



# Public Space & Gender in Amman

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**Published by**

Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices  
Bonn and Eschborn

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Improving Living Conditions in disadvantaged areas in Amman  
Green Infrastructure (ILCA)

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On behalf of

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development  
(BMZ)

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

Amman December 2020

# Table of Contents

- 07 NAVIGATING THIS REPORT
- 08 FOREWORDS
- 10 INTRODUCTION
- 11 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 2 THE STATE OF PUBLIC SPACE IN AMMAN

Knowledge Base

- 26 PUBLIC SPACE IN... PLANNING
- 30 PUBLIC SPACE IN... RESEARCH
- 36 PUBLIC SPACE IN... THEORY

## 3 PUBLIC SPACE & GENDER IN AMMAN

Research & Findings

- 46 EXPERIENCING THE CITY AS A WO/MAN
- 50 RESEARCH DESIGN
- 56 THEMES & FINDINGS
  - 58 Entertainment 60 Safety 62 Reputation 64 Accessibility
  - 66 Mobility 68 Comfort & Discomfort 70 Privacy 72 Facilities
  - 74 Gender Separation 76 Young Single Men

## 4 TOWARDS MORE [GENDER] INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES IN AMMAN

Recommendations & Food for Thought

- 80 DESIGNING GENDER-INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES IN AMMAN
- 88 TO THE FUTURE PLANNERS OF AMMAN'S PUBLIC SPACES
- 90 ETHNOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO MORE [GENDER] INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES
- 94 REFLECTION & OUTLOOK

## 5 CASE STUDIES

100 Habibah Square 124 Abu Darwish Square 148 Al Mahatta Raghadan 174 Istiklal Mall 198 Matal Abu Nseir

## 6 REFERENCES

## 7 ANNEX

- 228 ANNEX A: TEMPLATES FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD RESEARCH
- 232 ANNEX B: SURVEY & QUESTIONNAIRE



## NAVIGATING THIS REPORT

This study report begins with an introduction into the state of public space planning in Amman, an overview of the current knowledge landscape of Amman's public spaces that can be used for further reading and research, and a theoretical framework illustrating concepts on gender and critical urban theory. The main body outlines the research design and key findings of the study to illustrate how men and women experience the city differently. The themes address public urban life in relation to entertainment, safety, reputation, accessibility, mobility, comfort and discomfort, privacy, facilities, gender separation, and young single men. After, more practical guidelines are presented as food for thought for the design of more gender-inclusive public spaces in Amman. These come with a question pool as well as an ethnographic guide for further independent research. Combined, they are directed to urban practitioners and urban scholars to ensure that a gender lens can be applied to a variety of public space projects. Finally, this report is accompanied by a fairly extensive analysis of five case studies, presented as urban ethnographies.

### Glossary of Arabic Terms

<b>abaya</b> full-body cover except for hands, face, and feet	<b>knafeh</b> traditional sweet dish
<b>Al Mahatta</b> station	<b>mash'rou</b> project
<b>argileh</b> shisha, waterpipe	<b>matal</b> viewpoint
<b>basta</b> street vending stall	<b>mokam kameh</b> covered up, suffocated, feeling the need to cover up the hair and entire body
<b>chador</b> large (black) veil	<b>niqab</b> veil only revealing eyes
<b>dabke</b> traditional dance	<b>saha</b> square
<b>dishdash</b> long tunic for men	<b>sha'bi</b> popular, conservative, poor
<b>dukkan</b> small shop in residential area	<b>shebab</b> young men
<b>Fairuz</b> famous Lebanese singer	<b>sooq</b> market, shopping area
<b>harra</b> neighborhood (street)	<b>tawjihi</b> high school diploma
<b>hawooz</b> water tank	<b>thob</b> traditional Palestinian dress
<b>hijab</b> head covering, veil	<b>wadi</b> valley
<b>jabal</b> hill	<b>waqar at makan</b> sacredness of the place
<b>jilbab</b> full-body cover except for hands, face, and feet	<b>waqf</b> Islamic ownership model for land or property
<b>Jumma</b> Friday	<b>Wast Al Balad</b> Downtown
<b>ka'ak</b> sesame bread	<b>zo'ran</b> derogative term for male troublemakers
<b>karabij halabi</b> sweet dough sticks	
<b>khimar</b> longer version of hijab	

## FOREWORD BY DR. LEEN FAKHOURY

Dr. Leen Fakhoury is a professor at the Department of Architecture at the German Jordanian University (GJU) and has worked extensively on the nature of public space in the context of Amman and as a female architect.

A discourse on what is public space or what is a successful public space in Amman from a gender perspective still needs a deeper social and cultural interpretation to be clearly explored or understood. As a female architect and heritage expert that grew up and studied in this city, I am constantly reminded that the newly emerging city of Amman of the sixties managed rather successfully to accommodate the diverse groups of urban dwellers and members of a family including their females. My aunts's accounts of the late sixties and early seventies reflect that they owned and shared their right in the streets of Amman.

Pioneer donor-driven projects tackling open space in the heart of our cities and in Amman did not consider seriously the social construct, including gender, and proceeded to look at the need for public space primarily to accommodate tourists or visitors. Societies were summed up rather as a beneficiary to an economical asset or lucky dwellers of a physically facelifted open network, with no clear accountability to their cultural, societal nor gender needs. I strongly believe that the topic of gender and space needs to be tackled within a holistic social construct that allows for the minorities, youth, and diverse groups to coexist, and any proposal needs to respond to their diverse, complex, common, and conflicting needs or rights.

I hope that with more research and knowledge the term gender/planning/space does not adopt only a limited viewpoint but approaches space planning - creating or recreating of new or old open public spaces - with further acknowledgment to our local and cultural context so that it moves from a critique of gender to a more constructive contribution.

## FOREWORD BY DR. DEYALA TARAWNEH

Dr. Deyala Tarawneh is the head of the architecture department at Jordan University (JU). She has worked on a variety of aspects related to public space and is currently exploring the dimensions of gender and transport in Amman.

As the concept of public space continues to unfold with more literature discussions aiming to explore it on a multiplicity of levels, the social dimension remains the most intricate. Social structures and associated social norms have played a significant role on how space in general is experienced, however, and due to both the visual and physical permeability of public space, the manifestations of such social dimensions have been easier to observe and thus interpret in the public realm.

Looking at public space in Amman - in every sense of the term - may entail a magnitude of effort in order to identify what may constitute as an open space and what may not in the first place according to the city's context specifics, especially that the Middle Eastern city of Amman does not represent the typical Western case often demonstrated in the majority of available published work. Thus, further research is constantly in demand to investigate such contexts in order to inform the 'universal' understanding for the concept of public space.

Similarly, considering gender is a socially constructed phenomenon and as male and female users experience public spaces differently, it has been long discussed that the physical and non-physical attributes of public space may contribute to the creation of safer and more inclusive environments and making the shift from 'gendered' to 'just' spaces. In order to achieve such endeavours as part of the larger quest of achieving spatial justice and to bring gender equalities to our cities, however, more awareness is required and more attempts to unravel the public space from a gender lens are becoming more urgent.

**Rahel Hermann** is the manager of the ILCA project. She has been working in municipal and urban development with a focus on pro-poor service delivery and social participation for GIZ and other organizations in various countries over the past 18 years. She was a major driver in the realization of this study, without whom it would have not been made possible.

**Improving Living Conditions in disadvantaged Areas in Amman (ILCA)** ILCA is an urban regeneration project set up to pilot the improvement of existing green infrastructure elements in selected sites in East Amman. The project aims to create ownership and enhance quality of life of the residents through community participatory involvement in the research, design, and management processes of the newly created or revived networks. The project also seeks to improve connection to public transport and increase inclusive accessibility to public spaces for all, with attention to women's specific needs.

<sup>1</sup> CSBE 2015 in SADAQA 2018: 13

## INTRODUCTION BY RAHEL HERMANN

„Incidents of harassment that occur inside [public transport] vehicles are limited...Incidents of harassment rise in bus depots where it is easier for the offender to escape and remain unidentified.”<sup>1</sup>. The presentation of this finding at a conference on Gender and Public Transport in Amman held in 2017 was followed by a discussion where this statement was largely debated and further explained. Women reported experiencing harassment and unwanted attention not only at public transit stations and stops but also on their way there, or rather in public space in general. The conversation went on to uncover this conclusion: In Amman, we lack data on harassment and gender in public spaces.

For ILCA, a sustainable urban development project focused on integrated public open space regeneration and design, it became an imperative endeavor to turn this gap in information into a niche for knowledge. Green and environmentally-sound public spaces are not inclusive by nature, nor is their design neutral, let alone gender-neutral. They can quickly develop into wilted empty places if we fail to comprehend the diversity of experiences and practices of those for and with whom they should be designed. As a contribution to the body of knowledge on Amman's urban life, this study on gender and public space uncovers and describes the specific experiences of women - and men - in Amman with a view to design more inclusive public spaces and provide better and easier access to the city's public realm for all.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express her gratitude towards those who have supported this study. Thank you to the Ministry of Environment and Greater Amman Municipality, especially Eng. Sajida Alnsour, for their openness to this unconventional but timely topic. Also, thank you to the numerous „friends of the study“ who shared their experiences as urban practitioners, scholars, as well as residents of Amman. Special thanks are directed to Dr. Deyala Tarawneh and Dr. Leen Fakhoury who have supported the study with their knowledge, network, and hands-on mentality from the very beginning. The author would like to thank Rahel Hermann and Dina Alnajjar for initiating the idea and taking it over the finish line with constructive criticism on content, form, and copy. She is, moreover, much indebted to the dedicated research team of eight Ammanis whose diverse backgrounds provided valuable perspectives and stimulating discussions.<sup>2</sup> With gratitude she thanks Suha Jaber whose ability as interpreter to delicately decode language and culture cannot be underestimated. She is thankful to all for their enthusiasm and endurance. Same goes to the 18 architecture students who participated in the summer workshop that kicked-off the field research, eager to see positive change in their city. Last but not least, the author would like to thank the many, many women and men of Amman who gifted their time, facilitated the field research, and agreed to tell their stories. Never perceived as research objects but always as worthy individuals, this study is as much made *with* them in mind as it was made *by* them. Thank you all for embarking on this journey with curiosity, empathy, and the shared belief that when different lifeworlds meet good things happen.

**Rebekka Keuss**, the author and lead researcher of this study, is a female urban anthropologist from Germany. She moves between ethnography, urban design, architecture, and planning, and, in her work, focuses on urban lifeworlds in the global south in order to provide more grounded planning approaches for cities.

<sup>2</sup> Turn to page 52 to find out more about their backgrounds and their roles in the study.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Experiencing the City as a Wo/Man

Omar M. Amireh in *Amman Experiencing Plazas and Parks: Adaptation of Users to Space or Space to Users*, „Women using the plaza and the park [Hashemite Square] never experience the personal, social, domesticated space which men create. Rarely is any woman, or women, seen sitting alone, or lying down having a nap, or in a social group, sitting on the ground having a chat.“<sup>1</sup>

Ana Falú in *Gender Perspectives in Urban Planning for UN Habitat* „The city is not experienced or lived in the same way by men and women. Urban assets are not equally accessible, neither equal in quality and supply, to all citizens. Due to these inequalities women face greater vulnerabilities than men.“<sup>2</sup>

**Cities are not planned for and with everyone.** This is not only an organizational issue but a structural one and, among others, it comes to the disadvantage of women because cities around the world have been and continue to be planned and built mainly by men with the male body and experience in mind, falsely assuming that urban planning is gender-neutral or gender-blind, meaning that the male body is perceived as universal and the norm. Amman is no exception to this as it has been stated among female urban scholars, professionals, as well as numerous women across different areas and socioeconomic backgrounds in Amman. In order to make Amman's public spaces more suitable and liveable for men *and* women or, in other words, more gender-inclusive, city makers need to know more about how men and women experience the city differently for lack of sufficient knowledge and data and as a prerequisite to change. In this manner, gender privileges and discrimination in Amman's planning can be uncovered and reima-

## Definition of Public Space

In this study, public spaces are understood as places of public urban life that are produced through public practices, less through a specific built environment. Public spaces, essentially, refer to people's interactions with and within the built environment, less the material product on its own since without people they are meaningless. As public urban life can occur in a variety of places, public spaces can consequently also be found in different places of encounter. May it be a street corner, a popular restaurant, or a social media platform, they all have the ability to transform into a public space at any given time, no matter where, how it looks, and if formally recognized, simply by being a meaningful social arena for urban dwellers. Planning practice of public spaces in Amman is currently governed by concepts of public open space related to recreation, mobility or agriculture only and almost exclusively led by prescriptive physical guidelines. Considering this, Amman's planning sector is ill-equipped to recognize existing public spaces or meeting points that do not fall into the listed categories though there are efforts to close this gap.

gined. A number of cities around the world have explored the different experiences of men and women in the city before and it might be tempting to simply adopt their learnings and approaches. To truly cater for Amman's inhabitants, however, insights need to derive from the city of Amman itself as each cultural context produces a different kind of urban life and has different ideas thereof.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

**To better understand the different lifeworlds of men and women in Amman, a cross-sectional study was conducted with mixed methods from qualitative and quantitative research.** At the beginning, to get a general sense of public urban life across all of Amman, an inventory of places of public urban life was created through desk research and qualitative ethnographic field research. From this list, five sites were then selected for more in-depth research in order to illustrate different typologies of public space in Amman less from a planning point of view but more from a people's perspective and, by extension, from a gendered perspective. For these case studies, a team of local female researchers joined the lead researcher so that local perspectives and knowledge could be amplified not only through research subjects but also through the lens of the researchers themselves. Since there is a general tendency among Amman's population and planning sector to give preference and attention to public spaces in West Amman, the case studies focus on public urban life associated with East Amman or the threshold between East and West.

Lina Abirafteh in *Gender and the Arab City* „In many Arab communities, urban space is, by default, male space. Men act as if they 'own' the street, which is reflected in how they walk and how they treat women in public.“<sup>3</sup>

**Woman at Matal Abu Nseir** „How can I walk there since it does not have sidewalks? If I walk on the street, I will be frightened because of the cars.“

**Young Woman at Al Mahatta Raghadan** „Men can sit and stand however they want. I have to shrink my body in order to keep a safe space and not to have our bodies touching each other.“

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SITES

- 1 Food Landmark**  
Habibah Square, West Al Balad
- 2 „Failed“ Project**  
Abu Darwish Square, Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh
- 3 Public Transport Station**  
Al Mahatta Raghadan, West Al Balad
- 4 Mall + Parking Lot**  
Istiklal Mall, Jabal Al Nuzha
- 5 Viewpoint**  
Matal Abu Nseir, Abu Nseir

Time Frame:  
September 2019 - June 2020  
[research interrupted from March to May 2020 due to COVID19 measures in Jordan]

**Woman (20) on Istiklal Mall** „Fancy people never come here. We go to them, they don't come to us.“

<sup>1</sup> Amireh 1996  
<sup>2</sup> UN Habitat 2016  
<sup>3</sup> Abirafteh 2018





Location of case study sites in Amman (above)  
Methods applied in the qualitative and quantitative study (below)

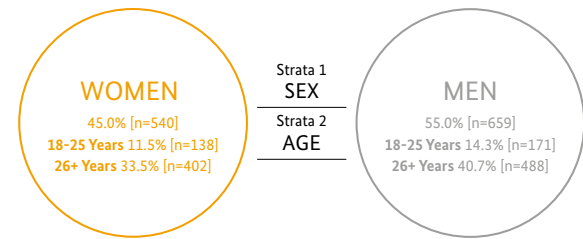
**A quantitative survey accompanied the qualitative field research in order to collect representative data on public urban life on a city-wide scale.** Men and women from all 22 districts of Amman were selected through a stratified cluster sample and 1.199 participants [540 women, 659 men] gave valid responses. Significance tests were made with a confidence interval of 95% for two strata, namely between men and women in general as well as between men and women in the age groups of 18-25 years and 26 years or above. The case studies informed the development of the survey instrument and enabled the researchers to formulate more targeted questions that would yield more specific and productive answers for the purpose of the study. 28 participants [19 women, 9 men] joined three post-survey focus group discussions to support the interpretation of the survey results. The qualitative and quantitative findings combined provide multi-scale insights into the different lived experiences of men and women in Amman's public spaces on both a micro and macro level. From there, a number of key findings and themes could be extracted which form the basis for the design recommendations and approaches towards more gender-inclusive public spaces in Amman presented here.

**QUANTITATIVE SURVEY**

- Sample Area**  
Amman [22 Districts]
- Sample Size**  
1.199 valid respondents [540 women; 659 men]
- Data Collection**  
February 2020
- Survey Instrument**  
Questionnaire with 24 questions; ca. 20-30 minutes per questionnaire on handheld tablets
- Randomized Stratified Sample**  
Sex [women; men]  
Age [18-25 years; 26+ years]
- Level of Confidence**  
95% [p-value < 0.05]

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

- Date and Place**  
July 2020, Al Hashmi Al Shamali
- Sessions**  
3x 2 hours for 7-8 questions each
- Participants**  
*Session 1*  
9 women (30s-40s years) from Al Hashmi Al Shamali & Al Mahatta  
*Session 2*  
10 women (30s-40s years) from Jabal Al Nuzha  
*Session 3*  
9 men (18-25 years) from Al Hashmi Al Shamali

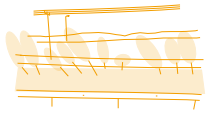


Sample details of the quantitative survey on public urban life administered to all 22 districts of Amman



## GENERAL TRENDS

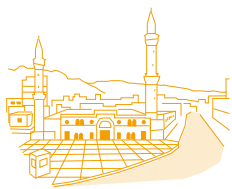
Women and men experience Amman's public spaces differently. In general terms, **women in Amman are much more encouraged or receptive to staying at home or to moving through private, often commercial realms for safety and comfort than men.** For one, street harassment makes the experience of public spaces for women highly unpleasant and embodies more than a mere nuisance, particularly so as it can turn into a personal safety issue when the reputation is at stake and social pressures of maintaining a moral public image are at play. Public spaces that are host to improper behavior can then be a threat for women even if not directly affected as already a place's bad reputation can rub off onto a woman's reputation.



Direct personal safety is another deterrent to public spaces especially to women as the public is perceived as potentially dangerous unless police or security guards are present. It appears that safety is widely considered to be a woman's own responsibility and failing to do so can consequently lead to victim shaming and blaming. **As a protective measure, women and those in their company oftentimes seek privacy in public which, in a way, turns into a currency that can buy comfort, a good reputation, and safety** by excluding the public, if only partially or temporarily. Encounters with the other hence are limited.



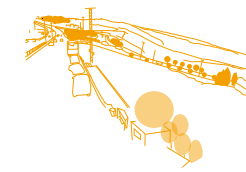
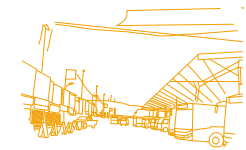
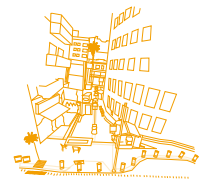
There is a general tendency among men and women to demand more gender segregated spaces in Amman while one of the main reasons is the presence of young single men who are almost unanimously perceived as default „troublemakers“ by men and women alike. As a result, **young single men are faced with limited choices to spaces that**



**welcome them and represent the only group in Amman's society that is explicitly excluded from numerous places of encounter** through „mixed groups and couples only“ policies and other similar mechanisms.

Generally, men are more drawn to recreational facilities and places that are easy and economically to reach by car. Women tend to be more drawn to green spaces, clean areas, and places with attractive shopping opportunities. Children-friendly spaces also play an important role for women who are usually primary caregivers. Besides these features, **both men and women are attracted simply by seating of which there should be a variety of options that allow for different seating arrangements**, for instance, as individuals, as families, or in the presence of strangers.

It is important to note that women do not only face challenges with regard to comfort and safety, **women also have it harder to access public spaces of interest.** In other words: women face more obstacles when moving through the city than men. This holds true when it comes to transport as well as public facilities. Since the majority of women does not own or drive a car and many destinations are beyond walking distance or rather hostile to pedestrians, women in Amman tend to be more dependent on others and more often need to resort to costly taxis or less than feasible public transport. Spatial disconnects between residential areas and places of care, like schools or markets, can intensify these dependencies. The fact that public bathrooms are fairly scarce in Amman can, furthermore, be a reason for women to involuntarily limit their time in public as opposed to men who are not as much involved in child care and who will more willingly seek bathrooms outside their homes.

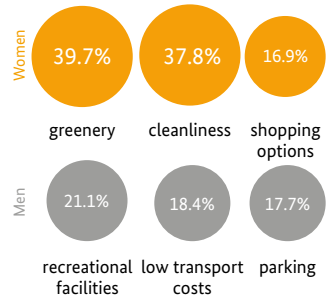


# Public Space & Gender in Amman

## KEY FINDINGS & THEMES

### Entertainment

Women look for green & clean places with shopping areas



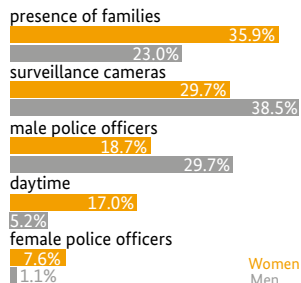
#### Challenge

Create places of interest for all with special attention to women's needs and wishes

Basic services and housing ensure people's survival in a city, but public spaces make a city liveable. Lack of suitable public spaces thus result in a decrease in quality of life which, if the male experience is being prioritized, comes at the expense of women. 53% of men and 48% of women indicated in the survey that they are attracted by features like seating followed by different kinds of entertainment. Men tend to be more attracted to recreational facilities like football fields or basketball courts, especially men between 18 and 25 years, as well as low transport costs and parking. Women are more attracted to greenery, clean spaces, and places that offer shopping opportunities, particularly when in close proximity.

