



 UrbanMetaMapping



UrbanMetaMapping Semester Talks: Winter Term 2023 via zoom, 11.00 - 12.00 (CET)

Registration via: talks.urbanmetamapping@uni-bamberg.de

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Mapping bombing attacks on France during the Great War

The First World War (1914-1918) confronted civilian populations with violence way beyond the vicinity of the frontline. Aircraft, Zeppelins, and long-ranging heavy artillery also targeted the interior, thereby radically changing life in cities under fire and claiming thousands of dead and wounded. In addition to death and injury, the consequences of the bombardments were multidimensional: they were material and psychological (e.g. destruction of houses and work stoppages, a feeling of general insecurity, and symptoms of shell shock), required measures to protect cities and their populations (reduction of lighting, defensive cannons) and were echoed in the press and propagandistic postcards (highlighting innocent victims of enemy 'barbarism'). Moving away from the frontline, my work focuses on French cities distant from the front, such as Dunkirk, Amiens, Châlons-sur-Marne, Nancy, and Paris. They suffered bombardments of varying intensity, with casualties ranging between several dozen and several hundred. The rapid technological advance and the increase in aircraft production during the war resulted in a wider range of cities coming under heavier and more frequent attacks. This massively increased material destruction caused in the cities, destroying or damaging dozens or even hundreds of buildings; besides military targets like railways, ports, or barracks, these included private property, churches, museums, schools, etc. They also reinforced the psychological consequences and the measures to be taken to protect the cities. Consequently, as the war progressed, it became ever more palpable in the rear.

By mapping the material destruction caused in the cities over time, the contribution examines the consequences of the bombardments for French cities far from the front and addresses the question of whether these attacks were mainly directed against military or civilian targets.



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