The contribution of population moves' collective emotions to regime durability and instability: the Syrian case (1963-2020)

Nine years after the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the country's population is the most displaced of the world. Although weakened, the Syrian regime has not collapsed. In the areas over which it seized control back, displaced people are often prevented from coming back. Unveiled reconstruction plans with large expropriation measures target the former opposition strongholds.

Although this phenomenon stands out by its size, it is not new in Syria. In the three first decades following their access to power in 1963, the Baath party and Syrian regime already pushed for forced or voluntary moves across the country. In the 1960's, land reform¹ led to massive land expropriations, nationalization and reattribution accross the country. From the 1960's to 1980's, Baathist rural dwellers were encouraged to move to the cities to work in state's administration or factories and industries. In the 1970's and 1980's, the implementation of development projects² and urban planing projects³ also led to the resettlement of dozens of thousands of people. In 1982, the military offensive in Hama led to the destruction of entire neighbourhouds and to the forced displacement of thousands of families who were never allowed to return to their neighbourhoods of origin.

We see that there is a continuity in the enforcement of these policies over decades, and thet they were always enforced at times when the regime was still weak and lacking legitimacy, or when it faced an increasing political opposition. Also, these moves were never the first goals of the policies, but always one consequence of their enforcement. That is why I propose to use the term 'population moves policies', in order to study population movement that are usually analyzed and theorized separately, such as 'conflict-induced displacement' (Lischer 2009, p.143), direct and indirect displacement during conflict (Michael P. Roch, 1995), forced migration as "a form of human displacement under coercion and fear (Riano-Alcala, 2008, p.2), involuntary resettlement due to development projects following or outside contexts of conflicts (World Bank, 2015). Within that framework, questioning the use of population displacement as a tool of authoritarian regime durability, defined as the ability to hold on power despite the crises that challenge the authoritarian rule (Levitzky and Way, 2012), is therefore necessary.

Also, I found out during previous fieldwork in Syria and its neighbouring counties that the positions Syrians have on the current conflict and its participants have been often partly motivated by emotions linked to these population moves. Those are directed not only towards the regime, but also towards the other groups composing the Syrian society, whose

¹ Leading to expropriation and reattribution, sedentarization.

² Such as the construction of the Euphrate dam in 1968-1976.

 $^{^{3}}_{2}$ Urban planning projects targeting neighbourhoods where the regime' influence was challenged, such as in ASuch as the construction of the Euphrate dam in 1968-1976.

⁴ Krban planning projects targeting neighbourhoods where the regime' influence was challenged, such as inp or Aleppo in the late 70's.

experiences of population moves differed. Therefore, it requires to explore the impact of these previous policies on the mobilization, from all sides, that broke out in and after 2011. Indeed, population moves policies lead to spatial disruption, and result in having social groups that were traditionally geographically and socially separated forced to cohabit. Looking at them as one phenomenon is also a way to compare the similarities in the effects they created on society. Building on Slater and Fenner's (2011) definition of stability, I therefore question the possibility that population moves policies' outcomes are a factor of instability – defined as the incapacity to avoid crises challenging the ruling power even when sustaining power. I include the inter-groups tensions as being also part of instability. This approach can help us understand the Syrian regime's ability to adapt and reinvent itself to survive at all costs (Heydemann and Leenders, 2011). Indeed, even if not necessarily anticipated, the instability population moves policies created may have helped the Syrian regime to be more durable.

I believe this research is essential in the framework of a sustainable political transition or reconciliation in Syria. Indeed, whoever the winners of this conflict are, they will need to take these emotions and their effects into consideration when dealing with the displaced file. It is also very helpful to conceptualize the nature of Middle Eastern regimes as well as thinking of sustainable solutions for other conflicts in the region, where population displacement and regular social, political and armed mobilization are observed. Indeed, Turkey has also extensively displaced Kurds and faces regular PKK mobilization. The Saddam Hussein baathist regime has also extensively displaced Kurds and other minorities such as Turkmens in the 60s and 70s. The tensions surrounding the retrocession of their confiscated land after the American invasion in 2003 significantly helped ISIS to gain ground in Iraq in 2014.

