

# AMMAN BASIC CITY DATA

## City, Country, Location:

Amman, Jordan

## Coordinates:

31° 56' 59" N 35° 55' 58" E

31.94972° N 35.93278° E

## Population:

2.206.928 (based on a 2006 census)

## Area:

1.662 km<sup>2</sup>

Greater Amman Municipal Area Size

(GAM Area before 2007: 705 km<sup>2</sup>

/ GAM area after 2007: 957 km<sup>2</sup>.

The total of the two is: 1.662 km<sup>2</sup>)

## Elevation Above Sea Level:

777–1.400 m



This caricature by Emad Hajjaj, locally known as Abu Mahjoub (↔ www.mahjoub.com)—a famous Jordanian caricaturist—entitled “Living Well” is reminding us of two things: First the title: “Living Well, an apartment above the Roof” is referring to the new series of English magazines popular in Jordan today

about social events and living styles of the rich. Second, the caricature is referring to the new neoliberal real-estate investments (e.g. exclusive business towers, gated communities) where the poor man on the roof is using the advertisement billboard material to construct his “apartment on the roof”.



This caricature by Abu Mahjoub entitled “Country in a unique location for sale” is referring to the opportunities and facilities that are made possible to investors who buying the country's assets and investing in its real-estate development. The English translation of the caricature: “A country in a unique location for sale, a Medi-

terranean country opposite to Jordan River for sale. Governorates on two streets, 3 bedrooms and a super deluxe master-capital, Maeen bathrooms, 4 decent floors, high quality oak, a nice basement with a view with nice smiley people in a moderate condition. Sale is through agents directly. Telephone: 079-684 82 94”.



A stretch of billboard about the Abdali investment Project (Source: Rami Daher '07)

## IMPRINT

**Edited by** Rami Farouk Daher, TURATH—Architecture & Urban Design Consultants

**Text contributions by** Myriam Ababsa, Raghda Butros, Rami Farouk Daher, Ahmad Abu Khalil, Christopher Parker & Mais Razem.

**Urban Maps and Case Studies by** Rami Daher & TURATH—Architecture & Urban Design Consultants; Mais Rasem, Vice Director & Maps and Graphic Expert; Ramez Massanat, Nadeen Dihmes, Hiba Abu al Haija, Bashar Matar; IFPO: Institute Francais de Proch Orient; Students of the German Jordanian University Amman (Ramez Massanat, Rasha Aboudi, Ra'afat Barakat, Mohammad Mango, Nezar Taha, Mahzah Abu Hamdiah, and Nala Abu Taleb)

**Text editing** Rami Daher

**Translation:** Guest Editorial piece by Ahamad Abu Khalil translated from Arabic by R. Daher  
**Graphic design:** Studio Matthias Görlich (Matthias Görlich, Charalampos Lazos & Alexander Horn)

**Printing:** Berliner Zeitungsdruck, Germany

## Made possible by

Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, IABR 2009/ sub-exhibition “refuge”; TURATH—Architecture & Urban Design Consultants, Amman; German Jordanian University, Amman

## Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to all contributors for their time and voluntary support for this project. In particular we would like to thank Rami F. Daher and TURATH team for their support and efforts and in particular Mais Razem, Ramez Massanat, Nadeen Dihmes, Hiba Abu al Haija, Bashar Matar, and Rahsa Aboudi. Furthermore, we would like to thank Ahmad Abu Khalil, Myriam Ababsa, Raghda Butros, and Christopher Parker for their valued contributions.

A publication by Diwan\* made possible by Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, IABR 2009 / sub-exhibition “refuge”.

\*Diwan is a collaborative research platform initiated and curated by Philipp Misselwitz and Can Altay which brings together leading academics, practitioners and experts from the field of architecture and urban studies in Turkey and the Middles East. Diwan aims to provoke a critical discourse on the current trends that are radically transforming cities in the region, focusing on voluntary and involuntary forms of urban exclusion and urban practices that confront, subvert and transgress a reality of growing spatial and social polarization. Through conducting new field work, collecting reflections, thoughts, ideas, and utopias, Diwan also hopes to act as a trigger and nucleus for a multitude of regional projects and collaborations—and ultimately provide a unique opportunity to generate links, networks, and collaborations in a region that is geographically united with shared histories and numerous cultural traditions, which is also dealing with very similar challenges yet remains divided and fragmented.

## Diwan publications include:

**Istanbul**—Living in Voluntary and Involuntary Exclusion (edited by Eda Ünli-Yücesoy and Tansel Korkmaz with

Yasar Adanalı, Can Altay and Philipp Misselwitz)  
**Beirut**—Mapping Security (edited by Mona Fawaz, Mona Harb, Ahmad Gharbieh)

**Amman**—Neoliberal Urban Management (edited by Rami Farouk Daher)

**Cairo**—Resilience: City as Personal Practice (Dina Shehyeb and Shahira Issa)

**Dubai**—Mobility (Yasser Elsheshtawy and Markus Miessen)

# AMMAN

# NEOLIBERAL

# URBAN

# MANAGEMENT

REFUGE

DIWAN

IABR

 **Universität Stuttgart**  
Städtebau-Institut

 **C**  
Fonds  
Prince Claus Fund for  
Culture and Development

Panoramic View of Abdali Project in Amman  
("a new downtown for the city")



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

01—DISCURSIVE MAPPING OF LANDSCAPES  
OF NEOLIBERALISM IN AMMAN

02—AMMAN IN THE HANDS  
OF NEOLIBERALISM

map A—LANDSCAPES OF NEOLIBERALISM  
fig. B—Previous and New Administrative  
Boundaries for Greater Amman  
Municipality

map C—EMERGING SPACES OF INCLUSION  
AND EXCLUSION

03—TUNNEL-BYPASSES AND MINARETS OF  
CAPITALISM

04—SOCIAL DISPARITIES BETWEEN EAST  
AND WEST AMMAN

fig. D—Number of Families by Appartment in  
Greater Amman Municipality in 2004  
at the block level

fig. E—Percentage of population under 15 years  
in Amman in 2004 at block level

fig. F—Percentage of elder (between 75 and  
79 years) in Amman 2004 at the block  
level

case study 05— PASSIONATE ACTIVISM

06—THE NEW CITIES LANDLORDS

fig. G—REAL-ESTATE DEVELOPERS'

DISCOURSE IN AND AROUND AMMAN

07—THE URBAN REGENERATION OF

RAINBOW STREET

map G—RECLAIMING THE CITY

08—URBAN AGENTS, ACTORS AND ACTIVISTS

# 01—DISCURSIVE MAPPING OF LANDSCAPES OF NEOLIBERALISM IN AMMAN

BY RAMI DAHER—SEPTEMBER '09

## Circulating Global Capital and Emerging Models of Planning, Refuge, & Consumption

### Introduction

Citizens all over the Middle East are bombarded and overwhelmed daily by the boom in real-estate development. Local newspapers, new emerging property magazines, TV advertisements, and billboards all promote real-estate development in the form of exclusive business towers and high-end gated residential communities. It is very obvious that “property” is the new consumer good par-excellence in the Middle East and “real-estate development” is its new religion.

Cities across the Middle East are currently competing in order to attract international investments, businesses and tourism developments. Currently, developments in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates such as the World’s two largest man-made islands (Palm Jumeirah and Palm Jebel Ali), and major skyscrapers and luxurious resorts on Sheikh Zayed Street are becoming the precedents and models to follow. This reality stands in sheer contrast when compared to a previous time around the 1960’s where cities like Cairo or Beirut presented cutting edge urbanism for the rest of the Arab World. It is interesting to understand the effect of the circulation of global capital (surplus oil revenues) and huge reserves of money in search of high yielding and secure investments, excessive privatization, and circulating urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, all over the Arab Gulf States, and through out the Arab Region on the transforming of urban reality, property values and speculation, and nature of public life in these cities. It has been estimated that over the period 2005 to 2020 the Arabian Gulf States are likely to have a US-\$ 3000 billion or so spent on investment within the Middle East and North Africa.

### Privatization of City Planning and the Quartering of Urban Space: The News from Amman

It is interesting to understand the effect of the circulation of global capital (surplus oil revenues) and huge reserves of money in search of high yielding and secure investments, excessive privatization, and circulating urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, all over the Arab Gulf States, and through out the Arab Region on the transforming of urban reality, property values and speculation, and nature of public life in these cities. Amman represents a clear example of neoliberal urban restructuring and emerging forms of spatial ordering and engineering such as high-end and isolated urban development and regeneration (Abdali), upper-end residential “gated” communities all over the City (Green Land, Andalusia), business towers that offer an exclusive concept of refuge and of consumption; and even low-income residential cities (in Jizza and al Zarqa) that work to push the poorer segments of society to the outskirts of the City in new zoned heterotopias. On prominent objective of this discursive mapping in Amman is to unpack and expose the rhetoric and deconstruct the emancipatory discourse of these emerging landscapes of neoliberalism.

This section of the editorial focuses on recent urban transformations in the creation of public space in Amman that is orchestrated by partnerships between multinational corporations and the State through the establishment of newly regulating bodies such as MAMARED in Amman within the last ten years. The SOLIDERE (Société Libanaise de Développement et de Reconstruction) Model of Neoliberal urban restructuring adopted in Beirut became the adopted approach in Amman, in fact the Projects share similar global

investors. This neo-liberalization in the creation of public urban space circulates urban images, spectacles, and models and is leading to the dilution of local differences and the circulation of “corporate” urban realities and images.

The Abdali Project, and by turning its back to Amman’s original downtown which is only about 1.5 kilometer away from the Abdali site, is anticipated to lead to urban geographies of inequality and exclusion and spatial & social displacement. The remodeled area, previously the site of the General Jordan Armed Forces Headquarters, consist of 350,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the heart of Amman and will contain a built up area of approximately 1,000,000 m<sup>2</sup>. In order for this Project to succeed, the investors together with the “State” had realized that it could not be facilitated through regular governmental bodies, therefore, a new organization had to be established, thus MAWARED was created by the King similar to other neoliberal institutions in the region such as SOLIDERE in Beirut and ASEZA (Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority). These are in general replacing older governmental bodies such as municipalities and governorates which had either been disintegrated entirely or had taken over a more technical role such as service and infrastructure provision, permits and land appropriation, and traffic and transportation management.

Analysing the details of the investments in Amman’s Abdali project, one realizes that the bottom line is that the “State” is subsidizing large scale investment for the business elite of the region to create such flagship or mega projects of urban restructuring. Contrary to formal State’s declarations and propaganda which advocates an absent state in such neoliberal privatization efforts, it is very clear that the “state” is not absent, but is “there” heavily involved and there to stay.

The financial contribution of the state is considerable; prime urban land made available for investment forms a greater part of the subsidy, but other forms of the subsidy also include taxes exemption, infrastructure provision, and elimination of all barriers and red tape in addition to special building regulations made possible for this particular development.

It is also important to shed light on the nature and details of the shareholding setup of this neoliberal investment. The privately owned (private shareholder) Abdali Investment Company (AIC) has been created in 2004 to develop and manage this mixed-use urban development and is composed of the main investors: MAWARED and Saudi Oger (International Developer from Saudi Arabia) only. As a private real-estate developer, it is responsible to implement the Project, and is in charge of the management and the master planning of the Project (similar to SOLIDERE in Beirut). Amman’s Abdali is promoted by MAWARED’s brochures, website, short video, and other promotional materials as the “New Downtown for Amman”. New introduced functions include exclusive office space, an IT Park, and commercial and high-end residential space, in addition to a newly created civic “secular” plaza bounded by the State Mosque, the Parliament, and the Law Courts. This represents a symbolic replacement of the existing historic downtown and the current civic/urban symbols (e.g., The Historic Hussein Mosque and specialty Ammani Markets). This will intensify the socio-economic and spatial polarization not only between East and West Amman, but also between this new “elitist urban island” and the rest of the city. The Abdali Project will culminate in the displacement of the near-by existing Abdali transportation terminal, together with its drivers, informal vendors and occupants,

# 02—AMMAN IN THE HANDS OF NEOLIBERALISM

BY AHMAD ABU KHALIL

## “Planning that is Antagonistic to People”

Even though the terms “West Amman” and “East Amman” are considered old now since they date to the 1970’s when they were associated for the first recognition with the geography of poverty in the City; yet, that division of “East” and “West” was never (until the beginning of the 1990’s decade) manifested in a lack of understanding, communal feeling, and social mixity between residents of different parts of the City. The citizen of Amman had only to take a public transit but or a small communal taxi to move between the poorer or “popular” East to the more affluent West; in fact, the visitors from the Eastern parts were moving all over the City and into the Western parts without any feeling of inferiority or strangeness.

The neighborhood of Jabal al Hussein, for example, which belonged to “West Amman” is under the attention of and is relatively close to residents of areas such as Nozha, Al Hussein Refugee Camp. Even an area like “Shemaisani” which until recently was considered very western Amman; the average person only needed minutes to get there whether coming from places such as the Downtown or from Abdali (where existed many formal grand governmental buildings such as the Army Leadership Headquarters, Ministries of Education and Work that were only 10 meters away from one of the oldest most popular public transportation hubs in the City).

Even the most prestigious commercial city places and shops were, and up to the 1990’s decade of the last century; considered part of the public communal space available and accessible to all citizens from different social stratas. A pride from “Easter” Amman would meet with respective other prides and shoppers from “West” Amman even with discrepancies in the amount of shopping being made. Furthermore, a pride from “West Amman” would also meet with similar prides and other female shoppers from “East” Amman at the Gold Market located in the heart of the Downtown (a place that now many Western Ammanis seldom visit).

It could be very easily noticed that social, physical, and other discrepancies between rich and poor areas in Amman did not create tension in the daily routine life of the average Ammani resident. Also, Ammani rich individuals and merchants were conducting their lives in humility. For example, one of the most notorious merchants (Mr. Hamdi al Ta’ba) who come from a very well-off and prestigious Damascus-Ammani family; was very careful to also remember in public occasions his childhood and friendship relations with the poor of the City. In a way, he wanted to emphasize that, to a certain extent; he still belonged to the culture of these bygone times. Yet, and since the beginning of the 21st

century, this Ammani scene described above had changed dramatically. Specially during the past couple of years where we have witnessed an acceleration in that change with dangerous and alarming consequences on the citizens living in the City. This narrative should no be understood as a mere nostalgia for a by-gone time (with all due respect to that genuine nostalgia), but rather, it is a serious matter that is linked with the general transformation of the City and the position of its people regarding such transformations who consider the City is gradually running away from them and is gradually withdrawing from their own vision and capacity. Current city planners are not paying enough attention to the ordinary citizens of this City who had worked hard for its emergence and continuity. Similar to their fellow colleagues of neoliberals in the World; the administrator and planners of the “Contemporary Amman” are searching for a special type of citizens who they believe are the only ones worthy of their “ambitious” plans.

The terms of “East” and “West” Amman are no longer sufficient to actually describe current transformations in the City. Amman is today witnessing the phenomenon of “West of the West of Amman” and “East of the East.” Western Amman had started to take over the traditional East through several neoliberal plans that worked to

remove tens, but rather hundreds of thousands of Ammanis to any other place provided they are not within the vision range of the new very rich strata of occupants who are taking over the City by controlling its future planning and management aided by different forms of social, financial, and cultural capital to falsely represent the powerless majority of the City’s residents.