### Safety

Women feel safe with families, security guards, daylight & female police officers



#### Challenge

Decrease risks and make women and men feel safer in public

Women are more vulnerable than men to potential harms and crimes like sexual violence or harassment and therefore face plenty of advise, stories, and control on how to behave, what to avoid, and to ideally stay in the not-always-so-safe haven of home. Men, on the contrary, are deemed to play the part of protectors or perpetrators. Yet, men feel fear in public, too, even if prevailing notions of masculinity prevent many men to express it openly. Security guards contribute greatly to the feeling of safety of both men and women. But women in particular have come to accept that the issue of female safety ultimately rests on their own shoulders. Therefore, more women [36%] than men [23%] feel safer in the presence of families and during daytime. Men tend to feel safer with more technical support and, literally, more manpower like surveillance cameras and male police officers.

### Reputation

Women need to be able to maintain a good reputation

Woman (17) from Jabal Al Ashrafiye „Let me tell you how my life changed after wearing the hijab. I feel protected when I walk in the street. If I hear words, I can tell my family and they will blame the boy. I am dressed respectfully, I walk hurriedly to go home, and put my eyes to the ground. If anyone harasses me, my father will never say it's my fault.“

#### Challenge

Maintain a place's good reputation by ensuring women's safety and privacy as well as highlighting socially accepted activities and their positive values

A woman in Amman is not only concerned about whether she will become the victim of immediate harm but also needs to worry about potential future harm which, in Jordan's honor society, comes with consequences that can be just as socially, mentally, and physically harmful as other dangers. A good reputation, particularly in conservative settings of Amman, is therefore paramount to the design of public spaces should they also cater to women. This applies particularly to unmarried and young women. Elderly women are less affected by reputational concerns and therefore less inhibited in their choices and use of public space. How to know whether a place has a bad reputation or not? Most people in Amman hear about it through word-of-mouth or paying attention to certain markers. Particularly, traces of alcohol and drugs, the presence of young men, excessive dirt and waste, an unsafe environment, the absence of families, and socially unacceptable behavior like public display of intimacy, open defecation, or loud and repeated swearing hint at a place's bad reputation and demands extra caution.

### Accessibility

Public spaces should better connect care work with leisure

Two mothers from Tababour at Istiklal Mall „We just need a place where we can sit without our children. We come here so they can play while we sit and talk in peace.“

#### Challenge

Make more of Amman's public spaces accessible and affordable for women, particularly for mothers

The majority of both men and women find that Amman offers everything they need and enjoy. Significantly more women [58%] than men [45%], however, do not, or find it harder to access it. One of the reasons is that the majority of women spends much time on unpaid care work like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and extended family, which also applies to women who work for an income. It is thus not surprising that the majority of women indicated in the survey that they spend most of their time on markets [78%\*] and gardens and parks [57%\*], one being related to household chores, the other to family-oriented activities. What is crucial is that most women can only dedicate a limited time to leisure and depend on public spaces nearby that can accommodate care work.

\*do not add up to 100% as multiple answers were possible

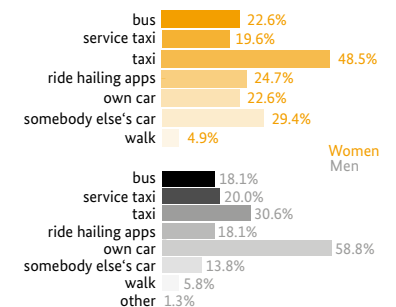
### Mobility

Women need better public transport & more walkable areas

#### Challenge

Increase women's urban mobility through greater walkability and an expansive public transport system

While Amman's hilly topography challenges all modes of transport, it is women who are mostly affected by it since most women in Amman are caregivers, taking care of children, household, and extended family, for which, women need a certain level of autonomy and an environment in which they can move comfortably. The currently existing available modes of transport and built environment in Amman makes it highly difficult for women to do so due to dependencies, high costs, and the great amount of time and effort it requires to move from one place to another.



## Comfort & Discomfort

### Public spaces shouldn't be too noisy or too crowded

More men than women feel relaxed in public in Amman



## Privacy

### Public spaces should accommodate for islands of privacy

Two Young Women from Khaldia and Jabal Amman „You can't be comfortable when you feel like you are being watched.“

## Facilities

### Public spaces lack facilities that cater to women's needs

More women than men go home to use the bathroom



#### Challenge

**Make Amman's public spaces more comfortable by decreasing opportunities for street harassment, especially for women**

Moving through Amman's public spaces as a woman, particularly as a pedestrian, can be very uncomfortable for a variety of reasons but specifically one: street harassment. Significantly more women [48%] than men [20%] are regularly harassed. The majority of men [57%] believe it is a woman's own fault and about half of the women [47%] believe so, too. Until there is more clarity for the causes and effects of harassment, a woman's discomfort in public will remain normalized. To decrease the chances of being harassed or, more generally, to avoid any forms of discomfort, the majority of both men [93%] and women [81%] tend to avoid places that are too noisy or too crowded as a precautionary measure. It suggests that nuisances and discomforts are, to a large extent, generated by the presence of people.

#### Challenge

**Creating a sense of privacy in public by providing niches and retreats**

Many Ammanis have the habit of creating small islands of privacy amid the public in order to carve out some tranquility, comfort, and peace of mind. This can especially be observed among families with daughters and female peer groups across all ages. They may come in the shape of a wide open surrounding, an enclosed room, or a backside of a wall. Just as one would expect in the private space of one's home, physical, visual, and vocal distance to strangers *within the given limits* are their core pillars as well as material or symbolic boundaries between what is the *more public* public space and what is the *more private* public space. To what purpose are such islands of privacy? Reputation, safety, comfort, and protection, particularly from young men who are widely considered to be harmful for women and, therefore, also a threat for men in company of women and whose role it is to protect.

#### Challenge

**Increase and improve public facilities that accommodate women's needs and those of parents with young children**

In Amman, most public facilities are primarily designed and distributed according to men's needs. Increasing and improving public facilities that cater to women's needs both in design and number, particular those directly connected to a female's biology and care work duties, will remove one not so minor worry from a woman's experience in public space. Public bathrooms are perhaps the most prominent examples and apart from biological needs, they play an important role for women as they oftentimes also function as safe spaces for being an enclosed island of privacy (see above). Facilities for changing a baby's diaper or to breastfeed comfortably further influence particularly a mother's but also a father's use of public space, providing more opportunities for fathers to act as caregivers, too.

#### Case Study Al Mahatta Raghadan

Two young female students enter the women's bathroom at the station. After using the toilet, they start chatting with each other as they re-adjust their *hijabs* and make-up. Once everything is in the right place, they sit down on the floor in the bathroom's vestibule and light a cigarette.

## Gender

### Separation Public spaces don't segregate but do separate gender

#### Challenge

**Enable different genders to be near to each other while maintaining culturally and socially acceptable distances**

Gender-segregated spaces ultimately limit the choices to accessible places for both women and men through explicit exclusion which, essentially, runs counter the idea of an inclusive city. It further invites blaming practices when one is found in the „wrong“ place. Nonetheless, temporary and partial gender *separation* can empower both women and men to find confidence and social acceptance to participate in shared places of encounter. Public spaces should therefore provide separate but well-connected quiet and active areas with open or porous boundaries so men and women can find their own comfort zones in „male“ and „female“ areas. Initiated through gradual mixing of perceived male and female activities, everyday life experiences can then reframe what women and men can or cannot do in public and reshape existent gender roles.

#### Case Study Matal Abu Nseir

The viewpoint attracts young men and women, families, foreigners from Gulf states, and couples alike. All have their respective corners through an unspoken mutual agreement, nevertheless, the boundaries are unclear, open to change any time, and only negotiated in the moment.

## Young Single

### Men

### Young single men lack spaces that welcome them

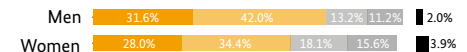
Young Man from Abu Nseir „I go to Rainbow Street in order to see the girls who go there, too. I don't like to go to the malls where there are many security men. At Rainbow Street, nobody can prevent us from being there. Also, the people who visit the Rainbow Street are classy in terms of treatment.“

#### Challenge

**Create public spaces where young single men are welcomed and not excluded**

Young single men across all socioeconomic backgrounds are so widely stigmatized in Amman that they automatically seem to fall into the category of undesirables. Either explicitly or implicitly, they are systematically excluded through „mixed groups only“ policies, gatekeepers, high entrance fees, or potential complaints from dominant user groups like families and women. Fewer public spaces are thus made available to young single men so that many resort to the more accessible streetscapes in which cars play a heightened role. Cars do not only enable young single men to linger but also double as mobile personal spaces as they are somewhat removed from both the public and private sphere. In a self-fulfilling prophecy, some are then socialized to become the very threat and nuisance they have been labeled to be and, by doing so, reinforce harmful concepts of masculinity in society. A gender-friendly city, however, does not cater to prescribed concepts of masculinity or femininity and does not discriminate against any gender.

All men should be allowed to enter malls, cinemas, etc. without their families:



Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree Neither agree nor disagree

**THE STATE  
OF  
PUBLIC  
SPACE  
IN  
AMMAN**

# Public Space in... Planning

Fig. 1 22 Districts of Greater Amman



Fig. 2 Population in Amman 2015<sup>4,5</sup>

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Jordan	1.3 m	1.2 m	2.5 m
Other	900,000	600,000	1.5 m
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.2 m</b>	<b>1.9 m</b>	<b>4 m</b>
Palestina	171,000	137,000	308,000
Syria	220,000	215,000	436,000
Egypt	318,000	73,000	390,000
Iraq	61,000	61,000	122,000
Bangladesh	1,300	12,100	13,400
Philippines	600	15,700	16,300

<sup>1</sup> DoS 2015a <sup>2</sup> Innab 2019 <sup>3</sup> DoS 2015a  
<sup>4</sup> DoS 2015b <sup>5</sup> DoS 2015c <sup>6</sup> GAM 2008  
<sup>7</sup> GAM 2008: 49 <sup>8</sup> Potter et al. 2007

## ABOUT AMMAN & ITS PEOPLE

As legend goes, Amman was built on seven hills. Today, Jordan's capital stretches over 22 hills and accommodates more than 4 million of Jordan's 9.5 million inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Since its founding in 1921, contemporary Amman has been shaped by several waves of rapid migration and appears to be in a „state of permanent temporariness“.<sup>2</sup> It is home not only to 2.5 million Jordanians (of which 1.3 million are women) but also host to around 1.5 million non-Jordanians (of which 600,00 are women), many of which reside in Amman as refugees, descendants of refugees, or foreign workers (see Fig. 2).<sup>3,4</sup> The majority of Amman's population is below 24 years old, making the capital also demographically a very young one.<sup>5,6</sup> Limestone facades dominate Amman's built environment while only little vegetation and green spaces surround them. With a majority of the residents being Muslims, numerous mosques, managed by the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs, scatter through Amman's neighborhoods. A few high-rise buildings can be spotted in West Amman's skyline, less so in the more conservative East. When it comes to transport, cars are Amman's go-to response which becomes visible in the city's urban form with its extensive road network, large scale constructions, and urban sprawl. Also, public transport is limited and many parts of the city are rather hostile for pedestrians.

## PLANNING HISTORY

Greater Amman is divided into 22 districts and Amman's surface comprises of 800 sqkm.<sup>7</sup> Historically, much of the expansion occurred to the East of the city and only from the 1970s moved further to the West and South. Great parts of Amman's urban landscape and urban planning goes back to the *Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan* released in 1988, which addressed urban development till 2005 and accommodated up to 2 million inhabitants. After restructuring Amman's boundaries and increasing the surface area from 680 km<sup>2</sup> to 1,662 km<sup>2</sup> in 2006, the latest master plan, *The Amman Plan: Metropolitan Growth (MGP) 2008-2025*, was published. Later on, Amman's boundaries were resized again to 800 km<sup>2</sup>. Generally, the Amman Plan less aims to decentralize but to focus on „directing and managing future growth within the City“.<sup>7</sup>

## PLANNING OF PUBLIC SPACES

In Amman's urban planning sector, public space is generally referred to as open space related to recreation, mobility or agriculture for the public. Though the 1988 *Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan* lays out an overall open space strategy, it was never implemented. The *Amman Plan* proposes a revised version of the 1988 Open Space System for Amman and lists several typologies (see Fig. 5). Generally, the *Amman Plan* recognizes that a network of open spaces is critical for the city as it defines the public realm, accom-

Fig. 3 Overview of Amman's Planning History<sup>6,8</sup>

1921	Amman declared capital of Transjordan
1938	<b>Land Use Plan</b> The British mayor proposes a land use plan for Amman
1946	31 km <sup>2</sup> 60,000 inhabitants
1959	50 km <sup>2</sup> 246,000 inhabitants
1968	<b>Physical Planning in Jordan</b> Developed by Victor Lorenz and published by the Ministry of Interior for Municipal and Rural Affairs
1978	<b>Preliminary Study on the City Centre Development</b> Released by the Municipality of Amman and prepared by Japanese consultants
1982	<b>Jordan Urban Sector Review</b> Published by the World Bank
1986	91 km <sup>2</sup> 870,000 inhabitants
1987	<b>Establishment of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM)</b> 532 km <sup>2</sup>
1988	<b>Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan 1985-2005</b> Published by GAM in seven volumes, funded by USAID, based on British planning principles
2004	680 km <sup>2</sup> 2.2 million inhabitants
2005	<b>Amended regulation of the buildings and zoning in Amman City</b>
2006	<b>Expansion of GAM boundaries</b> Annexation of the municipalities Sahab, Al-Mouwaquer, Al Jeeza, Marj Al Hamam, Na'our, Um Besalteen, and Husban 1.662 km <sup>2</sup> 2.4 million inhabitants
2008	<b>The Amman Plan: Metropolitan Growth (MGP) 2008-2025</b> Published by GAM, accommodates 6.5 million inhabitants
2015	<b>Shrinking of GAM boundaries</b> 800 km <sup>2</sup> ca. 4 million inhabitants

“without open space, public life becomes more difficult as people depend on private spaces for interaction”

modates everyday social interaction, and „without open space, public life becomes more difficult as people depend on private spaces for interaction“.<sup>1</sup> The Open Space Plan is meant to enhance the quantity and quality of open spaces and, in particular, highlights the value of regional parks that aim to be “aesthetically pleasing, support a sense of belonging to the community, and allow for a variety of activities throughout the year”<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year when the *Amman Plan* was published, the Jordanian National Building Council released the *Urban Aesthetics Code*. It outlines a number of public space typologies in more detail aiming to “beautify” the city.<sup>2</sup> An in-house assessment of existent public space guidelines in Amman revealed that the *Urban Aesthetics Code* is considered to be an “external document that is optionally referred to” by several GAM representatives even though the assessment illustrated that it was currently “the most comprehensive guideline found in relation to public open space”<sup>3</sup> The report further provides some insights into planning practice with regard to public spaces in Amman of which some of the relevant findings are listed on the left.

### Challenges in planning for public spaces in Amman<sup>2,6</sup>

- 1 Practitioners at GAM use the term “roads” as a definition for public space
- 2 The Comprehensive Planning Department has mainly been occupied with *zoning* as opposed to *planning* as planning is a rather recent addition to their work and, as such, seems to “complicate procedures and delay projects with its studies and analyses”
- 3 Emphasis is put on creating new public spaces, rehabilitation of existing spaces is secondary
- 4 Planning is less regulated by guidelines but by experiences and transfer of experiences, e.g. by “individuals of knowledge”
- 5 Districts of Amman are left out in making planning decisions
- 6 Maintenance is considered a burden which is often avoided by paving surfaces instead of greening them



Fig. 4 Definition of Public Space as „Road“ as outlined by the *Urban Aesthetics Code* and used by practitioners at GAM<sup>2,5</sup>



Fig. 5 2008 Open Space System and Public Space Typologies according to the the *Open Space Plan*<sup>1</sup>

- **forests, nature preserves, natural heritage**  
incl. wadis, slopes, and ridgelines, watershed divides, urban tree canopy, tree line, wildlife habitat
- **parks and recreation areas**  
incl. regional parks, area parks, neighborhood parks, linear open space, playgrounds, sport facilities
- **cultural heritage areas**
- **institutional spaces**
- **linear connections**  
incl. trails, pedestrian pathways, corridors, stairways, boulevards, bike paths
- **urban agricultural areas**  
incl. orchards
- **rehabilitated quarries and mineral extraction areas**
- **portion of metropolitan corridors and the built boundary**
- **utility corridors**
- **urban fringe areas**
- **private open space**

It is important to note that public space planning is almost exclusively led by prescriptive physical guidelines, showing little consideration for more process-oriented outcomes that focus less on public space as a material product and more on potential uses and users of a space to meet social, economic and environmental needs. Considering the current perceptions of public space, GAM is ill-equipped to recognize existing public spaces or meeting points in the city that do not fall into the category of open space or roads. As a consequence, without clear implementation strategies in place, little means of enforcement, and 14 different responsible departments, planning of public space in Amman presents itself as a challenging task. Nevertheless, in recent years, GAM has shown interest and effort in reviewing the current state of planning by opening up to more participatory approaches as well as more human-centered forms of urban development in order to arrive at a kind of planning that makes Amman’s public spaces with and for people in an environment that is safe, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.<sup>5</sup>

### Box 1 GAM departments responsible for the planning, design, implementation, and maintenance of public spaces in Amman<sup>6</sup>

- Comprehensive Planning Department
- Zoning Department
- Acquisition Department
- Building Licenses Department
- Agricultural Department
- National Parks & Combating Desertification Department
- Design & Engineering Studies Department
- Construction Department
- Execution Department
- Road Maintenance Department
- Production Department
- Project Supervision Department
- Dept. of Environmental Operations
- Amman’s 22 Districts

<sup>1</sup> GAM 2008:144-151 <sup>2</sup> JNBC 2008  
<sup>3</sup> GIZ 2019: 32 <sup>4</sup> GIZ 2019: 40-41  
<sup>5</sup> SDG 11 <sup>6</sup> GIZ 2019

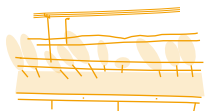
# Public Space in... Research

Much research, in and outside Jordan, has been done on Amman's public spaces. The studies, articles, papers, and the grey literature listed here aims to provide a glimpse into the existing knowledge without making claims to be comprehensive in order to become potential starting points for further research endeavours that might also fill voids found in urban gender perspectives.



## 7 Hills

In 2014, *Make Life Skate Life* and *Philadelphia Skate* created the 7Hills Skatepark in the Samir Al Rifai Park off Prince Mohammad Street in collaboration with GAM and with the help of the local community and volunteers. Today, especially young refugees get enthusiastic about 7Hills's free weekly skate classes. But not only skaters are attracted to the park. A diverse mix of people from very different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds sit along the skate bowls, picnic in the greenery, use the swings, or play basketball in the court while colorful street art forms the background to this scene. Further Reading: 7Hills 2014; Novotny 2014



## Airport Road

Stretches of unbuilt land and wide open space dominate the area between Amman's built up boundaries and the Queen Alia International Airport. The Airport Road, a large busy multi-lane-highway, runs through this area with two parallel service roads on both sides. The two-lane service roads are much smaller, less frequently used, and quieter than the main Airport Road. As such, they often turn into spontaneous sites of recreation where residents of Amman park their cars to find rest, to hang out, or to have an extensive picnic while the cars on the highway whiz by, wind gushes curve the trees, and the sun sets behind the mountains. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014



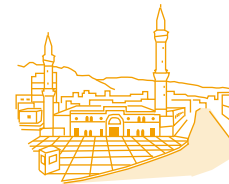
## The Boulevard

The Boulevard represents a high-end publicly-accessible private space that is part of the Abdali Urban Regeneration Project which began in 2013. Advertised as the „New Downtown of Amman“, the 370-meter-long open air pedestrian promenade offers shopping, restaurants, cafés, offices, as well as seasonal attractions and events that enable visitors to see and to be seen. In order to maintain a sense of safety and comfort, the management controls all entrances with security guards and denies entry to selected visitors or requests entrance fees for special events like during Christmas. Further Reading: Mare'e 2018; Daher 2011b; Cozzens 2014



## Manila Street

Manila Street is located near 2nd Circle and refers to the Filipino neighborhood found around Maen Ben Zaedah Street. Particularly Filipina live-out domestic workers reside in this area and foster Pinoy infrastructures that become visible in supermarkets, shops, restaurants, street vendors, shipping, money transfers, phone services, and English signage. Yet, it is not only the Filipino community who makes their home and mark here but also a number of other nationalities, among others, from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Sudan, and Somalia can be encountered here. In a way, the Manila Street hints at Doug Saunders' *Arrival City* and appears to be one of the few places in Amman where foreign migrants are active and visible participants of city making. Further Reading: Caillol 2018



## Grand Hussein Mosque

Now and then, the Grand Hussein Mosque in Downtown represents one of the most prominent public spaces in Amman. As a place of gathering for worshippers, sellers, buyers, and other pedestrians it is rare to find the place empty. During Friday prayers, it fills up with rows and rows of men, praying on cardboards and carpets while standing nearly shoulder to shoulder. Since the number of worshippers by far exceeds the capacity of the square in front of the mosque, adjacent streets are closed off and traffic police put in place in order to expand the prayer zone. The whole transformation takes place in a matter of minutes. Once the prayer ends, car traffic resumes and so does the hustle and bustle of Downtown life. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; Daher 2011a

## # 2nd Circle

One of Amman's oldest circles does not only function as a traffic element in Jabal Amman but also doubles as a square with benches, greenery and sculptures. It becomes lively especially during summer nights (see Manila Street). Further Reading: Caillol 2018

## A Abdali Mall

see The Boulevard

## Abu Darwish Mosque & Square

Situated on a hill in Jabal Al Ashrafiye, this ablaq mosque is visible to wider parts of Amman. In 2008, it became the center of attention for a redevelopment project by architect Ayman Zuaier and GAM. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; Al Aswad 2018; GJU, JU, see Case Study

## B Brownfields

Residual planning outcomes (e.g. left over land), unfinished mega projects (e.g. The Jordan Gate, The Limitless Towers, The Living Wall Project), contaminated and hazardous sites (e.g. landfills, historical sites, high voltage towers), and abandoned sites and buildings

## (e.g. The Housing Bank Complex)

are some of the brownfield categories found in Amman that are being appropriated in various ways. Further Reading: Tarawneh 2019

## C Cinemas

Nowadays, most cinemas in Amman are incorporated into malls. Downtown Amman is home to a few stand-alone cinemas like Al Hussein, Al Hamra, and the Filasteen Cinema, however, they are either not very active anymore or have ceased operating altogether and turned into abandoned buildings. Further Reading: Daher 2011a

## Cultural Avenue

Located in Shmesani, Al Thaqafeh Street or Cultural Avenue was planned as a site for cultural activities. While highbrow culture is largely missing from the scene, its smooth surfaces and various spatial elements have attracted lowbrow street cultures like skaters, break-dancers, and hiphop artists. Further Reading: Novotny 2014, Abdul-Rahman 2008

## D Dukkan

Small to medium-sized neighborhood shops, or *Dukkan*, that sell products like cigarettes, sodas, snacks, hot drinks, and household items are part of everyday life in Amman's dense residential areas. A visit to the *dukkkan* enables regular chance encounters and strengthens neighborhood ties. Further Reading: Daher 2011a

## Downtown

see Wast Al Balad

## E Electricity Hangar

A former electricity station, built in the 1930s and located in Ras Al Ain, has been re-designed into a contemporary public space hosting cultural and art events. The minimalist environment mostly attracts art-afficionados and affluent Ammanis. Further Reading: Herskhazee n.d.

