theologian and psychoanalyst.[33] As a result, Verena Andermatt Conley writes in 'Michel de Certeau: Anthropological Spaces', he 'approaches space (…) eclectically and from a variety of angles.'[34] De Certeau's theory deals with space in a manner that is very compatible with Lefebvre's theory, as I will explain later.

Michel de Certeau distinguishes between two categories in space. Lev Manovich describes these in an article: 'De Certeau makes a distinction between strategies used by institutions and power structures and tactics used by modern subjects in their everyday lives. The tactics are the ways in which the individuals negotiate strategies that were set for them.'[35] Organizations and institutions structuring the city are looking down on it, to be able to read it and make it legible for the 'modern subjects'. The latter experience and practice the city from inside. De Certeau explains the differences in those viewpoints by using the concepts of 'voyeur' and 'walker'. The voyeur is looking down on the city as if he is standing on top of a building: he sees the city as a whole in a panoramic view, which enables him to read and model it. The complexity of the city seems transparent. The voyeur theoretically perceives the concept of the city, but misses or misunderstands an important part of the city as it actually experienced.[36] 'The practices of everyday life are foreign to and thus escape the grasp of the city planner, engineer or architect', Andermatt Conley writes.[37] For this part, the walker is important. He contributes to the writing of the city without being able to read it, using space as

[31] Merrifield. (1993): 523.
[32] Simonsen. (1992): 81.
[33] Weymans, Wim. (2004) 'Michel de Certeau and the Limits of Historical Representation', in: *History and Theory*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press: pp. 161-178: 162.
[34] Andermatt Conley, Verena. (2012) 'Michel de Certeau: Anthropological Spaces', in: *The Spatial Ecologies: Urban Sites, State and World-Space in French Cultural Theory*. Liverpool: University Press: pp. 29-46: 29.
[35] Manovich, Lev. (2009) 'The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass Cultural Production?', in: *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 319-331: 322.
[36] Certeau, Michel de. (2007) 'Walking in the City', in: *The Cultural Studies Reader.* Simon During, ed. London: Routledge: pp. 156-163: 158.
[37] Andermatt Conley. (2012): 34.

created by the voyeur. Space remains indefinite and fragmented to him. He perceives the urban fact and acts in it. These practices of space 'slip into the clear text of the planned and readable city'.[38] Walkers are also able to creatively and alternatively use places, although within the boundaries set by voyeurs. Verena Andermatt Conley explains that walkers thus appropriate space as constructed by voyeurs, but they also transform spaces because they use them in another way than the voyeur planned.[39] This will be explained below by combining De Certeau's and Lefebvre's theories.

De Certeau's concepts partially correspond with Lefebvre's three notions of space. I will combine the concepts in the following analyses, so I will explain how they interact. As the voyeur structures and totalizes the city to make it legible, he is the creator of conceived space. Both Lefebvre and De Certeau name city planners and architects to explain their concepts of voyeur and conceived space. The creation of rules and legibility is very important to both. This makes it possible to compare and combine De Certeau's voyeur with Lefebvre's conceived space.

The voyeur structures a city to be read by the walker. Manovich explains 'an individual can't physically reorganize the city, but he or she can adapt it to his or her needs by choosing how to move through it.'[40] By this moving, the walker produces and reproduces daily life and the urban reality, the actions Lefebvre calls perceived space.

Verena Andermatt Conley writes about the walker that

Within its boundaries, it finds means of creative invention and subversion; thus (…) De Certeau concludes that the ordinary person becomes the 'wanderer,' the 'migrant' (…) who slips through the network of sanctioned modes of control.[41]

Dreams and fantasies of the walker are important for his living in and use of the city. Lefebvre defines his notion of lived space among other things as dreams, fantasies and memories. Lived space never follows conceived space, that's why it cannot become perceived space without disturbing the production and reproduction of space. Andermatt Conley's description shows that this also applies to De Certeau's walker.

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[38] Certeau. (2007): 158.
[39] Andermatt Conley. (2012): 35.
[40] Manovich. (2009): 322.
[41] Andermatt Conley. (2012): 34.

Chapter 2: The Battle for Home

Introduction

> The world has been watching us, and we have been watching ourselves, getting killed, tortured and uprooted. We have seen our buildings demolished, our cities destroyed and our archaeological treasures vandalized. (…) I have lived a certain kind of life – not, to my mind, the easiest one. In telling the story of my city and the story of my country, I also tell my own story, in so far as it is relevant.[42]

Marwa al-Sabouni writes about her experiences and observations of the architectural shape of Homs in her book *The Battle for Home*. She analyses the space before the war as well as the space during the war and interweaves her experiences of the city and the war with her analysis.

Al-Sabouni was born in Homs and has lived there all her life. She has a PhD in Islamic architecture, runs a private architectural studio in Homs and is co-owner of the first and only online media dedicated to architectural news in Arabic. To her opinion, architecture has played an important role in 'creating, directing and heightening conflicts between warring factions'.[43] Due to different architectural styles, there has been a loss of identity in the built environment for the people living in Homs, which increased the unrest in society.

By granting such a big role to architecture leading up to the war, Al-Sabouni elaborates on one of Henri Lefebvre's most important findings. He argued that space is not only a neutral setting, that it is not just a background for activities as they occur. The shape of space and spatial relations structure and determine what can be done in space itself. Marwa al-Sabouni focuses on the element of architecture and analyses what effect this can have on people and life in the city. Because she has lived in Homs all her life, she shows us the city and the war from within. She presents the city from a citizen point of view, but also always from an architectural point of view.

An architect needs to design buildings that guide and measure up to their function. In Henri Lefebvre's terms 'the architect and architecture have an immediate relationship with (…) construction as a practice': he or she needs to create a conceived space.[44] For this purpose, an architect has to be able to read and understand the city as a whole. Seeing the city as a whole and understanding its structure and its space in order to create conceived space can also be linked to De Certeau's concept of the voyeur. He names the space planner urbanist and city planner as examples of voyeurs creating conceived space: people that design the city according to its functions.[45] But a building needs to suit its environment and users, too. Those are easier known from the ordinary practitioners' point of view: De Certeau's walkers. Marwa al-Sabouni writes her descriptions of the city from both viewpoints, because she is an architect by profession, but she also is an inhabitant of the city. This duality in point of view and perception of the city is noticeable in *The Battle for Home*, as I will describe below. I will first look at negative as well as positive observations of the city. Subsequently, I will focus on viewpoint in descriptions of space and in the images of the book.

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[42] Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 8-9.
[43] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 8.
[44] Lefebvre. (1996): 190.
[45] Certeau. (2007): 158.

Homs' architectural pretension

First, Marwa al-Sabouni gives a very personal impression of the city of Homs. She compares it to a shabby little room and describes the atmosphere and the buildings negatively: 'Every walk in the city was a struggle for me.'[46] What strikes her most about Homs are the lack of homogeneous way of building, the ugliness, the unsafety, the dirty and dusty air.[47] Her overall thoughts of the city are that it is

> a neglected village, (…) no functional parks, no cultural centres open to the public in a systematic or organized way, no zoos, no amusement parks: and, even if those places had existed, there would have been no exciting activities, no safety measures, no tasteful or memorable architecture.[48]

In a later chapter, remembering her first impression of the city centre as an architect, Al-Sabouni describes the city as disorganized, unimpressive, and no longer functioning. New, concrete flats and towers increased these problems. The architecture did not fit into the original urban appearance of the city. It struck people as 'an architectural, cultural and moral crime', reminding them of 'cigarette burn marks on a tortured body'.[49] As these examples indicate, the city was inadequate on both the level of walker and voyeur. This comes to the fore in more descriptions of Homs.

Marwa al-Sabouni writes that Homs does not have an overall, continuous way of building throughout the city. Houses, offices, public buildings etcetera were built in a variety of styles and for a lot of different purposes. There was no structure in neighbourhoods or streets, no predetermined design which would make it possible for people to easily find their way. We can speak of a lack of conceived space, in Lefebvre's terms. Marwa al-Sabouni explains that 'the forms of the buildings are dictated by the mood of the rulers' and calls this phenomenon 'mood-anism'.[50] Due to the totalitarian political situation in Syria, a ruling governor or mayor could build whatever he wanted. Old buildings were renewed and new suburbs were built without adapting the new design to the original city. Buildings with historical, religious, social or aesthetic meaning were removed and replaced by null concrete flats. People lost their sense of the environment, their feeling of being at home in the city. Creating or recreating the city is not based on a functioning conceived space, but on showing off and making money.

This mood-anism affects the perceived space. According to Andrew Merrifield's reading of Lefebvre's notions, perceived space 'structure[s] daily life and a broader urban reality and, in so doing, ensure[s] societal cohesion, continuity and a specific spatial competence.'[51] Obviously, this is not true for Homs, but people have to find a way of living despite the deficiency of the city. The totalitarian political situation causes perceived space to be determined by acting the way you are expected to, by fitting in. People simply would not dare to show that their leader's organization of the city is not functional.

Despite the lack of cohesion and continuity in the architecture of Homs, there was tolerance and social acceptance. The city of Homs houses a diversity of people, 'accommodating a wide range of beliefs, origins, customs, goods, even climates and food'.[52] This variety and inspired tolerance:

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[46] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 13.
[47] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 12-26.
[48] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 13.
[49] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 42-45.
[50] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 43.
[51] Merrifield. (1993): 524.
[52] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 24.

> Syrian communities exhibited no real discrimination concerning the role and rights of women, or the coexistence of different religions, family structures and ways of life. (…) This was not due to any political decision or imposed plan: in my view, it was a natural outcome of the sheer variety of life made available by free movement and trade.[53]

Marwa al-Sabouni also suggests this social cohesion is actually connected to the lack of unity in architectural style.

In Homs' neighbourhoods and streets no predetermined design can be found. Houses and public buildings were built in all kinds of styles and for different purposes. The only principles that seemed to be important, Al-Sabouni argues, are humility and harmony. Christians and Muslims lived next to each other, a mosque could be standing on one side of a street and a church on the other. Mixed use, mixed origins and mixed religions recognizable in the architecture of the city represented the social fabric of Homs, which perpetuated a feeling of sharing and community. Marwa al-Sabouni writes how

> The traditional urbanism and architecture of our cities assured identity not by separation but by intertwining, helping to perpetuate the 'moral economy' that was tangible in the streets and the markets.[54]

This traditional urbanism, though, was not maintained or used to develop suburbs. For example the neighbourhood Baba Amr, originally a small farmer's village, was developed in an entirely random way. First, rustic dwellings based on the original village houses were built, but later on the government built everything with concrete blocks: 'this kind of mixed urbanism (…) exhibited neither aesthetic sense nor predetermined design.'[55] Despite the lack of order and beauty, citizens in Baba Amr managed to create a sense of security and unity in urban details:

> You might find a small pond with raised cement edges created under a tree on the pavement so that birds and cats could drink from it. Or you might find fruitful olive trees lining the streets on the open verges – additions to the otherwise haphazard urban planning process.[56]

Through these ideas, the lived space, people created a feeling of love and harmony in their neighbourhood.