The public transportation system had been fragmented by this neoliberal planning vision, which was a system that grow gradually with the natural expansion of the City. In the name of “progress” and a neoliberal vision for the City, two major public transportation hubs in the heart of the City (Abdali and Raghadan) had been displaced to new locations at the outskirts of the City in empty spots de-voided from all commercial and economic activities. Many of the neoliberal planners never asked themselves as to where did the thousands of visitors to these 2 transportation hubs went and how they were affected by such displacements.

Furthermore, these planners are embarking on a “grand” project of establishing a macro-scale luxurious commercial and tourist development area at the heart of the City. Huge areas were appropriated and many residents and workers were relocated. The Site represents a valley surrounded by poor neighborhoods that the residents of

to the outskirts of Amman away from the Center of the City. The Project will also definitely present fierce competition to the existing downtown which is gradually disintegrating and is already suffering from a lack of economic vitality. In Amman, the effect of such socio-economic transformation on the creation of new public urban space produces “a privatized public space” based on a highly selective definition of the public, thus triggering a new critical investigation of the meaning of public/private and inclusion/exclusion.

#### Amman's Emerging Spaces of Inclusion and Exclusion

The Abdali Project is not a unique phenomenon in Amman, even though it forces a major urban and territorial transformation on the City; yet, there are several projects either being built or proposed in the very near future. Some of these are high-rises of exclusive office spaces, others are residential compounds catering for high and upper middle class in the form of well-protected gated communities along the Airport highway. Several of these newly emerging spaces of inclusion and exclusion are causing severe cases of gentrification and social and physical displacement in the City. In addition to the displacement of the Abdali Transportation Hub to the outskirts of the City in Tabarbour and the displacement of the Za'amta Neighborhood both due to the Abdali Project; several other neoliberal projects that caused major displacement in the City included Limitless High Rise Towers that are causing the displacement of the Wadi Abdoun Village. Others include the displacement of another transportation hub (Raghdan) in the downtown area to the outskirts of the City due to tourism development projects in its place. The new displaced location in Mahatta further away from the buzzing city center is causing difficulties and financial burdens not only to the users of the transportation

which consider this valley as part of their everyday life (visually and physically). Yet, the planning vision for that area is considering a more exclusive and gated development: Another Ammani version of Beirut's Solidere. The planners and investors did even bother to search for a different name to promote for their urban restructuring endeavor, thus one could imagine the level of tension that would be created and experienced by tens of thousands of poor residents while they view a developed site that was once belonged to them being transformed to a mega project that they could not even afford to be close to or participate in as urban residents of the City. Thanks for the current financial crises, especially in the real-estate sector, which halted and delayed the execution of the Project.

The neoliberal development examples are numerous, and popular worries, tensions, and rumors are escalating amongst the poorer segments of society. Ironically, this anti-human planning that the City is witnessing at the moment is adopting the slogan of “a City with a soul” while in fact, the soul is being stripped off different parts of the City where the neoliberals had arrived to and touched. □

Translated from Arabic by Rami Daher.

hub but also to the various merchants downtown who used to benefit from the vibrant pedestrian activity.

Furthermore, the City had been recently (late 1990's) plagued with a series of shopping malls accentuating more a growing consumer society class with adverse effects on smaller businesses, corner neighborhood shops and grocery stores in different parts of the City. Malls have also been created in the Eastern less affluent part of the City as well. One of these shopping malls is Mecca Mall located in the western part of the City, it has been dumped as the 'most popular public Ammani space par excellence' by different Jordanian critics in local newspapers. These different Malls are also very selective in the way they choose their clientele. Not only that they are heavily secured with multiple sensors and security check points and devices, but they also exercise a no entry policy for what they claim to be a non-welcomed participant in the mall space which is predominantly young Ammani males who most of the times feel excluded from this gated consumerist community.

Neoliberal landscapes in Amman are not only restricted to business towers and new gated communities. Neoliberal urban restructuring takes on other forms such as “regeneration” of historic districts, for example. One example that is worth mentioning is the Company Ihya Amman's attempts for neoliberal urban restructuring in the historic neighborhood of Jabal Amman which is camouflaged with claims of historic preservation of the area's monuments and historic buildings. Exposing the emancipatory rhetoric of neoliberal urban policies adopted by Ihya Amman is crucial. It centers on exposing the fact that neoliberal ideological-discursive rhetoric (preserving the Jabal Amman's historic monuments and place) presented by the transnational capitalist class; conceals fundamentally exclusionary and

Ahmad Abu Khalil is an anthropologist, journalist and chief editor of “Al Mastour”, a local magazine concerned with issues of the poor in the City of Amman.

exploitative social relation (out migration of stable low-income families and tenants).

#### Neo-liberal Urban Governance in Amman:

These endeavors all reflect dominant political and ideological practices of power regulated by neoliberal tropes, camouflaged in the legitimacy of the local (through out promises of “job provision”, “new promised lifestyles, and other emancipatory rhetoric), and manifested through spatially-engineered realities. In reality several of these emerging neoliberal projects on the City are anticipated to lead to urban geographies of inequality and exclusion and to spatial/social displacement. These “projects” are operating in the midst of new emerging governing bodies on the city (MAWARD) that are replacing, manipulating, or silencing traditional governing bodies such as municipalities and governorates.

In order to understand the interplay and politics of these emerging models of urban governance, one should focus more on the human agent behind global capital flow orchestrated by the City's new landlords: the transnational capitalist class represented through major shareholders of real-estate companies, general managers/directors, corporate executives, and globalizing bureaucrats. They tend to play a crucial and significant role in the politics and dynamics of these investments and also in the direction of capital flow within the region let alone the promoted lifestyles prevailing within these projects.

#### In Conclusion:

The city under neoliberal policies (and despite an emancipatory rhetoric within a neoliberal discourse): conceal exclusionary and exploitative social relations and spatial ordering; disperse concentrations of poverty form the inner city and causes major social and physical displacement of marginalized social groups; remove local

states authorities and replace by newly emerging neoliberal bodies of urban governance; create a disparity between rhetoric and reality of urban policies; and also have an engineered and specific representation of the urban poor, low income tenants and owners, and their respective historic places within the inner city in the media that negates the fact that these societies represent “socio-spatial entities produced through distinct historical-geographic social relations”.

In different parts of the Arab World, there is a need of more genuine research that goes beyond the classical analysis of the traditional Arab City, into instead researching current urban transformations, flow of global capital and its effect on the realities of cities, urban structures and polity, metropolitization processes from below addressing issues of migration, slums formation, and the details of social life vis-à-vis lines of inclusion and exclusion.

Our relationship with the city has always been and will always be a contestation between social classes, different groups, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. More recently, this relationship is becoming ephemeral and superficial, and our sense of belonging to place is very transient in nature. We think that we live in the City as our grave for urbanity increases; but rather, we live “above” the city in gated realities. □

Rami Farouk Daher is an architect and academician working in Amman and leading the architectural firm “TURATH—Architecture & Urban Design Consultants” and teaching at the German Jordanian University in Amman.

A caricature with the caption translated to English as: “What is coming is much nicer... believe me!!! Saraya Project, Amman new center Project, and Amman Gate Project... I mean do not be afraid, your future is secured as there are millions of new projects where you could

beg at.” This caricature is brilliant in the way it is explaining the relationship of the poor vis-à-vis these new neoliberal projects. Simply, and as the graphic designer sees it; these new neoliberal locations provide only new locations for the poor to beg at.



# map A—LANDSCAPES OF NEOLIBERALISM



- ROUNDABOUTS
- MAJOR ROAD SYSTEM
- MINOR ROUTE SYSTEM
- HIJAZ RAIL ROAD LINE
- BUILT-UP AREA

- PROVINCIAL BOARDERS
- AIRPORT
- COMPOUND
- TOWERS

- DISPLACED LOCATIONS
  - 1—ZA'AMTA NEIGHBOURHOOD NEAR AL ABDALI PROJECT
  - 2—ABDALI TRANSPORTATION HUB
  - 3—RAGHDAN TRANSPORTATION HUB
  - 4—WADI ABDOUN
- NEW LOCATIONS
  - 1—NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION HUB
  - 2—AL MAHATA TRANSPORTATION HUB
  - ?—UNKNOWN LOCATION

# fig B

## Previous and New Administrative Boundaries for Greater Amman Municipality

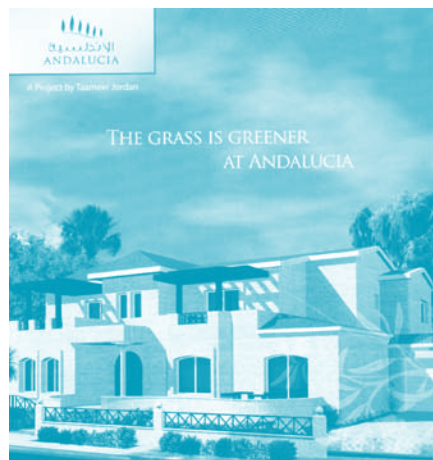
⇒ Map A attempts to discursively map landscapes of neoliberalism in the city of Amman by laying out the distribution of neoliberal urban restructuring projects (while differentiating between high end business towers, gated residential communities, regeneration projects, and low-income housing). The map also, and through its legend attempt to explain about the circulation of global capital within the region and mainly capital circulating to Amman as a result of surplus oil revenues from the Gulf region.

The author had conducted, between 2004–8, a study that analyzed the different development discourse of real-estate companies and their associated transnational capitalist class operating in the city of Amman. The study suggested that the real-estate projects could be divided into two main categories:



—Type 1 such as Andalusia, Greenland, Hummar Hills, and the Royal Village represent gated communities and housing enclaves for the very rich targeting mostly high-end clientele which the author dubs “selling of paradise on the ground,” because a quick glance across the different marketing slogans and discourses of the developers (e.g., “The Joy of Living”, “Provide distinctive homes that will redefine everyday life”) will infer one to suggest that all projects are promising a utopian existence and a completely transformed individual once one becomes part of this exclusive community.

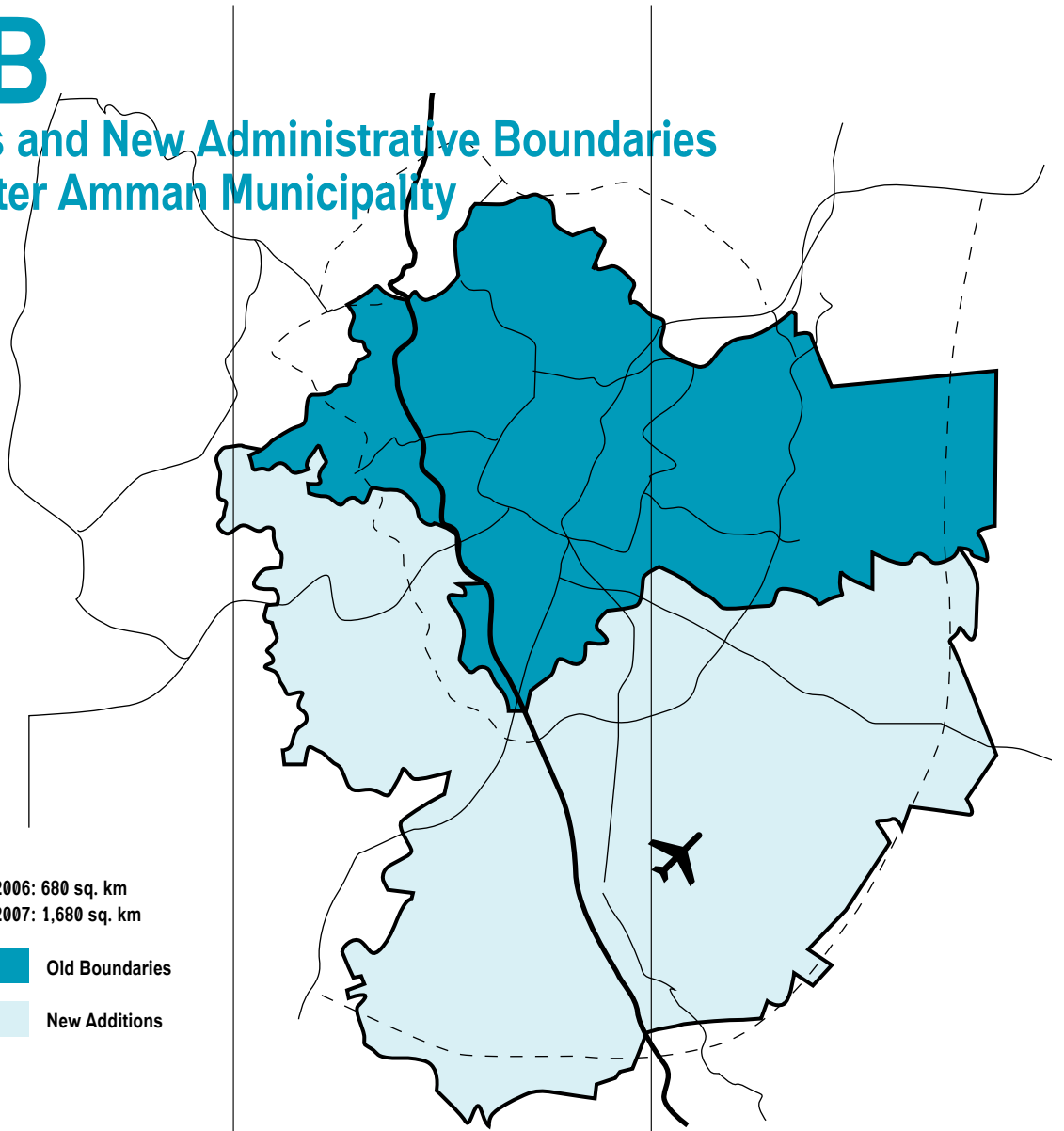
—Type 2 of these projects like the towers sector of the Abdali Project (including the Vertex, the Heights, and the Lofts), Jordan Gate, and many others constitute exclusive office space and luxury apartments which the author dubs “Living above the City in the Clouds”. The high end residents thrive to be part of the city, but in reality they are living in a privileged position above the city. These projects promise a distinctively luxurious lifestyle and a protected and safe environment throughout their marketing slogans (e.g., “Lofty views, open terraces, and deluxe living in the city center”, “Luxury Life Style Providers”, “A Comprehensive Security System”). □

Andalusia: One of the Gated Communities planned close to the Airport Highway.