## F Friday Market

In 2014/15, the Friday Market, Amman's go-to address for second-hand clothing, was moved from Al Abdali to Ras Al Ain. The *sha'bi* (English „popular“) market now



opens every Friday behind painted walls and under white plastic roofs. Some visitors argue that the best bargains can be made on Thursday nights when the market sets up shop and the selection is mostly still untouched. Further Reading: Cozzens 2014; GJU

#### H Harra

*Harras* or neighborhood streets are the first point of contact to the public sphere when stepping out of one's home. Thus, they serve as low-threshold meeting points in residential neighborhoods and they are frequently transformed into informal playgrounds for children and youth. Further Reading: Harra Initiative;

#### Hashemite Plaza & Roman Theater

Together with the Roman Theater, the large-scale Hashemite Square in Downtown attracts a wider public from various parts of the city - day in and day out. It may very well be Amman's public space par excellence as it boasts a number of archetypical characteristics of a public square. Here, families sit on benches, walls, and stairs, children play football or rollerskate, men and women rent *argileh* and have food and drinks. Further Reading: Amireh 1996; Daher 2011a; Elkhatib 2017a; Innab 2019

#### Hawooz

Previously, Amman's water supply used to be regulated via water tanks, or *hawooz*, which were spread across Amman's old districts. Today, the *hawooz* are no longer intact and have mostly been removed. But many former *hawooz* locations remain places of gathering still. In Al Buhtori Street, for instance, a former *hawooz* location has given way to a vibrant neighborhood park. Further Reading: Daher 2011a

#### Housing Bank Park

Developed by the Housing Bank, this private park in Abdoun is equipped with large play and green areas in a controlled and fenced environment. Many families, particularly mothers with young

children, enjoy using it.

Further Reading: Aljafari 2014

#### J Jabal Al Qala'a & The Citadel

This neighborhood has a unique position in Amman's urban fabric as it houses the citadel on top of its hill, a major landmark and element of Amman's urban fabric. Its central location provides views across the city to the east, west, south, and north which attract Ammanis and tourists alike. Further Reading: Ababsa 2011; CSBE and Hamzet Wasel 2009; CSBE 2007

#### Jabal Al Natheef Camp

At the Jabal Al Natheef Camp, a settlement for mainly Palestinian refugees, domestic space is dense and limited. Social activities and interactions are therefore often moved outdoors to the public or publicly-accessible realm and negotiated on rooftops, courtyards, and staircases. Further Reading: Arini 2014; Ababsa 2011

#### Jordan Street

Running from Downtown to the North of Amman, Jordan Street connects the capital to cities like Jerash or As Salt. Users of the highway can expect to see and experience wide open space, fewer buildings, fresher air, and cooler temperatures the further north and up they drive. Given its pleasant environment, a number of parking spots along Jordan Street that also offer views onto the surrounding mountain panorama attract families, youths, men and women alike for picnics, hang outs, and relief. Further Reading: GJU

#### K King Abdullah Park

Formerly a large recreational complex with an integrated amusement park, the King Abdullah Park in Sh-meisani lays bare and abandoned after visitor numbers had steadily gone down. Revitalization efforts have so far been unsuccessful. Further Reading: Tarawneh 2019

#### King Faisal Street

Built in the 1920s, King Faisal Street, also known as Faisal Plaza, represents a historic and symbolic public space in Downtown Amman. It was considered the heart of the city and nation and, as such, also served as a site for political events. It lost some of its relevance when cars started to dominate the streets and caused the loss of its square-like character. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; Daher 2011a

#### King Hussein Park & Mosque

The King Hussein Park, established in 2005, and the adjacent King Hussein Mosque, form Amman's largest public garden and one of the city's few green urban lungs. Located in Dabouq in the north of the city, it houses vast greenery, recreational facilities, sports facilities, two museums, an exhibition pavilion, and ample parking space. Further Reading: Nga Le 2017

#### M Al Mahatta Raghadan

Al Mahatta Raghadan (English „Raghadan Station“), Amman's central public transport hub is named after the Hijaz Railway Station and the nearby Raghadan Palace. From Al Mahatta, passengers can depart on inner-city and short-distance routes by taking buses or carpooling in service taxis. There is also a market as well as Amman's largest secondhand market. Public transport used to depart from today's Raghadan Complex, closer to the center of Downtown, but has temporarily - for 13 years now - moved to its current location which soon is to become a main and permanent stop on the future bus rapid transit system. Further Reading: Innab 2019; GJU, JU, see Case Study

#### Al Mamonia Park

This neighborhood park is located in Jabal Hussein near the busy Firas Circle. With its greenery and game facilities, it attracts in particular parents and children. Further Reading: Al Aswad 2018

#### N National Gallery of Fine Arts Park

The rehabilitated park, formerly known as Jabal Al Luweibdeh Park, includes outdoor sculpture displays, children's play areas, a performance and exhibition space, an event space, and educational gardens demonstrating water conservation landscape practices. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; CSBE 2005

#### P Pepsi Pool

East of Rusaifa lies the infamous Pepsi Pool in close proximity to the Jordan Ice Soda & Pepsi Company. Its 104 dunums of land sit between a residential and industrial area and are highly contaminated with domestic and industrial wastewater. To tackle this health hazard, GAM is developing plans to decontaminate the area and to turn it into a public park. Further Reading: Weldali 2019a; Weldali 2019b

#### Public Transport

Amman's public transport encompasses buses, coasters, and service taxis. GAM buses are payable via ecard, other buses, coasters and service taxis are paid in cash. The routes are fairly fixed, yet stops can be created spontaneously when needed. Further Reading: Maan Nasel 2016; FES 2018

#### R Rainbow Street

Rainbow Street in Jabal Amman, off the 1st Circle, is lined with shops, cafés, restaurants and other establishments. Especially on weekend nights, it turns into a buzzing place for young Ammanis seeking entertainment. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; Daher 2011a; Hiari 2010; Lama 2011; GJU; JU

#### S Sharia'a Street

This gentrified street in Jabal Al Weibdeh off Paris Circle can be described as the pulse of the neighborhood. A number of shops, restaurants, coffeshops, and bars attract the spectacle-hungry crowds especially on weekends, causing heavy traffic on the one way road. Further Reading: Elkhatib 2017b; Daher 2011a

#### Souq JARA

The Souq JARA is an artisanal flea market on Fawzy Malouf Street off Rainbow Street that takes place every Friday in the summer season. Its colorful stands offer local foods, handicrafts, art, and other middle-to high-end products. It is named and organized by the Jabal Amman Residents Association (JARA). Further Reading: Daher 2011a

#### Sports City

Al Hussein Youth City or Sports City was constructed in 1964 and spans an area of 1200 dunums. It incorporates several sport fields and halls, swimming pools, Jordan's largest sports stadium, as well as the Cultural Palace for performances and events. Access to the facilities is provided via a membership fee while large parts of the area are openly accessible to the public who can use the park to exercise, picnic, or to rest. Further Reading: Daher 2011a, CSBE n.d.

#### Stairs

Stairs are a ubiquitous element in Amman's urban fabric, particularly in and around Downtown. They come in various lengths, widths, shapes, materials, colors, degrees of maintenance, popularity, levels of privacy and publicness, and are sometimes also referred to as Amman's living rooms as many stairs directly connect to people's houses. Further Reading: CLUSTER 2019; Al Aswad 2018; Daher 2011a

#### T Taj Mall

Taj Mall is a high-end mall in Abdoun which attracts the affluent and those who wish to be around national as well as international brands and products. Different to most other malls in Amman, this mall offers a large outdoor area with restaurants, coffeshops, and vast city views. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014

#### W Wakalat Street

Before Rainbow Street became popular, Wakalat Street was one of the places to be in Amman. After this shopping street in Sweifiyeh became part of a revitalization project that aimed to turn a car-

dominated street into a commercial pedestrian area, visitor numbers and commercial activity went down. So, in response, cars were permitted again. Today, this shopping street remains intact even though it lost much of its former vibrancy. Further Reading: Aljafari 2014; Daher 2011a

#### Waqf

*Waqf* (English „endowment“ describes an Islamic institution under which an owner purchases land or property that benefits users for specific purposes, including the profits that are generated through a *waqf*. Oftentimes, *awqaf* (plural of *waqf*) are tied to a public service, e.g. mosques and prayers, and as such attract a larger public. These places of gathering are managed by the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places and, thus, follow different legal and institutional frameworks than land and property owned and governed by GAM. *Awqaf* are widespread and active in Amman and therefore have a vast impact on the city's urban landscape as well as public life. Further Reading: Sait and Lim 2006

#### Weibdeh Viewpoint

Jabal Al Weibdeh is widely known as a place for amusement and as such attracts people from different parts of Amman. One major attraction is the Weibdeh Viewpoint which essentially is split into two viewpoints as it is divided by a tall residential building. Especially on weekend nights, a number of people gather with or without their cars. Further Reading: GJU

#### Wast Al Balad or Downtown

The historic center of Amman nurtures feelings of nostalgia and entertainment for some and represents an important lifeline for others. On the one hand, Wast Al Balad keeps traditions and memories alive, on the other hand, it functions as a non-romantic source of income and supplies due to its numerous markets and extensive commercial and social infrastructure. Further Reading: Daher 2011a; Amireh 1996; Abu Khalil 2019; Shawash 2011



## FURTHER READING

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**Note:** Much of the research conducted on public spaces and public urban life in Amman is being stored in the architectural departments of the Jordan University (JU) and the German Jordanian University (GJU) and need to be requested on a case by case basis.

# Public Space in... Theory

Lina Abirafeh in *Gender and the Arab City* „In many Arab communities, urban space is, by default, male space. Men act as if they „own‘ the street, which is reflected in how they walk and how they treat women in public.“<sup>2</sup>

## WHY DO AMMAN'S PUBLIC SPACES CATER MORE FOR MEN AND LESS FOR WOMEN?

In Amman, you see mothers climb up long and steep sets of stairs, perhaps carrying a baby on one hand and a heavy bag on the other hand, for lack of a less exhausting alternative. Also, although women make use of bathrooms more frequently than men, public toilets for women are rare, often poorly maintained and lack adequate amenities which discourage some women entirely to leave their houses for an extended period of time. Many women avoid going out or being seen alone during nighttime for fear of discomfort, lack of safety, or a bad reputation whereas men can be seen on the streets until very late. If asked, Amman's women could extend this list much further but given there is so little available data into women's experiences in Amman, it appears they have not been asked much by planners and one begins to wonder why this is the case even though they make up around half of the city's population.<sup>1</sup> What becomes clear is that men and women experience cities differently. Since Amman's urban framework is largely male-oriented, this generally comes to the disadvantage of women. Some even say that in many Arab communities urban space by default represents male space as it is where men display their entitlement to be, or make use of their right to the city but force out women in the same act.<sup>2</sup> As a result, women face many obstacles, for instance, with regard to access and movement.

In order to better understand the gender imbalance in Amman's urban design, one must step away from the cityscape for a moment, examine its potential causes, and take a look at the wider gender debates they are embedded in. Truth is, Jordan's level of gender inequality is high - but why?<sup>3</sup> For starters, one could argue, gender inequality, to a large extent, stems from the sexist social structures of patriarchy that are particularly pronounced in Jordan's society (see Box 2).<sup>4</sup> It implies that consciously or subconsciously "men oppress, exploit and control women" or other men, in a systematic manner.<sup>4</sup> For example, women in Jordan are granted equality in the constitution but are being discriminated against in national laws, curtailing women's choices regarding family planning, access and ownership of assets, and freedom of movement. In daily life, it is the woman's responsibility and burden to stay protected and honorable while men are not necessarily asked to do the same. Women are asked to put on a veil, not to dress or behave provocatively, and to stay away or at home in certain areas and hours - for their own good. Men, on the other hand, are not explicitly told not to harm women, even the opposite can be the case, and it would, righteously so, never occur to men to stay at home - for their own good - so women can move around freely and in safety. Instead, countless men inflict sexual harassment and violence cases onto women both in public and in private without facing severe consequences.<sup>5,6</sup> Shockingly, yet unsurprisingly, the majority of these cases remain unaddressed and unreported, or worse, silenced when spoken about for fear of facing the repercussions put in place by patriarchal structures which can negatively affect the individual as well as the individual's family.<sup>7</sup> Despite all of this, it is important to note that not all men actually oppress, exploit or control others or even benefit from patriarchy due to additional factors like socioeconomic backgrounds or ethnicity. Likewise, some women are more privileged than others and therefore face less discrimination or might even benefit from patriarchy as individuals.

**Box 2 Jordan's Constitution grants equal rights to every citizen, yet national legislation and societal practice discriminate against women<sup>4</sup>**

**Example 1** Article 23 in the Constitution grants the right to work to every citizen but Article 61 of the Personal Status Law states that women require their husband's permission to work outside their home, men do not. In 2018, only 14.6% of women in Jordan were economically active.

**Example 2** The Nationality Law prohibits Jordanian mothers to pass on their citizenship to their children. Jordanian citizenship is inherited through fathers.

**Example 3** In a marriage contract, a woman can add terms and conditions to which the husband has to agree to. Men are automatically guaranteed rights such as the right to divorce, to travel without permission, and to a monogamous marriage.

**Example 4** In educational curricula, women are portrayed in roles limited to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. Women, thus, are housewives, mothers, teachers, and nurses while men are presented as breadwinners in decision-making positions.

**Example 5** As financial responsibilities lie with the men so do economic privileges. Women have very limited access to wealth and resources. In 2017, only 17% owned land and 24% owned apartments in Jordan.

<sup>1</sup> Fenster and Hamdan-Saliba 2013

<sup>2</sup> Abirafeh 2018

<sup>3</sup> In 2018, Jordan globally ranked 138 out of 149 on the Global Gender Gap Index (WEF 2018).

<sup>4</sup> IRCKHF 2019

<sup>5</sup> Shammout 2015

<sup>6</sup> In November 2019, a man in Jerash brutally assaulted his wife and damaged her vision permanently as a result of a domestic dispute. It triggered public outrage demanding immediate changes to stop ongoing gender violence (Husseini Nov 19, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> During research, some women shared stories about speaking up against a sexual harasser but instead of being applauded for their bravery, they were shamed for addressing it and not staying quiet.

### Box 3 Gender Glossary

#### Sex

At birth, a person is biologically classified as *female*, *male*, or *other*. A person's sex does not change.

#### Gender or Gender Identity

According to a society's understanding of gender, a person may identify as a man or a woman or other. It refers to how one performs or presents him- or herself in society. This is not predetermined by birth but entirely socially constructed. Gender can, therefore, change and has unlimited forms of expression.

#### Gender Expression

Gender identity and gender expression can overlap, e.g. when a person identifies as a man and expresses himself in a masculine way or when a woman expresses herself in a feminine way. But all kinds of combination of identity and expression are possible.

#### Masculinity & Femininity

Masculinity may be associated e.g. with physical strength and the color blue, femininity with emotional strength and the color pink, however, such associations are strongly determined by society and not by biology, therefore they are not universally valid.

#### Gender Role

Most societies connect men and women to a certain set of appropriate values, behaviors, abilities, characteristics, etc. which are meant to outline one's role in society. A person's gender might coincide with these societal expectations - or not.

#### Sexism

Discrimination based on somebody's sex or gender and using or reinforcing gender stereotypes is sexist.

#### Patriarchy

A society that is led by its male members is patriarchal. In its more common use, patriarchy refers to the institutionalized social structures that oppress women.

Apart from patriarchal social structures, gender inequality in Jordan can also be traced back to prevailing conceptions of gender and gender roles. Too often, gender is confused with a person's sex. Sex is a biological classification that categorizes humans into male, female or other, usually based on a body's external anatomy. Somebody's sex stays the same across cultures as, biologically speaking, we are considered human beings in any part of the world. Gender, in contrast, is not biological but socially constructed and, therefore, allows for as many forms of expression and interpretations as imaginable that go beyond the reductionist categories of woman/feminine and man/masculine. As such, they are strongly tied to a society's cultural norms and values that outline the parameters of meaning, answering to questions like: What is a woman? What is a man? Can there be anything else? How do we feel about it? So a person's sex can overlap with his or her gender identity, i.e. a person can identify as a woman and appear feminine or identify as a man and appear masculine. But if a woman shows masculine traits and a man shows feminine traits, it is society who decides what degree of "masculinity" for women and "femininity" for men is acceptable and whether they will be perceived as a woman or a man still.<sup>1</sup> Negative discrimination based on sex or gender leads to sexism or sexist behavior which reinforce harmful gender perceptions and further discrimination.

Understanding the specificities behind Jordan's gender roles plays a significant part in deconstructing harmful sexist practices in society and, consequently, in making Amman a more gender-inclusive city. In Jordan, according to a professor at the Women's Studies Department of the Jordan University, men are generally associated with superiority, logic, and the public/political sphere while women are connected to inferiority, emotions, and the private/domestic sphere. "It is believed that men and women complement each other and have to be different in order to do so", she says, meaning that a man without a woman and vice versa is incomplete and not able to live a fulfil-

led life. Following this train of thought, gender equality is impractical and inequality imperative because otherwise, if all were equal like equal puzzle pieces, the system would fail. But there is a flaw in the system, one that is unattainable and dysfunctional in the end. First off, it is again impregnated with patriarchy, promising a life of fulfillment to men whereas a woman's well-being is highly dependent on their male guardian. Furthermore, deviations from existing gender stereotypes and heteronormative life models are actively discouraged and severely punished by society.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the system is harmful to both women and men who do not want to be confined to their assigned gender roles and the societal expectations that go along with it but have no means of stepping out. As a coping strategy, these groups can either carve out their niches in permanent hiding with limited opportunities for exchange and fulfillment or they do not find a vehicle to express themselves at all. The price society pays for it perhaps cannot fully be grasped, let alone measured, but the stigmatization of mental health issues is surely only one of the symptoms that occur when gender roles are being enforced as it takes away a person's right and ability to make their own choices in life without fear. Accurately, this has prompted a gender expert to conclude, "the liberation of men is tied to the liberation of women".<sup>3</sup>

One could suspect that this "women's issue" might really be more of a men's issue. Is it not men who have put this system of inequality in place and who benefit from its privileges? Then it might also be men who, as "gatekeepers", have the greatest chance for success to end gender discrimination by standing up for freedom of expression for all.<sup>4</sup> Women can advocate, lobby, and raise awareness for the cause but gender transformation within a patriarchal society rises and falls with the action of men, particularly of those with access to power, wealth, and resources. Consequently, one could argue, it is powerful men who keep this system intact for fear of losing their privileges. Partly, this is not an unfounded concern since gender equality comes with

#### Feminism

It describes the collective struggle of those who are being discriminated against based on their gender as well as other factors that intersect with it. The struggle of women as a major discriminated group is emphasized in feminism, yet, feminism stands for equality for all.

#### Intersectionality

Gender discrimination as well as privileges are not only tied to a person's gender. Many other factors intersect and contribute to it, e.g. race, class, income, region, religion, ability and ethnicity. It implies that neither men nor women are monoliths and one must acknowledge the differences not only across but also within gender.

#### Heteronormativity

It implies that femininity should only be performed by women and masculinity only by men. It also refers to the belief that there are only two binary gender, men and women, whose default sexual orientation is heterosexual.