Marwa al-Sabouni argues that architecture has played an important role in both creating harmony and unity in (Old) Homs and in eventually disrupting it. The tolerance she speaks of, though, cannot be, or not only be, attributed to architecture and the urban. People are required to live in harmony with others of different origin or religion, because of the political situation. As mentioned above and as Lisa Wedeen writes in 'Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria', 'the fear of coercive retaliation combined with the habit of representing oneself strategically' determines the behaviour of Syrians.[57] Even lived space, which is very personal, is determined by fear of what might happen if the ones in power find out. Only in small alterations like the olive trees in Baba Amr lived space is knowable. There is no other possibility than living in harmony, because that is what the totalitarian political system requires.

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[53] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 24-25.
[54] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 70.
[55] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 95.
[56] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 95.
[57] Wedeen. (1998): 519.

A floating perspective

For supporting her texts and statements, Marwa al-Sabouni has drawn maps of and buildings in the city of Homs. Appendix 1 shows the general map of Homs as it is included in *The Battle for Home*. Al-Sabouni divides the city into five districts, basing the partition on Homs' historical development. In Appendix 2, the following five sectors are marked:

1. Old Homs, which forms the centre of the city

2. Extensive constructions outside the city boundaries, the enclosed downtown

3. Residential neighbourhoods

4. Social housing developments

5. New Homs, separated from the city, chiefly residential

The map Al-Sabouni draws in the chapter is drawn from a voyeur point of view. Not only is the city seen from above, the map is also based on architectural characteristics and the structural features of Homs. The first becomes clear from descriptions of the sectors, the latter becomes clear by comparing it to Homs' plan on Google Maps (see Appendix 4).[58] Beside a map of the whole city, two maps of the neighbourhood Baba Amr are included in *The Battle for Home* (Appendix 5 and 6). Again, as becomes clear when they are compared to Google Maps, these city plans are purely based on the actual structure of Homs and have nothing to do with Al-Sabouni's personal experience of the city.

Al-Sabouni has marked districts, paths and important places/buildings as they functioned before the war in the maps of Homs and Baba Amr. She depicts conceived space: the elements in the maps are based on what they are supposed to be, not on how they are actually used or experienced. For example the 'greenery' in Baba Amr might be used/experienced as a park, but also as wasteland. This does not become clear from the drawing.

In the general map of Homs Al-Sabouni also gives an indication of what parts of Homs were destructed during the war. This becomes visible in Appendix 3. Both Homs before the war and Homs after the war, both conceived and perceived space at the time of drawing, are depicted in one map. In the rest of the book, though, there seems to be a difference in way of description and in point of view for pre-war and post-war Homs.

During her overall descriptions of Homs, Marwa al-Sabouni switches between a voyeur point of view and a walker point of view. She looks at the city on the urban level, talks about areas and building styles, than zooms in to streets, houses and the experiences of people on the architectural level, and zooms back out. This might also happen in another order. The analysis of the Ibn Al-Walid Mosque, for example, shows this structure. Al-Sabouni starts describing its architectural style and role as visual landmark. Hereafter, she focusses on the details of the building, reading both the exterior and the interior of the building. The following paragraph describes the place of the mosque in the city: 'the north-east end of Homs was originally the outer frontier of the city, but over time the city enclosed it, turning the surrounding village into a residential mixed-used area.'[59] From a voyeuristic point of view Marwa al-Sabouni moves to a walker's perspective and back to the voyeur's. She also moves between perceived and lived space. Although a voyeuristic view might logically be linked to

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[58] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 28-30.
[59] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 32-34.

conceived space, this is not described in the text. Al-Sabouni focusses on the experience of the mosque: it is 'important to every Homsi' and 'expresses a simple and serene love'.[60] During the battles, though, the mosque was ruined: the experiences described above are a memory and belong to lived space. The actual status of the mosque is depicted in an image (Appendix 7).

In contrast or in addition to Michel de Certeau's theory, Marwa al-Sabouni does not seem to belong to either the category of voyeur or walker. She looks at the city from above, but does not miss the experience of the city. She practices space in the city, but is still able to read it as a whole. As an architect she 'floats' between the categories, moves between Lefebvre's concepts of space as they can be linked to De Certeau's. She is not able to look at the city only from a theoretical point of view because of her citizenship. At the same time, due to her architectural background, she is no longer able to experience the city purely as resident, as walker.

Mario Gandelsonas argues there always is a duality in architecture. In 'The City as the Object of Architecture' he describes how a building belongs to two practices at once, architecture and actual construction. Between these two disciplines exists an impossible relation: 'the signifier (building) collapses two objects – the urban building and the architectural building – as one. The building, as part of the city, is 'outside' architecture.'[61] Architects develop a mental design of a building, but this design has to be constructed and function in actual space, eventually. According to Gandelsonas 'architectural urban fantasies will never reach their object'.[62]

Al-Sabouni agrees with Gandelsonas. 'Controlling the built environment is a huge responsibility: the face of a city governs the daily routines of its people and all that pertains to their way of life' she writes,[63] so it must be remembered that 'what has been articulated by the architect is imagined in the mind of the perceiver.'[64] However, Mario Gandelsonas sees this difference as a lack, an impossible relation. Al-Sabouni considers it to be an architectural challenge. An architect must communicate conceived space to the perceiver, the voyeur's point of view to the walker's point of view. By moving or floating between those viewpoints Al-Sabouni tries to understand both. Her way of seeing architecture also has its flaws, though. Al-Sabouni seems to forget that outside the built environment, more powers are influencing the perceived space. She 'forgets' about the totalitarian regime and assigns too much responsibility for the war to architecture and city planning.

Walking through destruction

Descriptions of Homs in wartime do not show the 'floating' described above. During the war, houses, schools, hospitals and other buildings were ruined: they cannot be used according to their functions anymore, so conceived space is no longer relevant. People perceived their environment in new ways due to the war. Marwa al-Sabouni describes how the old city turned into a place for hiding. It was not possible to live, shop or socialize there like before, but the neighbourhood did contain a stock of food, water and clothes. Besides, 'its interwoven plan and basalt buildings created an impregnable fortress'.[65] Old Homs is no longer perceived as a space consisting of different buildings with their own

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[60] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 31-33.
[61] Gandelsonas, Mario. (1998) 'The City as the Object of Architecture', in: *Assemblage*, no. 37, pp. 128-144: 130.
[62] Gandelsonas. (1998): 131.
[63] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 17.
[64] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 164.
[65] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 48.

functions, but as a fortress to hide in. At the same time, people felt caught inside the walls of besieged places that had once been their homes. A similar situation existed in the neighbourhood of Baba Amr. People found new ways for using their environment, 'they used the roofs of the newly built housing blocks as gun posts', took advantage of the close-knit urbanism and stood up to the governmental forces.[66] Others in the neighbourhood could not fight or flee and were trapped, imprisoned.[67] Lived space consists of contradictory feelings, thoughts and stories.[68] Through ideas and dreams, spaces were given new function. At the same time, people tried to remember the previous functions of buildings in order to understand their environment:

> Streams of people flooded into the old city centre, remembering the last time they had set foot on their doorstep years before, everyone anticipating the results of destruction and looting (…) Every roaring sound, every stench of burning and every vision of hideousness one had experienced during those years came back, as though it was experienced for the first time. Here's where you used to stop and talk with your friend; here are the remains of the shop where you used to buy your groceries; here's what used to be your neighbour's building.[69]

Conceived space is no longer functional, so lived space determines the way in which people experience and act in the city. Perceived space becomes highly subjective.

This destruction of conceived space also influences the way Marwa al-Sabouni looks at Homs. Apart from the map in Appendix 3, she does not give structuring overviews or descriptions. The city cannot be read anymore, existing or newly appointed areas are not understood by their users:

> When war becomes a way of life, people and places go through different stages of adaptation. War always finds a way to be one step ahead of them, presenting new forms of torture around every corner.[70]

A lack of the possibility to create structures causes the walker's point of view to become most appropriate for reading the city. Marwa al-Sabouni no longer floats between the voyeur and walker. Her feet are touching the ground again. Descriptions are mostly about homes, feelings, stories, bombings, experiences and the way people try to give new functions to the city or locate themselves, but often fail. There is no longer any reason to move between the voyeur's and walker's perspective, since the voyeur is no longer able to structure the city, to understand or create conceived space. Architecture, city planning and other forms of conceived space no longer interact with a perceiver in the way they are supposed to. Conceived space only exists in lived space, in memories. The walker still uses the city, but bases his behaviour on lived space now.

Conclusion

In her descriptions of Homs before the war, Marwa al-Sabouni looks from both a voyeur and a walker point of view at the conceived, perceived and lived space. This flows from her profession as architect: she needs to communicate conceived space to the perceivers. Through floating between De Certeau's points of view, she denies the problem described by Mario Gandelsonas.

Although Al-Sabouni's reading of the city shows both positive and negative aspects, she tends to overestimate the power of spatial form on behaviour and cultural values. Most strikingly, she does

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[66] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 104.
[67] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 106.
[68] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 48.
[69] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 50-51.
[70] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 56.

not take the totalitarian political situation into account. Positive effects of the built environment in perceived and lived space cannot simply be linked to architecture, but work in tandem with larger power structures.

During the war, being a human being becomes more important than being an architect in Al-Sabouni's experience of the city. Besides, conceived space is destroyed, so people need to find other ways of relating themselves to the built environment. This happens mostly through lived space: either through new ideas and possibilities, or through memories of what used to be. The walker's point of view becomes very important, the voyeur's point of view impossible to use.