Emotions is "a feeling associated with the perception, the idea or the judgment that a particular desire is satisfied or not, thereby motivating subjects to take various sorts of action" (Ariffin 2016, p.2). However, some scholars dissociate *affects*, as bodily and unconscious sensations (Clément and Sangar, 2018) from *emotions* that would be more linked to cognition and built on intersubjectivity and cultural components (Crawford, 2000, p. 125, quoted in Clément and Sangar, 2018). However, Lordon (2016), who defines affects as the trigger for ideas (p.34), shows that the line between the two is very blurry. Also, what people feel can be beyond the only bodily reaction and formulated by words, yet without being fully conscious. I will therefore use the word "emotions" as an "umbrella concept allowing for the study of political emotions both as involuntary and as a potential resource for strategic political activity" (Lyngaard, 2019, p.1204). I also adopt her definition of collective emotions as individual emotions affecting the collective when they are shared by a large number of people because they belong to the same entity (such as a nation or institutions) or group they belong to (being a socio-economic class, a religious group or a profession for instance).

I therefore question: How have collective emotions generated by population moves

policies since 1963 contributed to the instability and durability of the Syrian regime?

I want to 1) Identify the collective emotions linked to spatial disruption, within people who faced population move policies (either negatively or positively) 2) explore the coconstituency mechanism between collective emotions, places, fellowship and mobilization, to explain the effect population moves have on regime durability and instability 3) I question the possibility that durability and instability are the two side of a double edge sword effect ; they are intertwined and feeding each other. 4) I also will question the fact the this instability dynamics produce regime durability ; as even if it has not been necessarily anticipated by the regime, it may help it to stay at power.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Emotions and mobilization

Recently, the question of 'emotions' started to receive more interest for the study of international politics. Ariffin, Coicaud and Popvski (2016) and Clément and Sangar (2018) highlight the importance of understanding the role of emotions in world politics and their decision-making processes. I situate my work within the IR "affective turn" (Hoggett and Thompson, 2012) which considers that emotions are at the heart of perceptions, representations and behaviors, therefore a major driver of world politics and political mobilization (Hutchison 2018). It is considered that they can be unpredictable (Hoggett, 2009), at the heart of dynamics of political violence (Fattah and Fierke 2009) and have a major impact in conflict and post-conflicts settings (Ahmed, 2004). I think that focusing on collective emotions related to spatial disruption can therefore deepen our understanding of regime durability and instability.

I also situate my research within structural sociology and cultural constructionism which consider that collective emotions both reflect and shape social structures (Barbalet 2001, Kemper 2001, Jasper 1997 & 2001). Emotions are still considered as intuitive, but the result of a cognitive process which depends on our comprehension of the world and events surrounding us (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001). This "ongoing" (Jasper 1997), "emotional habitus" (Gould, 2009) has direct effects on the eruption and development of social and political mobilization. Mobilization is triggered by a mix of these underlying emotions and more impulsive ones (Jasper, 2011), and can be collectively intentional (Salmela and Nagatsu 2016). In conflict settings, collective emotions are also interiorized through intra-group memory transmission which shapes the social representations and influences social groups' actions (Liu and Hilton, 2005) and therefore can trigger violent actions against other social groups (De Clerck 2010, Veldkamp 2016). They are also shaped by laws, and in return modify relationships between authorities and people (Pasquettu, 2013). As most of the displacement policies in Syria have been implemented within a legal framework, I would therefore like to build on this theory.

Including the spatial dimension of collective emotions into the analysis is essential to me. The concept of "ladder of emotions" developed by Woods, Anderson, Guilbert and

Watkin (2012) considers that the emotions related to place are the motor of political mobilization, and transformed at every stage of the process. Ahmed (2004) considers emotions as being co-constituent and circulatory between people. They influence individuals' behaviors and in return feed the others' emotions, producing a "spatial reorganisation of bodies" that contributes to the creation of reinforcement of "otherness". Building on their work, I therefore consider that collective emotions generated by population moves lead to a process of socio-spatial reorganization along which emotions are transformed and enhanced, making mobilization more likely to happen, which in turn also reinforces emotions. If I support the idea that new emotions are based on the existence of already-present emotions, I however don't necessarily think that there is an order between their appearance. Depending on the context in which population moves occur, several emotions can be felt at the same time, or not. For instance, the arrival of newcomers in a city can generate anger without a strong emotion of fear, that can then be developed by the spatial and mental creation of "otherness". It may be different in case of population moves that happened in a violent setting, with the destruction of houses, massacre and forced displacement, like in Hama in 1982.