**Male Gender Expert from Jordan** „The liberation of men is tied to the liberation of women.“<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler 2006 [1990]

<sup>2</sup> „Same sex relationships are legal in Jordan, but the LGBT community remains subject to discrimination and prejudice.“ (Abdel-Hadi 2017)

<sup>3</sup> „Understanding Toxic Masculinities“ discussion group in November 2019, organized by the GIZ Jordan Gender Working Group

<sup>4</sup> Connell 2005

**bell hooks in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*** „In patriarchal cultures men are not allowed to simply be who they are and glory in their unique identity. Their value is always determined by what they do. In an anti-patriarchal culture males do not have to prove their value and worth. They know from birth that simply being gives them value, the right to be cherished and loved.“<sup>5</sup>

**Box 4 Jordan Smoking Rates Highest in the World**  
More than 8 in 10 Jordanian men smoke or regularly use nicotine products and Jordanian men smoke on average 23 cigarettes a day.<sup>6</sup>

**R.W. Collins in *Change Among Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinity, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena***  
„Given the spectrum of masculinity politics, we cannot expect worldwide consensus for gender equality. What is possible is that support for gender equality might become hegemonic among men. In that case it would be groups supporting equality that provide the agenda for public discussion.“<sup>7</sup>

fairly redistributing privileges in an alternative social order. Nonetheless, also men (should) have an interest in fighting patriarchy and predefined gender roles that go beyond, yet by no means exclude, moral motivations.<sup>1</sup> For one, men do not live in a men's world but associate with women who they care for, which can be their mothers, wives, daughters and female friends. Many would welcome fair treatment as well as more and better choices in life for them which, ultimately, supports the idea of wider gender equality. Secondly, perhaps most importantly, men themselves benefit from not having to be "boys that will be boys" as the effects of hyper-masculinity can be toxic or harmful to themselves and their social environment. Research has shown that it is mostly men who suffer from policing, incarceration and premature death due to accidents, homicides, suicides, and higher levels of drug abuse (e.g. alcohol or tobacco). Men also benefit from recognizing women as equally full and active members of public life so that, for example, the burden of being the breadwinner and provider of a family does not solely rest on men but can be carried by women, too. This goes hand in hand with more gender diversity in typical male and female professions (e.g. male nurses, secretaries and house husbands or female car mechanics, engineers, and CEOs). It also fosters better work-life-balances. If paternity leave would be normalized, for instance, it would allow fathers to be much more part of their children's upbringing than is currently the case.<sup>2</sup> In the end, it is extremely challenging if not impossible to sustain toughness, strength, dominance, and success in all aspects of life in order to maintain manhood and to be perceived as a "real man". Therefore, the revision of gender roles in Jordan does not only come to the benefit of women but it would also allow men to remain "real man" even when they show signs of softness, weakness, understanding or failure since, above all, men are human.

## WHAT WOULD A NON-SEXIST CITY BE LIKE?

To make Amman more gender equal and just it is important to understand how local gender roles and the effects of patriarchy have an impact on the city's urban landscape. Historically, urban space was divided into public and private space because the public and political sphere was meant for men and the private and domestic sphere for women. But people's needs and wishes do not neatly fit into these two categories. In fact, the distinction is highly blurred and yet it continues to have a high relevance for Amman. In Amman, public life is still generally dominated by men and private life by women. In a patriarchal society, this can be an indicator for a sexist city which invites more in-depth analyses. This is not to say that it would be enough for a „non-sexist city“ to simply increase the number of women making use of public spaces that are usually reserved for men and vice versa, though it is on the same path.<sup>3</sup> A non-sexist or feminist city aims to make all of its inhabitants, but particularly those who are disadvantaged, active participants in city making so they also get to exercise their right to the city and become more than just "part of the scene".<sup>4</sup>

This study focuses on the current nature of public spaces in Amman from a gendered perspective with an emphasis on women. Public spaces nearly always define a city's urbanity and as such can influence Amman as a whole, including its private realm. Since the historic division between male and female sphere, notions of public space have expanded and developed further while their relevance has not decreased. In applied fields of city making, e.g. architecture or urban planning, public space represents a rather technical term. It strongly relates to materialities and is tied to modes of ownership and visibility. Concerned with its spatial arrangement, these concepts of public space are often accompanied by physical attributes like *open* or *enclosed*. As such, they outline some of the public *places* where public spaces are localized. Critical urban theorists generally relate public space to people's inter-

**Dolores Hayden in *What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?*** „Dwellings, neighborhoods, and cities designed for homebound women constrain women physically, socially, and economically. Acute frustration occurs when women defy these constraints to spend all or part of the work day in the paid labor force. I contend that the only remedy for this situation is to develop a new paradigm of the home, the neighborhood, and the city; to begin to describe the physical, social, and economic design of a human settlement that would support, rather than restrict, the activities of employed women and their families.“<sup>5</sup>

**Omar M. Amireh in *Amman Experiencing Plazas and Parks: Adaptation of Users to Space or Space to Users***  
„Women using the plaza and the park [Hashemite Square] never experience the personal, social, domesticated space which men create. Rarely is any woman, or women, seen sitting alone, or lying down having a nap, or in a social group, sitting on the ground having a chat.“<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Connell 2005

<sup>2</sup> According to Jordan's Labor Law, maternity leave covers 70 days whereas paternity currently stands at 3 days, due to an amendment introduced in 2019 (Husseini Jan 14, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Hayden 1980

<sup>4</sup> Sandercock and Forsyth 1992: 55

<sup>5</sup> bell hooks 2004

<sup>6</sup> Safi and Al Tahat 2020

<sup>7</sup> Connell 2005: 372

<sup>8</sup> Amireh 1996: 158-159

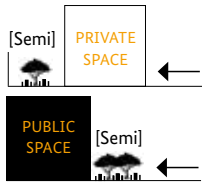


Fig. 6 Notions of public space as a material space with public forms of ownership and visibility

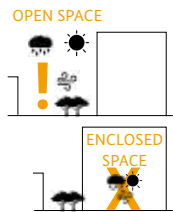


Fig. 7 Physical attributes for public or private spaces



Fig. 8 Notion of public space as a social space without uniform modes of ownership, visibility, and physical attributes

action with and within the built environment. In that sense, “space is a practiced place” and public spaces are created through public practices.<sup>1</sup> Thus, public spaces are, first and foremost, constructed through people, less through land, walls, and trees, and it is people who bestow meaning to spaces that would otherwise be meaningless. Public space can be understood as a performative cultural space that grows out of everyday activities and can occur in any given place.<sup>2</sup>

**Public spaces are created through public practices**

This is where the gender dimension comes in. As gender is a social construct and does not describe a state of being, like a person’s sex does, gender represents a performative practice which is localized in the spaces we traverse. Everyone engages in doing gender, one cannot *not* do gender or be gender-neutral.<sup>3</sup> A gender dimension therefore accompanies all public practices. So what happens when these people giving meaning to public spaces are mostly men? What kind of city do they create and what would happen if women started claiming their space in public, giving meaning to public spaces, too? Would it not make Amman more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for all?<sup>4</sup>

There are a number of things that can be done in order to move from a sexist to a gender-inclusive or feminist city, some of which will be addressed in this work. Generally, it is important to actively work on creating more breathing spaces and spaces of tolerance for all by putting gender-sensitive mechanisms in place wherever necessary. Since men and women are no monoliths, however, those trying to under-

stand gender inequality would be mistaken to focus on the gender dimension only but should also recognize the intersectionality of other markers of difference that have an impact on people’s lives, too. For example, a wealthy educated white woman might not face as much discrimination as an male illiterate person of color from a poor background. Likewise, say a single refugee mother with a newborn infant living in East Amman, a married Ammani housewife in a heteronormative family living in West Amman, a 22-year-old single and conservative university student, and an elderly disabled widow living by herself all fall into the „woman“ category, yet their experiences and needs vary greatly. Also this has to be accounted for when it comes to advocating for women’s needs and wishes. Gender equality, in essence, seeks to establish just and fair conditions for all humankind, no matter their gender.<sup>6</sup> To tackle this immense challenge, though, greater attention needs to be given to those who are being disadvantaged, magnifying the issue where it needs to be magnified. Thus, urban planning in Amman should rather focus on gender equity or justice in replacement of gender equality as gender equality seems impractical for it goes against the grain of local understandings of gender roles. Instead, gender justice or equity presents itself as a more suitable concept to gender-inclusive planning. It implies that the disadvantaged deserve a greater push for lack of privileges that they do not enjoy. So, under the bottom line, a feminist, non-sexist, and gender-inclusive city goes a step further than its related but more general human-centered approach and calls for a kind of city making that specifically targets the discriminated in an effort to make Amman a just city for all.<sup>7,8</sup>

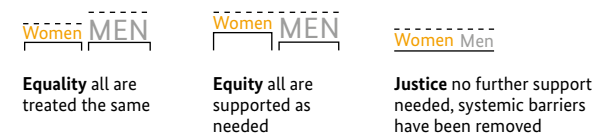
**Box 5 Henri Lefebvre and the Social Production of Space** Space is more than a flat surface with well-defined boundaries and dimensions. Space can be both tangible and intangible, visible and invisible, etc. Simply put: it is hard to grasp and define space, including urban or public space. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre has acknowledged this in his influential work *The Production of Space* in 1974 where he explains that space cannot merely be understood as a physical, spatial entity. Instead, it is better understood as a social construct.

**Chandra T. Mohanty in *Under Western Eyes*** „What is problematic, then, about this kind of use of ‚women‘ as a group, as a stable category of analysis, is that it assumes an ahistorical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination.“<sup>5</sup>

**Female Professor at Women’s Studies Department at the Jordan University** „It is believed [in Jordan] that men and women complement each other and have to be different in order to do so.“<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DeCerteau 1984 in Fenster 2005  
<sup>2</sup> Sennett 2017  
<sup>3</sup> Butler 2004  
<sup>4</sup> SDG 11  
<sup>5</sup> Mohanty 2007 [1984]: 344  
<sup>6</sup> Connell 2005  
<sup>7</sup> Hunt 2019  
<sup>8</sup> Beebejaun 2017  
<sup>9</sup> Interview from November 2019

Fig. 9 Differences between Gender Equality, Equity, and Justice



**PUBLIC  
SPACE  
& GENDER  
IN AMMAN**

# Experiencing the City as a Wo/Man



Cities are not planned for and with everyone. This is not only an organizational issue but a structural one and, among others, comes to the disadvantage of women because cities around the world have been and continue to be planned and built mainly by men with the male body and experience in mind, falsely assuming that urban planning is gender-neutral or gender-blind, meaning that the male body is perceived as universal and the norm. Amman is no exception to this as it has been stated among female urban scholars, professionals, as well as numerous women across different areas and socioeconomic backgrounds in Amman. In order to make Amman's public spaces more suitable and liveable for men *and* women or, in other words, more gender-inclusive, city makers need to know more about how men and women experience the city differently for lack of sufficient knowledge and data and as a prerequisite to change. In this manner, gender privileges and discrimination in Amman's planning can be uncovered and reimagined. More often than not this entails that women's experiences need to be prioritized as they have historically been neglected while men's needs and wishes remain just as relevant. A number of cities around the world have dedicated themselves to doing exactly that and it might be tempting to simply adopt their approaches. To truly cater Amman's inhabitants, however, such insights need to come from the city of Amman itself as each cultural context produces a different kind of urban life and has different ideas thereof. On the following pages, the study's research design is presented along with key findings and themes that can inform more gender-inclusive planning of public spaces specific to Amman, in particular with regard to East Ammani lifeworlds.

**Ana Falú in *Gender Perspectives in Urban Planning for UN Habitat***  
„The city is not experienced or lived in the same way by men and women. Urban assets are not equally accessible, neither equal in quality and supply, to all citizens. Due to these inequalities women face greater vulnerabilities than men.“<sup>1</sup>

**Arab Women in Architecture**  
„We always notice that female students are the majority in schools of architecture...There is an assumption that architecture is the nicest and most suitable major for female students...It is homey and involve tasks such as decorating the house.“<sup>2</sup>



**Fig. 10 International Examples for Gender-Inclusive Planning**

- A Fair Shared City for [Vienna, Austria](#)
- Safer Public Spaces in [Barcelona, Spain](#)
- Safer Transport for Women in [Mexico City, Mexico](#)
- Safer Streets and Tunnels in [Umea, Sweden](#)
- More Girls on Playgrounds in [Trappes, France](#)
- A Female-Friendly Public Square in [Mendoza, Argentina](#)
- A Female-Friendly Market in [Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea](#)
- Women-Only Parks in [Tehran, Iran](#)
- Women-Only Public Transport in [Istanbul, Turkey](#) and [Tokyo, Japan](#)
- Sexual Harassment CrowdMaps in [Cairo, Egypt](#) and [New Delhi, India](#)

<sup>1</sup> UN Habitat 2016  
<sup>2</sup> CSBE 2013



## HERSTORY

„I  
LIKE TO TAKE  
MY DAUGHTERS  
OUT BECAUSE THEY  
WANT TO GO OUT. WE SPEND  
A NICE TIME TOGETHER, AND,  
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T LIKE  
THEM TO COME HERE ALONE. I  
PREFER TO ACCOMPANY THEM AND  
THAT'S THEIR FATHER'S OPINION I NO ONE  
BOTHERS US, IT IS A SAFE PLACE I WE LOVE TO COME HERE  
ALL THE TIME BUT MOST OF THE USERS ARE LOVERS I I ONLY  
SIT ON MY BALCONY I I LIKE CALM PLACES I HOW CAN I WALK  
THERE SINCE IT DOES NOT HAVE SIDEWALKS? IF I WALK ON  
THE STREET, I WILL BE FRIGHTENED BECAUSE OF THE CARS  
I WE DO ALL THE HOUSEWORK AND HELP OUR CHILDREN  
WITH HOMEWORK. THE ONLY FREE TIME WE HAVE IS ON THE  
WEEKEND I IF I WALKED ON THE SOIL, MY CLOTHES WILL BECO-  
ME DIRTY AND I MAY FALL DOWN AND HURT MYSELF I I DON'T GO  
BACK THE SAME ROUTE, IT'S SAFER TO WALK THROUGH NUZHA BECAUSE  
THE SHOPS ARE OPEN I WHEN I GOT BACK TO AMMAN, I COULDN'T DRIVE  
FOR A LONG TIME. THE ROADS ARE SCARY, BIGGER ROADS, MORE TERROR  
I YESTERDAY MY COUSIN CAME TO THE MALL AND WE HAD THE BEST DAY I  
YOU ARE 25? WHY AREN'T YOU MARRIED YET? I SINCE SHE HAS RETIRED SHE WANTS  
TO WORK. SHE LIKES TO KEEP BUSY AND ACTIVE I I DON'T HAVE A CRUSH ANYMORE, I AM IN  
A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE ELSE, A GUY I MET ON FACEBOOK I I STOPPED SAYING HI  
TO BOYS WHO WORK HERE, I DON'T WANT THEM TO TALK ABOUT ME THIS WAY I THEY THINK  
WE HAVE NOT BEEN RAISED WELL BECAUSE WE ARE NOT WEARING A HIJAB I WE JUST WALK  
AROUND AND GET CATCALLED, WE YELLED AT THE SERVICE DRIVER THE OTHER DAY I IT IS  
IMPOSSIBLE TO GO ANYWHERE THAT DOESN'T HAVE A PLAY AREA FOR CHILDREN  
I MEN CAN SIT AND STAND HOWEVER THEY WANT, I HAVE TO SHRINK MY BODY  
IN ORDER TO KEEP A SAFE SPACE AND NOT TO HAVE OUR BODIES TOUCHING  
EACH OTHER I I AM NOT GOING TO HAI NAZZAL, I JUST COULDN'T KEEP WAIT-  
TING ON MY FOOT ANY LONGER SO I GOT SEATED IN THE  
BUS I DO YOU WANT THE MEN OUTSIDE TO KILL ME IF  
THEY SAW ME SMOKING? I WE NEVER EAT  
IN THE STATION I THE MORNING BUS  
DRIVE IS THE ONLY TIME I HAVE  
THE CHANCE TO THINK AWAY  
FROM MY MISERABLE LIFE I WE  
DON'T HAVE CHOICES I  
I DON'T COME HERE, I AM  
JUST WAITING  
FOR SO-  
MEO-  
NE“

## HISTORY

„MY  
HOUSE  
IS NEAR-  
BY AND I  
THE KI-  
LY - AND I  
COME TO  
OSK FREQUENT-  
DON'T HAVE A JOB  
I I EN-  
JOY COMING ALONE JUST TO SIT AND DRINK  
COFFEE - I DON'T  
COME WITH MY FAMILY AND I DON'T ALLOW MY WIFE TO COME HERE I I LIKE  
TO COME TO THE VIEWPOINT WITH MY GUY FRIENDS BECAUSE MY PARENTS MIGHT SEE  
ME HERE IF A GIRL WAS WITH ME I THE MALL HAS ONLY WOMEN'S CLOTHES, THERE IS  
NOTHING FOR ME INSIDE I GET MARRIED! YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL! NOW IS THE BEST TIME,  
YOU MIGHT STRUGGLE LATER I BOYS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR TROUBLE WILL CAUSE  
TROUBLE EVEN IF THEY WERE WITH THEIR FAMILIES I NOT EVERY MAN IS BAD. I HAD A  
GUEST HERE ONCE WHO GOT STOPPED BY THE SECURITY. I WAS REALLY EMBARRASSED  
I SALLIH ALNABI - I TOLD YOU THIS IS THE NORM IN ALNUZHA. ANY GIRL A BOY SEES HE  
COMMENTS I TRY LIVING HERE FOR A FEW DAYS, YOU WILL SUFFER I I COME HERE TO SIT  
WHEN I AM BORED, I LIKE WATCHING PEOPLE I NO, WE HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE MALL YET.  
WE ARE TOO OLD FOR IT, THERE ISN'T ANYTHING FOR US INSIDE I WHEN MEN DON'T  
HAVE A JOB IT IS SHAMEFUL THAT THEY SIT AT HOME LIKE GIRLS DO. THEY MUST GO OUT  
AND DO SOMETHING I IT IS BETTER TO GO TO ABDOUN, PEOPLE HAVE MONEY THERE I IT  
IS RARE IN JORDAN THAT A WOMAN OPENS A CONVERSATION WITH A MAN WHILE WAIT-  
TING FOR THE BUS I IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THIS NEVER HAPPENS I MY WIFE DOESN'T  
GO TO ANY PUBLIC PLACES WITHOUT ME, EVEN WITH OUR KIDS. IT IS PART OF OUR  
TRADITIONS AND REGULATIONS AND SHE DOESN'T WORK I NOTHING TO  
LIKE HERE AS A CLEANER, I FEEL LIKE I AM SENTENCED  
TO DEATH I WE ARE NOT LIVING HERE I  
WE COME HERE TO BREAK THINGS“

Fig. 11 A Slice of Life  
Quotes from conversations  
with women and men in  
different parts of Amman as  
collected or eavesdropped  
during field research

# Research Design

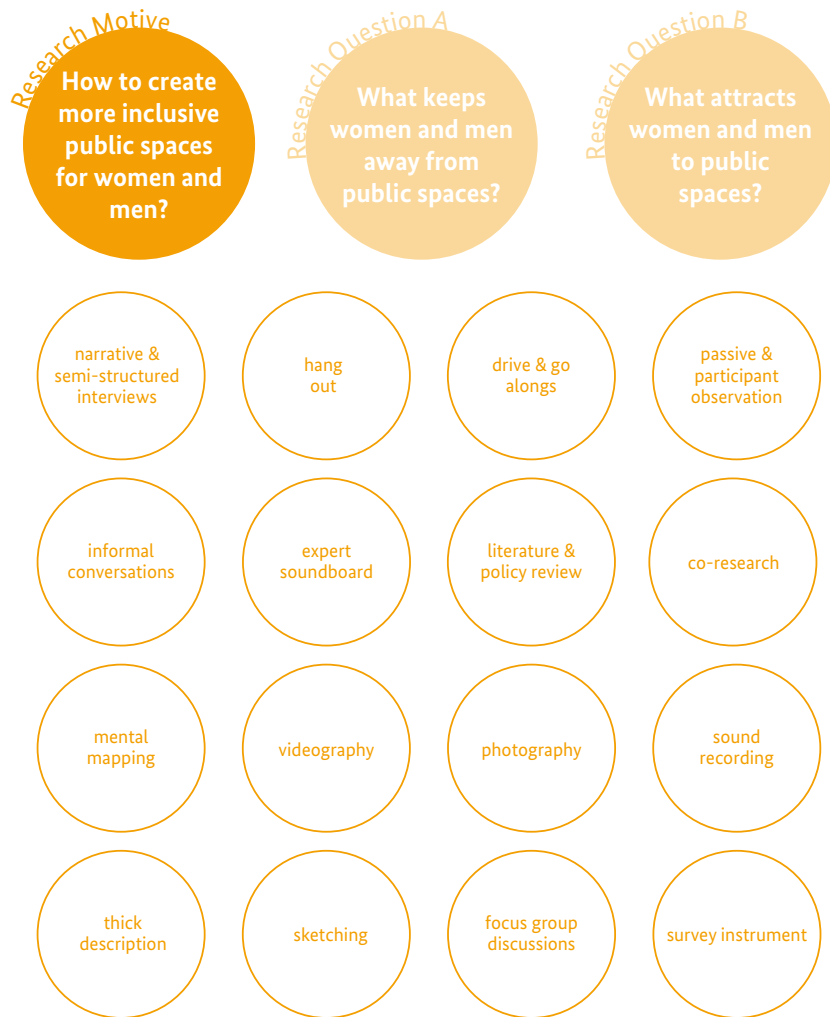


Fig. 12 **Research Questions and Methods** In order to find out more about women's and men's different lived experiences in Amman's public spaces, qualitative and quantitative methods were applied as shown above and a methodology as outlined on the right.