Chapter 3: Lens Young Homsi

Introduction

By writing and publishing *The Battle for Home*, Marwa al-Sabouni has been able to express and distribute her ideas on the Syrian war in Homs. Al-Sabouni's education allowed and made it possible to do this. In contrast, many Syrian people are not able to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings considering the war with the world. There are no possibilities for communication. Both domestic and foreign media agencies have been restricted by the Syrian government. Some of the Syrians, though, have found ways to show their life to the outside world, via social media.[71] *Lens Young* is an initiative of amateur photographers, who want to depict the reality of Homs during the war, from the perspective of the people living there. The initiative broadcasts its photos via Facebook, having different pages for different cities in Syria. In this chapter, I will focus on the photos shown on the Facebook page *Lens Young Homsi*.[72] Since 28 May 2012, a team of young photographers has been posting pictures with a description of date and place (what neighbourhood of Homs) a few times a month. One of the members explains the origin of the page:

> The idea for the Lens Young Homsi [Facebook] page came from a group of young guys in Homs. It grew out of the need to document events with images on social media, to convey them to the world faster, in an artistic and talented way.[73]

Lens Young Homsi's goal is not to show the city, but to portray and communicate the lives people are living.[74] At the moment only one member of the team of photographers is still living in Homs. The others chose to leave Homs, were expelled from their neighbourhoods or had to flee after being detained by the government. The last photographer thinks that 'the importance of life as portrayed in the pictures is that it brings hope out of our pain… The hope you might not see when passing by the ruins.'[75] Even before I had read this interview, I found the photographs very striking, beautiful, expressing a positivity and hope that seems unexpected or even out of place in wartime. Experiences and feelings are more important than objective veracity for the photographs taken and posted by *Lens Young Homsi*.

I selected six different photographs, showing different subjects (buildings or people) and taken in different years. The photos and their captions can be found in appendix 8 to 13. *Lens Young Homsi* does not want to transmit a message via text, but via formal elements such as colour, contrasts,

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[71] Duwaji, Omar. (15 February 2015) 'A Life Behind the Lens', in: *Majalla* http://eng.majalla.com/2013/02/article55238303/a-life-behind-the-lens (22 January 2017).

[72] Lens Young Homsi. (28 May, 2012) 'Lens Young Homsi', in: *Facebook* https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/ (22 January 2017).

[73] Mohammed, Sama & Maria Nelson. (21 December 2016) 'Lens Young Homsi: Photographs 'convey suffering in a way that motivates people to share them'', in: *SYRIA: direct* http://syriadirect.org/news/lens-young-homsi-photographs-'convey-suffering-in-a-way-that-motivates-people-to-share-them'/ (22 January 2017).

[74] [Author unknown]. (22 October 2016) ''A Young Homsi's Lens': An Artistic Project Documenting the Streets of Homs Through Photography', in: *FSLA* https://fsla.info/a-young-homsis-lens-an-artistic-project-documenting-the-streets-of-homs-through-photography/ (22 January 2017).

[75] Mohammed, Sama & Maria Nelson. (21 December 2016) 'Lens Young Homsi: Photographs 'convey suffering in a way that motivates people to share them'', in: *SYRIA: direct* http://syriadirect.org/news/lens-young-homsi-photographs-'convey-suffering-in-a-way-that-motivates-people-to-share-them'/ (22 January 2017).

composition, point of view and style to address the viewer. As Judith Butler writes in 'Photography, War, Outrage';

> Even the most transparent of documentary images is framed, and framed for a purpose, carrying that purpose within its frame and implementing that purpose through the frame. If we take such a purpose to be *interpretive*, then it would appear that the photograph still interprets the reality that it registers (…).[76]

Photos always provide us with a frame, an interpretation of reality. Every genre of photography has its own tradition and visual features. Professional war photography also has its conventions: 'smoke and debris, blasted architecture, menacing weapons, clamoring action, contorted faces, sometimes mutilated bodies', as essayist and artist Jason Francisco writes in 'War Photography in the Twentieth century: A Short Critical History'.[77] By analysing formal elements and relating them to the tradition of war photography and theories of space as developed by Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre, I will decode the images and define this interpretation, based on semiotics as described by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*.[78]

The sniper

The first photograph is from 5 November 2014, taken in the Al-Waer neighbourhood of Homs (Appendix 8).[79] Placed exactly in the middle, the wall of the building creates a border between left and right. In the left half of the picture, Homs is visible; the right half shows a sniper, pointing a rifle at an unknown target. The latter part of the image is brown-greyish and in focus, in contrast to the out-of-focus and colourful left half. This half becomes reminiscent of a painting or an artificial picture (which it probably is), due to the blurriness, the bright colours and the resemblance to brushstrokes. Artificiality and blurriness make the view also more detached from the viewer. The right half, on the other hand, feels very close. We're seeing together with the sniper, the point of view just behind his shoulder. At first sight, the sniper might not strike you as sniper, but as photographer: his eye at the lens looking outside, his gun (camera) resting on the window frame, capturing the outside world in an aesthetic way. Every detail of this part is visible: his hair, the different parts of the rifle, the irregularities of the wall. Where the left half of the picture seems far away and almost dreamlike, inhuman, the right half is rough, depicting the harsh reality as it is.

The point of view in this photograph is from above, looking down on the city. This might suggest power, but it is not a voyeuristic or authorities' point of view. We do not see the city as a map and we are looking from inside a building. The blurry and seemingly artificial background is not structured, or the structure is not important. Besides, the sniper is focussing on only one spot, his target. This photograph is more reminiscent of a walker's point of view: the outside world cannot be grasped or understood, only the building in which the sniper is hiding and the targets nearby are important. The sniper's targets, though, are obscured by the blurriness of the outside world and the

[76] Butler, Judith. (2005) 'Photography, War, Outrage', in: *PMLA*, vol. 120, no. 3, pp. 822-827: 824.

[77] Francisco, Jason. (2005) 'War Photography in the Twentieth Century: A Short Critical History', in: *Jason Francisco*. Originally published in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Photography. http://jasonfrancisco.net/war-photography (15 February 2017).

[78] Sturken, Marita & Lisa Cartwright. (2001) *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 26-28.

[79] Lens Young Homsi. (5 November 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*. https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.890210257680568.1073741825.420911707943761/100947398908 7527/?type=3&theater (25 January 2017).

framing of the photo. While we are following the gaze of the sniper, we cannot see what he sees: the subjects and impact of his deadly gaze do not become visible. Charles Stronge writes in *Sniper in Action: History, Equipment, Techniques* about the deadliness of the sniper:

> Concealment from the enemy mixed with deadly accuracy of aim make the sniper an extremely effective weapon and creates a hugely disproportionate effect on the enemy. A sniper is capable of literally reaching the enemy's heart with his unseen hand, striking terror into all those around. (...) This mortal efficiency has caused the sniper to be respected, feared and loathed.[80]

The viewpoint shown actually is a feared one of hidden power and killing. Through aestheticizing and blurring the outside world, the sniper's power and dangerous side are denied or covert.

In the incomprehensibility but also in the aesthetics of Homs, we can recognize lived space. Since 2013, the government had been able to retake certain areas of Homs. Non-combatants had the opportunity to return to their homes in the retaken neighbourhoods or flee the besieged areas. Al-Waer was one of the last neighbourhoods that were still under control of the rebels. For this sniper, the city and his life beyond the boundaries of Al-Waer are very unsure, which can be linked to the out-of-focus outside world. However, he is still fighting, still sees opportunities: he still sees bright colours. These colours and the blurriness also obscure the deadliness of the sniper's gaze. The photograph depicts the sniper's lived space and glorifies him through visual qualities.

The rebel

Appendix 9 shows a rebel in the Al-Qusor neighbourhood on 23 April 2014.[81] This man can be identified as rebel because he is wearing a *keffiyeh*, a headscarf protecting men from the sun, cold or sand. Since the Arab revolution of the 1930's, the scarf has become symbol for Palestine and its battle for independence, as Nadim N. Damluji describes in her thesis *Imperialism reconfigured: the cultural interpretations of keffiyeh*.[82] In line with this, the *keffiyeh* symbolizes the pan-Arab history of struggle and resistance. Another important sign of rebellion is the beard, which has identified Muslim fundamentalism for a very long time, as Alan Peterkin explains in *One Thousand Beards: A Cultural History of Facial Hair*[83] and Marion Dowd writes in *Beards: an archaeological and historical overview*.[84] For Orthodox Muslims the removal of facial hair is unacceptable, since it means disobedience to Allah. His beard and *keffiyeh* mark the man in *Lens Young Homsi*'s photograph as a rebel, in the tradition of the pan-Arabic struggle for independence.

The composition of the image is very striking: the rebel's eye is positioned on the vertical centreline. The few colours in the image are reversed over this line, sometimes diagonally, which attracts the attention to the middle and to the rebel. Due to the biggest and brightest colour patch, the turquoise on the right, the rifle attracts our attention and emphasizes this man is not just a citizen, but a rebel.

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[80] Stronge, Charles. (2014) *Sniper in Action: History, Equipment, Techniques*. London: Amber Books Ltd (page numbers unknown).

[81] Lens Young Homsi. (23 April 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*. https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/749206158447646/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

[82] Damluji, Nadim N. (2010) *Imperialism reconfigured: the cultural interpretations of keffiyeh*. Walla Walla, Washington: Whitman College: 6.

[83] Peterkin, Alan. (2001) *One Thousand Beards: A Cultural History of Facial Hair*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press: 185.

[84] Dowd, Marion. (2010) *Beards: an archaeological and historical overview*. Dublin: Wordwell: 39.

Analogous to the previously described photograph of a rebel (Appendix 5), the person in the picture is in focus and the background/neighbourhood out of focus. Instead of focussing on what has happened to the world around him, this photograph concentrates on the person, his facial expression and the humanity of the depicted. The viewer is watching from the eye level of the rebel, also in accordance with the previous photo of the sniper. In the tradition of war photography, this way of depicting expresses a certain ideology, as Robin Andersen explains in his article *Images of War: Photojournalism, Ideology, and Central America*.[85] Looking directly into the camera is an act of gazing back, which is considered to be confronting and aggressive, especially when the depicted is a soldier or rebel.[86] Looking away, with the rifle off to the side or on the back, the depicted does not confront the viewer and is not perceived to be threatening.[87] Andersen explains: 'Portrayals of 'rebels' as inhuman and threatening deny them legitimacy as a plausible alternative to the status quo.'[88] By depicting rebels in the way they do, *Lens Young Homsi*'s photographers show their sympathy towards the rebels. The lived space of the rebels as well as the photographers contains belief in changing the status quo, which shows in the picture.

Children in the street

The photograph in Appendix 10 was taken on 21 November 2013 in the Jourat Al-Shayiah neighbourhood.[89] Most prominent are the two smiling children in the foreground. This photograph was taken very close to them, from a low viewpoint: the photographer was squatting down, as you do when you speak to children and want them to trust you. Where it is threatening and confronting if rebels or soldiers look straight into the camera, children looking straight at you are often considered vulnerable and honest, opening up towards the viewer. For getting attention and compassion, as Susan D. Moeller writes in *A Hierarchy of Innocence*, it is key that children in photographs are looking right at you.[90] From their smiles speaks trust, hope and innocence.