I also rely on Kemper's argument that modification of power⁴ and status⁵ is a major driver of collective emotions (2001). Looking at how they vary, and how one group perceives this change happening to another group (Kemper 2001, p.63), we take into consideration the multiple collective appartenances that each individual has in Syria (social class, political communal, religious, gender). I also look at how the change in one group's power and status is felt by other groups in society as it led to specific behaviors which reinforced emotions and created others. For instance, the regime's decision to attribute some land and jobs to rural dwellers in Homs and Aleppo in the 70's and 80's was felt by some of the urban elite as an undeserved and illegitimus privilege granted to uneducated citizens.

Space, atmospheres, places and emotions

I claim that the spatial dimension is an important element for the understanding of the role of emotions in the Syrian regime's dual nature as unstable but durable. I consider that spatial displacement produces new spaces, new subjects and spatial practices within society (Rogers and Wilmsen, 2019). Lefebvre's (1974) considers space as a heterogeneous entity: the way space is shaped ("conceived space") will influence the way space and the individuals living within it are perceived ("perceived space"). The practices of individuals ("lived space") also in return shape the space and people's perceptions, producing a new space. I thereby bring a particular attention to *perception* as a key element of space production.

⁴ Kemper (2001) refers to Weber (cf. Weber 1946: 181) to define power as "the process (...), the relationship or structure, within which one actor is able to realize his or her interests in interaction with another actor, even over the opposition of the other actor." (p.60)

⁵ Kemper considers status within the framework of social movement as a voluntary enterprise, meaning that one actor gives more status to another actor. Here, I would like to adopt another definition of group status as defined by Weber: social class (linked to an economic status), social and political positions (linked to social prestige and the proximity of the individual with the ruling party).

Building on Lefebvre's, the theory of place-making considers that "places" are formed through the emotional and cognitive processes people have from one space over time (Massey, 2005). The aggregation of the realities of the perceived and the perceivers, by their bodily presence in space, create atmospheres (Bohme 1993). Those are shaped by individuals' mundane behaviors in everyday life that constitute routine, "as people improvise their ways through the world" (Pink and Leder Macklay 2012, p.176). Places are made by the boundaries and borders but also by the norms and rules created by the socio-spatial practices (Harvey 1996) which shape social networks. Based on "relational place-making" theory (Pierce, Martin and Murphy 2010), places are composed of material space, social networks and the politics that bound them. I therefore aim at exploring how the material spatial reorganization, collective emotions, atmospheres and social networks give birth to places which in turn will affect collective emotions, and be co-constituent of political and social agency.

The study of co-constituency between places, emotions and mobilization needs to be deepened in the case of Syria. Being an architect and a Homs inhabitant, the testimony of Sabouni (2016) delves into the tensions spatial disruptions created in the city. Khaddour (2015) explains how the deep feeling of "minority" inhabiting Alawites in Homs (who moved to the city in the 80's) has shaped their position towards the regime and the opposition in Homs, largely Sunni. However, it does not go into the mechanisms that link space, emotions and mobilization. Ismail (2013) showed how the regime gave more socio-spatial existence to some socio-economocally marginalized groups in Damascus and Homs in the 80's, creating geographical buffers of loyal elements that can protect the challenged power. Because of varying economic and social integration, their mobilization differed in 2011, becoming a source of instability. This is a very interesting argument that I would like to extend by also considering emotions felt by the social groups who endured the arrival of these newcomers.

Trauma, memory transmission and space

The spatial dimension of traumas is also important to my project, as they are both constitutive of people's identity as well as their perception and interpretation of places (Tumarkin 2005) and 'otherness' (Pintar, 2011). It creates a cyclic reproduction of emotions, spatial segregation and representations (Lysaght and Basten, 2005) transmitted through spatial practices and memory transmission of places (Palmberger 2019), therefore feeding the conflict (Dawson, 2015).

I also take into considerations the temporal dimension of the emotion-building process linked to traumas. Building on Hirsch and Ricoeur, "infra-memory" (Estay Stange, 2017) is the passive transmission of memories from one generation to the other, through behavior and affects. I therefore want to explore how this intergenerational transmission has contributed to the constitution of atmospheres and shaped, on the long term, people's perceptions of the regime and other social groups. We can therefore better understand how emotions of injustice and divisions of societies linked to traumas are kept vivid (Hutchison, 2016).

It is also useful to explore the role of memory transmission on mobilization. Working

on the crackdown on Hama in 1982, Ismail (2018) claims that counter-memories created to keep annihilated places and people alive is constitutive of political mobilization. I would like to extend her analysis focusing on the effects these memory transmission has on spatial practices and mobilization. It can also be helpful to better understand why the degrees of mobilization against the regime and/or the other social groups vary.