2006: 680 sq. km  
2007: 1,680 sq. km

 Old Boundaries  
 New Additions

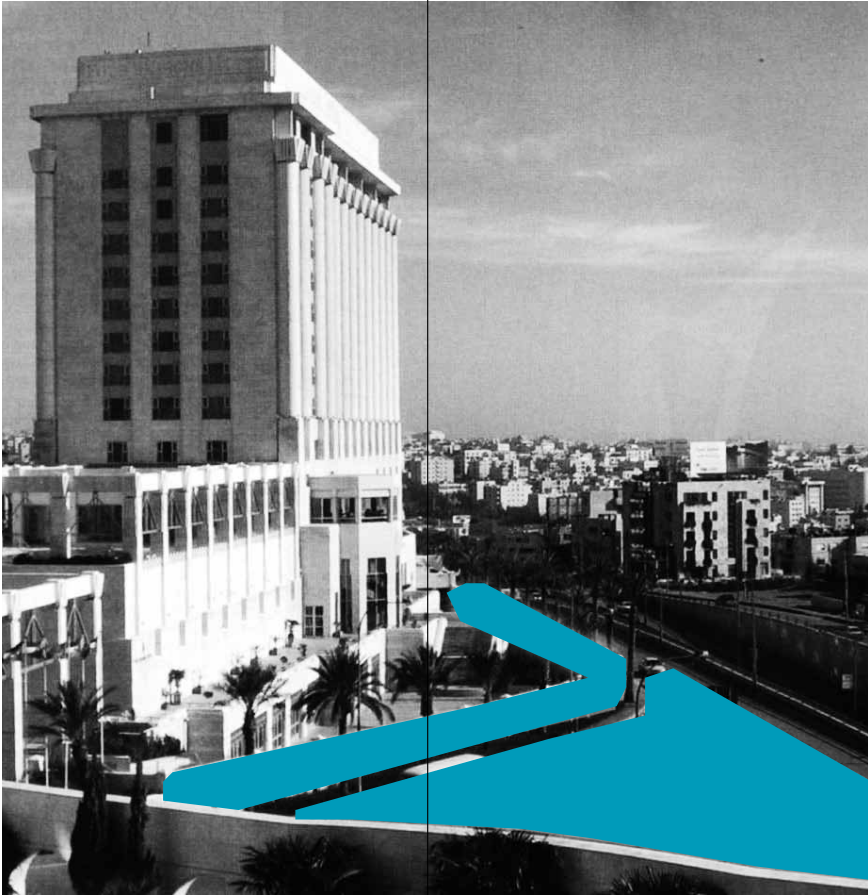


GreenLand Sales Center: Interior of Mecca Mall showing the Sales Center for GREENLAND Project (The Shrine of Neoliberalism where “property” is the new consumer good par-excellence in the Arab World).



Jordan Gate Business Towers: Jordan Gate is one of the early neoliberal business towers planned in the City in the midst of a residential neighbourhood causing major disturbances and forced relocations.





Hotel Four Seasons with its adverse effect either on the public urban edge, or in creating more lost spaces in the City. Furthermore, the Hotel exercises a selective policy of inclusion and exclusion couples with high-level security systems.

⇨ Map C attempts to map some of Amman's emerging spaces of inclusion and exclusion such as shopping malls, hotels (with high security measures), and even refugee camps offering a different type of "refuge" in the City. One of these shopping malls is Mecca Mall located in the western part of the City; it has been dumped as the 'most popular public Ammani space par excellence' by different Jordanian critics in local newspapers. These different Malls are also very selective in the way they choose their clientele. Not only that they are heavily secured with multiple sensors and security check points and devices, but they also exercise a no entry policy for what they claim to be a non-welcomed participant in the mall space which is predominantly young Ammani males who most of the times feel excluded from this gated consumerist community.

The City, which is already divided into East and West, will even be more divided as such along several new lines of division between the two main dominant socio-economic ends of the spectrum obliterating completely the Middle Class. The city is gradually developing into patches of isolated exclusive urban spaces, thus widening the already fragile gap and leading to geographies of social inequality and exclusion (e.g., gated communities, displacement of main transportation hubs, lack of public spaces that are shared by different strata of community, other). A more inclusive City does not simply mean that authorities should provide opportunities for social housing, but rather that the different venues and spaces of the City, weather plazas, shopping malls and streets, restaurants, public spaces, bus terminals, other; are shared by citizens from both ends of the socio-economic lines of division. □

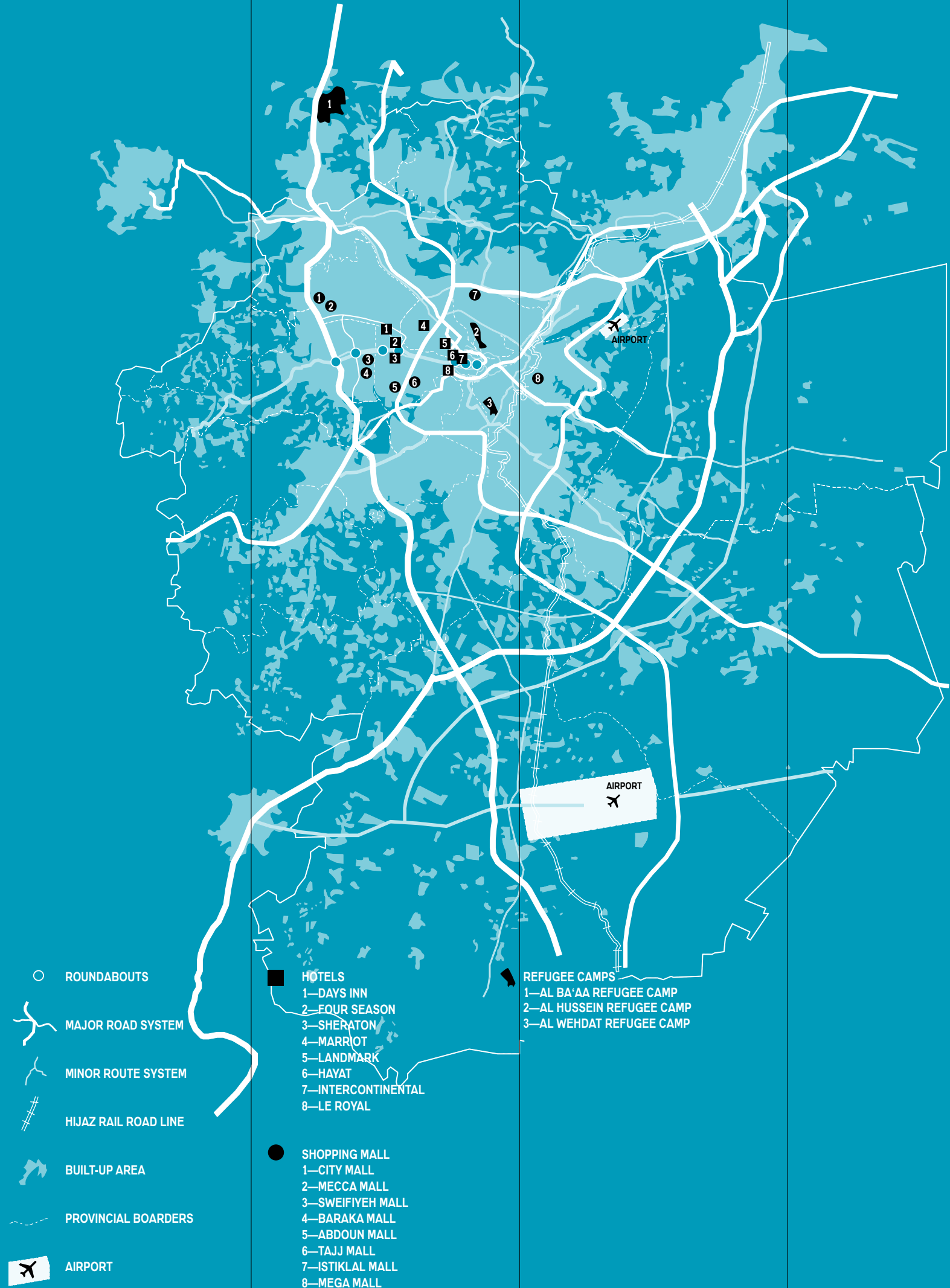
Mecca Mall, one of the City's most popular Shopping Malls with high-security measures and an exclusive entry policy.



Hotels (Sheraton and Four Seasons) turning their back to the Urban Fabric of the City.



# map C—EMERGING SPACES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION





# 03—TUNNEL-BYPASSES AND MINARETS OF CAPITALISM

BY CHRISTOPHER PARKER

## Amman as neoliberal assemblage

### Spaces of exemption and privilege

*"You only need to open your eyes and discover the world that is to become the new downtown. marvel at the physical features of a setting [arranged] in complete accordance with how its residents move and make their way in every space" —promotional material, www.abdali.com.*

Neoliberal development discourse justifies itself through an appeal to 'the global.' Much like modernization in past decades, globalization is today presented as a force external to, and hence beyond the scope of, political agency articulated at any particular point on the globe. As such, it provides a backdrop against which the various projects involved in its making can be made to seem not only technical and political neutral, but also historically inevitable. More than any other contemporary ideological project, neoliberalism has absorbed the charisma of popular, post-Cold War accounts of globalization to make its claims appear authoritative and effective. Somewhat paradoxically, however, it is the local scale that has proven a particularly useful platform for global ambitions. By virtue of its proximate links with irreducible scales of social organization (e.g., individual bodies and households), the urban milieu is seen to provide a malleable spatial container within which to reformat the life-world in ways congenial to modalities of government that prioritize the market as an instrument for expressing, aggregating and informing public choices. Municipal administration poses as an arena of practical problem solving free of the inertia associated with agencies organized at the national scale. By effecting the juxtaposition of local and global scales, neoliberal policy initiatives seek to articulate pathways of connection that harmonize the link between the individual (irreducible unit) and the global (universal principle), thereby resolving tensions built into the organizing dichotomies of liberal political thought (e.g., individual-collective, state-market, private-public, etc) in ways that advance individual liberty, and by virtue of market-derived mechanisms of aggregation and regulation the liberty of society as a whole. At the same time, however, this reliance on scale as a strategy of

organization and naturalization provides a clue that the supposedly boundless logic of neoliberal globalism depends for its realization on the deployment of boundaries and hierarchies.

Perhaps the most obvious sense in which this is so regards the ways in which neoliberalism puts places and spaces in competition with each other for infusions of private investment and financial capital. Almost per definition, this competition implies a comparison across similar socio-spatial units distributed across the globe. Scale-talk allows for the classification and ranking of spaces and populations with reference to categories and hierarchies that appear to be universally valid. By reconfiguring complex social realities into statistically comparable objects, it makes space legible within the wider matrix of competition that provokes the movement of capital.

Scale is, as such, a calculative device: a common operating principle that conditions the ability of actors to imagine and estimate the consequences of a particular course of action. It refers to a strategic matrix of infrastructures and technologies that detach people and places from the complexity of lived political experience, representing them as mathematical expressions within an ostensibly neutral regime of accounting. The distinctions thus produced are not inherent in the nature of the places or spaces being compared, but are at least in part produced by techniques and infrastructures that encourage some kinds of connections and comparisons at the expense of others. Worked into a diverse array of indexes that rank the performance of countries on the basis of indicators that claim to measure inter alia globalization (e.g., A.T. Kearney Inc.), democratization (e.g., Freedom House), transformation (e.g., Bertelsmann), corruption (Transparency International), investor friendliness (World Bank), and urban governance (UN Habitat), the criteria that underpin these accounting regimes become mechanisms of discipline. They act upon the objects and arrangements of government so as to encourage (at least the outward appearance of) conformity with 'global norms', thereby determining patterns of investment and global engagement. As such, they enable the exercise of power at a distance.

Jordan has scored well on many such indexes, and new agencies (e.g., the Jordan Investment Board, the Amman Institute, etc) have been created with the aim of advancing these scores still further. The expansion of Amman's municipal boundaries was itself a move designed to enable the redistribution of for example poverty, and dilute its potentially ranking-lowering effects across a wider field of measurement and regulation. In practice, these indexes measure not conformity with universal principles, but the production of business-friendly effects within arrangements that each market a particular regulatory advantage to attract the flows of transnational capital valorize by neoliberal development theory. State agencies become 'entrepreneurial' in these arrangements by joining forces with, rather than acting as an external source of regulation upon, the private sector. The private and public sectors are no longer adversaries, but partners often together with NGOs and donor agencies in setting, implementing, and administering policy initiatives in areas that were traditionally seen as the preserve of state authorities. State agencies intervene to minimize transaction costs for investors who can choose between competing places across the globe (risk is removed from the private investor and redistributed across the public at large); and they become stakeholders whose return on investment is valorize as a public good. This in turn leads to a situation in which government becomes accountable to investors (naturalized as 'market requirements') over and above citizens. Meanwhile, the tendency to evaluate these arrangements against statistically-rendered global norms disguises both the "varied and often quite illiberal forms of social and political rule" (Sparke, 2006: 153; see also Swyngedouw, 2000) that go into their making, and the specific configurations of interest and practice that emerge within each particular complex. These illiberal forms do not reflect the persistence of endogenous institutions, but are entangled within wider, emergent webs of global engagement and agency. Consider Mawared's Abdali Urban Regeneration Project. Mawared (The National Resources Investment & Development Corporation), is a financially and administratively independent

state-owned corporation set up to oversee the transfer of military sites to private developers. According to its website ([www.mawared.jo](http://www.mawared.jo)), Mawared is committed to "generating considerable investment opportunities for the private sector, creating job opportunities, and stimulating economic growth". It presents itself as "the ideal partner for the private sector", offering "flexible partnership formulas", and facilitating "the smooth processing of official dealings". The corporation is technically owned by the Jordanian military. The king sits atop its board of directors, and proceeds from the projects, it oversees are invested in the military pension fund and other military-related projects.

Mawared started out with 80 ha in the Abdali district of Amman, 12 ha of land in Aqaba, and 2500 ha of land in Zarqa. The land in Aqaba was quickly sold for redevelopment as a luxury seaside residential community. The land in Zarqa has been slated for redevelopment as a mixed-income residential city, dubbed Madinat ash-Sharq (City of the Orient), with a projected 500,000 inhabitants. But it is the \$ 1.5 billion Abdali project that is the jewel in Mawared's crown. Promising "a new downtown [and a] lifestyle of global connectivity and cultural significance" (Mawared newsletter, 14 October 2003), plans centre around investment in information technology, medical tourism, higher education, and high-end commercial and residential real estate. In order to attract global investors, the land was offered to private developers at wellbelow market price, and regulations regarding the buying and selling of finished properties within Abdali are more relaxed than those governing real estate investment in the country at large (Marroushi & Ford, 2006), thus minimizing risk and promising high returns.

The case also illustrates how state authority becomes entwined with private agency: Mawared has formed a 50/50 joint venture with Oger Jordan (a subsidiary of Saudi Oger) to form Abdali Investment and Development (AID), a private land development company. AID has in turn formed a partnership with the Kuwaiti investment group KIPCO, while DAMAC and EMAAR both UAE based firms are spearheading the devel-

opment of high-rise apartment complexes within the site. The international scope of the network has recently been extended with the establishment of Mawared International, capitalized at \$1 billion in Luxembourg. As the Abdali site becomes entwined in webs of investment, planning, and donor funding, the king (and the state agency he represents) increasingly appears as but one of many elevated nodes in a power network that spans the globe. That state agencies prioritize investors over citizens is evidenced inter alia by the ways in which the GAM has intervened (under pressure from Mawared) to expropriate the land surrounding the site in order to build the necessary service infrastructure.

The GAM is itself involved in several similar initiatives, the largest being the \$1.25bn Royal Metropolis, which consists of two interrelated projects: the Royal Village, a gated community abutting the Dead Sea highway; and the Jordan Gate, two high-rise business towers with a shopping mall located on the sixth Circle. The GAM contributed the land in exchange for a 10% stake. The Royal Metropolis was conceived as the flagship development of the airport investment corridor. This initiative includes plans for, inter alia, a 'media city,' a 'sport city,' a 'health city,' a 'Univer City,' and even a privately-developed 'Government city' that will be rented to state agencies out along the highway. Meanwhile, gated communities with names like Greenland and al-Andalusia are springing up on the western side of the highway, while industrial estates and low-income housing projects (discussed below) have been planned south and east of the corridor. In short, planners are creating enclaves artificial 'cities' made safe for capitalism that bypass Amman itself.