The curb and upper line of the door behind the children direct the viewer's gaze towards the men in the background. Due to the vertical separation of the buildings and his black clothes, the man on the left is most prominent. Although he is carrying a rifle, the children are not frightened. They feel comfortable around what seems to be a rebel. Considering the colours in the image, the children's sweaters are repeated in the clothes of the men (rebels) on the background. This equalizes the children's characteristics with the rebel's: a notable effect. Children would normally be opposed to rebels due to their connoted innocence, cuteness and harmlessness.

Despite the rebels that are standing very close to them, and despite the war and the dirt on the streets, the children in this photograph are still smiling. This is important for what *Lens Young Homsi* wants to show, as Susan D. Moeller explains: 'We judge the character of our leaders and the quality of our government by their responsiveness to the needs (or our perception of the needs) of

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[85] Andersen, Robin. (1989) 'Images of War: Photojournalism, Ideology, and Central America', in: *Latin Amerian Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 96-114.

[86] Andersen. (1989): 104-105.

[87] Andersen. (1989): 106.

[88] Andersen. (1989): 112.

[89] Lens Young Homsi. (21 November 2013) [Geen titel], *Facebook*. https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/667034569998139/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

[90] Moeller, Susan D. (2002) 'A Hierarchy of Innocence. The Media's Use of Children in the Telling of International News', in: *Press / Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 36-56: 50.

our own children and the world's children.'[91] Through the smiles and lack of fear of the children, *Lens Young Homsi* makes the viewer consider the rebels to be good possible leaders.

Based on the focus on facial expressions of people, the lack of horizon and the point of view below a children's viewpoint, this photograph shows us a walker point of view, a lived space. Through visual similarities between children and rebels, the latter are depicted as trustworthy and bringing hope. As in the previous two photographs, this image expresses a positive attitude towards the rebels.

Homs in wintertime

This image of people walking through the snowy Al-Waer neighbourhood, shown in Appendix 11, was taken on 1 January 2016.[92] In the composition, we can distinguish two directions of lines: the lanterns on the right direct the viewer's gaze mostly vertically, whereas the buildings on the left direct our gaze horizontally. At the point where they meet are people. The man on the left walks on the vertical midline, his face exactly at the intersection of the diagonal lines of the edge of the path on the left/the upper line of the trees on the right, and of the edge of the path on the right/the tops of the lanterns on the left. Due to these lines and the viewpoint, which is eye level, the viewer's focus goes to the people in the image.

White, grey and blue are the dominant colours in this photograph. They cause the landscape to look very hibernal, but also very quiet, peaceful even. In January 2016, Al-Waer had just been retaken by the government and people were able to return to their homes here. The tranquillity of the neighbourhood is reflected in this image. Greyish colours create a feeling of hopelessness, destruction and dreariness. Although the retrieval of the neighbourhood was good news for its residents, this photo's ambiance is predominantly desolation. When compared to the previously discussed images, *Lens Young Homsi* seems to have different attitudes towards the rebels and the government. Neighbourhoods controlled by the rebels connote happiness as a result of bright colours or smiling people, although war rages here. In contrast, Al-Waer, retaken by the government and no longer in the midst of fights, evokes a sense of devastation and misery. Again, a preference for the rebels becomes obvious in the pictures of *Lens Young Homsi*.

The Old Souk

Lens Young Homsi took this photograph of the Ancient Souk Market on 3 January 2014 (Appendix 12).[93] Our attention is drawn to an imaginary vertical line that runs through the top of the roof, the chandelier, the exit of the Souk and middle of the pathway. Because our attention is drawn to the chandelier, we might not directly see the Old Souk in its current state as rubble: a chandelier symbolizes wealth and beauty. In this photograph, the chandelier even seems to still shine, due to the light that comes through the open roof. These sunrays and dots of light in the roof and on the floor

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[91] Moeller. (2002): 44.

[92] Lens Young Homsi. (1 January 2016) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/1071382896229969/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

[93] Lens Young Homsi. (3 January 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/691290170905912/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

make the setting seem fairylike, reminiscent of an Eastern starry night. By directing the viewer's gaze to the middle of the image, the focus is not on the destroyed shops on the left and right. The star-like spots of light distract the viewer from the fact the holes in the roof are actually bullet holes. Due to the aesthetic quality of the image, the truth of destruction and war is almost invisible.

The point of view of this image is on eye level, from inside a building: a walker perspective. Although the space in which the viewer finds himself is almost completely closed off, the photograph does not create a feeling of being locked up. Through the incoming light and the opening at the end of the street, the possibility of moving around freely is suggested. This message appertains to lived space, since people were not yet actually able to move as they wished in the city in January 2014. The old city still belonged to the rebels and faced attacks by the government, so the actual world was not full of light or fairylike at all.

View through a window

A very sunny Homs, photographed through a window on 25 August 2015, is shown in Appendix 13.[94] The composition of this image, as for the previous ones, is quite remarkable. The horizon is just below the horizontal middle of the image. On the right, we see a road, which leads to the exact middle of the horizon. A little left from the road, a collapsed building perfectly follows the direction of the road. The two biggest and most notable buildings in the image are on the same height, one on the utter left and one on the vertical midline. Colours cause the opposition between the space above and beneath the horizon. The upper half of the image is bright blue, the lower half predominantly yellow and cream. This reminds of typical Hollywood film covers, which also often use the contrast of yellow and blue to get attention.[95] It might even be compared to a vacation photo: a sun-bathing city underneath a clear blue sky. Unexpected aesthetics for a photograph of a city in wartime. Besides, the outstanding colours are in stark contrast to the greyish city shown in the Russian drone footage discussed in the next chapter. This image clearly wants to give a positive impression of the city.

At the same time, this photograph displays another, less positive sphere. The view is from above, the picture was taken from inside an open building as the photo of the sniper was (Appendix 5). This sniper-quality gives a perverse touch to the sun-bathing splendour of the city: although the city is full of life, this life can be ended by one bullet. We cannot see a sniper, but the use of his viewpoint provides this picture with a sense of danger luring in the background. As in the firstly discussed photograph the sniper's point of view is extremely aestheticized and anonymized. We cannot see the sniper himself nor his targets, only his view on the city, which at first sight seems voyeuristic. This perspective suggests power. Since the neighbourhood of Al-Waer was still under control of the rebels, but about to be retaken by Al-Assad at the moment the picture was taken, *Lens Young Homsi*'s representation is comprehensible. Aesthetic qualities in combination with the point of view create a sense of hope and celebrate the sniper. His dangerous side and the reality of a war that is about to be lost are obscured. Although the photographer wants to evoke the idea a voyeur is watching, a lived space and thus a walker's viewpoint are actually shown.

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[94] Lens Young Homsi. (25 August 2015) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.890210257680568.1073741825.420091707943761/100947398908 7527/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).
[95] Sciretta, Peter. (27 November 2009) 'Orange/Blue Contrast in Movie Posters', in: */Film*.
http://www.slashfilm.com/orangeblue-contrast-in-movie-posters/ (7 March 2017).

Conclusion

Through the depiction of as well people as buildings, *Lens Young Homsi* shows us the experiences and feelings of people living in the city, both during and after the war. They are obviously against Al-Assad and represent rebels as trustworthy and bringing hope. The city is not depicted as irrecoverably destroyed, but full of life and chances. In the midst of rubble and chaos, *Lens Young Homsi* focusses on sunshine, bright colours, people and in particular children, and beauty. Sniper's deadly gazes are obscured through framing and aesthetics. Horrible events and circumstances cannot be denied so they are always present in the photographs, but never emphasized. The focus is always on humanity, sometimes by literally zooming into the human face. All photographs show a positive lived space. This brings hope out of pain, as the photographers wanted to achieve.

Chapter 4: Aerial footage of Russian drones

Introduction

In January 2016, *Russia Today* posted drone footage of Syrian cities on their website and on YouTube. *RT* or *Russia Today* is a Russian state-funded, multiple-language news channel which brings the Russian view on global news. It is the largest Russian news network on YouTube, with a few billion viewers across the world. The network aims primarily at audiences in Europe and the United States.[96] In contrast to the previously discussed representations of Homs, the footage of *Russia Today* does not show us the citizen's point of view on Syria.

Russia delivers military weapons and knowledge to Al-Assad, to end the war and to battle Islamic State. Although they argue they do not benefit from involvement, there is a reason for the Russians to intervene in the Syrian war. They have a military basis in Syria and the country is their last ally in the Middle East. Contrary to the opinion of the US and most European countries, Putin thinks Al-Assad should not be expelled.[97] Western newspapers claimed that Russia did not only help Al-Assad by delivering weapons and striking the Islamic State as they announced, but that they also struck other armed groups fighting the president. According to *The Independent* 'they have been bombing quite indiscriminately in areas where there isn't IS, where there are simply opposition groups to the Assad regime.'[98] Russia disagrees. What is actually going on, is not sure. Russian media analyst Vasily Gatov said in *The Moscow Times* that 'there is no coordinated effort to attack Russia in Western media', but 'as for the Russian propaganda outlets trying to shift public opinion in the West, their influence was too weak to change anything.'[99] To his opinion, the Western media are not claiming anything untrue, nor are the Russian media. *The Moscow Times* named *RT* as one of the most important Russian media outlets in trying to convince the West.[100] So whether Russia's role in Syria is ambiguous or not, whether the Western media are right or not, it is *RT*'s aim to present Russia as helping Al-Assad to end the war and to coordinate action against Islamic State. This is also important for the drone footage they posted in January 2016.

The drone footage I will discuss was filmed by *RT* correspondent Murad Gazdiev and his crew. On the internet, three different montages appeared. *RT* posted a 1.02 minute film titled *DRONE: City of Homs after years of fight*[101] on their website and a 1.55 minute film named *Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria* on YouTube.[102] The canal Activism and Riots also posted a

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[96] [Author unknown]. (2016) 'About RT', in: *RT* https://www.rt.com/about-us/ (18 December 2016).

[97] Crooijmans, Hans. (26 September 2015) 'Waarom Poetin wil samenwerken met Assad', in: *Elsevier* http://www.elsevier.nl/Buitenland/achtergrond/2015/9/Waarom-Poetin-wil-samenwerken-met-Assad-2689670W/?masterpageid=174042 (22 December 2016).

[98] Woodcock, Andrew. (7 October 2015) 'Russian air strikes makes Syria more dangerous, says Michael Fallon', in: *Independent* http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russian-air-strikes-make-syria-more-dangerous-says-michael-fallon-a6684101.html (27 December 2016).

[99] Litvinova, Daria. (4 October 2015) 'Russia Can't Sell Its Syria Propaganda – Analysts', in: *The Moscow Times* https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russia-cant-sell-its-syria-propaganda-analysts-50047 (20 December 2016).