Building on Massumi (2010), Wedeen (2019) defines as "political ontology of threat" the regime's strategy to instill a constant fear among groups to create a strong sense of "othering" between them and justify the use of military repression. I would like to introduce the spatial and memory/emotion transmission to this "ontology of threat". How has the arrival and spatial presence of newcomers, often perceived as allies of the regime, instilled deep and constant emotions of fear, threat and distrust within groups over time, transforming their behaviours within space and leading to inter-group and regime mobilization?

The "post-memory" intergenerational transmission of traumas beyond the small circle of the individual and his family transmission (Hirsch, 2017) can also help us to understand how the traumas of displacement have triggered the mobilization of individuals who have not been displaced, but grew up with unconscious or conscious memories linked to the displacement they assisted to, or heard about. Indeed, after 2011, they were one justification for mobilization given by people who did not experience them directly.

Displacement, regime durability and instability

Scholars show how spatially displacing population is a tool of territorial and political control strengthening (Rosière, 2007, Genat, 2017), counter-insurgency (Downes 2007, Tenenbaum, 2010, Genat, 2017), used to marginalize some territories (Galvis, 2009), increase dependency on the regime (Albertus, 2015), break the society's social structures (Lesne, 1962), target problematic identities and loyalties, both in conventional and irregular civil war settings (Balcells and Steels, 2015). It is also used during state formation (Chatty 2017, Reinisch and White, Baron and Gatrell 2003), with aims of population homogenization (Booth Walling 2000, Grundy-Warr and Wong Size Yin 2002, Oettler 2017).

However, the role of displacement-generated emotions is overlooked when it comes to explaining regime stability and instability. Anthropology scholars show that emotions linked to conflict-induced displacement in protracted conflicts increase the emotional attachment to the left place (Horst and Grabska, 2015) and affect the displaced ability to integrate (Riano-Alcala and Goldring 2006, Riano-Alcala 2008). Displacement is also claimed that it impacts people's perceptions, representations and status (Lund, 2011) via the inclusion and exclusion it triggers (Stepputat, 1999, p.72). However, as Rogers and Wilmsen (2015) argue, the literature does not delve into the mechanisms leading to these conclusions. I aim at building on these works to analyze how collective emotions generated by displacement create instability both for the regime and the society.

Population moves and Syrian regime durability and instability

Literature on Syria has theorized planning as a tool of power reinforcement (Balanche, 2006, Clerc 201), so as displacement (Ababsa 2004, Taha 2016), especially when the regime was challenged by the Muslim Brotherhood's increasing popularity (David 1989, Metral 1985). Land reform and expropriation are said to have weakened the former urban elite (Anne-Marie Bianquis, 1989), won control over the population and institutionalized the regime's power (Batatu, 1999). However, population moves have not been studied as a same and continuous phenomenon over decades but as isolated and punctual events. Also, research focuses on the purposes of these population moves at the time of their implementation, and not on the long-time effects on society. This is surprising, as from the 1960's until today, they have been regularly implemented in different areas of the country, targeting different social components of the society, always at a time when the regime's power was challenged.

Literature has however theorized the Syrian regime as capitalizing on historical cleavages existing in the Syrian society. Building on Ibn Khaldoun, Méouchy (2016) describes the Syrian society as composed of "asabiyat": social groups which hold together individuals whose social identity depends on their presence in belonging networks. The unity of these social groups, in competition by nature, relies on their opposition to the exterior (Méouchy, 2016). Seurat (1980) argues that the Syrian regime has integrated and played with the strong dualities historically existing within the Syrian society (the urban against the rural area, the city against the Badya – Syrian desert) into a same social entity characterized by contradictions and multiple alliances between actors. It would be therefore interesting to see how the collective emotions related to places consolidate the Khaldounian asabiyat, thereby impacting the regime's durability.

Governmentality

I adopt a Foucauldien approach as I consider that population move policies are a way for authoritarian regime to control population not only in physically moving the individuals within space, but also by acting on diverse variables⁶ (1978) "by manipulating, maintaining, distributing, establishing ratios of power in a space of competition"⁷. The Syrian regime may have not planned the instability stemming from population moves, but it may have benefited from the unexpected emotions and effects they created, to sustain power.