On 12 September 2006, 2 Egyptian construction workers were killed and 16 others injured when 3 stories of the Jordan Gate's north tower collapsed

during construction. The event galvanized local residents who backed by protests from within the Engineers Association began to raise concerns about the project. Critics noted that the GAM had appropriated the land for the Jordan Gate from its original owner with the intent of creating a public park (Ababsa, 2007). Furthermore, little consideration had been given to the extreme traffic congestion that would result; nor had the impact of the towers on local water and sewage infrastructures been considered. Finally, there was concern about the GAM's financial stake in the project: how, asked residents, could the GAM be both a financial stakeholder in the project and represent the concerns of citizens? Concerns had been raised during early stages of the project, but did not gain momentum because "everyone was blinded by the money". The controversy led to the dismissal of Mayor Hadid, who was replaced by Omar Maani, a prominent businessman. The GAM sold its shares to Bayan Holdings at a low price with the stipulation that Bayan take measures to develop the public infrastructure around the site. A split had begun to emerge between 'developers' and 'speculators,' and the GAM introduced new requirements on investors to act in the public interest. At first glance, the Jordan Gate incident seemed to represent a minor victory for collective public action. But what has in fact emerged is a scheme aimed at providing a tighter framework of market- and community-oriented self-regulation.

**Conclusion: neoliberalism as a destination**

*"Only when travelling along the road, can you learn something about its force."*

—Walter Benjamin

Contemporary theories of transition can accommodate the idea of multiple pathways to the global, but have more trouble with the pos-

sibility that the global might refer to a variety of heterogeneous and even contradictory destinations. Similarly, accounts concerned with the non-occurrence of regime transitions in Arab political life typically follow the map of globalist assumptions, but ignore scope and significance of boundaries and connections being etched into the terrain itself. Positioning the global as something hierarchical, isomorphic, and encompassing, they problematise the political world at the level of subordinate (and taken for granted) units and scales, and turn inward to unearth the endogenous path dependencies, structured imbalances of power, collective action dilemmas and regime survival strategies that might explain the non-occurrence of outcomes suggested by theory. This has led not only to a profound misdiagnosis of the dilemmas of contemporary Arab political life, but also to a catastrophic misdirection of intellectual and political resources.

The evidence presented here suggests that modalities of technopolitical intervention advanced by market- and transition-oriented modalities of inquiry are unlikely to provide an antidote to the enduring power of incumbent political and economic elites in the Arab world. This is not simply because neoliberal reforms enable the reconstitution of class power by articulating it to networks of finance, government and expertise that span the planet (e.g., Harvey, 2005); but also because such global engagements have been there all along. They are reflected not only in the new arrangements sketched above, but also in the very entanglements that gave rise to the nation-state, the society, and the economy (not to mention the theory) to begin with. They thus hint at the arbitrariness of projects historically associated with the advance of liberal modernity. As such, the non-occurrence of outcomes projected by (neo) liberal theory should not be taken as confirmation of the deformation of a global logic by en-

dogenuous institutional imperatives, but rather explored as evidence of the (often violent) contradictions that lie beneath capitalist ideology and practice.

That the 'local' contexts neoliberal globalism problematise and seeks to transform are themselves reflections of earlier trajectories of global engagement becomes clear if we start from the destinations as opposed to the destinies of neoliberal restructuring. If we look outward from the perspective of the governed - if we start from Jebel al-Nadhif, al-Jiza or Abdali rather than from assumptions of planners and theorists the global appears not hierarchical, isomorphic and encompassing, but heterarchical, emergent, and fragmentary. And while some fragments are clearly more powerful than others (Tsing, 2005: 271), it is only by travelling the paths that lead to the sometimes-distant sites of their formation that we might identify the cracks through which the assumptions and agencies of neoliberal globalism might be most effectively contested and transformed. The road can take us over a border, but it can never deliver us to the global. □

*Adapted from the article published in Political Geography, 28, C. Parker, "Tunnel-by-passes and minarets of capitalism: Amman as neoliberal assemblage", Pages 110-120, © Elsevier (2009).*

**Christopher Parker** is a political scientist and academician teaching at Ghent University in Belgium.

Limitless Advertisement: A huge billboard on one of Amman's new busy inter-city highways advertising one of the new neoliberal investments. Photo by Rami Farouk Daher and Mais Razem.



# 04—SOCIAL DISPARITIES BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AMMAN

## GIS Diagnosis and Public Policies

MYRIAM ABABSA—IFPO AMMAN



Year 2009 marks the centennial of the Amman's municipality. The official celebrations that are organized for the occasion emphasize its privileged location as a crossroad of the *Bilad al-Sham*, the diversity of its population, as well as its modernity. Yet, a closure look at the Hashemite Kingdom capital reveals its segregation between "West Amman" and "East Amman". West Amman is richer, less densely inhabited with more economically active and elderly persons. East Amman, which hosts the two Palestinian camps of *Jabal Hussein* and *Amman New Camp / Wahdat* and numerous informal settlements, is poorer, densely populated, and is said to be socially more conservative. The Jordanian government started creating social housing schemes for the poorest categories of the population as from 1965. But the establishment in 1980 of a specialized national agency, the Urban Development Department (that was to be replaced by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation 1991) was a landmark in the country's urban history. Under their aegis, Jordan was to become the Middle Eastern leader in the field of urban upgrading policies, ushering in such "new concepts" as the active participation of the (squatter) populations concerned in upgrading schemes of land titling through long-term loans (Ababsa, 2009). Another landmark was the launch in 1997 of a National Strategic Plan and a Social Productivity Plan that aimed *inter alia* to improve living conditions in the country's poorest location (see more in this program below). In the process, the physical infrastructure of many such areas was implemented including, for the first time ever, the official Palestinian refugee camps managed jointly by UNRWA and the government (2000–2002). Later, other spectacular developments took place such as the establishment of development corridors and the erection of the *Abdali* New City Center, in West Amman. Such progress had not (yet) benefited East Amman that is still lacking basic services, social housing, and activity centers.

During the preparation of IFPO Atlas of Jordan—prepared in collaboration with Jordanian institutions — I worked with the GIS section of the Greater Amman Municipality on data based on the 2004 National Population and Housing Census at the block level. This enabled me to produce salient information about the distribution of Amman population, thus revealing significant demographic and socioeconomic disparities between East and West Amman. The following paragraphs focus on these disparities.

### 1. A GIS Methodology

Since 1952, four national population and housing censuses covering the entirety of the country's buildings and households have been carried out by the Ministry of Interior and the Department of Statistics (in 1961, 1979, 1994, and in 2004). The censuses' results are generally published at the governorate and country levels. Researchers may obtain data at district and sub-district levels and, exceptionally, at neighborhood and block level. In 2009, I worked with engineers of Greater Amman Municipality GIS section on their data base at the block level. Using ESRI Arc Map program, I crossed checked data in order to represent social disparities inside Amman. In 2004,

Greater Amman Municipality was divided into 21 districts, 143 neighborhoods (zoning) and 4808 blocks (from the smallest blocks in the oldest part of city, to the largest blocks in its new extensions). My first suggestion was to join the polygon shape-file of the block level with the census data given by code in a point shape-file.

### 2. Amman Density Population in 2004 at the Block Level

Some of the maps produced by Ababsa represent Amman density of population during different periods. In Amman's central neighborhoods (Wadi Hadadeh, Al Nozha, Al Hashemi Al Shamali, Al Hashemi Al Janubi, Hamza, Jabal Al Nasr, Al Amir Hasan, Jabal Jofeh, Al Manarah, Al Taj, Al Mudarraj, Al Ashrafia, Al Nadhif, Al Akhdar, Al Awdeh, Al Thera), the population density is over 20,000 inhabitants by square kilometers (with a maximum of 31,240) which is among the highest urban density in the world (Dehli is between 3,000 to 17,000 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>, London 4,000 to 7,000 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>).

These neighborhoods include most of those informal settlements that developed following the arrival to the city of the 1967 Palestinian displaced persons from the West Bank and Gaza. Many of the settlements sprang out in the fringes of the *Jabal Hussein* and *Wahdat* official refugee camps that had been erected to accommodate the neediest 1948 refugees, in 1952 and 1955 respectively. The idea was to have easy access to UNRWA's services that were mainly based in the camps (primary education, medical aid, relief and social services). Informal settlements pose particular challenges. They are characterized by high natural population growth (more than 6% a year) and are typically located on treacherous terrains, including floodable *wadi* basins and steep hillsides (*jabal*). They also frequently encroach on agricultural land. In 2006, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation evaluated the number of such "squatter areas" in all Jordan to forty; inhabited by some 100,000 inhabitants.

### 3. Jordan's Successful Upgrading Policy and Community Infrastructure Programs (1980–2007)

Most of the 1950's and 1960's informal settlements were built on the edge of *Jabals* and in the flooding areas of valleys. Their average plot size was 150 m<sup>2</sup>, namely about half of the area allotted by the formal building code, leaving space for only narrow footpaths. Besides, plots with such small sizes are not identified by the zoning regulations introduced by the British in the 1930's that organized the country's inhabited areas in four categories: A (> 1000 m<sup>2</sup>), B (> 750 m<sup>2</sup>), C (> 500 m<sup>2</sup>) and D (250 m<sup>2</sup>); such plot sizes are too large to be affordable to low-income groups. This is also a reason for the presence of informal zones in the yet uninhabited (or sparsely inhabited) areas near the official refugee camps in East Amman.

By the early 1980's, three-fourth of the houses had permanent wall construction. 70% of them had concrete roofs. The remaining 30% had roofs made of zinc or wood. The average number of persons per room was 4.2; however, 15% of the households had 7 persons per room. Most of the

houses were characterized by overcrowdings, with all the domestic, safety, risks linked to it. The infant mortality rate was high: 86 children per thousand births (Al Daly, 1999).

In 1980, the Urban Development Department (UDD) was created. Its mandate was to develop infrastructures services and community facilities in the informal areas, and to provide low-income housing. When elaborating and implementing its projects, the UDD adopted from the start the World Bank concepts pertaining to the participation of the targeted population in any upgrading scheme. Three Development Projects were launched. The first Urban Development Project (UDP 1) consisted in the upgrading of four sites: East Wahdat, Jabal Jofeh, Rimam and Nuzeh, and the establishment of three "Sites with services": Marka, Quweisma, Russeifa 1. East Wahdat project was internationally recognized as a real success and its engineers received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1992 for their upgrading interventions. HUDC (that replaced the UDD in 1991 with an extended mandate including all the country, and not only Amman) constructed a community center in each project site. The objectives of the community centre were to mobilize and organize local community initiatives, promote income generating activities, literacy campaign, and public awareness and encourage women's involvement in the community development process. Furthermore, brand new vocational training centers were set up in order to provide vocational training for women and micro-credit schemes were designed to promote their insertion in the labor market (Al Daly, 1999).

In 1997, the HUDC initiated the Community Infrastructure Program within the framework of a National Strategic Plan to solve the problems of unemployment. The first Community Infrastructure Program (March 1998–February 2002) addressed 14 squatter settlements and 13 Palestinian Camps. The interventions targeted essential services including water supply and sanitation (environmentally sound wastewater and solid waste disposal); drainage system to minimize property damage and reduce the risk of loss of human life due to floods; safety measures through accessible roads and lighting; provision of schools, health facilities and community centers. However, maybe because camps were involved, the government abandoned the highly sensitive issue of land tenure, focusing only on improved service delivery in informal areas and camps. The main reason given for this shift is a financial one. The land price went so high that the government could not afford to buy private land anymore. Moreover, the informal settlements inhabitants became too poor to contribute by giving 10% of the apartment price (as in 1980's upgrading policies). But for all these efforts, not all informal areas were upgraded; and the upgrading interventions did little to alleviate the high population density, over-crowding and poverty, that still prevailed in the central and eastern areas of Amman.

### 4. East Amman / West Amman Division Line

#### 4.1. Types of housing inside Greater Amman at the block level (building, dar and villa).

Other Maps allow us to present Amman's morphology. Buildings are mostly located in the heart and the Western part of the city. The rural fringes of the city still claim *dar* (traditional houses with courtyard). *Wahdat* and *Jabal Hussein* camps include half of the buildings classified as "dar" but it is in fact self-built houses. It is interesting that this category did not change in the census,

although most of the *dars* were converted into buildings by addition of extra floors. Villas are located in the Western part of the city (Abdoun, Shmeissani, Deir Ghbar, Um Udheina).

#### 4.2. Over-crowding

According to UN Habitat definition of informal settlement, a settlement is considered informal if at least two of the five following criteria are lacking: access to improved water, access to improved sanitation, durability of housing, sufficient living area (must be less than 2 persons per room), security of tenure. The Jordanian governmental institutions have adopted such a definition. Up to 99% of buildings in Amman have access to improved water, and up to 80% to sanitation. Security of tenure is guaranteed in Amman (through *mulk* and *mucharak* contracts) and most buildings are durable except buildings with a *Zinko* roof. But overcrowding is dominant nearly everywhere in the heart of the city. In most of the center of Amman, we count more than 2 inhabitants per room. To produce one of the Maps (fig D in this newspaper), I have divided the number of apartments by the number of families at the block level. The heart of the city (Al Nuzha, Al Hashemi Al Shamali, Al Hashemi Al Janubi, Hamza, Jabal Al Nasr, Al Amir Hasan, Jabal Jofeh, Al Manarah, Al Taj, Al Mudarraj, Al Ashrafia, Al Nadhif, Al Akhdar, Al Awdeh, Al Thera) enjoys between 0,8 to one family by apartment. Some poor areas enjoy more than one family by apartment. In the richest area, there is twice more apartments than families (463,565 apartments for 355,942 families in Amman in 2004).

#### 4.3. Young and Elder in Amman:

##### the real indicator of poverty in the City

Figure E in this newspaper shows very clearly the East and West Amman Division line. Less than one-third of West Amman's population is under the age of 15 (comprising almost half of the population of East Amman). At the other end of the age range, Figure F, indicates that the elderly population group (between 75 and 79 years) constitutes less than 1% of the population in East Amman, whereas it sometimes reaches 6,6% in some blocks of West Amman. Jordan Life expectancy was, in 2004, 71 year for the men and 74 for the women. At the national level, 37,3% of the population was under 15 in 2004, and 3,2% more than 65 years (DOS, 2007). Jordan started its demographic transition forty years ago. Fertility rate is 3.6 children by woman.

#### 4.4. Gender Ratio in the City

Gender ratio in the City (shown in some of the Maps) indicate the sex/active population ratio. — Due to the out-migration of many young educated professional men (600,000 Jordanian are working abroad, nearly half of which are in the Gulf) and the massive presence of female domestic workers (mostly from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines), West Amman active population is slightly more feminine than East Amman. East Amman's active population includes more men, also because of the presence of male foreign workers employed in the construction and manufacturing sector (mainly Egyptians). Collective and public housing are also more developed in the eastern part of the city.

#### 4.5. Workers and Job Seekers in Amman

Other Maps further confirm the division line between West and East Amman. One particular Map shows that more than 36% (up to 62%) of West Amman active population (more than 15 years of age) is economically active, whereas only



# fig D

## Number of Families by Apartment in Greater Amman Municipality in 2004 at the block level

26 to 36% of East Amman active population is economically active. In contrast, job seekers represent between 6 and 14% of East Amman's and the rural fringe's population; and between 3 to 9% of West Amman population. According to 2004 National Census, 39,9% of the active population was working and 9,9% was seeking jobs.