[100] Litvinova, Daria. (4 October 2015) 'Russia Can't Sell Its Syria Propaganda – Analysts', in: *The Moscow Times* https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russia-cant-sell-its-syria-propaganda-analysts-50047 (20 December 2016).

[101] *DRONE: City of Homs after years of fight.* Gazdiev, Murad. (20 January 2016) Russia: RT. https://www.rt.com/news/329531-rt-exclusive-homs-drone-footage/ (18 December 2016).

[102] *Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE)*. [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016).

montage of *RT*'s drone footage on YouTube. Their film *RT EXCLUSIVE Drone footage Shows total Devastation IN HOMS* takes 3.19 minutes.[103] Activism and Riots shows us more shots, but all three video's use the same footage and depict the city the same way. Through framing, selection and viewpoint, all images and films invoke some degree of subjectivity.[104] The person(s) filming with the drone and editing the footage make(s) decisions about what is shown and in which way this is done. In this case, it is important to note that Russians filmed the footage. Their fundamental purpose was to survey and document destruction by showing a panoptic view from above, filmed with a drone. What is actually shown and the way in which it is shown are not documenting at all though, as I will explain below. The device and perspective of the drone represent Homs in a particular way. I will first explain why the footage is not documentative. Hereafter I will research what affects the footage actually plays upon and how, by looking at the drone as a technological means. Because all three videos show (roughly) the same footage in the same way, I will discuss them as one.

The metaphor of documentation

The Russian drone footage views the space of Homs mostly from above, as shown in Appendix 14-17. Sometimes the camera is moving away from the city as if zooming out (Appendix 17). Although we can see a large part of the city, an overview using a panning shot is never given and we feel like the city never ends. When the city is shown directly from above and there is an actual overview, only a few buildings are visible (Appendix 14). *RT*'s main purpose was to survey destruction, which suggests a voyeuristic viewpoint, but their view never enables us to read the city. The footage does not give us a documentational image of Homs through a voyeuristic viewpoint.

Next to zooming out, the camera also regularly zooms in to the houses, but never really enters them (Appendix 18). *Russia Today* also tries to move the camera toward a walker's point of view by moving the camera towards houses, but never actually shows it. No emotionally involved or embodied perspectives are displayed: there is complete absence of people, suffering and death. It is remarkable that the drone footage shows no inhabitants at all: according to the *BBC*, there were still 1.5 million people living in the city of Homs in 2015.[105] Homs was already completely retaken by the government by the end of 2015, so during 2016 (when the aerial footage was recorded) even more people have returned to their homes. As Marwa al-Sabouni describes in *The Battle for Home*, even during the war many people were still in Homs. They chose to stay or got caught when the official army besieged neighbourhoods where the opposition was in control.[106] People did not live in the way they normally did: 'as the available space decreased, people re-opened small businesses in order to make a living (…) and every abandoned bit of storage space became a valuable habitat.'[107] People were hiding and using space differently, which is not shown in the footage. *RT* does not document the war and city through zooming in and showing the lives of people through a walker's point of view either.

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[103] *RT EXCLUSIVE Drone footage Shows total Devastation IN HOMS*. Gazdiev, Murad. (21 January 2016) YouTube: Activism And Riots. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOEZVI3243M (20 December 2016).

[104] Sturken & Cartwright. (2001): 16.

[105] Hurrell, Bella & John Walton, Nassos Stylianou, Ed Lowther, Mike Hills, Khalil Lubbard, Mohamed Yehia. (15 March 2016) 'Life and death in Syria. Five years into war, what is left of the country?', in: *BBC News* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-841ebc3a-1be9-493b-8800-2c04890e8fc9 (20 December 2016).

[106] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 48.

[107] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 58.

Besides perspective, sound and text in *RT*'s videos also have an important effect on the viewer's experience. We only hear the buzzing sound of the drone in the videos posted on YouTube, and there is no other text than a short sentence in the caption. On the other hand, the footage on *RT*'s website is accompanied by sad, slow music and displays the following texts on screen:

Homs, Syria

Exclusive drone footage

This is Syria's 3rd largest city

Before war: major industrial center; population over 650k people

City saw heaviest battles between rebels & Assad forces

These texts and the music try to evoke a certain reaction, different from the other two videos. *RT* clearly wants to communicate the message of how disastrous all events have been. The music and text play heavily on a 'before and after' fantasy: it tells us what used to be and shows us what is now, indicating an end. In contrast to what *RT* wants or pretends to show, the immensity of destruction is employed as a metaphor and an allegory rather than documentation. To understand the meaning of this metaphor, it is important to understand what the videos connote or indicate. I will research this by looking at the perspective of the drone and the drone as a technological means.

A drone's perspective: shocking pleasure

A view from the sky will not likely be shown by inhabitants of Homs. The air is the space where danger comes from, since the fighting mostly happened through bombing. As Marwa al-Sabouni describes in *The Battle for Home* 'mortars and snipers were showering our skies'.[108] Tanks besieged the city and fired bombs, mortar missiles flew to their targets and air strikes were very common for the attack on Baba Amr.[109] These mortar missiles are drones: 'flying, high resolution video cameras armed with missiles', as they are defined by Grégoire Chamayou in *A Theory of the Drone*.[110] The device connotes threat and danger for inhabitants of Homs, especially their sound. Grégoire Chamayou cites a *New York Times* journalist to explain that 'The drones were terrifying. From the ground, it is impossible to determine who or what they are tracking as they circle overhead. The buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death.'[111] The films posted on YouTube are accompanied solely by the sound of drones, which would horrify locals. *RT*'s footage denies that horror or danger are connoted to drones. The eye of the camera in a drone allows to project power without projecting own vulnerability: a person controlling a drone is capable of killing without risking to be killed himself. This projection of power 'obscures the facts of wounding, killing and destroying' as Chamayou writes, and reduces the enemy to a mere target, nothing but vulnerable.[112] However, this human target and its vulnerability are not shown at all in *RT*'s footage. Danger for the human being and its death are denied. Instead of depicting the horror truthfully, a metaphor is created. By not projecting own or other's vulnerability, they only project their power.

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[108] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 172.
[109] Al-Sabouni. (2016): 48; 56; 106.
[110] Chamayou, Grégoire. (2015) *A Theory of the Drone*. New York: The New Press: 12.
[111] Chamayou. (2015): 44.
[112] Chamayou. (2015): 12.

For this viewpoint of power, the relation between developer and destroyer of the city is also very important. Russia has been bombing the city, amongst others with the device they are now filming with. The destruction we see is partially caused by them. Stephen Graham writes in 'Cities as Strategic Sites: Place Annihilation and Urban Geopolitics' that '[city annihilation] involves scientific planning and operational strategy-making of a complexity and sophistication that matches anything ever done to sustain the more familiar act of civil urban planning.'[113] Conceived space and a voyeuristic viewpoint are as relevant for city planning as it is for annihilation. To be able to destroy the city, you have to read and understand the city, and by destroying you create a new space. Although the footage never really shows a voyeuristic viewpoint, it is suggested. The videos show a conceived space that was partially created by Russia and is now given function or meaning by them, which shows their power and control.

Meaning and function are given in creating a sense of pleasure. For locals, *RT*'s videos connote danger and threat, but for outsiders (especially Western people), the way of depicting and the use of the drone connote something different. Homs seems post-war, stabilized, quiescent, ready to be rebuilt and used again. A sense of ending is suggested, there is no threat anymore. Destroyed buildings in this footage are displayed as ruins: remnants, traces of something that used to be there. They are defined by absence, as Andreas Huyssen explains in 'Nostalgia for Ruins': we can still see what something used to be, but it does no longer function. The past is visible, but no longer accessible.[114] Ruins are connected to a rethinking of the possibility for a new future, a belief that is gone in postmodernism and which is necessary after a war like the one in Syria.[115] Due to the suggestion of an ending evoked by depicting the buildings as ruins, it becomes possible to think of the future, of rebuilding Homs. The footage shows a blank slate upon which a new city can be built.

Presenting bombed cities this way happens more often in contemporary cultural expressions, it actually is a popular way of representation:

> Bombings (…) are not about producing ruins. They produce rubble. But then the market has recently been saturated with stunning picture books and films of the ruins of World War II. In them, rubble is indeed transformed, even aestheticized, into ruin.[116]

Picture books, war films and games aestheticize rubble into ruin. People are used to seeing cities this way and link the images of the footage to fun and fiction in popular culture. The use of the drone as a technological means is also connected to popular culture. Drones have become increasingly popular since the introduction of the personal drone, which can be used for vacation photos or films, or just in everyday life. For those involved in war the footage has a military gaze, but for people that do not know that drones are used as weapons, the videos show a popular gaze. The device of the drone connotes danger to Homs' locals, but it connotes pleasure for outsiders. By choosing this device, this viewpoint and the relation to these visual traditions to depict the destroyed city of Homs, Russia links its role in the war to power and pleasure.

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[113] Graham, Stephen. (2003) 'Cities as Strategic Sites: Place Annihilation and Urban Geopolitics', in: *Cities, War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*. Hoboken: Blackwell: pp. 31-53: 31.
[114] Huyssen, Andreas. (2006) 'Nostalgia for Ruins', in: *Grey Room*, no. 23, pp. 6-21: 12.
[115] Lecture 'City Culture: The City in Ruins', László Munteán & Timotheus Vermeulen. (1 December 2015) Nijmegen: Radboud University, Cultural Studies.
[116] Huyssen. (2006): 8.

Conclusion

Drone footage filmed by *RT* was meant to survey and document destruction by showing a panoptic view from above. The footage is not documenting, though, but creates a new conceived space. This space is given meaning by depicting the city in a metaphorical way that plays upon affective registers of shock/horror and pleasure.

      The air and the drone as a technological means connote threat and horror to inhabitants of Homs, since the fighting mostly happened by throwing bombs or sending drones armed with missiles. Sounds of drones, as we can hear in two of the three videos discussed, scare the hell out of locals. For them, *RT*'s footage connotes shock and horror. Since the shown images are completely dehumanized, these connotations are denied.

      For Russians and Western people the footage is not filmed from a threatening point of view. The viewpoint of the destroying drone is connected to conceived space and giving the city a function again, which connotes power and control. Besides, by depicting the annihilated buildings in the tradition of ruins an ending is suggested. All that is left is a blank slate upon which a new city can be built. Western people recognize this way of depicting war in the tradition popular films and games. They recognize the viewpoint of the drone from the increasingly popular personal drone. The device of the drone and its viewpoint will be read as powerful and popular, which connotes pleasure.