On Iraq, Châtelard (2012) argues that population displacement is an overlooked and interesting angle to understanding how durability of violence is a means of power access and upholding. According to the researcher, analyzing "the effects of governmentality on mobility and immobility" on the structures of society can provide an interesting reading of "the way in which practices of power and certain political identities have been encoded, leading to patterns of reproduction of violence" (p.364). She encourages academia to focus on the antagonist group memories that are formed during forced displacement, depending on the nature of the violence (confessional, ethnic, class composition) and the displacement

⁶ Lesson of February 8, 1978, Collège de France

⁷ Lesson of March 9 1978, Collège de France

(urban/rural displacement, inside/outside the country). She thereby considers that population displacement as a vector of durability and instability. The mobilization of her concepts and the comparison with Iraq is interesting for my research as these displacement policies were also enforced by a Baathist party in Iraq and the tensions they created were a major driver of further tensions and displacement after the 2003 US invasion.

OPERATIONALIZATION

I will explore the causal link between displacement and durability/instability, which occurs through the co-constituency process between emotions, places, fellowship » and mobilization.



Population moves can directly lead to spatial control and more durability. Indeed, the regime is able to settle a population which is supportive and loyal to the detriment of alleged detractors. It therefore creates geographical buffers in areas where its power is weak or challenged and prevents further destabilization.

However, population moves also lead to collective emotions that are co-constituant with places. Places are made by the "material spatial reorganization" (land confiscation, expropriation, banned access and property destruction, land and property redistribution), the atmospheres and the social networks they generate. The atmospheres are constituted by the strong collective emotions related to a change of status and power (Kemper 2001) and lead the individuals to negate the bodies of the groups who have a different experience of the

population moves. The presence of the "others" is mentally refused, which is translated into a spatial division of the bodies (in case of legitimacy/satisfaction and power to coercively forbid the presence of the others) and avoidance (in case of fear, anger, hate, you choose not to go to certain areas) through mundane behaviors and routine processes within space that lead to norms and rules. The spatial and immaterial "otherness" is reinforced through this process. It increases in return the collective emotions of fear and distrust towards the "others", which are either directly felt, but also through intergenerational transmission. The formation of collective emotions has indeed an important temporal dimension that is important to consider.

These amplified emotions create in-group solidarity and alliance building processes. Indeed, the perception of a shared risk becomes a "binding force" (Beck 1992, 49) and reinforces the feeling of "fellowship". Also, this step shows the co-constituency of emotions through their circulation and reinforcement from one group to the other. As Ahmed (2004) notes, it is important to think of hate not only from the one who hates, but the one who is hated. These solidarity and alliances processes in turn reinforce or shape the places and collective emotions, which can intensify over time. They lay ground for social, political and armed mobilization in support or against the regime and the other social groups.

This co-constituency process creates instability, but also leads to durability, as it enables the regime to mobilize supporters (Ismail, 2013). The very localized representations of the "other" is indeed an asset on which the Syrian regime can rely on at the national scale: the multiple divisions that exist locally makes it hard for groups that would share the same opposition to the regime to unify, as the emotions and representations they have towards each other tend to take the upper hand on their common political opposition to the regime.

To explain the link between population moves-generated collective emotions and durability/instability, I rely on Tavory and Timmermans' social mechanism-based approach to causality (2013), to formulate robust causal claims when using ethnography. They refer to Gross (2009) definition of social mechanism as being "composed of chains or aggregations of actors confronting problem situations and mobilizing more or less habitual responses" (p. 368, quoted in Tabory and Timmerman, p.686). Social mechanisms, as "gears in some social machinery", have a lesser or greater impact on the causal effects (Gross 2009, p. 363). While I don't plan to use ethnographic methods only, I think their approach to social mechanisms is inspiring as they rely on Pierce's meaning-making process which includes in the evaluation of causality the fact that social interactions are by nature interpretative. We always feel and act in reaction to the social and cultural norms we have integrated, and in reflexion to the persons we face. Meaning-making process is composed of three elements: the object, the sign (which is the effect of the object) and the interpretant (the reaction that the object/sign has). Due to the interactive and interpretive nature of social relations, the meaning-making process runs through "semiotic chains" (Tavory and Timmermans 2013, p.688): the interpretant is always a potential sign for another meaning-making process. The collective emotions generated by population moves can therefore be the "semiotic chains" (p.688) of the social mechanisms. I however consider that these mechanisms are co-constituent and "feeding" each other as shown in the graphic. They also have a temporal dimension as the memory

transmission plays a significant role in emotion shaping and transformation. This is an attempt to see how population moves lead to instability and durability: emotions, places, alliances and mobilization are co-constituent:

object: population moves policies

sign: spatial reorganization

interpretant: collective emotions of pain, anger, injustice

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object: spatial reorganization sign: collective emotions of pain, anger, injustice interpretant: negation of the other