**Phase 1** Through **ethnographic qualitative field research** and with the help of local informants, drive alongs, go alongs, informal conversations, expert focus groups, semi-structured interviews, as well as **desk research**, an inventory of over 200 Amman's public spaces was created (see page 54). Though by no means finite, the inventory aims to be as comprehensive as possible, covering areas in the east, west, north, and south of Amman. From the inventory, five case studies were selected for more in-depth situational analyses.

**Phase 2** Intensive field research of **5 case studies** was then conducted by a research group in which all but the lead researcher were locals from Amman (see page 52). On top of previously applied methods, passive and participant observations and narrative interviews were conducted. Furthermore, 18 Jordanian architecture students kicked off this research phase in a one-week summer workshop whose findings also contributed to this work. Collected data was documented in thick descriptions, mental mappings, sketches, photographs, videos, and sound recordings in preparation for an **urban ethnography** (see Case Studies on page 96).

**Phase 3** As a cross-sectional mixed methods study, initial qualitative findings from the case studies were integrated into a **quantitative survey** which was conducted among 1.199 respondents (540 women, 659 men) in all 22 districts of Amman (see Annex B on page 232). Three additional focus group discussions then offered a commentary to the survey's results.

**Phase 4** In the last phase, qualitative and quantitative data was synthesized to provide evidence-based key findings and to inform strategies towards more gender-inclusive planning of public spaces in Amman.

**Box 6 The Role of Knowledge Sharing** „Sharing data is difficult“, a local urban practitioner once said in a conversation on research landscapes in Jordan. The lead researcher could not agree more. Local academics frequently shied away from talking about their work on public spaces in Amman for a variety of reasons that are valid in their own right (e.g. fear of plagiarism, university regulations, systemic critique, safety concerns). While such fears are found in academia across the globe, academic exchange is generally encouraged. After all, academia is founded on the idea that knowledge production is never finite and therefore depends on exchange in order to grow and initiate change. To gain a greater platform, local academics would therefore benefit from carving out ways to share and publish their work so conversations can be expanded, receive more visibility, and earn the credit they deserve.

# The Role of the Researcher

The lead researcher was often asked why a foreigner - not a local - should conduct a study on Amman. The short response: While an insider is better equipped to provide local knowledge, somebody who is unfamiliar to local routines has the advantage of seeing more than the person who is confronted with it day by day since we all become blind in our everyday routines. In the end, each ethnographic study is self-reflective and told from an individual's point of view, may it be a local or not, and needs to be read as such. To ensure that local voices and perspectives do not fall short, nevertheless a number of co-researchers from Amman greatly supported the study with qualitative data, local knowledge, and critical commentaries.

**Erving Goffman in *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*** „The first day you'll see more than you'll see ever again. And you'll see things that you won't see again.“<sup>1</sup>

## Lead Researcher

Urban Anthropologist

**Rebekka Keuss** (female, 31) is an urban anthropologist with a bicultural background from Germany and Taiwan. Although she has traveled widely, she had never been to the MENA region before coming to Jordan, which allowed her to absorb the field of research with uncharted eyes. She is sometimes mistaken for an Arab woman but her very broken Arabic gives her away immediately.

Interpreter

Rebekka was accompanied by **Suha Jaber** (female, 43), an English/Arabic interpreter from Jordan who has lived in Lebanon for over two decades. She wears the *hijab*, was recently divorced, and has a lively daughter.

<sup>1</sup> Goffman 1974

## Co-Researchers

Public Space Expert

**Mahabba Ayesh** (female, 50s) is a Jordanian/Palestinian public space expert and has worked for GAM on urban agriculture for 25 years. She has a thorough understanding of Amman's rich history, social circles, and is never shy of words.

Urban Design Expert

**Riham Madi** (female, 26) studied Urban Design and International Planning at the University of Manchester and architecture at the Jordan University and she has worked in various architecture firms. She has great drawing skills, an observant eye for spaces and people, and she is an advocate for the use of fewer cars in Amman.

Social Development Expert

**Haneen Suheil** (female, 32) is a social development expert who has worked with a number of vulnerable groups. She is well informed about the challenges people face in Amman, wears the *hijab*, and was gifted with great self-confidence that enables her to speak comfortably even to strangers.

Quantitative Research Coordinator

**Rania Sweiti** (female, 48) is a statistical expert with over 15 years of experience and cleverly combines numbers with people's lifeworlds in Amman. She is a proud single without children, passionate about women empowerment, wears the *hijab*, and there is always a story ready to be told on her lips.

Architect

**Rama Halaseh** (female, 25) is an architecture graduate from the German Jordanian University (GJU). She lives with her family in Dabouq, celebrates Christmas, has a detail-oriented eye for the built environment, and has no difficulty with facing the unknown.

Research Facilitator

**Mohammad Khreisat** (male, 34) grew up in Jabal Amman and frequently visits all parts of the city. He knows the city and its many different people like seemingly no one else does and gladly shares their stories and perspectives.

Architecture Students

A group of 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year **architecture students** (17 female, 1 male) kicked off the study's field research as part of a one-week summer workshop in collaboration with the Jordan University (JU) and contributed with personal experiences, commentaries, and visualizations.

# Inventory of Public Spaces in Amman

In this study, public spaces are understood as places of public urban life that are produced through public practices and less determined by its built environment or legal framework. Since public urban life can occur in a variety of places, public spaces can consequently be found in all kinds of places of encounter by being a meaningful social arena for urban dwellers. This inventory lists examples of such public spaces in Amman as collected during field research while making no claim to being exhaustive.

Wast Al Balad  
King Faisal Street  
Grand Hussein Mosque  
Sukker Market  
Mango Market  
**Habibah**  
Hashem Restaurant  
King Ghazi Street  
Duke's Diwan  
Hashemite Plaza  
Roman Theatre  
Italian Street  
Bird Market  
Gold Market  
Thief Market  
Jara/The Hole  
Friday Market  
Brownfields  
Left-Over Land  
King Hussein Business Park  
King Hussein Park  
King Abdullah Park  
Queen Rania Park

Rainbow Street  
Wakalat Street  
Mecca Street  
Hamra Street  
Khirfan Street  
Sharia'a Street  
Prince Mohammad Street  
Wuasfi Al Taal Street  
Garden Street  
Sultan Street  
University Street  
Airport Road  
Ghamadan Park  
Weibdeh Park  
Weibdeh Viewpoint  
Paris Circle  
Darat Al Funun  
Jordanian National Gallery of Fine Arts  
Dali  
Rumi  
International School Food Fairs  
Funerals

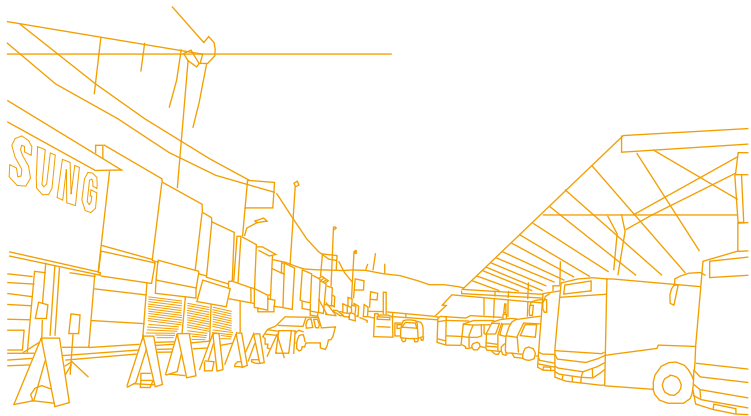
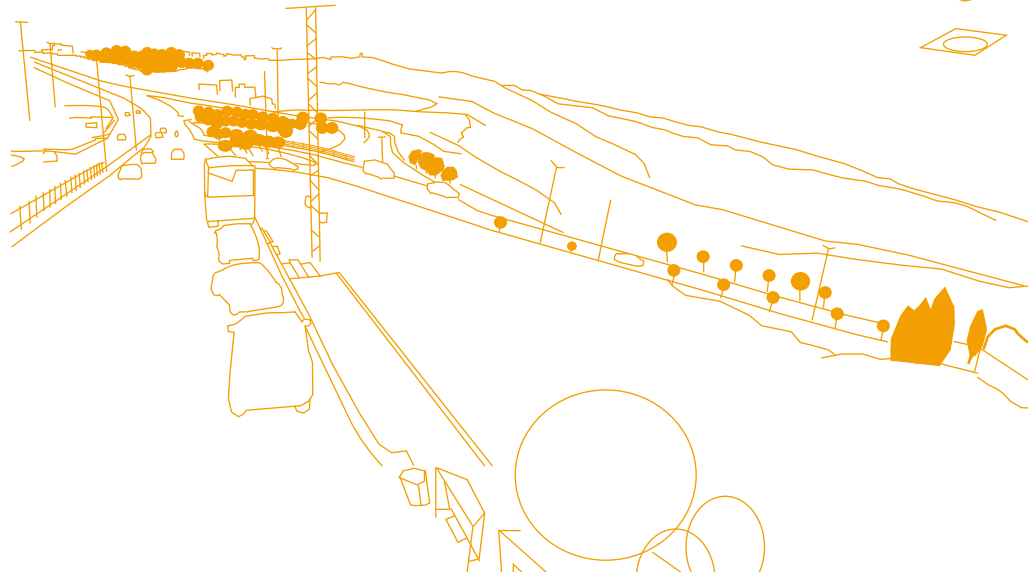
Weddings  
Graduation Parties  
Hair Salon  
Barber Shop  
**Abu Darwish Square**  
Al Quronful/Ephram Street  
Armenian Quarter  
Syrian Quarter  
Egyptian Neighborhood  
Prince Hassan Club  
Yarob Association  
Nasr Association  
Housing Bank Park  
Taj Mall  
Al-Kahla Stairs  
Abdali Mall  
The Boulevard  
King Abdullah Mosque  
1st Circle  
2nd Circle  
4th Circle  
7th Circle  
8th Circle

Dakhliye Circle  
Nuzha Circle  
Firas Square  
Al Hussein Circle  
Abdoun Circle  
Al Mashaghel Circle  
Nasr Circle  
Khalda Park  
Reem Shwarma  
Tamriye Al Omar  
Manila Street  
Al Buhtori Street  
Former Hawoos  
Electricity Hangar  
Cinemas  
Makha/Men's Coffeeshops  
Football Matches  
Sports City  
Zahran Park  
Dukkan  
Citadel  
Jabal Al-Qala'a  
Al Wuahdat Market  
Karabij Halab Shop  
Al Bushra Park  
**Istiklal Mall**  
Mecca Mall  
City Mall  
Taj Mall  
Mukhttar Mall  
Avenue Mall  
Galeria Mall  
Baraka Mall  
Mega Mall  
Pavillon Mall  
Areefa Mall  
Wawayun Mall  
Rantissi Mall  
Sameh Mall  
Azmeer Mall  
Sweifiyeh Village  
Hijaz Railroad  
Cultural Avenue  
Shmeisani Safeway Bridge  
Abdoun Bridge Park  
Japanese Public Garden  
Housing Bank Park  
Bird Garden  
Sham's Community

Samir Rifai „7Hills“ Park  
Raghadan Royal Palaces  
Jordan University Campus  
Jordan University Street  
GAM Parking Lot  
Parking Lots  
Viewpoints  
**Matal Abu Nseir**  
Jubeiha Viewpoint  
Jubeiha Entertainment Park  
Tlaa Al Ali Viewpoints  
Raghadan Complex  
Shoman Public Libraries  
Mahmoud Al Quda Park  
Sidewalks  
Bastas  
Fruit and Veg Trucks  
Rooftops  
Harra  
Cars  
North Station  
South Station  
Diyar Park  
Public Bathrooms  
Wadi Sha'ib  
Masjeed  
J3mea  
Musala  
Public Water Tabs  
Juhaneen „Hungry Streets“  
Al Madina Al Munawara Street  
Abdallah Ghosheh Street  
Prince Mohammad Street  
Yarmouk Street  
Yarmouk Pool  
Wuahdat Pool  
Madaba Street  
Middle East Circle  
Fuheis Viewpoints  
Dabouq  
Hai Nazzal Market  
Orthodox Club  
Al Aheli Club  
Amman Dunes  
Haya Cultural Center  
Nightclubs  
Abdoun Starbucks  
Blue Fig  
Zain Circle

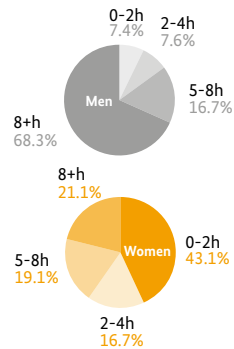
Cairo Street  
Martyr's Park  
Jeeran Park  
Muqabaleen  
Queen Alia Int. Airport  
Airport Waterpool  
Al Shura Park  
Queen Rania Park  
Khalidi Street  
Women Community Centers  
Zaha Park  
Former Seil Areas  
Gated Communities  
Princess Imam Garden  
Salah Al Din Park  
Diwans  
Hall Rentals for Events  
Jadal for Knowledge and Culture  
Sooq JARA  
Coffeeshops  
Argileh Places  
Bakeries  
Markets  
Parks & Gardens  
PSUT Football Field  
Applied Science University  
Debeen Viewpoint  
30° Street  
Playstation Shops  
Islamic Schools  
Sultan Coffee Shop  
Al Hedadah Tunnel  
Gyms  
Farms  
Umm Al Sous  
Rais Al Ain Cultural Center  
Rania Park (Umm Nowara)  
Hotels  
School Yards  
Street Corners  
**Al Mahatta Raghadan**  
Buses  
Service Taxis  
ATMs  
Iraq Al Amir

# Themes & Findings



# Women look for green & clean places with shopping areas

**Fig. 13 How much time do you usually spend outside your home?** 43% of women and only a minority 7% of men spend less than 2h per day outside their homes. The other end of the spectrum shows that 68% of men and only 21% of women spend more than 8h per day outside their homes.



**Man (28) from AlRusaifa** „When men don't have a job, it's shameful that they sit at home like girls do. They must go out and do something.“

**31.4%** of women and **75.4%** of men leave their homes to do their duties. **71.9%** of women and **60.7%** of men leave their homes to visit family.

Basic services and housing ensure people's survival in a city, but public spaces make a city liveable. Lack of suitable public spaces, thus, result in a decrease in quality of life which, in a male-oriented city like Amman, comes at the expense of women. According to the survey, which gives evidence to the fact that most people act within the parameters of their gender roles, men spend a great deal of time outside their homes, significantly much more than women, and a majority of men [75%] leave the houses to do their duties like going to work or study. Should a man have no specific obligations, often he goes out nevertheless as there is also a social stigma attached to men who stay at home for too much. The house is a „woman's place“ after all and true to its foreboding, significantly more women than men spend a great deal of their days usually at home. Family visits are the main motivation for 72% of women to leave their houses. So what kind of public spaces do women and men in Amman look for that can accommodate their different movement patterns? In the survey, the majority of both men and women indicated that they are attracted by features like seating followed by forms of entertainment (e.g. food and drinks, *argileh*, games, shops). One must keep in mind, though, that women face greater challenges with

## Gender-Inclusive Public Seating

In the focus group discussions, it was mentioned that public seating for both men and women should be able to protect users from harsh sun or rain, feel comfortable, provide ample space and stability for different body sizes, come with a backrest and armrest, use materials that do not heat up or cool down uncomfortably, and offer greenery or a pleasant view. Some men mentioned that they would welcome Wifi with seating as an additional attraction. This applies to chairs, benches, etc. or simply sitting on the ground.

Besides the design, the seating arrangement is also a decisive factor for users. A mixture of fixed and flexible or moveable seating can best accommodate different needs and situations. Individuals, especially women, prefer to maintain a physical distance to strangers and the opposite sex while groups and families are attracted to chairs with tables where one can sit together and face each other.

such features since, for example, eating and drinking may be impeded through veiling and publicly smoking *argileh* is less acceptable for women than for men although it is widely popular across the entire population. Women and men above 25, who are likely to be parents, unsurprisingly, are also attracted to children games (e.g. playgrounds). What is significantly different among men and women is that men tend to be more attracted to recreational facilities (e.g. football, basketball, chess, swimming pools), especially men between 18 and 25 years, as well as low transport costs and parking. Women are more attracted to greenery, clean spaces, and places that offer shopping opportunities, particularly when in close proximity. Since many of the mentioned features are better provided for in West Amman, most women and men prefer West over East Amman for entertainment.

## Case Study Habibah Square

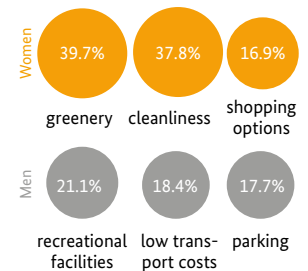
The small-scale passageway of the Habibah Square attracts women and men of all ages and backgrounds. Especially warm evenings regularly give way to ordinary and extraordinary spectacles that spill over from and to King Ghazi Street, spanning over Bekdash ice cream performances, acoustic concerts, dancing and singing, acrobatics, foreign tourists like world travelers on bikes, a motorbike gang, and teenagers on skates. A general air of excitement is created through spontaneous appropriations without much formal orchestration. After all, the Habibah Square is attractive because it is an attraction, a site of interest on the urban safari trail that appears to be a unique anomaly in Wast Al Balad, if not all of Amman.

Related to: [Comfort & Discomfort](#)  
[Gender Separation](#)  
[Accessibility](#)

**Female Head of an Association at Abu Darwish Square** „We beg the women to leave their houses. They'll come without question if there is food.“

**52.8%** of women are attracted to seating and **42.5%** to entertainment. **47.7%** of men are attracted to seating and **40.0%** to entertainment.

**Fig. 14 Which features make you attracted to certain places in Amman?**

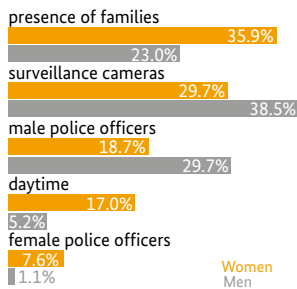


**Woman (20) on Istiklal Mall** „Fancy people never come here. We go to them, they don't come to us.“

**Challenge**  
Create places of interest for all with special attention to women's needs and wishes

# Women feel safe with families, security guards, daylight & female police officers

Fig. 15 What makes you feel safe in a place?



Urban practitioners around the world are increasingly paying more attention to spatial and infrastructural frameworks that provide a safe environment for all and while there is a lot that can be done, women are likely to remain more vulnerable than men to potential harms and crimes like sexual violence or harassment. Portrayed as the eternal victims, women are often kept from entering the public through plenty of advise, stories, and control on how to behave and what to avoid. It is therefore rare to see women in public alone and unaccompanied, loitering with no purpose, roaming around at night, and physically near men. Ideally, they are to stay in the safe haven of home it seems. Yet, women also have a right to risk and play so instead of advising women to come home, public spaces need to become safer. The survey results showed that security guards contribute greatly to the feeling of safety of both men and women. But women in particular have come to accept that the issue of female safety ultimately rests on their own shoulders. Therefore, more women than men feel safer in the presence of families and during daytime. More women also believe that female po-

**Woman from West Amman on Street Harassment** „Maybe it doesn't affect your safety, maybe it affects your mood? At least in London, no one is ruining your mood. They might come and stab you but they will not affect your mood. But here in Amman, people are always ruining your mood.“

### Case Study Istiklal Mall

Private commercial spaces like Istiklal Mall come with a whole range of measures aimed at providing a safe and comfortable environment for visitors to consume and spend in. Gate securities with optional metal detectors and bag and body searches, surveillance cameras and male and female security guards are distributed on all levels to keep an eye on costumers and employees alike. To maintain a peaceful atmosphere, there is a special tasks force that discretely deals with „troublemakers“ without causing a scene. Depending on capacities, a police truck parks at the main gate during evening hours although visitors to the mall are unlikely to be affected by whatever occurs outside due to the mall's bix box architecture. Istiklal Mall feels safe, particularly for women and families. So much, in fact, that some mothers leave their children, including toddlers and infants, unattended while they shop and move from store to store.

### Case Study Al Mahatta Raghadan

An hour or two after sunset, Al Mahatta Raghadan can become a very scary-looking place, dark, deserted, far removed from other places of encounter, and largely left to men. Vast parts of the station are barely lit, only the roofed bus area is flooded with light but it also empties out past 10 pm when the last buses have left. In order to avoid turning the little available light into spotlights, the few women waiting for their buses or service taxis stand outside the light beams in the dark, making them more vulnerable. The sociologist and design critic Lucius Burkhardt already wondered in the 1980s why public transport systems around the world seem to go into sleep mode when they are most crucial for women's safety.<sup>1</sup>

lice officers cannot only better relate to women's concerns but also act as confidants in issues that cannot be discussed with male strangers. Generally, men are given fewer guidelines and restrictions when moving through the city. On the contrary, they are rather empowered or expected to assert their presence in public. Meanwhile, men are deemed to be protectors or perpetrators, yet, men feel fear in public, too, even if popular notions of masculinity prevent many men to express it openly. Perceived to be safe by default, men are primarily expected to be able to defend themselves and thus tend to feel safer with more technical support or, literally, more manpower like surveillance cameras and male police officers.

Only 26.9% of men and 27.3% of women find that women above 18 years may leave the house after sunset alone but 84.8% of men and 74.3% of women find that men above 18 years may leave the house after sunset alone.