Conclusion

A struggle of perspectives

All three representations of Homs I analysed in this thesis show that during the war spatial structures are disturbed, which causes chaos. Representations are very subjective or struggle with the understanding of space at hand. Marwa al-Sabouni and *Lens Young Homsi* show us another perspective on the war than *Russia Today* does. All objects of research are struggling to comprehend and assign meaning to the space around them.

Conceived space no longer functions or is no longer able to function as it was supposed to. Space is used differently. People living in the city have to think creatively to be able to survive. This is where lived space becomes important. Lefebvre's understanding of space is reversed in representations of the war made by locals: lived space becomes the basis for perceived space, and conceived space does not fit into the production of perceived space anymore. As well Marwa al-Sabouni as *Lens Young Homs* show their own lived space in their representations of Homs in the midst of siege. Before the war, Marwa al-Sabouni wants to show us the conceived space of architecture, but she cannot eliminate her citizenship and also shows us perceived and lived space. In her descriptions of Homs during the war, lived space becomes the most important basis for perceived space since conceived space no longer functions as it was supposed to. *Lens Young Homsi* wants to show the experiences and feelings of people living in Homs during the siege, which form a part of lived space. They do not only depict the lived space of other people, but also their own lived space. They sympathize with the rebels in Homs, not with Al-Assad and the government. Victims of destruction, as Marwa al-Sabouni and *Lens Young Homsi*'s photographers are, need to rely on lived space in order to survive.

Russia Today provides us with a not-citizen's point of view. They want to create a new conceived space. As destroyer of the city, lived space is not important for *RT*'s representation. Because the city is depicted in a dehumanized manner, lived and perceived space are denied. The shock and horror that locals would feel when they watch the footage are denied. Instead, the footage is shown from a powerful point of view in visual traditions that connote pleasure. A metaphor that shows possibilities for a new conceived space is created. Lefebvre's understanding of space is not reversed. *Russia Today* is not a victim of the destruction, but partially caused it and still has a sense of control. This shows in the differences between the representations.

De Certeau's understanding of space is not sufficient for the representations researched in this thesis. Marwa al-Sabouni, both architect and inhabitant of Homs, floats between the two concepts and connects them. The perspective of voyeur can be taken to perform or demonstrate power and control, but there cannot be real control or structuring during the war, as the Russian drone footage shows. *RT* suggests both a voyeuristic and a walker's point of view, but never shows either of them. *Lens Young Homsi* does sometimes seem to take a voyeuristic viewpoint by taking perspective above the ground. The photographs showing this perspective are always taken from inside a building though, which is the walker's area, and do not structure the city. All three representations seem to be both walker and voyeur, but none of those at the same time.

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RT EXCLUSIVE Drone footage Shows total Devastation IN HOMS. Gazdiev, Murad. (21 January 2016) YouTube: Activism And Riots. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOEZVI3243M (20 December 2016).

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backtracks-threats-close-accounts-Putin-s-propaganda-mouthpiece-Russia-Today.html (20 December 2016).

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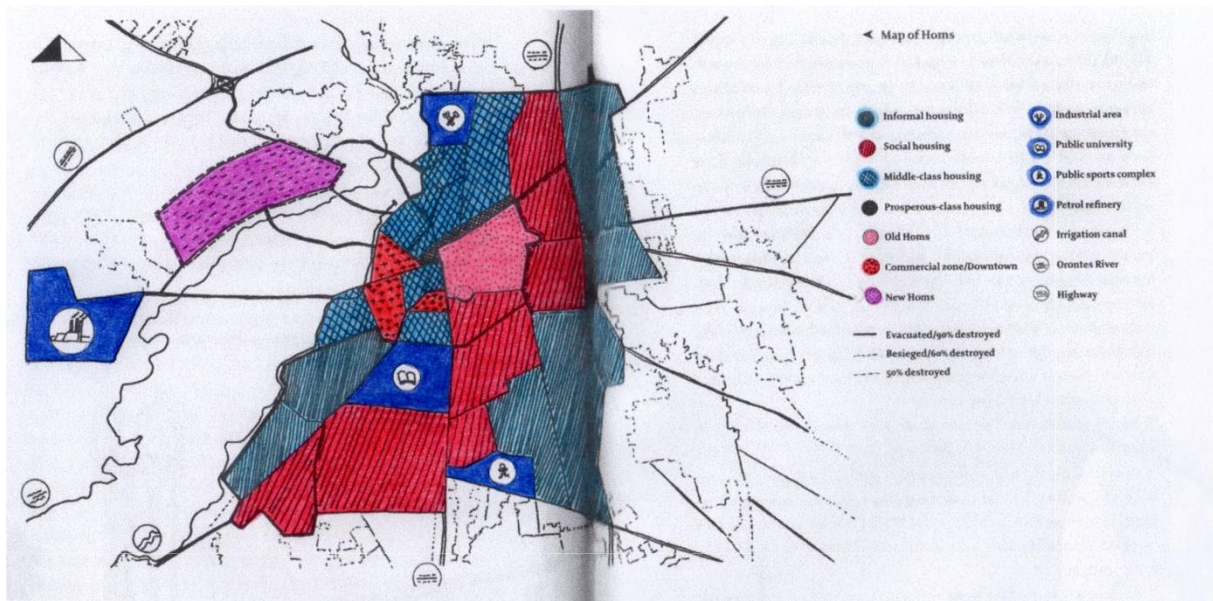
Appendix

Appendix 1: Map of Homs in *The Battle for Home*

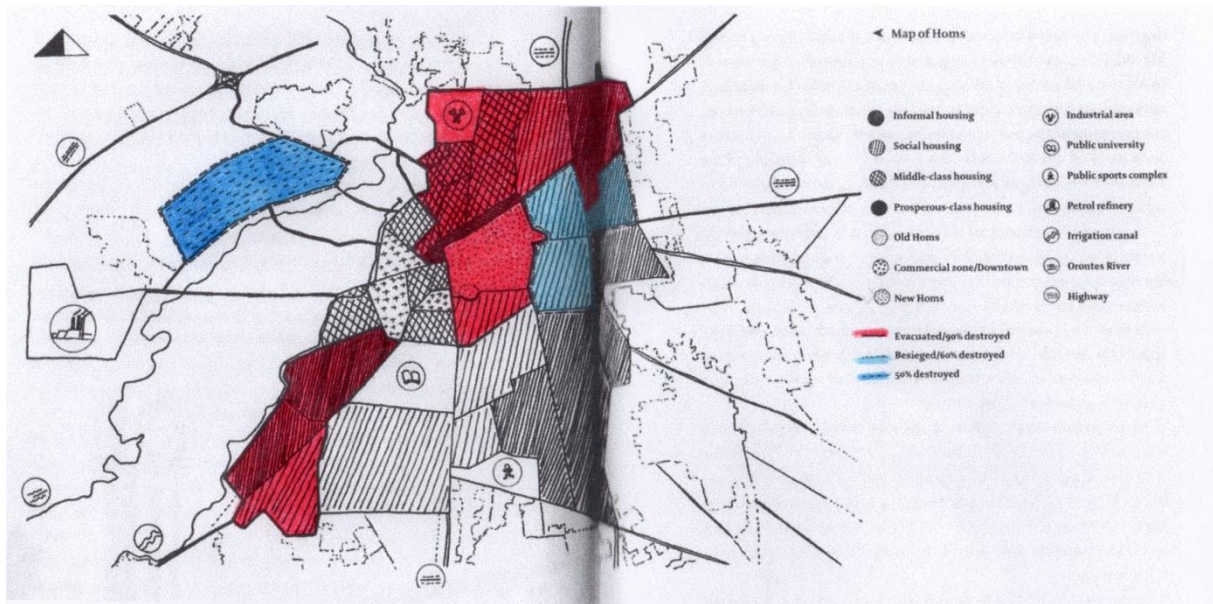Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 28-29.