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object: collective emotions of pain, anger, injustice sign: negation of the other interpretant: bodily/spatial separation

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object: negation of the other sign: bodily/spatial separation interpretant: emotions of fear and distrust

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object: bodily/spatial separation sign: emotions of fear and distrust interpretant: strengthening of in-group social networks

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object: emotions of fear and distrust sign: strengthening of in-group social networks interpretant: in-group/alliance building

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object: strengthening of in-group social networks sign: in-group/alliance building interpretant: emotions of fear and distrust, and fellowship ++

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object: in-group/alliance building sign: emotions of fear and distrust, and fellowship ++ interpretant: negation of the other, bodily/spatial separation ++ i object: emotions of fear and distrust, and fellowship ++ sign: negation of the other, bodily/spatial separation ++ interpretant: emotions of fear and distrust + +

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object: negation of the other, bodily/spatial separation ++

sign: emotions of fear and distrust + +

interpretant: competing mobilization

This approach takes into consideration that population moves policies do not have necessarily direct expected effects (Pierson, 2000) on the regime and the Syrian society, but amplified effects over time (Collier and Collier, 1991), showing that contingency is important to consider (Kapoccia and Kelemenn, 2007). It can help to dissociate expected from unexpected legacies of moves, that the regime may have decided to amplify (Morris 1988, Forman 2004), turning instability into a source of durability. Some policies and effects related to population moves may be also hard to change, as it is considered too costly by the actors (Collier and Collier, 2011). Indeed, attempts by the regime to modify some population move policies have led beneficiaries to mobilize against the regime, therefore also leading to instability. I am aware this approach is for stricto sensu causal mechanisms as more of a linear process, but I think they can be very helpful to consider for co-constituency processes too.

Also, the Tavory and Timmermansthen's "data set variation" (2013) allows me to take into account each case's different contexts and situations. The type of population move, social groups and political actors in presence have indeed a great effect on the collective emotions and the types of mobilization. I therefore plan to select two or three case studies to compare the collective emotions linked to population moves and their effects on regime's durability and instability. However, my guess is that whatever the population moves policies and the local context are, the social cohesion is deeply damaged at the local level. And if we move back a bit, we see that at a smaller and national scale, the multiplicity of local fragmented cohesion between social groups in presence leads to a major instability that may help the regime to hold on to power.

About alternative explanations:

Population moves are not considered as the only vector of collective emotions leading to mobilization and regime durability and instability. I however argue that it is an important factor to take into consideration when trying to understand this "double-edged sword" of authoritarian durability and instability.

Population moves policies have other purposes than authoritarian maintenance, for instance capitalism-related profit hunting (Prince and Dufty, 2009; Jones and Murphy, 2011). Some major expropriations were planned in Homs (Homs Dream project) and in Damascus Suburb (in Basateen Berzeh) prior to the war. However, these projects have eventually been a tool of spatial control reassertion. This is how I approach my topic: no matter the first goal is, they eventually can be used for power strengthening.

Other actors than the Syrian regime and involved in the Syrian civil war have also used population displacement to reinforce their power. I will examine them as "aspects of the displacement crisis [which] may in turn affect the conflict" (Lischer, 2009, p. 146). However, I am unclear at this stage if they will be studied in my research, as I focus more on what has happened since 1963 when the regime had monopoly over space and violence.

CASE STUDIES

I am aiming at studying case studies that faces multiple waves of population moves and mobilization since 1963, but where population's mobilization has differed in term of intensity after 2011.

1. Hama

The case study enables to analyze the cyclicity between population moves and instability/durability. Hama has faced different waves of population displacement policies and mobilization: land reform and voluntary moves policies 60's and 70's led to massive protests (in 1964, then late 70's and early 80's). In response, the regime launched a huge crackdown on the city in 1982 which led to the death of approximately 15,000 people, massive land and house destructions, expropriations, expulsions as well as a quick reconstruction of the city accompanied with the construction of new suburbs on the city's outskirts and additional moves of baathist from rural to urban areas.

Hama had reserved involvement in 2011 compared to Damascus suburbs, Aleppo, Homs or the Kurdish area. My hypothesis here is that population moves that occured in late 70's and 1982 were accompanied by much violence, which made city dwellers very cautious, while in the countryside mobilization was higher.

Very few research has been conducted on the quick reconstruction of Hama after 1982⁸. This is a very interesting case to see how collective emotions linked to spatial disruption have created new "places" through mundane socio-spatial practices and memory transmission.