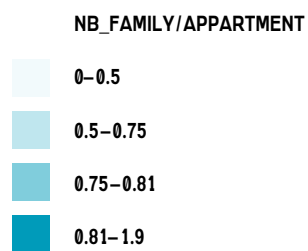
These maps allow us to draw the division line between East and West Amman. West Amman extends from Jabal Amman to Khalda and is limited north by Wadi Hadadeh and South by Wadi Deir Ghbar. East Amman covers Amman historical center, and more than half of the city in its North and South extensions. □

Myriam Ababsa is an urban geographer and researcher at IFPO (Institut Français du Proche-Orient) in Amman.

### References

- ↔ Ababsa, M., 2007, *Amman de pierre et de paix*, Paris: Autrement.
- ↔ Ababsa, M., 2009, "Social Disparities and Public Policies in Amman (1946-2009)", in Ababsa M., Daher R. (dir.), 2009, *Villes et sociétés en Jordanie. Cities and Societies in Jordan*, Cahier de l'IFPO (Institut Français du Proche-Orient) N° 5, Beyrouth (to be published).
- ↔ Al-Asad, M. 1997. "Ruptures in the Evolution of the Middle Eastern City: Amman," in: Bonine, M. (ed), *Population, Poverty, and Politics in Middle East Cities*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, pp. 46-63.
- ↔ Al Daly Jamal.I, 1999, *Informal settlements in Jordan, Upgrading approaches adopted and lessons learned*, ↔ <http://www.hdm.lth.se/fileadmin/hdm/alumni/papers/ad1999/ad1999-09.pdf>.
- ↔ Alsayyad N., Roy, A. (ed.), 2004, *Urban Informality. Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books.
- ↔ Hannover, J., Shami, S., 1996, *Amman, ville et société*, Beyrouth, CERMO.
- ↔ Razzaz, O., 1991, *Law, Urban Land Tenure, and Property Disputes in Contested Settlements: The Case of Jordan*, doctorat en planification urbaine, Harvard University, 336 p. non publié.

\*  
1—With the permission of Jordan's Prime Minister, HE. Nader al Dhahabi, I was allowed to work with the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center, the Department of Statistics, the Ministry of Municipalities and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the University of Jordan and the Greater Amman Municipality. The project was funded by the French National Research Center (CNRS), Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO), the French Embassy in Jordan Cultural Services, the Delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, the French University Agency (AUF) and the National Research Agency (ANR) through Citadain project - Philippe Cadène, Paris VII University). The book will be published in English and Arabic at IFPO press in Beyrouth in May 2010; ↔ cf [www.ifpoorient.org](http://www.ifpoorient.org)  
2—Population classes between 15 and 65 years were taken.

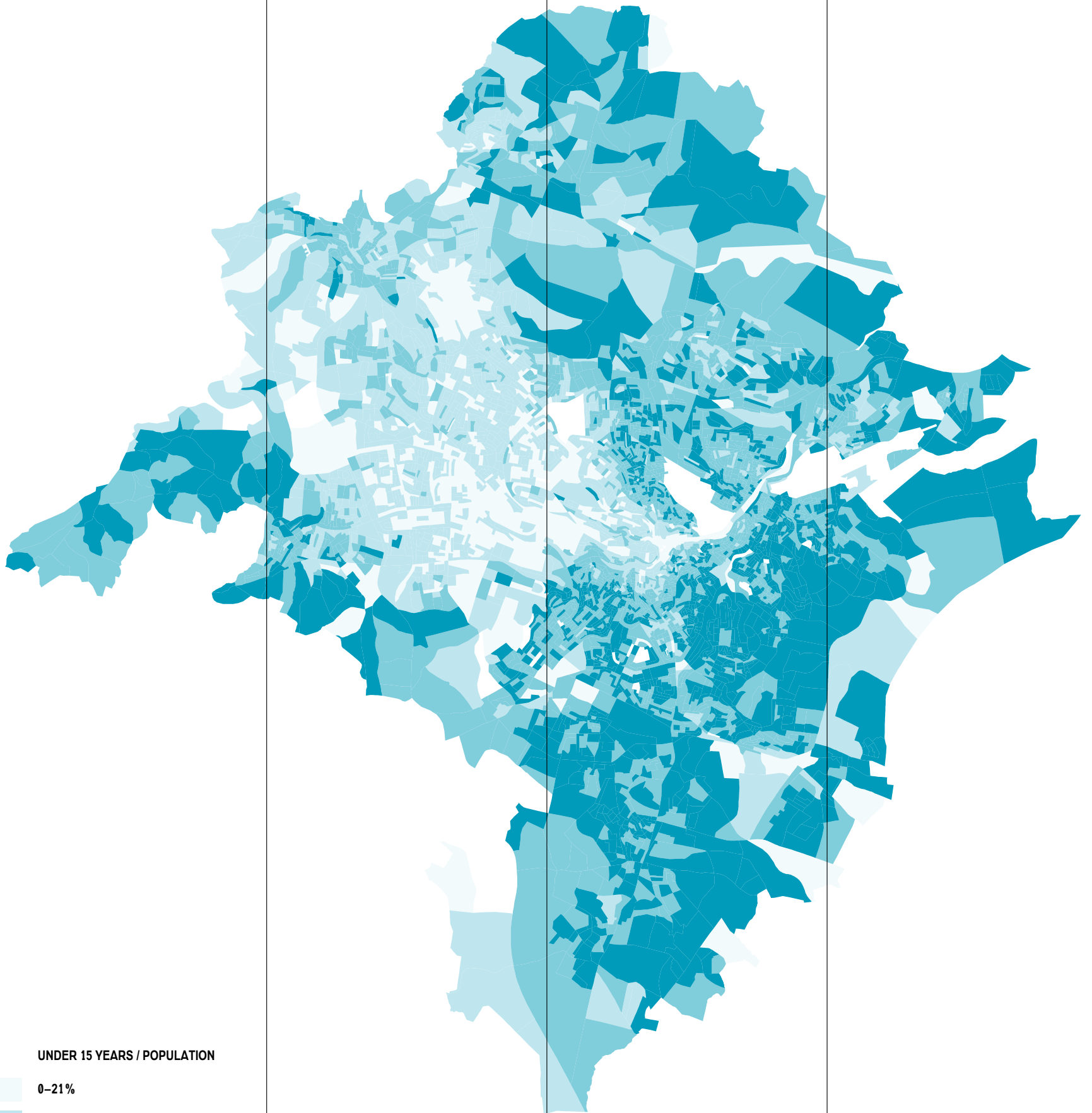


(Ababsa, IFPO, 2009)

Source: Greater Amman Municipality and Department of Statistics, 2004 Population and Housing Census

# fig E

Percentage of population under 15 years in Amman in 2004 at block level



UNDER 15 YEARS / POPULATION

- 0-21%
- 21-30%
- 30-38%
- 38-71%

3 1.5 0 3 KILOMETERS

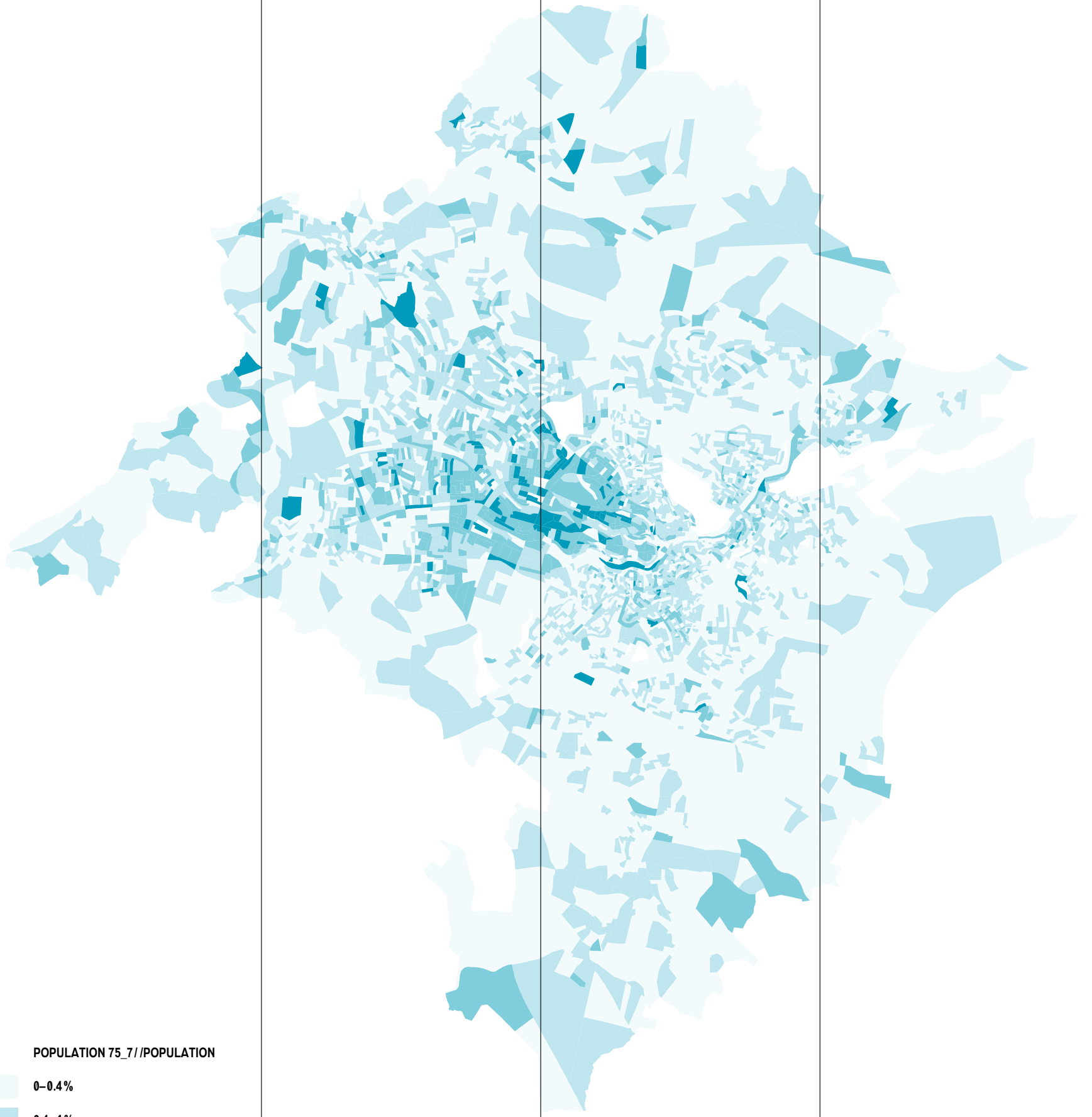
ifpo  
أمانة  
عمان  
الكبرى  
Institut français du Proche-Orient  
Amman — Beyrouth — Damas — Alep

(Ababsa, IFPO, 2009)

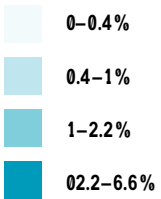
Source: Greater Amman Municipality and Department of Statistics, 2004 Population and Housing Census

# fig F

Percentage of elder (between 75 and 79 years)  
in Amman 2004 at the block level



POPULATION 75\_7 // POPULATION



# case study 05—PASSIONATE ACTIVISM

## The Story of Jabal al Nathif

BY RAGHDA A. BUTROS



I spent the years from 2005 to the end of 2008 in Jabal Nathif, a neighborhood of 120,000 people in the center of Amman geographically, in its less-privileged east according to prevailing socio-economic classifications, and among its most impoverished and neglected by any definition. My journey into and within Jabal Nathif was a professional but also a very personal one; of discovery within this city where I was born and spent most of my childhood, a city I love but which as a young adult I had often wanted to leave, and one which I have, in recent years, begun to fully claim as my own.

Growing up middle class in Amman means that you live in less than half of the city and that you meet and associate with people very similar to yourself; people who live in nearby neighborhoods, who have been to the same schools and whose parents happen to know yours in some way or another. My experience at the University of Jordan, after some years abroad, brought me closer to the reality of Jordanian society, but the realization that so many my friends and acquaintances share so much in common with each other and with me, was a big part of the motivation that lead me to a career in development and, eventually, to Jabal Nathif and onto other communities around Amman since. Another source of motivation was my desire to understand and experience the city as a whole and not be confined to the small radius of West Amman, which, if not careful, one runs the risk of imagining is a true representation or our city as a whole.

When Ruwwad was established in 2005 by Aramex with whom I worked to set-up and then run the organization, the private sector's involvement in development work in Jordan was minimal, with some companies making yearly contributions to charity and some working on small projects here and there. The term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was beginning to become a buzzword but was still widely misunderstood. In many ways, and several conferences later, I believe it still is, with a worrying trend which seems to suggest that a contribution to a charitable endeavor of some sort translates into social responsibility and a 'get out of jail card' for any damage a company may cause to its employees, the environment, and society as a whole.

The timing was nonetheless apt, and the approach of seeking funds after being able to show some initial results on the ground in Jabal Nathif, allowed Ruwwad to garner support from several individuals and companies in Jordan and the region and become the first development organization in Jordan to be fully funded by the private sector. It is worthwhile mentioning that some of the biggest individual contributors to Ruwwad declined to tie their contributions to any marketing, PR or promotional efforts and corporations that contributed did not at any point during my time there expect or demand publicity from the organization. In fact, they were often hesitant to respond to media interest which started early and went on to grow substantially with time. In that sense, Ruwwad, does not fit the profile of a typical CSR initiative and in fact, I personally never perceived it as one, but rather saw it as a vehicle to allow people to invest their time, funds, expertise and ideas in the community.

Prior to Ruwwad's official launch and to the fund-raising efforts that followed, I ventured into Jabal Nathif, equipped with passion, my own very personal brand of CSR where the "C" stands for collective, and some initial Aramex money to spend. Interestingly enough, neither I, nor many of the people I knew had ever even heard of the place before. And yet there it was, on the hillside to the right of Ras El-Ain as you head to the Balad, Amman's much-frequented downtown. The fact is Jabal Nathif, for a variety of social, economic and political reasons had all but disappeared from the radar screen of the city and this was a fact its residents felt very keenly. In our first meetings together, both informal ones in people's homes, or in focus group meetings, people spoke of their desire to change perceptions about them and their neighborhood. It was one of the priorities people set for our work with them in the neighborhood, along with renovating run-down schools, fixing damaged infrastructure, providing educational support, creating opportunities for young people and lobbying the government for the instatement of non-existing services such as a health center, a police station and simplest of all, a post-office where people could pay bills and access social security and welfare payments. Until the very end of my time in Nathif, first-time visitors would arrive very early to meetings because they thought Jabal Nathif was a long trek from Jabal Amman, Abdoun or elsewhere in West Amman, when in fact it was a mere five to ten minute drive away.