Appendix 2: Map of Homs districts in *The Battle for Home*

Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 28-29 [colours edited].
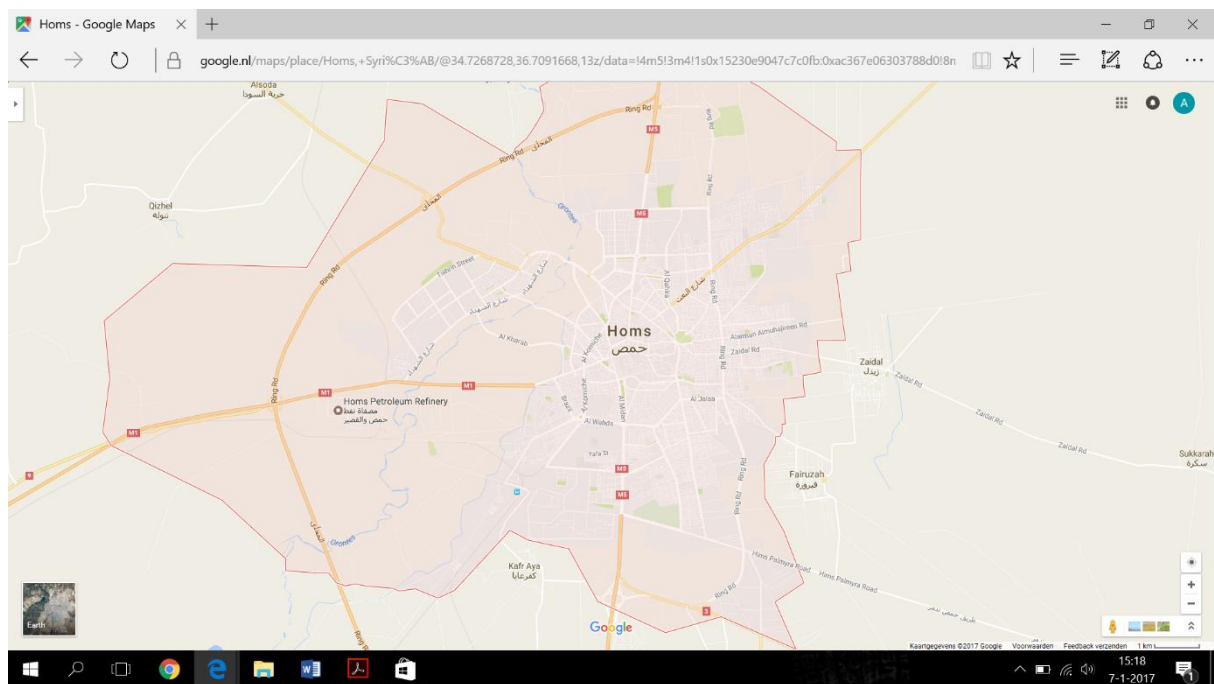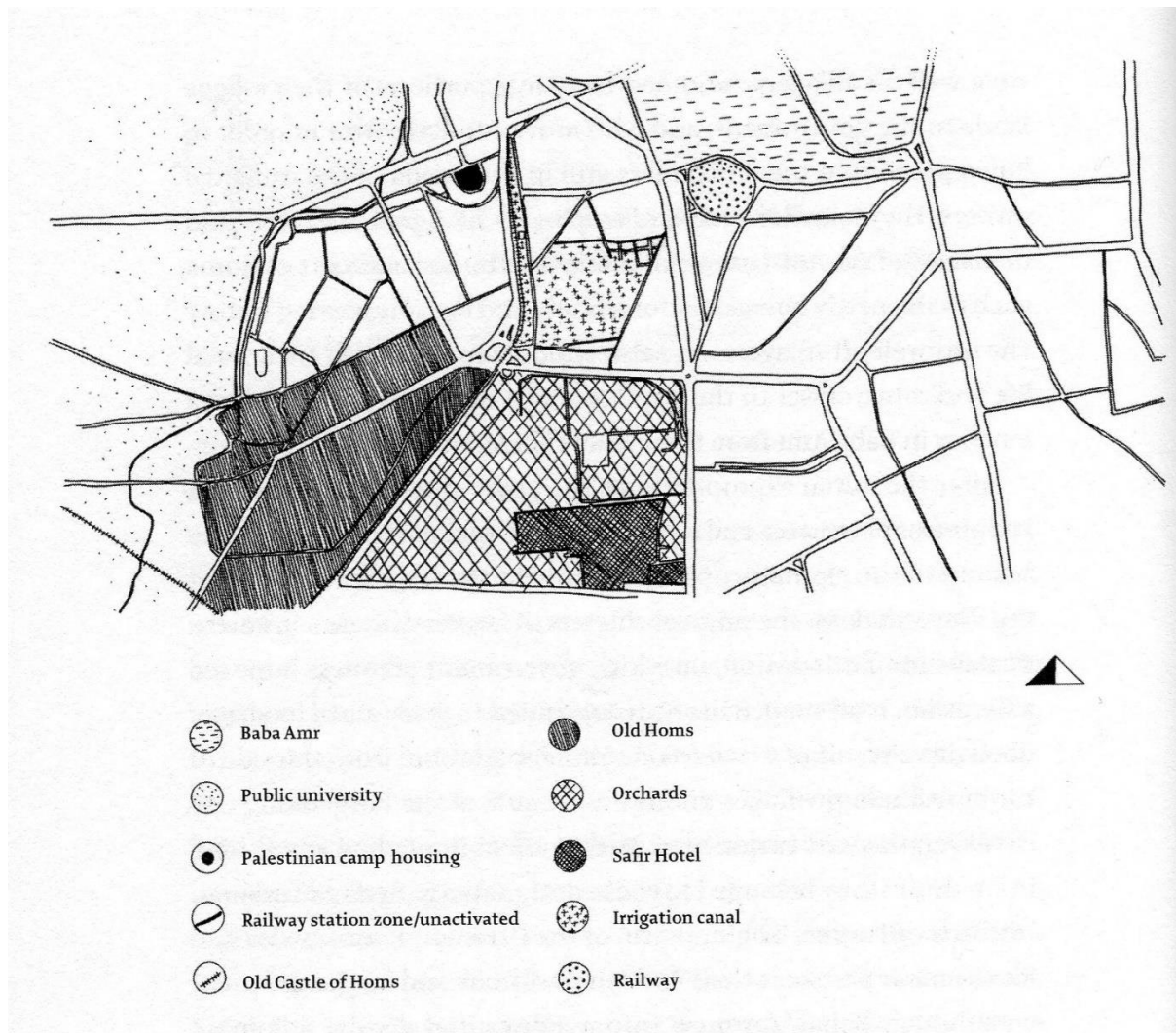
Appendix 3: Map of Homs destruction in *The Battle for Home*

Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 28-29 [colours edited].

Appendix 4: Map of Homs from Google Maps

[Author unknown]. (11 February 2017) 'Homs', *Google Maps*.
https://www.google.nl/maps/place/Homs,+Syri%C3%AB/@34.7302927,36.6419769,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x15230e9047c7c0fb:0xac367e06303788d0!8m2!3d34.7324273!4d36.7136959 (11 February 2017).
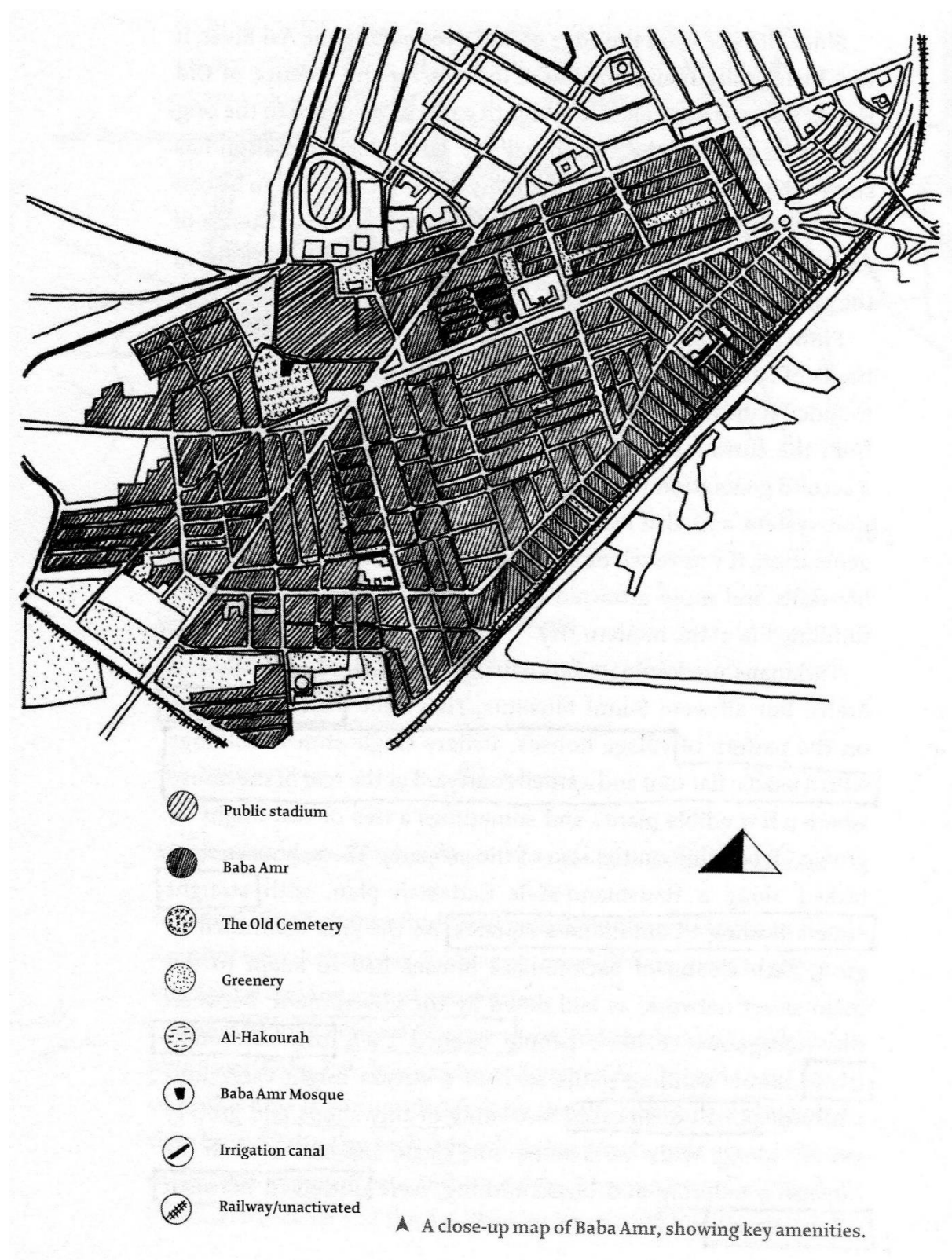
Appendix 5: Map of Baba Amr in *The Battle for Home*

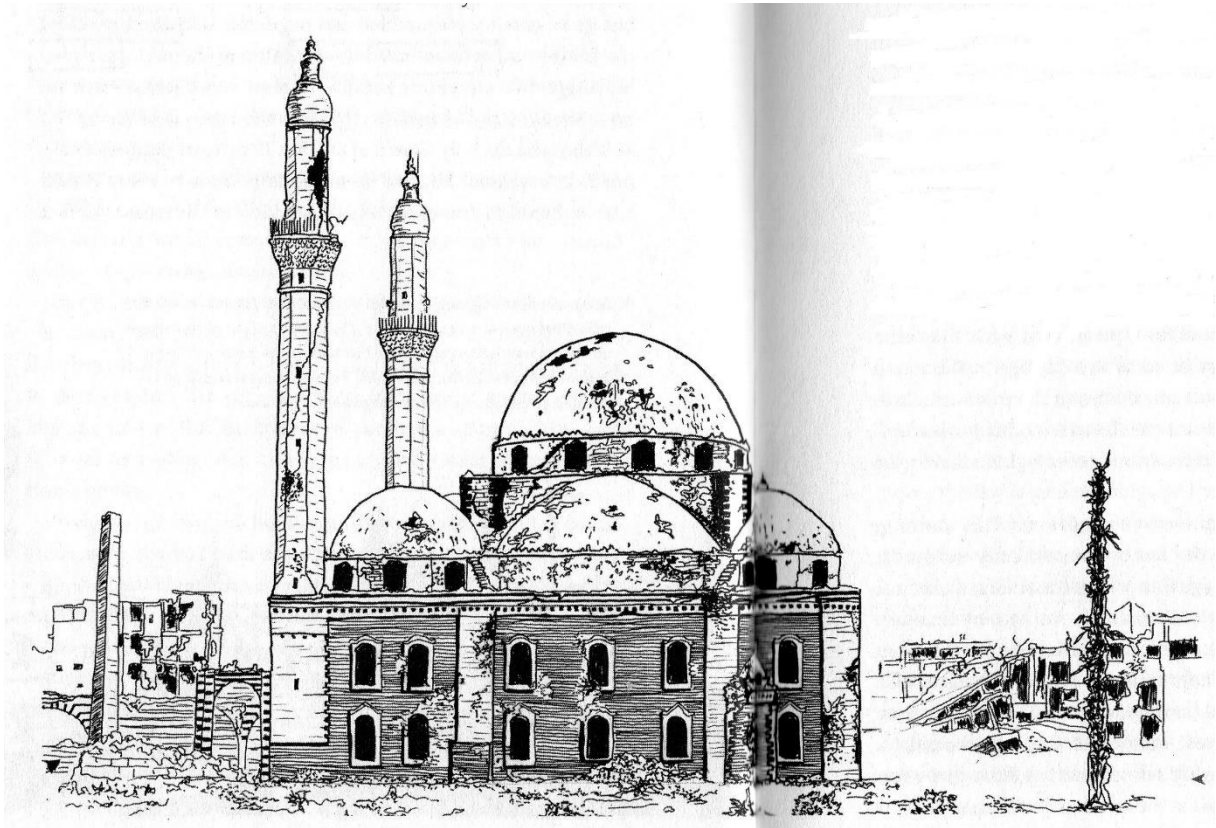Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 92.