In 2011, Hama has become a symbol for groups which have not been directly victims

⁸ Only Françoise Metral (1986) succinctly mentions how the public presentation of the new city plans excluded any reference to Islam.

from the population displacement. How the individual traumas of the crackdown were translated into collective memory among the targeted families but also beyond these families?

2. The Arab Belt in Jazireh

In 1974, the Syrien regime seized approximately 30,000 hectares of land belonging to Kurdish families in the Jezireh region⁹. These lands were allocated in 1975 to about 40,000 Ghamars, whose land was submerged by the construction of the Euphrate dam. Dozens of villages were built on confiscated Kurdish land, and agricultural land distributed to the Ghamar¹⁰ families. This move aimed at reinforcing the regime's control over this Kurdish-majority region.¹¹ At that time, tensions erupted between the Kurds and the displaced, the army eventually had to intervene to prevent the Kurds to chase the Ghamars¹².

Expropriated Kurds and displaced Ghamars have lived a few hundred meters from each other for decades, but without really interacting. It is a great case to see how emotions have been co-constituent with places and mobilization. How have these emotions and place-making processes influenced the Kurdish mobilization after 2011? The retrocession of Kurdish land was indeed a major demand for the Kurds after the PYD took control over the north-east in 2012, and a major source of fear for the Ghamars. However, today, the situation seems not as tense as it used to be in 2012¹³. I make the hypothesis that the local authorities' strong autonomy velleities that rely on foreign support has led them to decrease tensions with Ghamars (as they issued a law to prevent anyone from attacking them and taking their land back).

I also would like to explore the link between Ghamars' displacement and their mobilization since 2011: some have kept supporting the government, but others joined ISIS or integrated the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria. How can we explain this diversity of mobilization?

Aleppo or Homs?

These cities and their countryside faced multiple population moves policies since the 60's: land reform, arrival of rural population to the cities in the 70's and 80's and urban planing in Aleppo in late 70's to decrease the Muslim Brotherhood's influence. Picking up one third case study could help make the comparison in terms of displacement

⁹ Hassakeh governorate in North-Eastern Syria, with a high majority of Kurdish inhabitants.

¹⁰ Ghamars and Shammars are two different names defining the same tribe.

¹¹ The author of the Baath report Mohammed Talab Helal, an officer in the Syrian Interior Ministry, advised to "settle Arab and nationalist elements in the Kurdish border agents, as they are the fortress of the future, while at the same time surveilling the Kurds pending their displacement; we propose that those [settled] are from the Shammar [tribe] firstly because they are from the poorest tribes on earth, and secondly because they are 100% guaranteed to be [loyal] nationalists." Himbervan Kousa. 20 august 2019. "The "Arab Belt": the Story of the Largest Demographic Change in Syria". Raseef22.net. https://raseef22.net/article/1074813-the-arab-belt-the-story-of-the-largest-demographic-change-in-syria

¹² Interviews conducted with both expropriated Kurds and Ghamars in Gre Vra and Jabarya villages in Jazrieh area in november 2012.

¹³ In 2012, some clashes happened; Ghamars demonstrated in force in Qamishli to show their power and will not to leave. Kurdish authorities were worried to see the Ghamars making alliances with (pre-ISIS) radical armed groups of Ras al-Ein in order to make sure to keep their land.

moves/emotions and mobilizations in late 70's (in the case of Aleppo) and 2011. The mobilization and conflict between the different groups have been indeed particularly high and violent in these cities.

III. METHODOLOGY

I face a significant challenge: how can I conduct research linked to spatial disruption when I actually have very limited access to the Syrian space? I plan to go to the Arab Belt villages in Jazireh as the area is still accessible. I did fieldwork in the Arab belt villages in 2012 and kept in touch with contacts I made over there. I will therefore be able to observe the evolution of the relationships between Kurds and Ghamars since 2012, and their mobilization during the conflict.

The historical perspective I adopt makes it possible to also rely on interesting fieldwork outside Syria: many Syrians are now present across the Middle East and Europe. I am aiming at meeting people who have faced population moves policies, both in a positive or detrimental way. I plan to conduct snowball interviews with personal contacts as entry points. Being introduced and considered as a trustworthy researcher by respondents is absolutely necessary to have fruitful discussions. The situation is indeed very sensitive: first, they have experienced traumatic events which are hard to share with a stranger. The conflict started ten years ago, meaning that people are more reluctant to share their narratives: they have taken very high risk to speak since 2011 while their situation has only deteriorated. Finally, they often have family siblings remaining in Syria, whose safety is still at stake.