**Box 7 Homes are not safe for women** Feminist scholar Shilpa Phadke wonders why we never ask women *not* to go to their homes and, thereby, take away their right to risk of being in public.<sup>2</sup> The unprecedented measures enacted to stop the spread of the COVID19 pandemic, including national lockdowns, strict curfews, and movement restrictions, magnified how the private domestic sphere in Jordan can be just as risky and unsafe as public spaces, yet public safety for women is treated with much greater care. In a study by Plan International, 69% of respondents agreed that gender-based violence increased during the pandemic, most commonly emotional and physical abuse by intimate partners or family members.<sup>3</sup> In the same time period, the number of reported cases went down but so did survivor's access to support services. The pre-COVID19 GB-VIMS Jordan Annual Report states that 97% of reported incidents in 2019 were by women while most survivors reported their case at least a month later after the incident(s) happened.<sup>4</sup> 88% of all incidents were carried out by intimate partners. This goes to show that for many women their homes are not safe which makes safe spaces in public an even more urgent matter.

<sup>1</sup> Burkhardt 2017 [1980]  
<sup>2</sup> Phadke 2016 (minute 05:05)  
<sup>3</sup> Anderson 2020  
<sup>4</sup> Zafari and Di Camillo 2020

**Challenge**  
 Decrease risks and make women and men feel safer in public

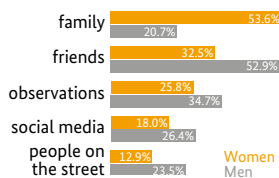
## Reputation

# Women need to be able to maintain a good reputation

**Two Women (17) from Jabal Al Ashrafiye** „Let me tell you how my life changed after wearing the *hijab*. First off, I feel protected. Since I decided to commit and I started to wear the jilbab too. I am too shy to even go down the stairs without it. I feel protected when I walk in the street. If I hear words, I can tell my family and they will blame the boy. I am dressed respectfully, I walk hurriedly to go home, and put my eyes to the ground. If anyone harasses me, my father will never say it's my fault.“

„We used to go there...then we heard that it has a bad reputation so we stopped. I wouldn't sit in a place that has a bad reputation. It means I put myself at risk of people thinking bad of me or meeting bad girls. It's better to avoid these provoking places...this is a place where you find both, good and bad things.“

Fig. 16 How do you know if a place has a bad reputation?



While the public sphere can carry many external dangers, moving through the public as a woman comes with an additional set of more internal safety challenges men do not have to pay as much attention to. A woman in Amman is not only concerned about whether she will become the victim of *immediate* harm, she also needs to worry about potential *future* harm. She has to think about what her family, relatives, neighbors, or, more generally, what „people“ would say if she behaved in a socially unacceptable way, was seen in a certain place, alone or with the wrong kind of company, or even if she was mistreated in public. Should people think or talk about her negatively, her reputation and, by extension, value for marriage will be affected and might bring shame to her family which, in Jordan's honor society, comes with consequences that can be just as socially, mentally, and physically harmful as other dangers. Women are, therefore, particularly careful about where they go, what they wear, and what they do in public and - to be safe - either avoid places that have a bad reputation or go into hiding in private spaces while navigating the public sphere almost exclusively with highly purpose-oriented journeys. How to know whether a place has a bad reputation or not? Most people in Amman hear about it through word-of-mouth

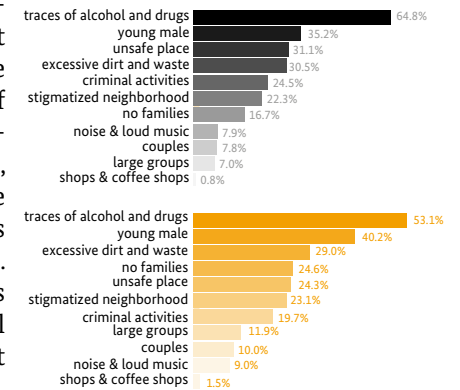
or paying attention to certain markers. The survey results and findings from the case studies showed that for women and men traces of alcohol and drugs, the presence of young men, excessive dirt and waste, an unsafe environment, the absence of families, and socially unacceptable behavior like public display of intimacy, open defecation, or loud and repeated swearing hint at a place's bad reputation and therefore demands extra caution. The absence of families is perceived to be an indicator more so for women than for men, which can partly be explained by the fact that families are also the authors to what is acceptable or unacceptable. Their presence then socially sanctions a place so to stay on the reputational safe side women particularly seek out family-friendly places.

**Case Study Abu Darwish Square** One of the most common reasons why so few women make use of the Abu Darwish Square in Jabal Al Ashrafiye is because most residents think of it as an unsafe and „bad“ place best to be avoided or used only if absolutely necessary, particularly as a woman. While the design of the space cannot fully be blamed, it certainly has contributed to its stigmatization. Due to its prominent location, lack of security, and an open space that allows for barely any privacy that would invite families and could visually absorb some of the square's activities, the pressure of the public eye looms large on its users and the risk of damaging one's reputation becomes fairly high.

There is no doubt that especially young women in Amman have to think and go through a lot to maintain a good reputation. Consequently, they have internalized coping strategies that range from celebrating the benefits of protection by legitimizing it over making their peace with the mechanisms of control by conforming and following formulas of common behavior, to secretly rebelling against the status quo through deceit and escape into a lifeworld of their own choosing as far as they are ready to risk. Under the bottom line, particularly in conservative settings, a good reputation is paramount to the design of public spaces in Amman if they should include women, too.

Related to: [Safety](#) [Privacy](#)

Fig. 17 What makes a place „bad“?



**Young Men responding to whether sisters can go out alone or not** „NO no, with her family only...Don't leave the girl alone, never leave the girl alone.“

**Noora El Wer, Female Psychologist from Jordan** „People get upset and frown upon nonconformity. Conformity is very deep in our society.“

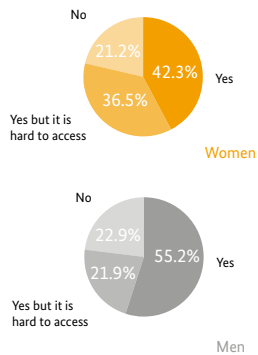
**Female Professor at the Women's Studies Department at Jordan University** „Women [in Jordan] are forced to lie to survive...you have to live!“

**Challenge** Maintain a place's good reputation by ensuring women's safety and privacy as well as highlighting socially accepted activities and their positive values



# Public spaces should better connect care work with leisure

**Fig. 18 Does Amman offer everything you need and enjoy?** 37% of women and 22% of men think that Amman offers everything they need and enjoy but find it hard to access.



**Suad Amiry in Arab Women in Architecture**  
 „I usually say that the liberation of women unfortunately has meant that they now have two jobs. They still have to do all the work they used to do and they also have a career.“<sup>11</sup>

The majority of both men and women find that Amman offers everything they need and enjoy. Significantly more women than men, however, find it harder to access it. Around 58% of women do not find suitable spaces for themselves. This can have a variety of reasons, one of which can be explained by the fact that women have to consider and prepare for a number of additional factors when leaving their houses that men do not. First off, spending time in suitable public spaces may be a luxury not everyone can financially afford while public spaces that are affordable and accessible without high transport costs and on-site expenses are often also those considered unsafe or not reputable for women. Secondly, the majority of women spend much of their time on unpaid care work like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and extended family, which also applies to women who work for an income, so most women can only dedicate a limited time to leisure and thus depend on public spaces nearby or accessible places that can accommodate care work. Men, who are generally less involved in care work, have it easier to move around on their own terms and, in fact, rather tend to be receivers of care work from mothers, wives, and daughters. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of women in the survey indicated that

**Case Study Al Mahatta Raghadan**

Children are less frequently seen at Al Mahatta Raghadan than in other places of Amman despite the presence of numerous women who use the station for public transport or to shop in the market. Al Mahatta, with its de-central location, cut off from most parts of the city, is not a suitable place for children. There are no games, no adequate facilities, and buses, cars, and taxis come and go however they please. A female employee at the station used to bring her daughter to work but stopped because her daughter „got bored“, as she says, and „it is unsafe for her“.

**Case Study Habibah Square**

The Habibah Square represents one of the few public spaces in Downtown that provide an environment in terms of safety, facilities, and entertainment which mothers can take their children to after shopping and give them a place to play while simultaneously having a moment to themselves.

they spend most of their time on markets [78%\*] or gardens and parks [57%\*]. Men, on the other hand, visit markets [58%\*] or gardens and parks [46%\*] significantly less. Both public space typologies can be connected to care work like household chores and family-oriented activities. Men, in contrast, spend more time in more individual-oriented, sometimes livelihood-related places like neighborhood streets, places of prayer, squares, sidewalks, or circles which are less tied to care work, among others, due to their spatial disconnect from care-related places and activities. Squares and circles may be the exceptions to some degree as also many families can be seen using these. Since women spend a good amount of time of their daily lives on taking care of others, places that allow them to take care of themselves become attractive to them. Especially mothers look for breathing spaces where they do not constantly have to keep an eye on their children so they are given a break from their responsibilities and can take some time off to do things on their own terms.

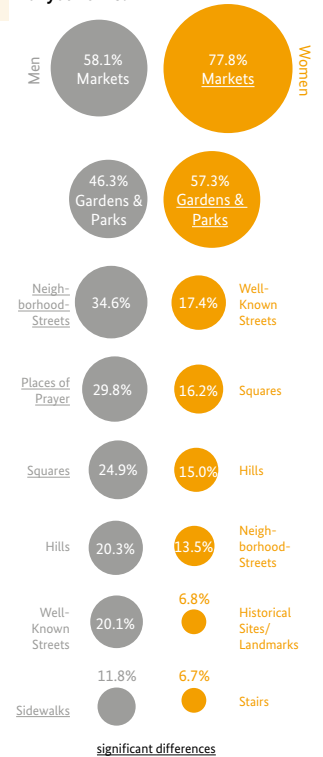
\* do not add up to 100% as multiple answers were possible

<sup>11</sup> CSBE 2013

**Two mothers from Tababour at Istiklal Mall** „We just need a place where we can sit without our children. We come here so they can play while we sit and talk in peace.“

**Woman (40s) at Matal Abu Nseir** „I prefer not to bring my children here. It is too stressful. I will spend all my time watching them and yelling at them.“

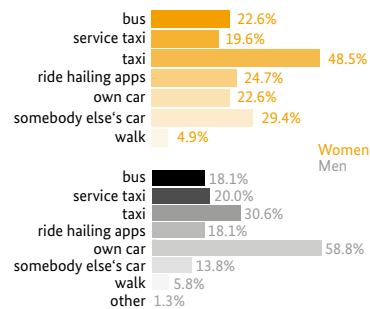
**Fig. 19 Where do you spend most of your time?**



**Challenge**  
 Make more of Amman's public spaces accessible and affordable for women, particularly for mothers

# Women need better public transport & more walkable areas

Fig. 20 Transport mode choices in Amman, disaggregated by gender



Men and women move differently through Amman due to their different use of transport as well as prevailing gender roles that lead to different movement patterns. In terms of mode of transport, the survey showed that a majority [59%] of men drives in their own cars, followed by the use of taxis and ride hailing apps [49%]<sup>1</sup> and public transport, that is buses and service taxis [38%]<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, only 23% of women drive their own car and the majority relies on taxis/ride hailing apps [73%]<sup>3</sup>, followed by public transport [42%]<sup>4</sup> and somebody else's car [29%]. Under the bottom line, Amman's transport mode choices show that women are much more dependent on external factors such as access, availability, suitability, cost, and time as their main modes of transport require that somebody can give them a lift or it can become costly and time-consuming. Walking, which lends itself as the most affordable mode of transport, is often not a viable alternative due to Amman's car-based urban form, hilly topography, and climate which makes it highly inconvenient to walk. Besides, walking, particularly as a female individual, has a social and cultural dimension that comes with the potential stigma of lower class and immorality for being perceived as too poor to drive or associated with sex work. All of this is problematic

**Male Worker at Al Mahatta Raghadan** „No, my wife does not go to any public places without me, even with our kids. It is part of our traditions and regulations and she doesn't work.“

**Case Study Al Mahatta Raghadan** Different types of vehicles, different forms of payment, unclear schedules, and multiple routes for similar destinations make public transport in Amman highly intransparent. As a result, it is time-consuming and less affordable if one is forced to make multiple journeys. Also, bus stops can be far away, requiring users to walk or use alternatives long before they reach a public transport stop.

because most women in Amman are primary caregivers and to fulfill their care duties they need a certain level of autonomy, preferably in a walkable environment in which they can move comfortably. Amman's current built environment, however, only rarely renders it possible. Amman's stairs, for instance, are not only exhausting but also highly inconvenient for those who carry heavy shopping bags, perhaps while walking with children or holding an infant even, which is something women as caregivers often do. Alternatively, a stroller would be much more convenient but this is impossible if only stairs are available. Sidewalks are another good example: while functionally meant to enable pedestrians to walk along a car road, most sidewalks are adorned with trees that make sidewalks impassable due to their positioning and choice of species. As a result of improper transport and urban design, women's mobility in Amman is highly limited. This is further problematic because several international studies suggest that men tend to make fewer and longer journeys per day (e.g. back and forth from work) while women tend to move more frequently within a smaller radius (e.g. running errands, dropping and picking up multiple children, visiting family). In Jordan, some of these movement patterns are being absorbed by the fact that men traditionally support or accompany women, nonetheless, the burden of care work still largely lies on women's shoulders. More pedestrian-friendly networks and a diversified and expansive transport system, particularly if affordable, well interconnected, regularly and frequently accessible and, on top of that, also child-friendly would greatly benefit women and, by extension, many other marginalized groups.

- Related to: Accessibility
- Safety
- Facilities
- Comfort & Convenience

**Box 8 Female Employment in Jordan** 47% of women in Jordan have turned down a job because of transport challenges according to a study by SADAQA<sup>5</sup>

**Woman on why she goes to Al Mahatta Raghadan and uses public transport** „We don't have choices“

**Box 9 Women's Movement Patterns** A discussion paper by the International Transport Forum states that „women were found to have shorter commute distances since the 1970s (and hence shorter travel time), to chain trips, to have more non-work related trips, to travel at off-peak hours, and to choose more flexible modes.“<sup>6</sup>

**Eva Kail, Gender Planning Expert** „If you want to do something for women, do something for pedestrians.“<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 30.6% taxi and 18.1% ride hailing apps  
<sup>2</sup> 18.1% bus and 20.0% service taxi  
<sup>3</sup> 48.5% taxi and 24.7% ride hailing apps  
<sup>4</sup> 22.6% bus and 19.6% service taxi  
<sup>5</sup> SADAQA 2018  
<sup>6</sup> ITF 2018  
<sup>7</sup> Hunt 2019

**Challenge** Increase women's urban mobility through greater walkability and an expansive public transport system

## Comfort & Discomfort

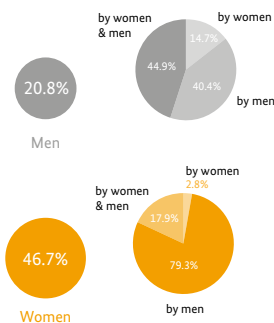
# Public spaces should not be too noisy or too crowded

Fig. 21 More men than women feel relaxed in public in Amman



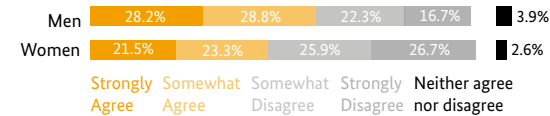
**Two Young Women from Khalda and Jabal Amman at Istiklal Mall**  
 „We should change the people, not the streets. It's their behavior that causes problems. I don't feel comfortable walking in the streets. Even old men look at me.“

Fig. 22 Respondents who are harassed on a regular basis and by whom



Moving through Amman's public spaces as a woman, particularly as a pedestrian, can be very uncomfortable for all the reasons outlined in this report, which may explain why fewer women than men feel relaxed in public as a whole, as the survey showed. But a number of women have and continue to mention specifically one reason: street harassment. The risk of being harassed as a woman by other men is so disproportionately high, women have begun to expect to be harassed by men through staring, unsolicited comments, and even groping. It is so widely spread that it is perceived as a fact of life by both women and men. For this reason, women as the main targets have developed coping strategies like putting on a „street walking face“ where a woman avoids looking around and smiling in public so she will not even accidentally give another man reason to interact with her unwillingly. Similarly, women give a lot of thought to what they wear, what they do, and where they go in public in the hope that they will be spared. In the survey, 57% of men believed that it was a woman's fault if she was verbally or physically harassed and only 52% of women disagreed. So the causes of street harassment remain largely ambiguous to much of the population and until there is clarity for the causes and effects, street harassment and

Fig. 23 It is the woman's fault if she is being verbally and/or physically harassed.



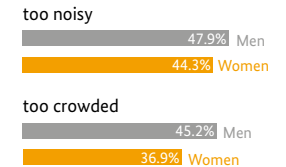
women's discomfort in public continues to be normalized. To decrease the chances of being harassed or, more generally, to avoid any forms of discomfort, the majority of both men and women tend to avoid places that are too noisy or too crowded as a precautionary measure. It suggests that nuisances and discomforts are, to a large extent, generated by the presence of people. For example, some forms of entertainment are attractive to more men and by doing so deter women because those women daring to enter a male space often face high levels of discomfort. On the other hand, spaces that are too empty can be perceived as frightening. A balanced crowd of a manageable size is therefore ideal. These are most easily found in enclosed private, often commercial spaces like malls or private parks due to their strong gatekeeping and control mechanisms. Yet, in this manner, women are, willingly or unwillingly, pushed into exclusive, controlled, family-oriented, and female-only spaces, partially abandoning their right to the entire city.

Fig. 24 Examples of Sexual Harassment

Actions	Comments
• a man touching a woman's bottom so briefly she will doubt that it happened	Hey candy! I wish your beautiful eyes joy! [to a woman in niqab]
• a man whistles/ makes kissing noises to catch a woman's attention	If my life was as sweet as what I am seeing in front of me. Come to me! Masha'alla! Sa'ha!
• a young man throwing his phone number at a woman on a piece of paper	Oh my dear father, how loose! [to a woman in baggy clothes] Oh my dear father, how tight! [to a woman in tight clothes]
• a group of men turning silent, bluntly staring at a woman as she passes by	I wish I could be the ice cream you are eating. My heart was aching but when I saw you it healed up. Whoever will take you is a lucky man!

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Fig. 25 Top reasons that make men and women avoid places in Amman



**Woman (25) at Al Mahatta Raghadan**  
 „Fear the elder men, not the young guys. If you yelled at a young guy he would really cause harm, emotionally or physically.“

**Two Men (19) on Street Harassment**  
 „It will happen anyway, it is in our blood.“ - „We are used to it. It is a bad habit we have in the society. Any girl you see, throw her some words and keep walking.“

26.1% of men and 18.9% of women believe saying *masha'alla* (English „beautiful“) to a woman on the street is a compliment as opposed to flirting, mockery, or verbal harassment

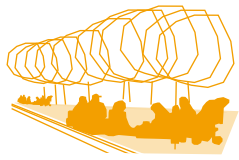
**Challenge**  
 Make Amman's public spaces more comfortable by decreasing opportunities for street harassment, especially for women

## Privacy

# Public spaces should accommodate for islands of privacy

**Mother from AlHashmi AlShamali**  
„Open areas are scary.“

**Young Woman at Al Mahatta Raghadan** „Men can sit and stand however they want...I have to shrink my body to keep a safe space and not have our bodies touching each other.“



**Family from Shafa Badran** „We bring everything with us, food, beverages, dessert, and water cups. We stay till midnight and maybe more.“

**Women (17) from Jabal Al Ashrafiye** „I want to be able to do sports, not gyms. I want to play at stadiums or football pitches. These places are only for boys. I can't play in the streets.“

**Woman from Jabal AlNuzha** explains why she likes to stay at home „I'd rather sit at home where I can sit comfortable, not mokam'kameh.“ [English „covered up, suffocated, feeling the need to cover up the hair and entire body“]

When spending time outside, many Ammanis have the habit of creating small islands of privacy amid the public in order to carve out some tranquility, comfort, and peace of mind by keeping unpleasant external encounters to a minimum. This can especially be observed among families with daughters and female peer groups across all ages. In a number of ways, islands of privacy can be found or spontaneously constructed. Just as one would expect in the private space of one's home, physical, visual, and vocal distance to strangers are their core pillars. In Amman's public spaces, the translation of these pillars is not always possible, so, alternatively, islands of privacy rather represent attempts thereof, supported by physical, visual and vocal protection *within the given limits* as well as material or symbolic boundaries between what is the *more public* public space and what is the *more private* public space. On the ground, such islands of privacy may come in the shape of a wide open surrounding, an enclosed room, gender-separated areas, or a backside of a wall. Self-made islands of privacy can be manufactured by simply sitting in a car or turning one's back to someone for more privacy within a small space. On a larger scale, one could create more elaborate islands of privacy, for example, through a picnic arrangement that uses „props“ like carpets, pillows, a barbecue, and

Fig. 26 Women have to wear a hijab in public.



Fig. 27 It is acceptable for a woman to smoke cigarettes in public.

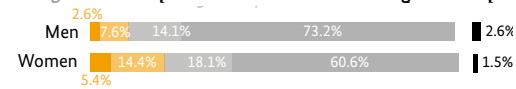
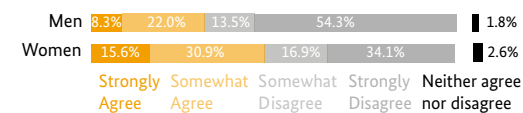


Fig. 28 It is acceptable for a woman to do sports (e.g. running) in public.