Appendix 6: Close-up map of Baba Amr in *The Battle for Home*

Public stadium

Baba Amr

The Old Cemetery

Greenery

Al-Hakourah

Baba Amr Mosque

Irrigation canal

Railway/unactivated

A close-up map of Baba Amr, showing key amenities.

Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 94.

Appendix 7: Drawing of Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque in *The Battle for Home*

Al-Sabouni, Marwa. (2016) *The Battle for Home. The Memoir of a Syrian Architect.* London: Thames & Hudson: 32-33.

Appendix 8: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*: the sniper

Lens Young Homsi. (5 November 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.890210257680568.1073741825.4209117079
43761/1009473989087527/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

المكان: حُمْص - حيّ الوعر

الزمان: اليوم - 5 تشرين الثاني 2014

Location: Homs - Al-Wa'er Neighborhood

Date: Today - 5 November 2014

Appendix 9: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*: the rebel

Lens Young Homsi. (23 April 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/
749206158447646/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

المكان: حُمْص - حيّ القصور

الزمان: اليوم - 23 نيسان 2014

Location: Homs - Al-Qusor Neighborhood

Date: Today - 23 April 2014

Appendix 10: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*: children in the street

Lens Young Homsi. (21 November 2013) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/667034569998139/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

المكان: حمص - حي جورة الشّيّاح

Location: Homs City - Jourat Al-Shayiah Neighborhood

الزمان: اليوم - 21 تشرين الثاني 2013

Date: Today - 21 November 2013

Appendix 11: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*: Homs in wintertime

Lens Young Homsi. (1 January 2016) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/1071382896229969/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).
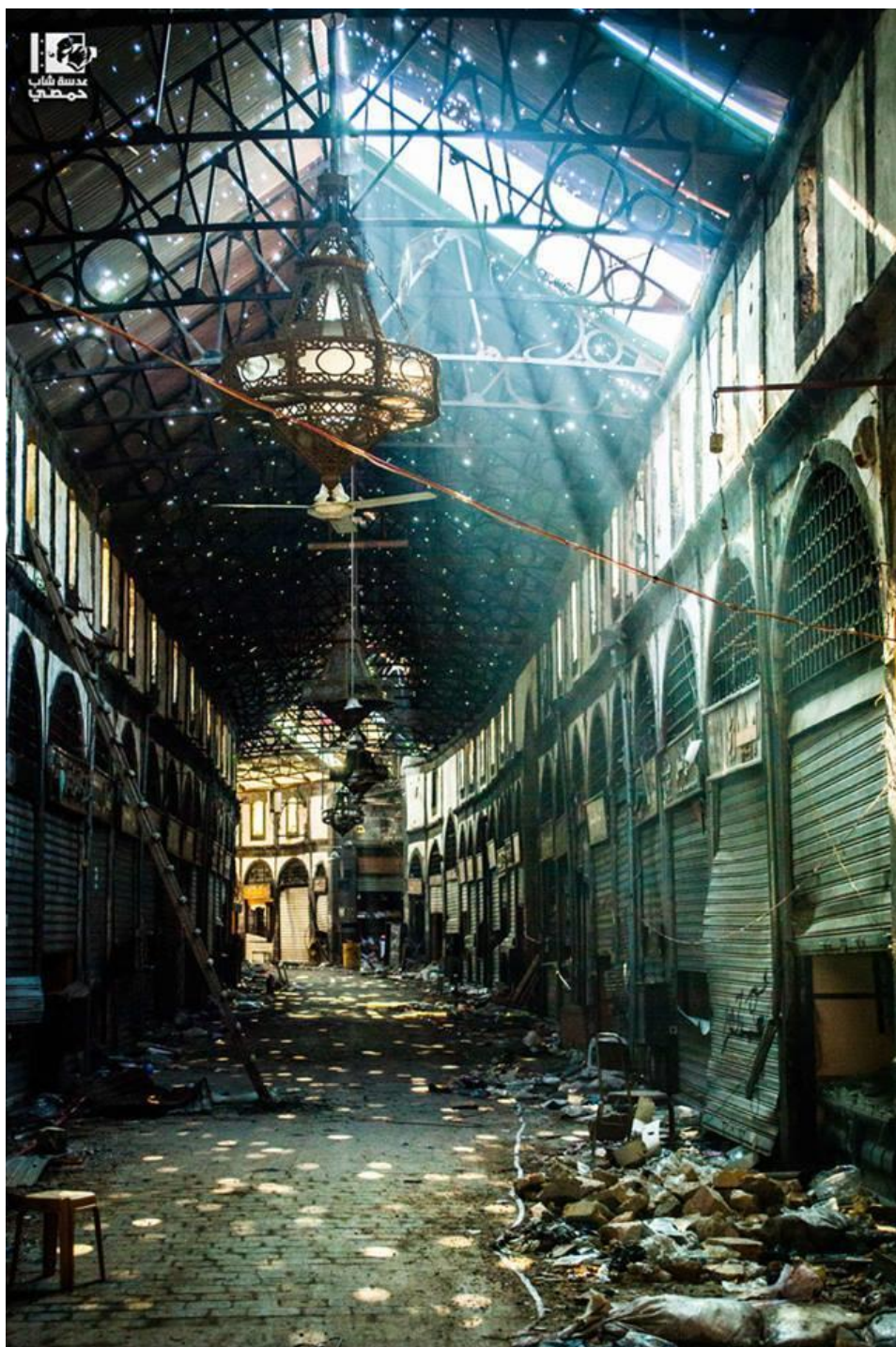
المكان: حُمْص - حيّ الوعر

الزمان: 1 كانون الثاني 2016

Location: Homs - Al-Wa'er Neighborhood

Date: 1 January 2016

Appendix 12: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*: the Old Souk

Lens Young Homsi. (3 January 2014) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.
https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.420920507942881.97560.420911707943761/691290170905912/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

المكان: حمص - السوق الأثري

الزمان: اليوم - 3 كانون الثاني 2014

Location: Homs City - "The Ancient Souq" Market

Date: Today - 3 January 2014

Appendix 13: Photograph made by *Lens Young Homsi*; view through a window

Lens Young Homsi. (25 August 2015) [Geen titel], *Facebook*.

https://www.facebook.com/LensYoungHomsi/photos/a.89021025768056B.1073741825.4209117079 43761/1009473989087527/?type=3&theater (25 January 2016).

المكان: حُمْص - حيّ الوعر

الزمان: 25 آب 2015

Location: Homs - Al-Wa'er Neighborhood

Date: 25 August 2015

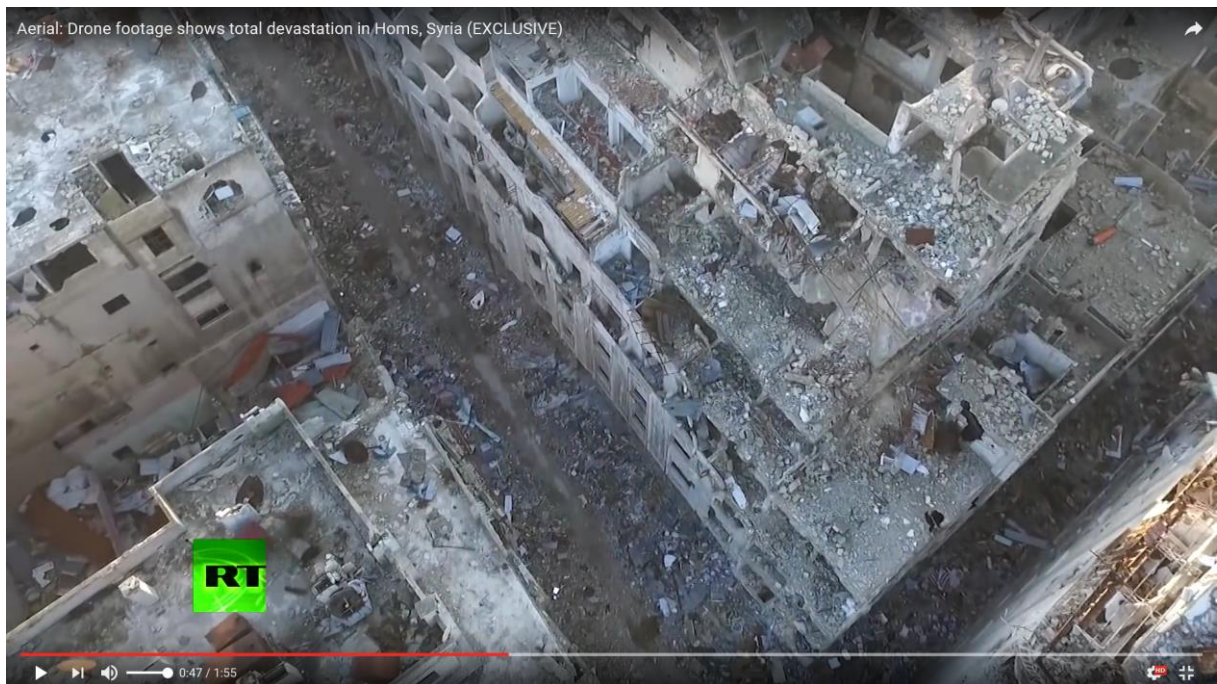## Appendix 14: Still from Russian drone footage: view from above

I decided to include screenshots from the *RT* post on YouTube, since the quality of this video is the best. All images are also included in both other montages named in chapter 4.

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 1.26 min.

Appendix 15: Still from Russian drone footage: view from above

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 0.47 min.

Appendix 16: Still from Russian drone footage: view from above

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 1.53.

Appendix 17: Still from Russian drone footage: view from above

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 1.44 min.

Appendix 18: Still from Russian drone footage: zoomed in

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 0.55 min.

Aerial: Drone footage shows total devastation in Homs, Syria (EXCLUSIVE). [Director unknown]. (20 January 2016) YouTube: RT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoRdCbDd50o&t=6s (20 December 2016): 0.16 min.