I place my research within an interpretive approach: the complexity of emotions is due to the various and sometimes contradictory perspectives people have of a same event and the fact that their knowledge or memory of the event is incomplete (Lutz and White, 1986). I therefore plan to use methodologies that enable me to uncover these differences of perceptions and their impact on reality. I also adopt a reflexive approach, considering the ambiguities and contradictions stemming from respondents' interpretations as an essential element of the analysis. My positionality is also determinant in the realization of the research.

1. A multiple-interview and collaborative approach of oral history.

My research aims at studying population moves and their outcomes within 60 decades. Oral history enables us to collect the testimonies of respondents who experienced displacement in the 60's, 70's and 80's. Content of oral history interviews are shaped by the moment of the interview, the direction given by the interviewer (Cohen-Fournier, 2012) and the audience they face, leading to variations in the narratives, interpretations of the respondents' experience and the reasons for them to share it (Greenspan, 2015). During interviews, respondent's positioning *within space and time* towards people who were present with them at the time of the traumatic event varies (Cole 2015). I therefore plan to realize *multiple interviews* with my respondents, in order to juxtapose the recountings and access the most accurate reconstruction of the events. It indeed enables to track change in respondents'

perception and analysis of their experience through time (Wali, 2018) by making linkage within the respondent's life cycle (Field, 2004). This work is collaborative, a process *between* the interviewee and the researcher (Greenspan 2015, p.152) relying on a strong acquaintance. It includes recounting previous meetings' content, listening to extracts of previous meetings and discussing them (Greenspan, 2010). I hope this methodology will help to identify the key events linked to population moves that shape collective emotions, places and mobilization within time. In addition to these individual interviews, I consider to organize group meetings, and draw a timeline on a big white sheet and ask for participants to place the key dates and events linked to population moves. I aim at triggering exchanges about the emotions they felt in the past and today to see how this contributed to in-solidarity/alliance building and mobilization.

2. Mental sketch mapping

Map sketching enables the researcher to access the respondent's material representation of her/his cognitive maps (Gieseking, 2013), which is one person' internalized mental representation of the space and environment (Kitchin, 1994). Like "memory maps" (Lynch, 1960), it is bound to the belief that the mental representation of space is based on emotions, memories and previous experience of space, and influences people's behaviours within space (Lazarenko, 2020). This concept is fundamental for my research as I believe people do not base their actions on what is true, but what they perceive as being true and good for them. I believe mental map sketching is an interesting methodology to identify and understand people's behaviours, atmospheres, and place-making processes. I therefore aim at asking respondents to draft maps of the areas where they have been displaced or faced the arrival of newcomers. The methods combine several steps (Gieseking, 2013): paying attention to the *drawing elements* (what is drawn or not, in a bigger shape, what is missing, what colours are used, etc). The narratives of place that are shared when the respondent draws are absolutely essential. Finally, the personalization step enables the sharing of intimate emotions linked to what is drawn. Comparing the conflicting emotions and perceptions respondents attach to places can be very informative to better understand the "semiotic chain" I developed sooner. Also, uncovering emotions that people felt in the past while interviewing them in the present and seeing how they have evolved is a very challenging exercise. As mental map sketching leads to associations and the reminiscence of memories (Gieseking, 2013), I believe it can be a useful tool for my research.

3. In-walking and sensory ethnography (Arab Belt case study)

In-walking methods consist in walking with the respondent to uncover the paths that individuals create and constantly reshape through routine and mundane actions. Path is indeed considered as the "primary condition (...) of becoming" (Ingold 2008, p.1808) and therefore can inform us about the creation of atmospheres. Sensory ethnography takes into account not only the verbal expressions of emotions, but also the unconscious ways of expressing feelings, like body and facial reactions as well as breathing. The routine paths we shape within space as well as our perceptions of it, are both constitutive of the atmospheres

that need to be uncovered to understand how places are made (Pink and Leder Macklay, 2016).

I therefore aim at following Ghamar families and expropriated Kurdish families in their daily moves, in their villages and surroundings. I want to see the paths they create in space: where they go and don't, with whom and how they interact in their close environment or not, etc. Paying careful attention to their gestures and expressions can help uncover emotions that are constitutive of atmospheres and specific places. My hypothesis is that these groups are geographically close, but live in different places between which interactions are limited. A specific attention will be brought to the Ghamars and Kurds' behaviors in "meeting points" (in the administration offices, market places, schools) as the juxtaposition of different places may have a significant impact on public space.

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