Its beginnings as an unofficial Palestinian refugee camp in 1948, land-tenure issues, government neglect and a sprinkling of ineffective development projects are just some of the many reasons for Jabal Nathif's state of neglect, one so acute, the image I have of my first few days there still resemble a scene from a film studio recreation of a deserted town, with imaginary tumbleweed spinning in the wind. Of course, this image could not have been true or real, for I was, after all, a newcomer and for people in the community, I may as well have been an alien. In fact, Jabal Nathif is a very active, busy place. I quote here from a blog post I wrote a couple of years later, which reflects how I came to see the community not long after:

"Jabal Nathif, is a place where anything is possible. All the elements of life coexist, connect and conflict. A neighbor is still likely to call from her window to any random boy or girl in the street to run to the shop and buy her some groceries, and is just as likely to tell any child off for being rude or silly as she is her own. People acknowledge each other and exchange Salams and you know when Abu Mahmoud has had a fight with his wife from the kashra (scowl) on his face first thing in the morning. Abu Khaled who is eighty and pristine in his white hattah and 'ugal will sometimes let the kids pick fruits from his garden and will at other times chase them away with his walking stick. Then there's the infamous Um 'Ugab, who can be seen in her yellow and red dishdashah one day and her black 'abay the other, and you can tell her mood by which one it is. The yellow dishdashah usually means you get a firm handshake and lots of repeated kisses on the cheek, while the black 'abay should tell you to probably keep your distance. Khalil may only be four but he walks around like he owns the place and clearly doesn't suffer fools gladly. Um Wael can be seen leaving her house every morning to follow-up on her many ailments and those of her two daughters. She goes to the hospital so often that the nurses have started asking her to bring them things for them on her way. Abu Wael on the other hand seems to be quite content sitting on a small stool in front of his door smoking and watching the passers-by.

Hot tea is always ready at Awad and Manal's where you're always welcome to take a respite even if they're not at home. And just as you're about to leave, Firas the khudarji (greengrocer) will lift a huge head of cauliflower or a watermelon from his truck and thrust it into your arms as a gift, which you can never turn down, hard as you try.

We reminisce about the old Amman where we played in the street till sunset and could drop by any neighbor's house for a drink and a sandwich. The streets of Nathif may not be as safe as our old neighborhoods, but you can be sure that even if someone bothers you, someone else will certainly come to your defense. Just don't dream of ever keeping any secrets, Um Khaldoun is sure to be spying on you, and everyone knows Um Wael is psychic!"

I'm getting ahead of myself though, because when I first arrived in Jabal Nathif, I could not see the beauty in the place and they certainly could not see it in me! Although I was never refused entry into anyone's home and was always welcomed for tea and with warm greetings, my relationship with Jabal Nathif and its resident, like any other meaningful relationship, grew slowly and had its many ups and downs. Before we even had an office in the neighborhood, I had spent a year getting to know people and building trust and understanding and this went a long way to dispelling the rumors that I was, amongst other things "a Zionist, a missionary, a money launderer, an infidel", and finally in a final desperate and rather lame attempt "a devil worshipper".

And so it went my love-hate relationship with Jabal Nathif which ended up on both sides more of love than hate. There were threats and accusations by some and attempts to keep the children away, but my response was to open our doors even wider. I would ask everyone to come in and see what we do for themselves, to work with us to achieve our common goals, and eventually the accusations subsided. The very openness of the place was something that took some getting used to by the community. This was not a place for some, not reserved for the few, but free and accessible to everyone, regardless of convictions, social status or views. We were happy and willing to cooperate with anyone and everyone, including the charitable Islamic organizations which had been present in the community for decades and who did not always appreciate our presence. In fact, one of the first people I worked with in the community was the representative of the Zakat Fund, with whom I still maintain a friendship.

I could cite a long list of Ruwwad's achievements during those first four years, from the three hundred and fifty university scholarships we provided to young people in the community, to the schools we fixed, to the health center, the police station and the much-coveted post office we managed to establish, but what most strikes me now that I look back, is the extraordinary leap of faith this all required on both sides. I would say that the most important of these achievements were not those which were made possible with money, but those that came with time, with

active listening, with a suspension of disbelief and a willingness to see beyond the stereotypes on both sides. The ones where I was able to see beyond the pretenses of "empowerment" to seeing that real strength often rests not with education and a successful career but with the ability to raise a family, build a home and earn a living when all odds are against you. The ones where for example, I was able to convince a group of kids who felt down and out on their luck to give something back to the community and by volunteering, reclaim a bit of their destiny which they had always thought was blowing in the wind. There is nothing I enjoy more than to see how some of the children we worked with have gone from not reading and writing to creating scripts and producing short films, from not seeing the beauty of their community to painting it in all its glory in life size murals on the walls of their community and eventually teaching kids in other communities to do the same.

When I go into communities now, I have learned to ask how people are and what's great about their lives, rather than rudely jumping into questions about what plagues them and their communities and thinking of ways to throw money at their problems. I am amazed at what a difference that approach can achieve in bringing me closer to people and to allowing us to share mutual understanding of our varying realities. I have never believed in the "beneficiary-benefactor" equation, and I have learnt from experience how to make sure that definition does not make its way into my relationship with the people of the communities where I now choose to work.

I am still struggling with what the most effective and reflective sources of funding are for myself and other social entrepreneurs and activists to tap into so that our ideas can see the light of day. Having tried working with government and donor-funding as well as private sector money, I cannot say that one is necessarily better than the other. While private sector money certainly offers flexibility and ostensibly less strings-attached, you still run the risk of that your ideas and work end up being part of a certain agenda, be it personal, political or ideological. What I know for a fact is that while financial support is important to the success of any development effort, it is the intangibles which ultimately leave their mark. In this case, it was the time that volunteers from within the community, from all over Jordan and the world were happy to give to teach children art, music and dance, the suggestions and ideas that people readily contributed and implemented, the leadership qualities of a guest-speaker on any given Saturday when we held our weekly discussions, and the patience it took one of our young students to teach a few elderly ladies to read and write. The understanding and sharing of self is key-without it, no amount of money could ever achieve the change we seek within ourselves and society. □

*Raghda Butros is an urban activist, Ashoka fellow, and a founder of an activist group "Hamzat Wassel" in Amman.*



# 06—THE NEW CITIES LANDLORDS

## The Transnational Capitalist Class

BY RAMI F. DAHER

Further research on neoliberal urban restructuring should focus more on the human agent behind global capital flow, and the field is in need of more search and ethnographies that target transnational capitalist individuals in order to arrive closely to a better understanding of the nature and future of these investments. The transnational capitalist class includes major shareholders of real-estate companies (e.g., TAAMEER, AMAAR Properties, DAMAC Properties, NAKHEEL, others) general managers/directors, corporate executives, and globalizing bureaucrats 1. They tend to play a crucial and significant role in the politics and dynamics of these investments and also in the direction of capital flow within the region let alone the promoted lifestyles prevailing within these projects.

Between 2005 and 2007 Daher had researched the current real-estate ventures by visiting different project locations, sales centres of main real-estate companies and exhibitions, interviewing the CEOs and deputy managers of such companies, and consulting a huge variety of literature published in magazines such as *Jordan Business*, *Jordan Property* and *Jordan Land*. One of the outcomes of this research is Table 1 which presents a critical analysis of the different projects in terms of the nature of their real-estate company; origin of capital and the translational capitalist class; project type and associated lifestyle; marketing slogans; and targeted clientele and cost. I suggest that the real-estate projects can be divided into two main categories: Type 1. Gated communities in the form of residential compounds; and Type 2. Exclusive office space in the form of high-rise towers. The following is a discussion of these two types of neoliberal investment in Amman 2.

Type 1 such as *Andalusia*, *Greenland*, *Hummar Hills* and the *Royal Village* represent gated communities and housing enclaves for the very rich targeting mostly high-end clientele which the

author dubs “selling of paradise on the ground,” because a quick glance across the different marketing slogans and discourses of the developers (e.g., “The Joy of Living,” “Provide distinctive homes that will redefine everyday life”) will infer one to suggest that all projects are promising a utopian existence and a completely transformed individual once one becomes part of this exclusive community. The architecture attempts to offer a traditional envelope to these housing villas and apartments through the use of traditional materials and colors, and the use of certain historicized elements (e.g., wooden pergolas, *mashrabiahs*, and so on). The architectural style represents, in most of the cases, a poor and unsophisticated understanding of a mythical rigid Orient. But once one attempts to reveal and peel off this Disney-like and superficial layer, it is very obvious that these projects represent an oriental vision of the occident, where the occident here is the American-style of living in the suburbs with its single family house, front yard, garage, and basketball ring.

Type 2 of these projects like the towers sector of the Abdali Project (including the Vertex, the Heights, and the Lofts), Jordan Gate, and many others constitute exclusive office space and luxury apartments which the author dubs “Living above the City in the Clouds.” The high end residents thrive to be part of the city, but in reality they are living in a privileged position above the city. These projects promise a distinctively luxurious lifestyle and a protected and safe environment throughout their marketing slogans (e.g., “Lofty views, open terraces, and deluxe living in the city center,” “Luxury Life Style Providers,” “A Comprehensive Security System”). As Sklair 3 (2001, p. 6) says:

*“global capitalism thrives by persuading us that the meaning and value of our lives are to be found principally in what we possess, that we*

*can never be totally satisfied with our positions (the imperative of ever changing fashion style), and that the goods and services we consume are best provided by the free market, the generator of private profit that lies at the heart of capitalism.”*

It is very obvious that “property” is the new consumer good par-excellence in the Middle East and “real-estate development” is its new religion. Table 1 reveals the different actors and agents behind these neoliberal projects, they include people like Bahaa al Harriri (chairman and president of Saudi Oger), Akram Abu Hamdan (general director of MAWARD), Jordan Branel (CEO of Dubai Properties), and Mr. Sijwani (major chairholder in DAMAC Properties) to mention a few. This group of people (either major shareholders of real-estate companies, general managers, corporate executives, and globalizing bureaucrats) play a crucial and significant role in the politics and dynamics of these investments and also in the direction of capital flow within the region let alone the promoted lifestyles prevailing within these projects.

It is suggested that further research on neoliberal urban restructuring should focus more on the human agent behind global capital flow, and the field is in need of more search and ethnographies that target these transnational capitalist individuals in order to arrive closely to a better understanding of the nature and future of these investments. Ley (2004, 152) attempts to pin point the importance of studying the different discourses of these transnational capitalists while attempting to bring the issue of human agency to a globalizing discourse which “has frequently been satisfied with speaking of a space of networks and flows devoid of knowledgeable human agents.” Sklair (2001, 4) attempts to understand who are these actors and agents influential within this transnational capitalist class and adds that this “new class is the transnational capitalist class, composed of corporate executives, globalizing bureaucrats and politicians, globalizing professionals, and consumerist elites.”

In conclusion, it is important to add that in order to understand the interplay and politics of these emerging models of urban governance within a neoliberal milieu; one should focus more on the human agent behind global capital flow orchestrated by the City’s new landlords: the transnational capitalist class represented through major shareholders of real-estate companies, general managers/directors, corporate executives, and globalizing bureaucrats. They tend to play a crucial and significant role in the politics and dynamics of these investments and also in the direction of capital flow within the region let alone the promoted lifestyles prevailing within these projects. □

A stretch of billboard about the Abdali investment Project is the only source of information between the community at large and this major neoliberal urban restructuring project in the City. The slogans on these billboard (e.g., Let us start the pleasure of shopping) thrives to transform the society into a consumerist one where “property” is the new consumer good par-excellence in the Arab World nowadays. (Source: Rami Daher 2007).







1—Ley, David. 2004. “Transitional spaces and everyday lives.” in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. Britain: Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers. Pp. 151-164.

2—Daher, Rami. 2008. “Amman: Disguised Genealogy and Recent Urban Restructuring and Neoliberal Threats.” Pp. 37–68. In Elsheshtawy, Yasser. (ed.), *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity, and Urban Development*. New York: Routledge.



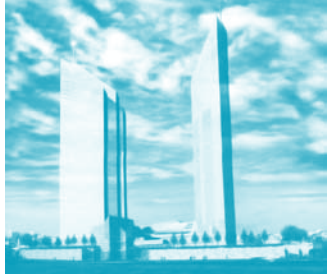


3—Sklair, Leslie. 2001. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.



# fig G—REAL-ESTATE DEVELOPERS' DISCOURSE IN AND AROUND AMMAN <sup>1</sup>

NAME OF REAL-ESTATE COMPANY	ORIGIN OF CIRCULATING CAPITAL & TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALIST CLASS	LOCATION OF REAL-ESTATE PROJECT	PROJECT TYPE, LIFE & ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	NAME OF PROJECT & MARKETING SLOGAN	TARGETED CLIENTAL (CATER TO) CLOSED/OPEN COMMUNITY	IMAGE
<b>DISCOURSE I: "SELLING OF 'PARADISE' ON THE GROUND"</b>						
TAAMEER Jordan / Jordan Company for Real-Estate Development (PLC) / www.taameerjordan.com	UAE & Jordan / CEO: Ahmed Dahleh	Amman, Airport Highway	Villas Cost/m <sup>2</sup> : 600 JDs Facilities & Life Style: Centralized under-floor heating, maid room with laundry, interior customization, 24 hour security & maintenance, indoor and outdoor swimming pool, spas & heath clubs.	ANDALUCIA / "The Grass is Greener at ANDALUCIA"	Upper Class / Gated closed community.	 (Reference: Jordan Business. July 2007. Page: 66)
Kurdi Group / www.greenland.jo	Jordan / CEO: Obaidah al Kurdi	Marj al Hamman, Near Amman, close to Airport Highway.	Mostly Villas, but also Apartment / Architects: Kurdi & Ashdak Cost/m <sup>2</sup> : Apartments: 657-796 JDs Villas: 700-784 JDs Sales Center: Open Area in Mecca Mall	Green Land / "The Joy of Living"	Middle and High Income / Open Community	 (Reference: imazine—celebrating Jordan. February 2006. Page: 13)
AMAAR Properties / In partnership with Triad Investments / www.amaar.net	Jordan & UAE	Al Hummar, Amman.	Villas Architectural Style: Modern Smart Home System, centralized AC and heating system, Centralized satellite and internet, 24 hours security and maintenance, health clubs	Al-Hummar Hills / "A new oasis for dwelling in Amman" / Provide distinctive homes that will redefine everyday life" / Elite Products for the Elite Community" / "Al Hummar Hills is an ingeniously fresh approach to Gated Communities compound living" www.hummar-hills.com	Upper Middle Class & High/ Gated Community / Compound Living	 (Reference: Jordan Land. Issue 9, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007. Page: 93)
Bayan Holding (Developer) / Gulf Finance House (Financing) / Al Hamad Construction & Development Co. (Construction).	UAE	Near Airport Highway on the way to Marj al Hamam, Amman.	Villas and Apartments Architectural Style: Modern/Contemporary Facilities: cable TV, Central Gas Distribution, Central Irrigation System, VRV System Architects: Consolidated Consultants Sales Center: Under Construction	Villas and Apartments Architectural Style: Modern/Contemporary Facilities: cable TV, Central Gas Distribution, Central Irrigation System, VRV System Architects: Consolidated Consultants Sales Center: Under Construction	Middle & High Closed Gated Community.	 (Reference: Jordan Land. Issue 9, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007. Page: 74)

<sup>1</sup>—This table was constructed based on field work conducted by the author in Amman between the years of 2006-7 through visiting different project locations, real-estate investors sales centers, expos, and through consulting different local business and real-estate magazines such as *Jordan Business*, *Jordan Property*, and *Jordan Land*.