*argileh* as well as sensory items like loud music, the sound of conversations, and a woman's dress in order to communicate a temporary intangible line between privacy and the public that signals what code of conduct should be applied. To what purpose are such islands of privacy? Reputation, safety, comfort, and protection, particularly from young single men who are widely considered to be harmful for women and, therefore, also a threat for men in company of women whose role it is to protect. For a woman, a sense of privacy in public is important as it enables her to maintain an overall moral image and by extension a good reputation so she can relax within the parameters of societal norms (even if she might not live up to its ideal). Same applies to men, though, they are more motivated to build islands of privacy for comfort, less because of reputation and safety concerns, which might also drive the widespread practice among men of hanging out in their cars.

### Case Study Habibah Square

The Habibah Square can become extremely crowded on a regular basis. Since it attracts men and women alike, both sexes then come physically very close to each other due to the nature of the small space and the experience of buying and eating knafeh. In order to carve out an island of privacy, nonetheless, some men have adopted the practice of respectfully turning their back to women while women place bags or other objects between them and other parties to at least suggest a distance.

Related to: [Reputation](#) [Safety](#)

**Box 10 Women's motivation to seek islands of privacy in public (examples)** 81% of men and 79% of women consider it unacceptable for a woman to smoke cigarettes in public, so instead, female smokers use publicly-accessible bathrooms to smoke. Similarly, women are mostly unable to do sports in public as 68% of men and 51% of women consider it unacceptable. For lack of a suitable substitute in Amman that offers sufficient privacy, women have to resort to private spaces like gyms and sports clubs.

**Box 11 Mashrabiya** Balconies link the private to the public sphere.



In traditional Islamic architecture, balconies with latticed screens, referred to as *mashrabiya*, have commonly been used on street-side openings to ensure privacy while allowing air circulation and daylight to enter a building. Similarly, in a reverse logic, latticed screens can link the public to the private sphere.

**Two Young Women from Khalda and Jabal Amman** „You can't be comfortable when you feel like you are being watched.“

### Challenge

**Creating a sense of privacy in public by providing niches and retreats**

# Public spaces lack facilities that cater to women's needs

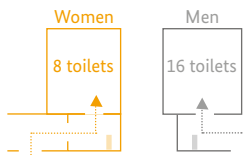


Fig. 29 Public Bathrooms at Al Mahatta Raghadan

### Case Study Al Mahatta Raghadan

Two young female students enter the women's bathroom at the station. After using the toilet, they start chatting with each other as they re-adjust their *hijabs* and make-up. Once everything is in the right place, they sit down on the floor in the bathroom's vestibule and light a cigarette.

A male service taxi driver at the station works around 12-13 hours per day from Saturday to Thursday. Naturally, he uses the bathroom during work. For a few years now, the bathrooms cost 0.15 JD per visit so to save costs he openly urinates in one of the corners of the station to the dismay of other users of the space. He feels somewhat embarrassed about it but he cannot afford spending so much on the bathroom only. He could try to get a free pass or beg someone to cover the fee, like some women do, but so many of the other workers, drivers, and vendors openly urinate so why shouldn't he?

### Case Study Istiklal Mall

The attendant of the women's bathroom next to the food court stands out as she has turned the women's bathroom into an even more female-friendly space. A plastic chair is readily available for breastfeeding, resting, or smoking a secret cigarette. Next to the sink, the attendant has created a small diaper changing station with a piece of square cloth and a heart-shaped pillow. Another small heart-shaped pillow hangs on a hook and is spiked with hair pins for women fixing their *hijab*. The attendant also always carries a supply of sanitary products with her for women on their monthly period.

### Case Study Matal Abu Nseir

Located on the edge of a cliff with little infrastructure in immediate vicinity, there are no facilities available but plenty of nature. Improvisation is therefore key to making a stay last a few hours. Men might disappear behind a tree to relieve themselves, much to the dismay of residents and visiting families. Women have it more difficult and may approach the only restaurant at the viewpoint to use the bathroom or leave the place altogether.

In Amman, most public facilities are primarily designed and distributed according to men's needs. Public bathrooms are perhaps the most prominent example. Studies have shown that women

**Mother (59) of four children from Jabal AlNuzha on her experience at Al Mahatta Raghadan** „I use both, the public and mosque's toilets. When I was younger I never had a place to breastfeed so the baby kept crying. Sometimes I went to the mosque to change diapers. Me and some other women would grab a carton and put the baby on the sidewalk or a corner of the street.“

**A Family picnics at Matal Abu Nseir and is enjoying themselves.** Suddenly, a young man comes running and urinates at a nearby tree. The family is appalled and leaves the place immediately.

need to use the toilet more frequently than men, spend more time in bathrooms (e.g. due to menstruation), and need more space due to prevailing toilet designs. After all, a toilet cabin is more cumbersome than a urinal. A men's bathroom capacity is therefore usually higher than those of women's bathrooms, one of the reasons why bathroom lines for women are notoriously longer than for men. Facilities for changing a baby's diaper or to breast-feed comfortably in various locations further influence particularly a mother's but also a father's use of public space. Lack of such facilities can result in an involuntary shorter presence or become a deterrent to public spaces as a whole. Apart from biological needs, public bathrooms play another important role for women as they oftentimes also function as safe spaces. In these enclosed and gender-segregated rooms, veils can be readjusted in comfort, rest and support found from fellow women, or a cigarette smoked without the scrutinizing eyes of male members of society. As such, this puts unisex bathrooms into question which, in other contexts, has become a staple of gender mainstreaming. Public access to clean running water also comes to the benefit of women (as well as those wishing to smoke *argileh*) as it supports their care work duties like providing drinking water, washing foods, and maintaining a general cleanliness and hygiene when in public. Increasing public facilities that cater to women's needs both in design and number, particular those directly connected to a female's biology and care work duties, will remove one not so minor worry from a woman's experience in public space. Meanwhile, it can provide more opportunities for fathers to act as caregivers, too, thereby gradually shifting prevailing notions of masculinity that too rarely address the values of fatherhood.

12.1% of men and 20.0% of women believe breastfeeding in public is acceptable. The majority of both men and women finds it unacceptable.

Fig. 30 More women than men go home to use the bathroom



**Woman smoking in a mosque's bathroom** „Do you want the men outside to kill me if they saw me smoking?“

**Father with four young children** He sits alone on the busy Nuzha Circle while keeping an eye on his children playing around. All of a sudden the youngest child needs to use the bathroom but there is none in sight. With panic written all over his face, he grabs all four children and quickly heads home.

**Challenge** Increase and improve public facilities that accommodate women's needs and those of parents with young children

# Public spaces don't segregate but do separate gender

Mother from AlHashmi AlShamali with a 14-year-old daughter  
„I am open-minded. I would let her go to girl-only places, her friends' houses, or if there were any cafes for girls only.“

76.4% of men and 68.7% of women find that there should be more segregated places in Amman (female or male only).

40.9% of men and 50.7% of women find it acceptable to speak to the other sex outside one's family.

Men and women in Amman, particularly in conservative or traditional settings, lead segregated lives, either institutionally or socially prescribed. This applies to the fields of education, religious practices, cultural and social rituals (e.g. weddings), choice of profession, use of public transport, sports activities, forms of entertainment, the use of facilities, and many more. Public interactions between men and women are, furthermore, predominantly limited to acceptable and purpose-oriented interactions where the parameters of interaction are outlined by the nature of the purpose, for instance, the purpose of doing business (e.g. making a purchase) or seeking guidance and making inquiries (e.g. asking about directions). As a result, in spaces where genders are mixed, women and men tend to remain separate from each other and, unsurprisingly, the majority of men [76%] and women [69%] support the idea of creating more spaces segregated by gender. It must become clear, however, that gender-segregated spaces ultimately limit the choices to accessible places for both women and men through explicit exclusion which, essentially, runs counter the idea of an inclusive city. Nonetheless, temporary and partial gender *separation* can empower both women and men to find confidence and social acceptance in mixed places of encounter. A number of strategies can be applied to

foster such environments. Special days for women and men, for instance, are particularly beneficial for women and girls who would otherwise budge from groups of men and boys who more often than not occupy and dominate Amman's public spaces. Another strategy to curtail a group's dominance is to partition an area and to install attractive items not only once but multiple times, perhaps adjusted to different user groups or flexible in use by nature (e.g. multiple seating, shading, games, or art pieces). Most effectively, public spaces should provide separate but well-connected quiet and active areas with open or porous boundaries so men and women can find their own comfort zones in female- and male-oriented areas. Female-oriented activities should be prioritized without limiting male participation (e.g. communicative meeting areas, places for food consumption, zones for relaxation, walking trails for strolling, and areas suitable for the supervision of children). Initiated through gradual mixing of perceived male and female activities, everyday life experiences can then reframe what women and men can or cannot do. In essence, a gender-inclusive public space should offer something for everyone, however, this does not have to be done all at the same time and in the same place. Dedicating special places of interest for different population groups can be much more practical and beneficial.

### Case Study Abu Darwish Square

The square's wide open space frequently turns into a football ground for boys who are quick to break out in fights, too. The open space is largely surrendered and most people choose to use the more lively section next to the main road instead which also offers more groundlevel seating. Some young women and girls who hang out in the square, however, sit on the stairs furthest away from the main road, somewhat protected from onlookers.

### Case Study Matal Abu Nseir

The viewpoint attracts young men and women, families, foreigners from Gulf states, and couples alike. All have their respective corners through an unspoken mutual agreement, nevertheless, the boundaries are unclear, open to change any time, and only negotiated in the moment.

Related to: [Entertainment](#)  
[Comfort & Discomfort](#)  
[Young Single Men](#)

### Box 12 Is this for men or women?

Introducing a new or uncommon activity to Jordan can be a great medium to initiate gender-friendly adoption by enabling women to participate from the very beginning. Skating and playing frisbee are currently good examples as well as going to the gym. All of these activities attract women and men alike even though they are largely male domains.

### Box 13 A Word on Gender-Segregated Parks in Tehran, Iran<sup>1</sup>

In Tehran, a number of parks are female-only parks or have special opening hours for women. Public opinion varies. Some inhabitants celebrate the fact that women are given a breathing space of their own in which they can take off their *chadors* and do sports comfortably. Some have mixed feelings about it because they would like to take their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons to the park, but can't. Others are entirely against these parks. To them, they represent yet another aspect of life in Iran where men and women are deliberately segregated despite the fact that societies consist of both and, therefore, need to be imagined as such. In the end, segregation fosters more segregation and one is confronted with the question whether to strive for a fully segregated society, or not?

<sup>1</sup>Arjmand 2017

### Challenge

Enable different genders to be near to each other while maintaining culturally and socially acceptable distances

# Young single men lack spaces that welcome them

**An elderly man and nextdoor neighbor to the Istiklal Mall** „It is the single men who cause problems.“

**Group of Female Cousins (all late teens) from AlMoqabaleen at Istiklal Mall** „We don't let any boys walk in with us to the mall. They'll think we want to be their girlfriends. The boys don't know any limits here. It's better to ignore them altogether.“

**Parents at Matal Abu Nseir** „I like to take my daughters out because they want to go out. We spend a nice time together and, to be honest, I don't like them to come here alone. I prefer to accompany them. I know that they are in university and well-raised but I don't know how the boys here act and behave. After all, we are a conservative family.“

**Young Man from Abu Nseir** „I go to Rainbow Street in order to see the girls who go there, too. I don't like to go to the malls where there are many security men. At Rainbow Street, nobody can prevent us from being there. Also, the people who visit the Rainbow Street are classy in terms of treatment.“

One of the main deterrents and strongest motivation for gender-segregated spaces for nearly all members of Amman's society, particularly for women, are young single men. This group of the population is so widely stigmatized in Amman that they automatically seem to fall into the category of undesirables wherever they go. It is common practice, for instance, that publicly-accessible private places of gathering (e.g. malls, cinemas, gyms, certain restaurants and coffeeshops, or events) extensively make use of their right to control who gets to enter and participate and who does not. Young single men bear the brunt of this practice as they are systematically excluded either explicitly or implicitly through „mixed groups only“ policies, gatekeepers, high entrance fees, or potential complaints from dominant user groups like families and women. This is true for young single men across all socioeconomic backgrounds although higher income groups are given some leverage to buy themselves out of the stigma when it comes to discriminatory door policies with a suitable appearance or, more straightforward, by literally showing how much cash they carry in their wallet. All other young single men are generally degraded to „troublemakers“ with their „mischievous“ appearance, behavior, way of talking, and other markers

### Case Study Istiklal Mall

Evenings and nighttime are prime time for young single men to turn into the „bullies of the street“ as they drive around or park somewhere in their cars with their male entourage. Many have their tinted windows rolled down, playing loud music, smoking cigarettes, drinking Turkish coffee, and eating sunflower seeds while observing the people, especially women, around them who may receive unambiguous comments from them. Scenes like these can be seen on a nightly basis at the Istiklal Mall. A few years back, there used to be many fights between the mall's security guards and young single men trying to enter. Fights decreased when more young single men were allowed to enter the mall as it decreased the tension.

of marginalization. Therefore, neither the domestic, private sphere, for being the female domain, nor large parts of the public sphere, welcome them. The more accessible streetscapes of Amman and especially the car then become one of the few available public spaces as well as substitute (mobile) personal spaces left to which young single men can retreat to. In a self-fulfilling prophecy, some are then socialized to become the very threat and nuisance they have been labeled to be by playing loud music, smoking heavily, harassing women, getting involved in fights, driving aggressively, and breaking taboos like strong swearing, alcohol consumption and drug abuse. By doing so, harmful concepts of masculinity are reinforced in society.

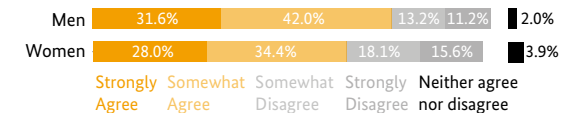
A gender-inclusive city, however, does not cater to prescribed concepts of masculinity or femininity and does not discriminate against any gender. Instead, a gender-inclusive city acknowledges individual histories and offers public spaces for everyone. By providing public spaces for young men, in particular, motivating them to pursuit non-threatening activities while carefully drawing them closer to other members of society, their stigmatization can slowly be dismantled while public spaces can become safer for all, too.

- Related to:
- Safety
  - Gender Separation
  - Privacy

### Box 13 How to Enter Istiklal Mall as a Young Single Man?

- waiting to „hitchhike“ into the mall with a woman or mixed group who is willing to take young men across the gate and past the security guards
- carrying a valid water, electricity, or phone bill and showing it to the security guards while explaining that they just came to pay the bill
- trying to apply for a job and providing more details about it if asked
- wanting to return a product showing the corresponding branded shopping bag, product with price tag, and the receipt
- young men opening their wallets and showing large money bills to prove that they are able to spend
- knowing the security guards through an informal middle man or middle woman
- knowing the security guards through frequent visits that have made a young man eligible for the mall
- having a neat appearance that conforms to other visitors' appearances and mannerisms

Fig. 31 All men should be allowed to enter malls, cinemas, etc. without their families



### Woman from West Amman

„I have brothers and sometimes I have to drive them to places so they can enter...sometimes I feel like they are even more marginalized than we are. I don't have any place where I cannot actually go if I intended to go there. Western or Eastern background is just the same, it is for all male.“

### Challenge

Create public spaces where young single men are welcomed and not excluded

**TOWARDS  
MORE  
[GENDER]  
INCLUSIVE  
PUBLIC  
SPACES**



# Designing Gender-Inclusive Public Spaces in Amman

Knowing about the different experiences between men and women - how they feel in public, how they move through the public, what features they are and are not attracted to - is the right path towards making gender-discrimination visible. But while it may appear like a finish line in itself - and it surely is a major milestone - this is only where the work of Amman's urban practitioners and policymakers begins. Therefore, on the following pages, some practice-oriented recommendations for more gender-inclusive public space designs in Amman have been formulated with respect to the study's themes and key findings on entertainment, safety, reputation, privacy, mobility, accessibility, comfort & discomfort, gender separation, and young single men. The recommendations do not offer a step-by-step guide to making gender-inclusive public spaces as each context comes with a unique set of interpretations that need to be taken into account. Instead, they should be read as food for thought on how to arrive at what steps can be taken. By providing a set of questions that are important to ask across all stakeholders and offering a guide to ethnographic field research that enables urban practitioners to explore different context independently, a truly grounded „gender agenda“ can be translated into participatory processes,

**Leonie Sandercock and Ann Forsyth in *A Gender Agenda***  
„A gender research agenda for planning theory concentrates on areas where feminist theory has had little to say: case studies of planning practice, practical and strategic gender interests, gender in the internal culture of planners, a gender-conscious reform of planning education, and the balance between multiple differences and equality.“<sup>1</sup>

urban designs, architectural drafts, community programs, and city making as a whole. The goal of gender-inclusive public space design is to produce tangible and intangible concepts that so seamlessly fit into men's and women's daily activities that its use becomes nearly subconscious and effortless. A poorly designed public space, thus, is very much negatively felt by those affected and often leads to complaints at its best and fatalities at its worst. Since cities and their public spaces are never perfectly fully-finished products, gender-inclusivity entails a constant negotiation in an attempt to strike a balance between good and bad urban design. Meanwhile, by doing so, it can reignite a rethinking of who is given opportunities to participate in Amman's city life and city making and who has been excluded thus far. Under the bottom line, gender-inclusive planning is not merely a „women's issue“ but relevant for everyone. Addressing and communicating different experiences openly, therefore, becomes all the more important. After all, privileges are mostly invisible for those who have it and very much visible for those who do not, hence, representation and participation becomes crucial.

**Lucius Burckhardt in *Design is Invisible*** „Invisible design. Today, this implies conventional design that is oblivious to its social impact. Yet it might also imply the design of tomorrow—design that consciously takes into account the invisible overall system comprised of objects and interpersonal relationships.“<sup>2</sup>

**Michael Kimmel, Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies**  
„Privilege is invisible for those who have it.“<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sandercock and Forsyth 1992  
<sup>2</sup> Burckhardt 2017 [1980]  
<sup>3</sup> Kimmel 2015

**Gender-inclusive public spaces in Amman offer green & clean places with shopping areas with a variety of seating. They are family-friendly, have security guards and female police officers and focus on daytime activities. They have a good reputation and link places of care with leisure. They are connected to good public transport and walkable areas. They are not too noisy or too crowded and accommodate for islands of privacy. They offer facilities that meet women's needs and separate areas by gender so public spaces can potentially be shared with young single men, too.**

## Entertainment

### Women look for green & clean places with shopping areas

Basic services and housing ensure people's survival in a city, but public spaces make a city liveable. Lack of suitable public spaces thus result in a decrease in quality of life which, if the male experience is being prioritized, comes at the expense of women. 53% of men and 48% of women indicated in the survey that they are attracted by features like seating followed by different kinds of entertainment. Men tend to be more attracted to recreational facilities like football fields or basketball courts, especially men between 18 and 25 years, as well as low transport costs and parking. Women are more attracted to greenery, clean spaces, and places that offer shopping opportunities, particularly when in close proximity.

## Safety

### Women feel safe with families, security guards, daylight & female police officers

Women are more vulnerable than men to potential harms and crimes like sexual violence or harassment and therefore face plenty of advice, stories, and control on how to behave, what to avoid, and to ideally stay in the not-always-so-safe haven of home. Men, on the contrary, are deemed to play the part of protectors or perpetrators. Yet, men feel fear in public, too, even if prevailing notions of masculinity prevent many men to express it openly. Security guards contribute greatly to the feeling of safety of both men and women. But women in particular have come to accept that the issue of female safety ultimately rests on their own shoulders. Therefore, more women [36%] than men [23%] feel safer in the presence of families and during daytime. Men tend to feel safer with more technical support and, literally, more manpower like surveillance cameras and male police officers.

### Challenge

Create places of interest for all with special attention to women's needs and wishes

### Recommendations

- **offer variety of seating** partly mobile, suitable for individuals and small groups, pair with tables where suitable
- **offer and adjust entertainment options to gender-specific needs** e.g. food & drinks, argileh, games, shops, wifi access, see *Gender Separation*
- **offer and adjust recreational facilities to gender-specific needs** e.g. football, basketball, chess, swings, see saw, swimming pools, see *Gender Separation*
- **include extensive greenery**
- **maintain cleanliness** e.g. effective waste management, regular maintenance
- **provide access to a variety of shops in close proximity** e.g. near a market
- **make places of interest family-friendly** e.g. playgrounds, see *Reputation & Privacy & Facilities*
- **ensure affordable access** see *Accessibility & Mobility*
- **focus on East Amman and target West Ammanis, too** e.g. through social media or special events/activities

### Challenge

Decrease risks and make women and men feel safer in public

### Recommendations

- **use defensible design strategies but avoid building urban fortresses by limiting safety measures to a moderate amount to ensure porosity**
  - area-wide lighting, avoid single spotlights
  - no fearscapes (e.g. dark streets, tunnels, bridges, dead ends)
  - surveillance cameras & mirrors where suitable
  - emergency buttons in selected locations
  - male & female security guards (in stigmatized or crowded areas)
  - male & female police presence (in stigmatized or crowded areas)
- **focus on the Eyes on the Street principle** foster diverse and continuous users that acts as informal guardians and potential figures of authority e.g. street vendors, shops with frequent street interaction
- **target families and daytime activities** see *Reputation*
- **a place should be easy to familiarize with** e.g. clear pathway, good overview, signage, simple wayfinding system
- **focus on East Amman** for greater social cohesion, see *Entertainment*
- **promote reporting platforms and raise awareness for men & women** e.g. crowd maps like *HarassMap*, *The Everyday Sexism Project*, psychosocial support facilities
- **identify times of anxiety and focus on making them especially safe** e.g. nighttime, rushhours

## Reputation

### Women need to be able to maintain a good reputation

A woman in Amman is not only concerned about whether she will become the victim of *immediate* harm but also needs to worry about potential *future* harm which, in Jordan's honor society, comes with consequences that can be just as socially, mentally and physically harmful as other dangers. A good reputation, particularly in conservative settings of Amman, is therefore paramount to the design of public spaces should they also cater to women. This applies particularly to unmarried and young women. Elderly women are less affected by reputational concerns and therefore less inhibited in their choices and use of public space.