NAME OF REAL-ESTATE COMPANY	ORIGIN OF CIRCULATING CAPITAL & TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALIST CLASS	LOCATION OF REAL-ESTATE PROJECT	PROJECT TYPE, LIFE & ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	NAME OF PROJECT & MARKETING SLOGAN	TARGETED CLIENTAL (CATER TO) CLOSED/OPEN COMMUNITY	IMAGE
<b>DISCOURSE II: "LIVING ABOVE THE CITY IN THE CLOUDS"</b>						
Abdali Investment & Development PSC (a private shareholder company). A public-private partnership between the state-owned investment corporation MAWARED and Saudi Oger as the main developer and contractor. Plus the Kuwaiti Investment Group KIPCO	Saudi Arabia & Jordan / Chairman: Bahaa Hariri/ Chairman & President of Saudi Oger: Sheikh Sa'ad Hariri / Director General of Mawared: Akram Abu Hamdan / Prominent Board Member: Ali Kolaghassi 1.5 Billion Dollars Investment.	Abdali, Heart of the City of Amman / a 3.5 million square feet investment.	The Towers Sector of the Project is a mix of high and mid-rise developments designed to accommodate corporate offices and offer integrated building management systems to ensure state-of-the-art services for corporate tenants. The residential area will be mixed-use space with luxury apartments	Abdali Urban Regeneration Project / "A new downtown for Amman" / "The Planting of a Heart for an Old City is the Essence of the Abdali Project"	Corporate Businesses Upper Middle Class residents and expatriates / Closed community.	 (Reference: Jordan Land. Issue 9, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007, Page: 41)
EMMAR / Partner with Bin Suaidan Group of Saudi Arabia	Jordan & Saudi Arabia	Amman, 5th Circle Area , Zahran Street/ 40 Thousands Meter Square.	Three Commercial Towers / High End Corporate Offices.	EMMAR Towers /"Best Place to Practice Commercial Activity" / "A Comprehensive Security System"	Closed Community.	 (Reference: Jordan Land. Issue 9, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007. Page: 145)
Bayan Holding (Developer) / Gulf Finance House (Financing) / Al Hamad Construction & Development Co. (Construction).	UAE	Amman, 6th Circle Area.	Two Towers (Commercial & Hotel). Architects: Consolidated Consultants Sales Center: Under Construction	"Jordan Gate" www.jordan-gate.com "Share the Vision, Embrace the Future" "Energizing Jordan and Beyond"	High End.	 (Reference: Jordan Land. Issue 9, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007. Page: 119)
DAMAC Properties	UAE Main Shareholder: Mr. Sijwani of UAE / CEO: Peter Riddoch / Regional (Jordan) Office Director: Wisam Atqi	Abdali, Heart of Amman.	The Heights: Studios and bedroom apartments. Cost per m2: 1400 -2500 JDs The Lofts: Studio & Apartments. Cost per m2: 1400 1600 JDs. The Courtyard: Residential & Commercial Tower 22 floors with 4 offices in each. Cost per m2: 2200 JDs for Residential space and 3100 JDs for Commercial Space In general: serene landscape, gateway to the Abdali Master plan, Overlooking malls, offices, and the new downtown Amman, Ample parking on 3 levels, video phone entry, advanced cabling system for telephone internet lines, 24 hour concierge and help desk facilities, standby power generator, water storage tanks and garbage rooms, exotic sauna/Jacuzzi, state-of-the-art gym, temperature-controlled swimming pool, a variety of high class retail outlets and specialty restaurants.	3 Main Towers: "The Heights" (35-Storey Offices) "The Lofts" (8-Storey Residential) "The Courtyard"  "Lofty views, open terraces, and deluxe living in the city Center" / "Luxury Life Style Providers" /	Upper Class / Gated Community	  (The Lofts / The Courtyard. Reference: Home Magazine. Issue 15, March/ April 2007. Pages: 88 / 89)

# 07—THE URBAN REGENERATION OF RAINBOW STREET

ESSAY BY RAMI DAHER



## Introduction:

Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) is embarking on a milestone project centering on developing a Metropolitan Growth Master Plan for the City. The Rainbow Street Urban Regeneration Project is but one of many projects that correspond with GAM's new vision for a City that not only celebrates and grants voice to its distinctive urban and social heritage and places, but a one that is more pedestrian friendly and a City that aspires to create more public spaces for its citizens.

## Rainbow Street in Spatial and Temporal Contexts:

The Street enjoys a central location between East and West Amman and is well connected to the Downtown Area (Wast al Balad) through a magnificent web of specialty Ammani Steps of memory. The area around Rainbow Street is one of Amman's oldest residential neighborhoods and is blessed with a variety of architectural resources representing a testimonial to the evolution of architecture in the City. Further more, the area is

blessed with a diverse mixed use urban neighborhood with corner shops, retail, cultural centers, residential, religious buildings, cinemas, libraries & research centers, literary cafes, ethnic and local restaurants, and special environmentally conscious institutions. The 1960's and 70's witnessed the emergence of an active public sphere in Rainbow Street where urban growth in Amman was also affected by the influx of Palestinians to Jordan after 1967 and also the oil boom boosted the emergence of new urban centers (other than in Downtown Amman) at the residential hills flanking the downtown of which Rainbow Street was a major one. By the early 1970's, book shops, cinemas, banks, and cultural centers were opened in Rainbow Street which took its name after Rainbow Cinema. During the 1980's and parts of the 90's decade, the Street and the area lost part of its symbolic and economic value due to competitions from newer developed areas in Amman; yet, Rainbow Street and for the past 10 years or so, is witnessing a subtle, yet significant comeback. Rainbow is becoming popular again with a booming café culture, craft shops, bookshops,

and the thirty-something clientele; and until now, and fortunately, it kept (until now) its mixed use (residential-commercial) character. The current popularity of the area attracted large-scale investors who saw in the area around Rainbow a golden investment opportunity and had started buying properties in the area since more than 5 years ago. Its crucial to critically understand and expose the fact that neoliberal ideological-discursive rhetoric (preserving the Jabal Amman Area's Historic monuments and place) conceals fundamentally exclusionary and exploitative social relation (out migration of stable low-income families (mostly tenants) from the area).

## Project's Urban Positioning and Conceptual Thoughts:

The Project's objectives were to create more public spaces that are more pedestrian friendly in the area while enhancing, protecting, and conserving Amman's distinctive urban heritage present in the area. Furthermore, the Project thrives to sustain the current social mix in the area (countering the current neoliberal transformations

and urban restructuring). The Project was based on a careful design of 8 urban nodes along the street each with a distinctive character that is emerging from existing realities and dynamics. Conserving, enhancing, and complementing the qualities of place while maintaining diversity and enhancing a sense of place by minimal intervention was a main desired objective of the Project. Another Project objective was to create a Place that is more inclusive and to encourage an active public life and hopefully a public sphere. The project delivered to the local community of the area an enjoyable pedestrian-friendly promenade along the stretch of the Street of about 1.5 km with designed urban furniture, panoramic lookouts, urban decks and cultural landscapes.

## Project's Significance & Impact

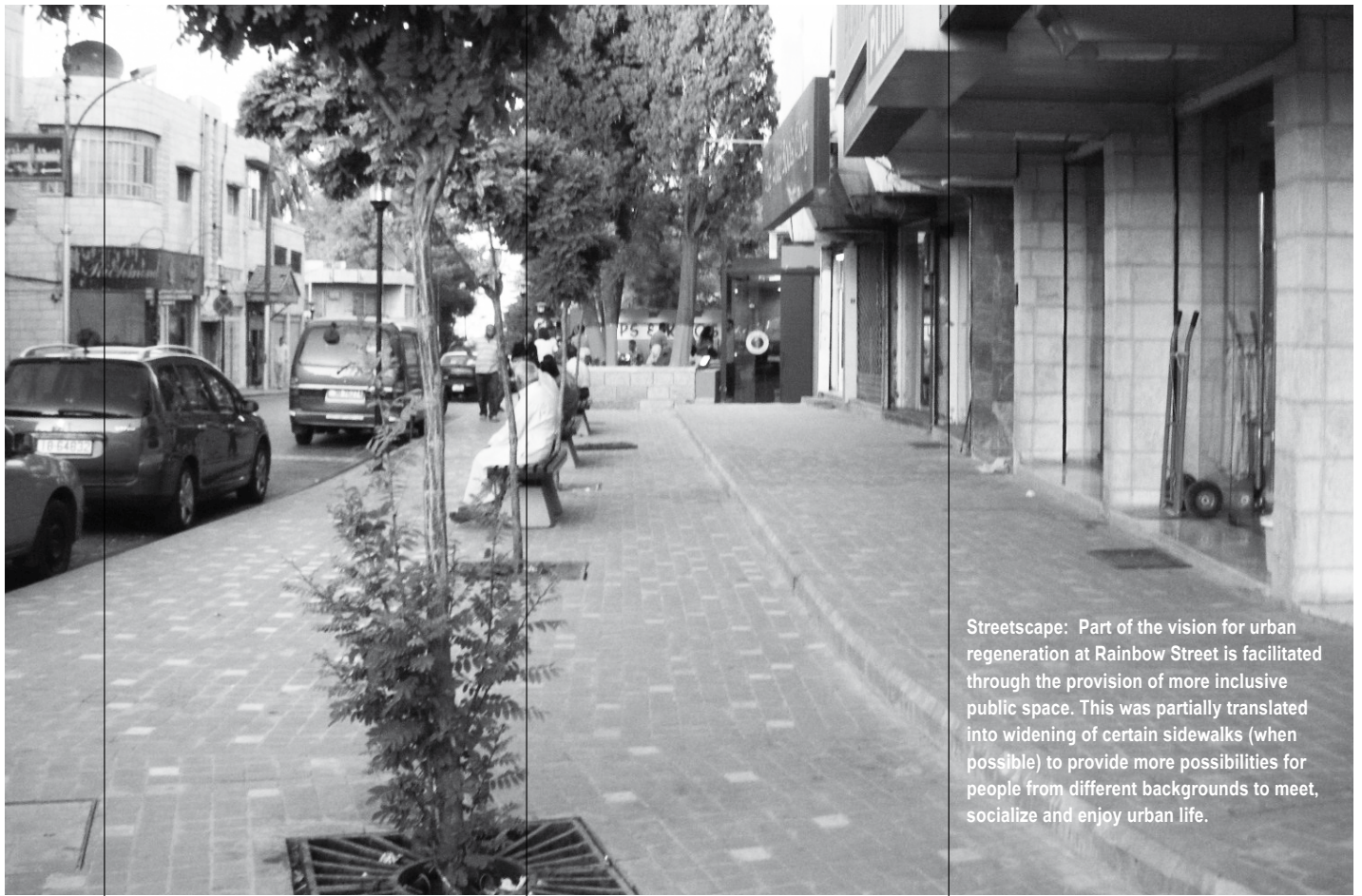
It is true that this project was concerned mainly with the public domain and did not cause major intervention in the area. But literally, this was the purpose; the main objective was not so much to build new and inflect major changes to the area as much as it was to complement this distinctive



Panoramic lookout: Part of Rainbow Street Urban Regeneration Project is a provision of socially inclusive urban panoramic lookout for the general public to enjoy views of the opposite mountains of the City.



JARA Flea Market: The Jabal Amman Resident Association (JARA) initiated the JARA Flea market in older parts of Jabal Amman.



**Streetscape:** Part of the vision for urban regeneration at Rainbow Street is facilitated through the provision of more inclusive public space. This was partially translated into widening of certain sidewalks (when possible) to provide more possibilities for people from different backgrounds to meet, socialize and enjoy urban life.

Ammani character. With the absence of sufficient 'State institutions' regarding public place projects in most cities of the Arab World; this significant urban initiative by GAM is considered a major landmark and demonstrational Project not only for Amman, but for other cities in the region as well. One of the Project's main objectives was to create a place that is more inclusive and to encourage an active public life and hopefully a public sphere to emerge. The project delivered to the local community of the area an enjoyable pedestrian promenade along the stretch of the Street of about 1.5 km with designed urban furniture, panoramic lookouts, urban decks and cultural landscapes that will be used and enjoyed by all Ammani's of different background and by visitors to this City that we all hold dearly: Amman.

At the scale of urban design, the Project addressed several urban nodes along the Street with the major objective, through an approach of minimal intervention in most cases, of providing more inclusive public spaces in the City. A visitor to Rainbow Street starts with the First

Circle Garden which serves as an introduction to the Street and is composed of different levels easily accessed from the side walk. The second urban node lays at the intersection of the Street with Rainbow Cinema (a major cultural attraction that is being rehabilitated and conserved to serve as a main Cinematheque and cultural hub). The third node is located at Arwa Bint al Hareth School where the School wall is exposed to celebrate and show more of the traditional Ammani early houses. At the opposite side more shaded outdoor seating is provided for the Jerusalem Falafel Place. The fourth node is very nearby and represents another public garden (locally called "Sarvees"). The urban solution is simple and is based on creating a natural extension of the side walk into the garden. Located at mid point in the middle of the distance between the First Circle and the end of Rainbow Street; lies a major interesting urban node which is the main panoramic lookout added on top of the roof of an old house. This natural extension of the side walk creates an urban deck with a unique view of Jabal Weibdeh and the Citadel of Amman. Even during con-

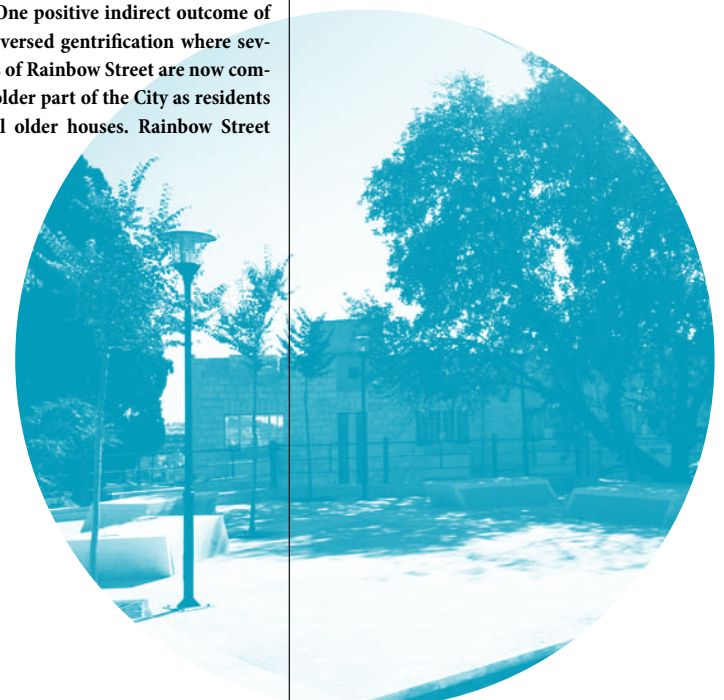
struction, this unique Ammani public space became very fashionable and was often frequented by many visitors to the City and to the Street. The house underneath has been preserved to serve as a headquarters for JARA and it also enjoys a quaint garden.

The Project also included several non-physical interventions such as coming up with guidelines for commercial signs and awnings, designation of different historic buildings, spaces, and vistas in the area, and coming up with a traffic solution for the Street where Rainbow Street becomes mostly one way. Finally, and for the first time in Amman, the pedestrian or the flaneur in the City can enjoy walking on a continuous side walk that works with no pumps, or with no high curb stones, and yet can also enjoy a distinctive urban experience with gardens, corner seating, panoramic lookouts and cafes. One positive indirect outcome of the Project is reversed gentrification where several ex-residents of Rainbow Street are now coming back to the older part of the City as residents in their original older houses. Rainbow Street

today, is an inclusive social space of successful co-existence between local Ammanis from different socio-economic background, expatriates, and visitors from various age groups. Not only that the Project had economically revitalized the area, but it introduced to the City of Amman a new unique and distinguished pedestrian urban experience. □



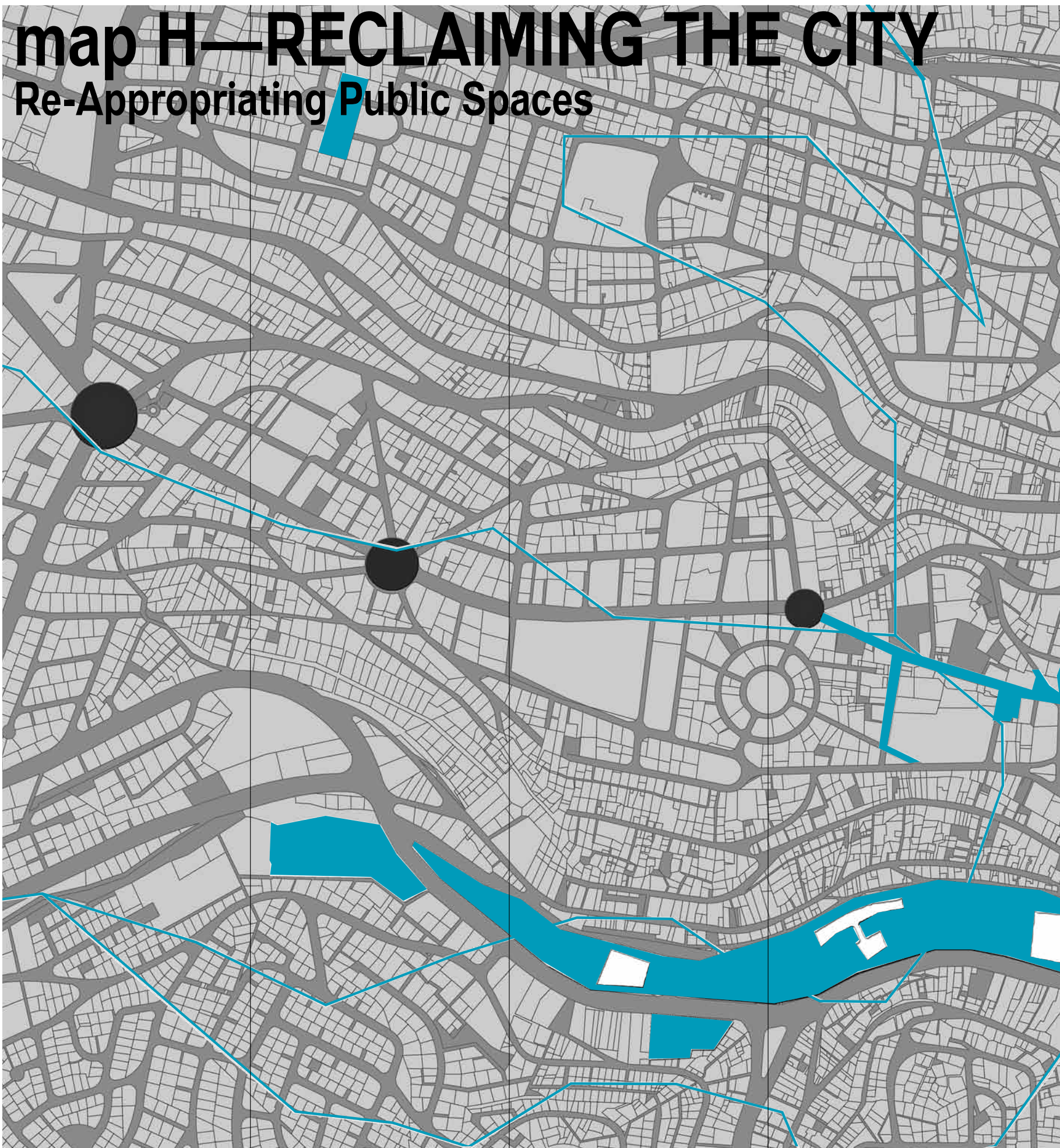
**Entry Garden:** The first urban node at Rainbow Street is represented by its entrance and public garden that introduces the Street to the public with possibilities of surface parking at the upper levels of the Garden.



**Shibli Bsharat Garden:** This small yet elegant public garden was based on the preservation of an existing garden which was not used by the public. The design provided the possibility of an urban extension of the side walk (with shaded trees) into the Garden space where a more natural setting at the lower levels of the Garden.

# map H—RECLAIMING THE CITY

## Re-Appropriating Public Spaces



In the midst of major neoliberal urban transformations and restructuring in the City; emerge several attempts for an alternative urban vision. The city is a complicated organism of different power mechanisms and contested narratives; so while gated communities are being built on the airport highway and exclusively luxurious apartments and office towers in Abdali, the city is and will also continue to be the theatre for different agents or actors such as the municipality, a local community group, a philanthropist, an NGO, or even a private investor with an alternative vision or approach. One particular important actor on the City is Greater Amman Municipality which is undergoing a paradigm shift of self redefinition especially

in terms of its role in the City. GAM today considers its role beyond services and infrastructure provision and attempts to address the future of the City throughout a calculated vision that attempts to maintain a balance between the pressures of neoliberal investments by very powerful individuals on one hand, and the demands and desires of its wider citizenship base and the visions of its activists and intellectual crowd on the other. GAM is also undertaking different projects concerning heritage management and addressing the creation of public spaces within the City. These include Urban Regeneration of Rainbow Street and of Faisal Plaza located in a historic section of the City. Projects also include the adaptive reuse

of the old Electricity Hanger into a local flea market, and urban design for the Hashemite Plaza to mention a few. Furthermore, Amman is witnessing the emergence of several historic urban adaptations into art galleries film production centers (e.g., Darat al Funun funded by the Khaled Shouman Foundation, Makan (an alternative space for artists and activists), Dar al Anda, the Royal Film Commission, and several more) or into urban research centers (e.g., Center for the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE), or Metropolis: Cities Research Council, which is the research arm of TURATH: Architecture and Urban Design Consultants). It is very obvious that the City is witnessing a great come back where public spaces and older parts

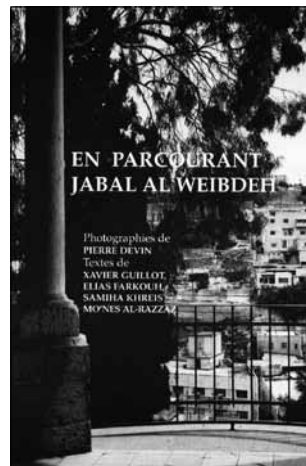
of the City are being reclaimed again by former residents and several City urban activists. Public projects are gradually being debated within the public sphere where levels of contestation of neoliberal projects are strong. □



-  ROUNDABOUTS
-  HIJAZ RAIL ROAD LINE
-  MAJOR ROAD SYSTEM
-  PROVINCIAL BORDERS
-  BUILT-UP AREA
-  MINOR ROUTE SYSTEM
-  BRANCH ROADS
-  AIRPORT
-  RAINBOW STREET - ROTATED FEATURE
-  DAR AL ANDA - MAKAN - ORANGE RED - DARAT AL FUNUN
-  FAISAL STREET
-  CASTLE MANAGEMENT PLAN
-  NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
-  OPERA HOUSE  
HUSSEIN CULTURAL CENTER  
ELECTRICITY HANGER  
GREAT AMMAN MUNICIPALITY  
NATIONAL MUSEUM
-  AL SAHA AL HASHMIYYE



**Darat al Funun: A adaptive reuse of a historic complex into a “houses for the arts” by Khaled Shouman Foundation in the historic parts of the City. The Project is successful in the way it is connected with the neighborhood and how it is open to the public from different socio-economic backgrounds.**



**A Publication on Jabal Weibdeh by local activists and urbanists.**

# 08—URBAN AGENTS, ACTORS AND ACTIVISTS

## An Appeal to the Creative Class

ESSAY BY RAMI DAHER

The city is a complicated organism of different power mechanisms and contested narratives; so in the midst of these urban restructuring projects, arises diverse alternative endeavors championed by creative agents and actors such as urban designers and architects, local community groups, urban activists, philanthropists with a genuine social agenda, or even private investors with a different vision or approach that attempt to counteract such neoliberal urban policies and thrive to create instead a more inclusive urban landscapes in the city. More recently, urbanism research and literature addressed the rise of the creative class in cities that focuses on diversity and creativity as basic drivers of innovations and regional and national growth. The urban creative class includes architects, scientists, engineers, university professors, philosophers, artists, and novelists to mention a few. Amman is another place where one notices the rise of a creative urban class who are trying to

make a difference in a socially, economically, and spatially divided city. Amman, increasingly, is paying attention to its social and cultural needs, Amman becoming an attractive place to live, improved pedestrianization, increased green space, and multi-use districts have been most recently adopted by Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). One of these projects is the Urban Regeneration of Rainbow Street located in a historic section of the City which is close to the Downtown area. The project aims to create more spaces for the public (in the form of small urban gardens and panoramic lookouts) in addition to granting voice to this distinctive Ammani urban reality. Wakalat Street in the newly shopping district of Sweifieh is considered the first pedestrian street in the City. In Wakalat Street, the main design objective was to produce the “Anti Mall Space” by creating a “Workable Street” and a recreational promenade that encourages pedestrian life in Amman. The objective was to create a street that is inclu-

sive, welcoming people from different parts of Amman and at the same time, creating a vibrant urban space that wins back public life from shopping malls to the “real” Streets of the City. Furthermore, Amman is witnessing the emergence of several historic urban adaptations into art galleries film production centers (e.g., Darat al Funun funded by the Khaled Shouman Foundation, Makan (an alternative space for artists and activists), Dar al Anda, the Royal Film Commission, and several more) or into urban research centers (e.g., Center for the Study of the Built Environment (CSBE), or Metropolis: Cities Research Council, which is the research arm of TURATH: Architecture and Urban Design Consultants) who attempt to engage in research that is more integrated into urban life. One significant new phenomenon emerging in the City as well is the emergence of neighborhood associations such as JARA (Jabal Amman Residents Association) and Friends of Jabal Al Weibdeh Association who at-

tempt to improve the urban quality of life in their respective neighborhoods.

It is important to attempt to focus on this phenomenon of the re-emergence of an active Ammani public sphere manifested in several ramifications: Firstly, one cannot help but notice that a lot of Ammanis of different backgrounds have started to develop an interest in its historic neighborhoods such as the downtown area (Wast al Balad), and other neighborhoods such as older parts of Jabal Amman, Jabal al Weibdeh and Jabal al Ashrafieh. This is manifested in a come back of families who had left earlier, but is also manifested in the proliferation of different studies and monographs about these urban Ammani spaces in addition to the forming of new residents associations such as JARA (Jabal Amman Residents Association) and Jabal al Weibdeh Residents Association. Furthermore, a lot of cultural bodies and organizations (e.g., Darat al Funun, Makan, Dar al Anda, Association of Jordanian Writers,



An image from the Urban Regeneration of Faisal Plaza Project in the Downtown Area which is patroned by Greater Amman Municipality.



New Logo for Amman: Greater Amman Municipality had commissioned the design of a new logo for the City that more represents its genius loci and different mountains and neighbourhoods.

Center for the Study of the Built Environment, The Royal Film Commission, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature), are favoring to be located in such areas rather than in newer parts of the City. For the first time, the social and urban heritage of the City is being celebrated and recognized for its uniqueness and specificity. Secondly, the urban heritage of Amman and of other Jordanian cities is becoming the focus of several donor agencies projects centering on heritage and tourism development. Daher (an urban architect and activist) had elaborated about the surfacing of different “urban regeneration/heritage tourism” developments in places like Amman, Salt, and Kerak in Jordan orchestrated and funded by international donor agencies (e.g., WB [World Bank], USAID [US Agency for Development], JICA [Japanese International Cooperation Agency], and GTZ [German Technical Cooperation]). Daher had also elaborated that one of the main tracks for development that was empha-

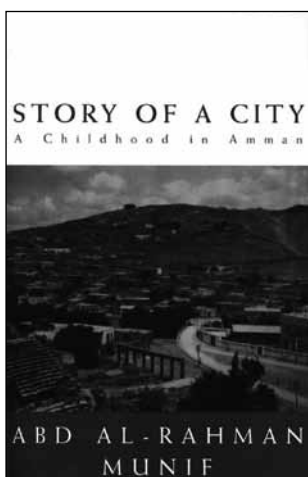
sized by such donor agencies was for Jordan to invest in, develop, and promote its tourism sector, and the “cultural heritage” in general, and the urban heritage of Jordanian cities in particular, and for the first time in Jordan, was identified as one of the main assets for the generation of such development. Thirdly, Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) is attempting to reinvent itself and redefine its relationship vis-à-vis the City by envisioning its role beyond services and utility provision. It could be true that this might not be the first time GAM re-evaluates its mission as during previous times GAM started to address its role as a patron and facilitator of culture, hence the publication of a special magazine devoted entirely to the City of Amman (a Jordanian architect and urbanist); yet, this time around this redefinition of roles is taking on major consequences on the City of Amman. Recently GAM had initiated several urban projects addressing urban regeneration in loca-

**Panoramic Lookout on Rainbow Street: Part of the Urban Regeneration of Rainbow Street in historic Jabal Amman in the Panoramic Lookout**

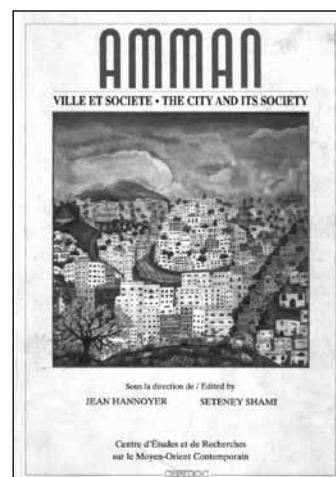
tions such as Rainbow Street in historic Jabal Amman, Jabal al Ashrafiah near Darweesh Mosque, and in the downtown area in Faisal Street. GAM is also currently involved in putting forward to new vision where heritage protection and provision of more green spaces and open spaces for Ammani residents are a top priority. Fourthly, the proliferation since the early 1990's of novels on Amman by Jordanian authors such as novels by Ziad Qasem, Hisham Gharaibeh, Ilyas Farkouh, Abdelrahman Munif, and Sameeha Khrais. According to Razzaz (A Jordan author and critic), Jordanian writers are only recently starting to acknowledge Amman as the topic of their novels. Before the early 1990's, the places where the different events of Jordanian novels materialized, took place in either mythical spaces or in a generic Arab-Islamic town, or even in cities with no specific identity at all. Novels of the 1990 have started to take interest in the City of Amman and its urban social history.

**overlooking opposite mountains in the City and a popular hangout of different Ammanis from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.**

Yet, these new phenomena and transformations are all happening in the midst of neoliberal urban transformations and restructuring which is and will have a major effect on people's relationship to the City, specially the relationship between the citizens of Amman on both sides of the economic scale. Such more recent urban and real-estate ventures will be the topic of discussion of the second part of this paper. In different parts of the Arab World, there is a need of more genuine research that goes beyond the classical analysis of the traditional Arab City, into instead researching current urban transformations, flow of global capital and its effect on the realities of cities, urban structures and polity, metropolization processes from below addressing issues of migration, slums formation, and the details of social life vis-à-vis lines of inclusion and exclusion. □



Cover for Novel Story of A City: The Cover for one of the early novels (Story of a City) that came out in the early 1990's and addressed the City of Amman as the main topic of its investigation.



Cover for Edited Volume on Amman: The cover page for one of the early books (Amman: Ciity and Society) that attempted at early as 1990 to research the City of Amman from different perspectives (urban, architectural, socio-economic, and historic).