## Accessibility

### Public spaces should connect care work with leisure

The majority of both men and women find that Amman offers everything they need and enjoy. Significantly more women [58%] than men [45%], however, do not, or find it harder to access it. One of the reasons is that the majority of women spends much time on unpaid care work like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and extended family, which also applies to women who work for an income. It is thus not surprising that the majority of women indicated in the survey that they spend most of their time on markets [78%\*] and gardens and parks [57%\*], one being related to household chores, the other to family-oriented activities. What is crucial is that most women can only dedicate a limited time to leisure and depend on public spaces nearby that can accommodate care work.

## Mobility

### Women need better public transport & more walkable areas

While Amman's hilly topography challenges all modes of transport, it is women who are mostly affected by it since most women in Amman are caregivers, taking care of children, household, and extended family, for which, women need a certain level of autonomy and an environment in which they can move comfortably. The currently existing available modes of transport and built environment in Amman makes it highly difficult for women to do so due to dependencies, high costs, and the great amount of time and effort it requires to move from one place to another.

#### Challenge

Maintain a place's good reputation by ensuring women's safety and privacy as well as highlighting socially accepted activities and their positive values

#### Recommendations

- **prevent traces of alcohol and drugs** e.g. effective waste management, keep distance from liquor shops
- **enable physical distancing between sexes** see *Gender Separation*
- **ward off attention from female users and potentially unacceptable public behavior** see *Privacy*
- **promote positive image of space among families** with an appealing communication strategy e.g. through community organizations, social media, regular site activations
- **design a family-friendly space** see *Entertainment & Safety*
- **focus on young women's needs**

#### Challenge

Make more of Amman's public spaces accessible and affordable for women, particularly for mothers

#### Recommendations

- **ensure close proximity or easy access to places of care work** e.g. walking distance from home, stroller-friendly infrastructure, connection to good public transport, see *Entertainment*
- **think of movement patterns and a trail of care-related stops** e.g. en route to markets, schools, shops, hospitals, or homes (multiple options can increase attraction), see *Mobility*
- **create breathing spaces for mothers** with and without their children
- **provide free/affordable care-related amenities** e.g. drinking water, access to food, homework support, play areas for children, see *Facilities*
- **use weather-adaptable elements** e.g. shading, roofing, heat and cold resistant materials
- **create distance from male-dominated spaces** e.g. male coffee shops, car shops, parking lots

#### Challenge

Increase women's urban mobility through greater walkability and an expansive public transport system

#### Recommendations

- **ensure close proximity or easy access** e.g. walking distance from home, stroller-friendly infrastructure, connection to good public transport
- **assess and remove obstacles for pedestrians and strollers** create clear and wide walking trails that allow for walking in rounds and ideally connect to a network of public spaces
- **prioritize structures on eye level over car-based scales and facilities** e.g. limited formal and informal parking space
- **maintain cleanliness** e.g. effective waste management, regular maintenance
- **apply functional yet appealing aesthetics** e.g. ambiguous designs for multi-functional use

\*do not add up to 100% as multiple answers were possible

## Comfort & Discomfort

### Public spaces shouldn't be too noisy or too crowded

Moving through Amman's public spaces as a woman, particularly as a pedestrian, can be very uncomfortable for a variety of reasons but specifically one: street harassment. Until there is more clarity for the causes and effects of harassment, a woman's discomfort in public will remain normalized. To decrease the chances of being harassed or, more generally, to avoid any forms of discomfort, the majority of both men and women tend to avoid places that are too noisy or too crowded as a precautionary measure. It suggests that nuisances and discomforts are, to a large extent, generated by the presence of people.

## Privacy

### Public spaces should accommodate for islands of privacy

Many Ammanis have the habit of creating small islands of privacy amid the public in order to carve out some tranquility, comfort, and peace of mind. This can especially be observed among families with daughters and female peer groups across all ages. They may come in the shape of a wide open surrounding, an enclosed room, or a backside of a wall. Just as one would expect in the private space of one's home, physical, visual, and vocal distance to strangers *within the given limits* are their core pillars as well as material or symbolic boundaries between what is the *more public* public space and what is the *more private* public space. To what purpose are such islands of privacy? Reputation, safety, comfort, and protection, particularly from young men who are widely considered to be harmful for women and, therefore, also a threat for men in company of women and whose role it is to protect.

## Facilities

### Public spaces lack facilities that cater to women's needs

In Amman, most public facilities are primarily designed and distributed according to men's needs. Increasing and improving public facilities that cater to women's needs both in design and number, particular those directly connected to a female's biology and care work duties, will remove one not so minor worry from a woman's experience in public space. Public bathrooms are perhaps the most prominent examples and apart from biological needs, they play an important role for women as they oftentimes also function as safe spaces for being an enclosed island of privacy (see above). Facilities for changing a baby's diaper or to breastfeed comfortably further influence particularly a mother's but also a father's use of public space, providing more opportunities for fathers to act as caregivers, too.

#### Challenge

Make Amman's public spaces more comfortable by decreasing opportunities for street harassment, especially for women

#### Recommendations

- **enable tranquility of a space (optional)** e.g. through sectioning, see *Privacy*
- **consider different ways of soft gatekeeping to prevent over-crowding** e.g. presence of mother authorities, distraction activities, extensive softscaping, see *Safety*
- **raise awareness for street harassment** e.g. through empathy walks, mapping of places of anxiety, world cafés for women & men

#### Challenge

Creating a sense of privacy in public by providing niches and retreats

#### Recommendations

- **provide flexible spaces with varying degrees of physical, visual, and vocal distancing while ensuring access to light and air** e.g. through latticework or pergolas, avoid creating fearscape, see *Safety & Reputation*
- **provide multi-use areas** through urban furniture that is flexible and easy to appropriate e.g. for picnics or private conversations, see *Entertainment*
- **enable physical distancing between sexes** see *Gender Separation*

#### Challenge

Increase and improve public facilities that accommodate women's needs and those of parents with young children

#### Recommendations

- **install or ensure access to public bathrooms nearby** clear signage at entrance/exit points, focus on care-related areas
- **adjust bathroom design** consider that women's bathrooms need to be larger than men's bathrooms for the same capacity, include a vestibule with seating and ventilation, stroller-friendly access (enough space, low curbs)
- **provide diaper station with a children-friendly toilet and sink** e.g. separate from the bathroom, unisex, size-adjusted or with a flexible step
- **breastfeeding stations** e.g. connected to women's bathroom but protected from potential cigarette smoke
- **provide drinking water** e.g. bottle-friendly, self-cleansing, connected to waste bins
- **ensure cleanliness & maintenance**
- **apply appealing aesthetics**

## Gender Separation

### Public spaces don't segregate but do separate gender

Gender-segregated spaces ultimately limit the choices to accessible places for both women and men through explicit exclusion which, essentially, runs counter the idea of an inclusive city. It further invites blaming practices when one is found in the „wrong“ place. Nonetheless, temporary and partial gender *separation* can empower both women and men to find confidence and social acceptance to participate in shared places of encounter. Public spaces should therefore provide separate but well-connected quiet and active areas with open or porous boundaries so men and women can find their own comfort zones in „male“ and „female“ areas. Initiated through gradual mixing of perceived male and female activities, everyday life experiences can then reframe what women and men can or cannot do in public and reshape existent gender roles.

## Young Single Men

### Young single men lack spaces that welcome them

Young single men across all socioeconomic backgrounds are so widely stigmatized in Amman that they automatically seem to fall into the category of undesirables. Either explicitly or implicitly, they are systematically excluded through „mixed groups only“ policies, gatekeepers, high entrance fees, or potential complaints from dominant user groups like families and women. Fewer public spaces are thus made available to young single men so that many resort to the more accessible streetscapes in which cars play a heightened role. Cars do not only enable young single men to linger but also double as mobile personal spaces as they are somewhat removed from both the public and private sphere. In a self-fulfilling prophecy, some are then socialized to become the very threat and nuisance they have been labeled to be and, by doing so, reinforce harmful concepts of masculinity in society. A gender-friendly city, however, does not cater to prescribed concepts of masculinity or femininity and does not discriminate against any gender.

#### Challenge

Enable different genders to be near to each other while maintaining culturally and socially acceptable distances

#### Recommendations

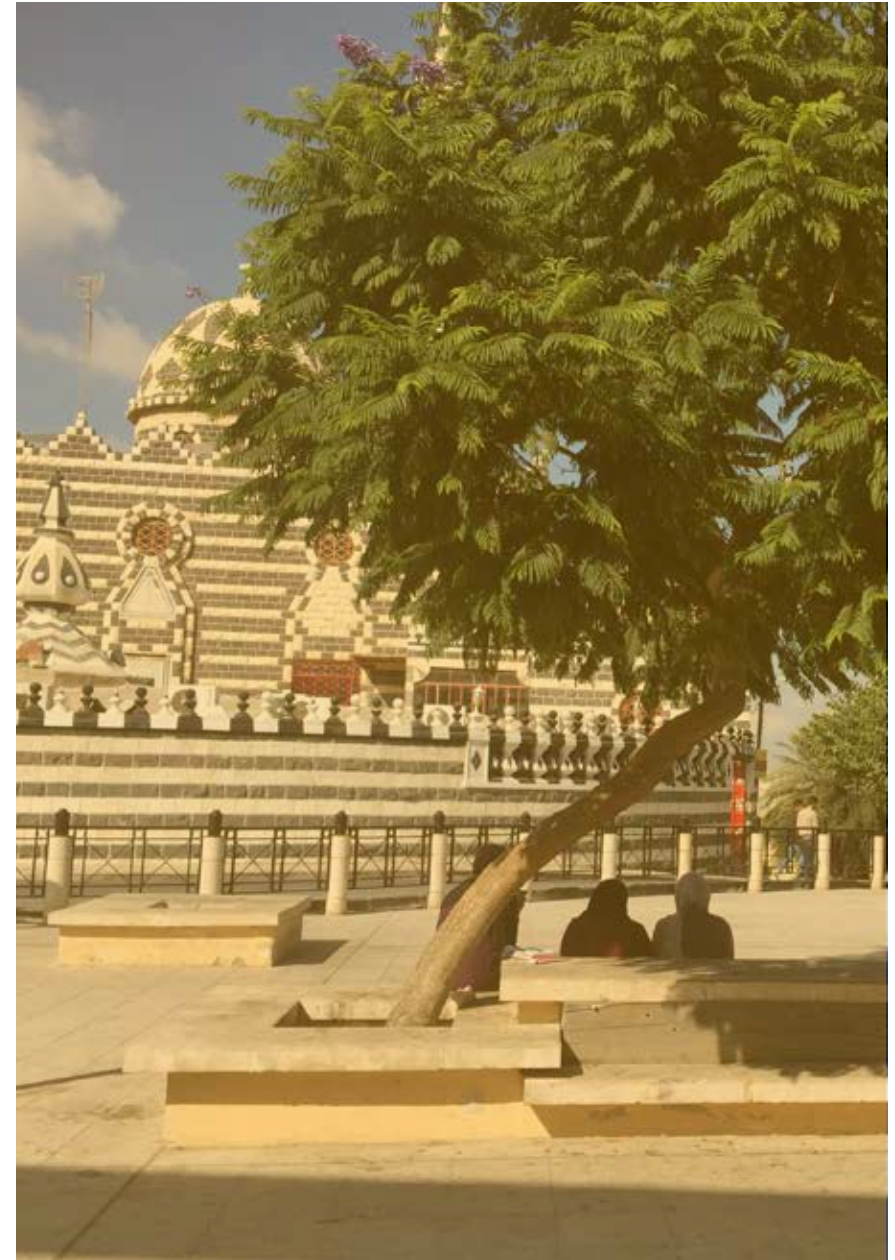
- **enable women to participate in „male“ activities** by organizing activities in different zones or through women-only days (e.g. playing football, roller skating, riding a bike, eating and drinking in public)
- **enable men to participate in „female“ activities** through spatial connections to „male“ activities, near more quiet areas and points of reference (e.g. reading, chatting, walking, interacting with nature)
- **maintain ambiguity in order to include, not exclude genders** unisex aesthetics, multifunctional areas (e.g. football courts that can also be used for other purposes)
- **ensure site guardians** formal (community organizations, social workers) or informal (through continuous family activities), connect activities with coaching or youth clubs
- **clear but open, porous boundaries** through boundary activities that are partly visually and vocally protected

#### Challenge

Create public spaces where young single men are welcomed and not excluded

#### Recommendations

- **engage young single men** with targeted socially acceptable activities and programs
- **highlight and eliminate explicit and implicit gender discrimination** e.g. by banning the „mixed groups and couples“ policy
- **offer „personal spaces“ for young single men** e.g. community organizations, youth clubs, psychosocial support facilities, connect to attractive activities, see *Entertainment*



# TO THE FUTURE PLANNERS OF AMMAN'S PUBLIC SPACES, HERE ARE A FEW GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK YOURSELF

## 1 Do you have sufficient gender-segregated data to make informed design decisions?

Try to ensure that your designs are also based on disaggregated data by gender as well as socioeconomic background, ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, and ability, if possible, in order to highlight and accommodate different priorities of different groups in Amman's population.

## 2 Are you making public spaces in Amman more attractive for men or women?

Try to prioritize women's needs as urban planning is usually male-oriented already.

## 3 Could your gender-inclusive design proposal make existing inequalities worse?

Try to think of different best and worst case scenarios for the public space you are designing for and propose design alternatives or additional activation programs (e.g. regular activities, special events, community organizations) that can prevent exacerbating inequalities, especially between women and men.

## 4 Have you included a maintenance plan that includes the short term and long term upkeep of the space?

Try to find suitable time intervals for how often a place should be cleaned and when renovations might be necessary. Keep in mind that your designs can help reduce the need for maintenance e.g. by using materials that are easy to clean and that might become more, not less attractive over time.

## 5 Do you have a clear strategy to ensure that users are attracted to your public space on a continuous basis?

Try to make your public space design open to spatial and behavioral changes, e.g. through flexible and adaptable design elements, to ensure that public spaces can keep up with people's changing needs and wishes.

## 6 Have you defined how to measure the success of a gender-inclusive public space in Amman?

Try to define what you consider a „successful“ gender-inclusive public space and include a post-implementation evaluation strategy to ensure its ongoing success.

## Entertainment

- Do you provide multiple and various types of seating, well-shaded and with sufficient distance to other seating?
- Are you including female- and male-oriented forms of entertainment and recreation?
- Do you include plenty of greenery that is not only decorative but also interactive?
- Do you use easy-to-maintain materials and have you come up with an effective waste management strategy?
- Are there any shopping options attractive for women nearby?
- Is your design family-friendly?
- Is the location in East Amman attractive for West Ammanis, too?

## Safety

- Have you applied multiple defensible design strategies but kept it to a minimum?
- Does your design provide eyes on the street through continuous and various users?
- Is your design family-friendly?
- Do you provide attractive daytime activities in all weathers?
- Can a user quickly understand where to go for what?
- Is your design family-friendly?
- Is the location in East Amman attractive for West Ammanis, too?
- Have you considered how users can report a safety issue, particularly women?
- Are you prominently raising awareness for what is not okay to do to men and women?
- Have you inquired about how different times of the day can affect especially women's safety and do you provide additional safeguarding?

## Reputation

- Have you come up with an effective waste management strategy that aims at removing traces of alcohol and drugs?
- Does the spatial arrangement accommodate socially acceptable physical, visual, and vocal distances between men and women?
- Do you ward off attention from female-oriented areas?
- Have you come up with a communication strategy that promotes the positive values of a public space among families in Amman?
- Is your design family-friendly?
- Have you inquired young women about their special needs and wishes?

## Accessibility

- Is the space easily accessible for pedestrians and strollers and/or well-connected to stroller-friendly public transport?
- Is the space in walking distance to places of care, like markets, schools, shops, hospitals, and residential areas, or reachable on one public transport line?
- Do you provide areas in which mothers can relax with and without their children?
- Is the space equipped with care-related amenities e.g. drinking water, food areas, homework support, play areas?
- Have you paid attention to what male-dominated places surround the site and how it could affect women's experiences?

## Mobility

- Is the space easily accessible for pedestrians and strollers and/or well-connected to stroller-friendly public transport?
- Have you assessed and removed all obstacles that could hinder pedestrians and strollers?
- Are structures kept on eye level and car-based infrastructures kept at a physical, visual, and vocal distance?
- Have you come up with an effective waste management strategy?
- Do you apply ambiguous, non-descript aesthetics to encourage multifunctional uses?

## Comfort & Discomfort

- Does the space offer quiet and less crowded areas?
- Do you foster soft gatekeeping mechanism to manage the number of users entering and exiting the space? Or do you require actual gates?
- Are you actively raising awareness for street harassment?

## Privacy

- Do you provide flexible spaces that enable varying degrees of physical, visual, and vocal closeness or distance between users?
- Are you avoiding the creation of fearscape?
- Do you offer multifunctional areas that are flexible or easy to appropriate for different activities and „props“?
- Do you keep male- and female-oriented zones at a socially acceptable distance?

## Facilities

- Do you ensure access to public bathrooms in close proximity and that they are easy to find?
- Is the women's bathroom stroller-friendly and equipped with ample space, seating, good ventilation, and a breastfeeding station?
- Do you provide a diaper station that is accessible to both men and women?
- Do you provide children-friendly toilets and sinks?
- Do you provide a water source that is regularly cleaned and maintained? Is it easy to bottle water from it?
- Do the facilities have enough trash bins?
- Do you use easy-to-maintain materials and have you come up with an effective waste management strategy?

## Gender Separation

- Have you included typically male and female games?
- Are the boundaries between male- and female-oriented places open and porous e.g. through multifunctional boundary activities?
- Do you apply unisex aesthetics that invite different users?
- Are there any formal or informal male and female site guardians in place who can act as mediators or coaches between men and women?

## Young Single Men

- Do you provide activities and zones that are specially catered to young single men and their needs and interests?
- Do you ensure that no explicit or implicit forms of gender discrimination are fostered?
- Do you include or provide access to personal spaces for young single men should they need one?

# ETHNOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO MORE [GENDER] INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES

Not one public space is like another, even if they were physically entirely identical. Public spaces come in different shapes and colors and occur in different places and times. In the end, public spaces without people are lifeless voids because it is people who create public spaces. As we cannot predict how people live, what they do, and what they need in public spaces, there cannot be a standard model for public spaces. This makes it hard to know what kind of public spaces should be created and how they should be designed so that they are not only attractive but also just and fair. To get a better idea of what kind of public urban life should be accommodated for, it can be useful, if not mandatory, to look at existing public spaces and everyday life, specifically current users and uses and how they interact within a space and with each other. Learning from these can greatly contribute to a better understanding of suitable public spaces in any given context. How urban practitioners can apply qualitative ethnographic research methods in order to do so is outlined in the following guide.

## Step 1 Define your Field of Research

Your field of research outlines the boundaries of your research. The boundaries can be physical or non-physical, encompass a single site or multiple sites.

## Step 2 Enter the Field

Field entry can occur in a variety of ways: through referrals (snowball principle), by sheer coincidence, or simply through initiating a first contact with a stranger.

## Step 3 Doing Research

### The Field Diary

notes/memos  
thick description  
mental mapping  
sketching  
photo/videography  
artifacts

### Passive Observation

Observe your research subject(s) from a physical distance by being there - sometimes even unnoticed - by following somebody or something, by strolling/drifting around. Interactions are limited.

### Participant Observation

Experience the same as your research subject(s) by going along with them, hanging out together, doing things together, copying what is being done. Interactions and shared experiences are of prime interest.

### Note-taking Tips

- Take notes as soon as possible
- Find your own system but have one
- Be specific: do not tell but show, e.g. with anecdotes, descriptions, quotes

### Qualitative Interview

Qualitative interviews are non-guided and have open-ended questions. They can be directed or non-directed, i.e. have a clear aim or not. They can be face-to-face interviews or conducted remotely, individually or in a group. Some qualitative interview examples are informal conversations, narrative interviews, semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, and focus group discussions.

### Interview Tips

- Face to face is best
- Be a good listener
- Have a conversation, no interrogation
- Don't ask yes or no questions
- Exchange contacts if possible

### Primary & Secondary Sources

Connect your field research with already available material in order to know more about histories, legal frameworks, planning mechanisms, and theoretical concepts that apply to your field. Useful points of departure can be statistical reports, legal documents, policy papers, academic papers, planning documents, newspaper articles, archives, regional literature, and oral histories.

### Reflection

Regularly re-read your notes and re-visit your material. Look for themes and write them down in memos to structure your material and thoughts.

### Analysis

Based on your material and memos, cluster relevant ideas, questions, concepts and write them down in easy-to-grasp codes. Try to find patterns - behavioral, social, cultural, spatial, temporal or others. Question your codes and assumptions through further field research until you can verify them with confidence.

### Research Tips

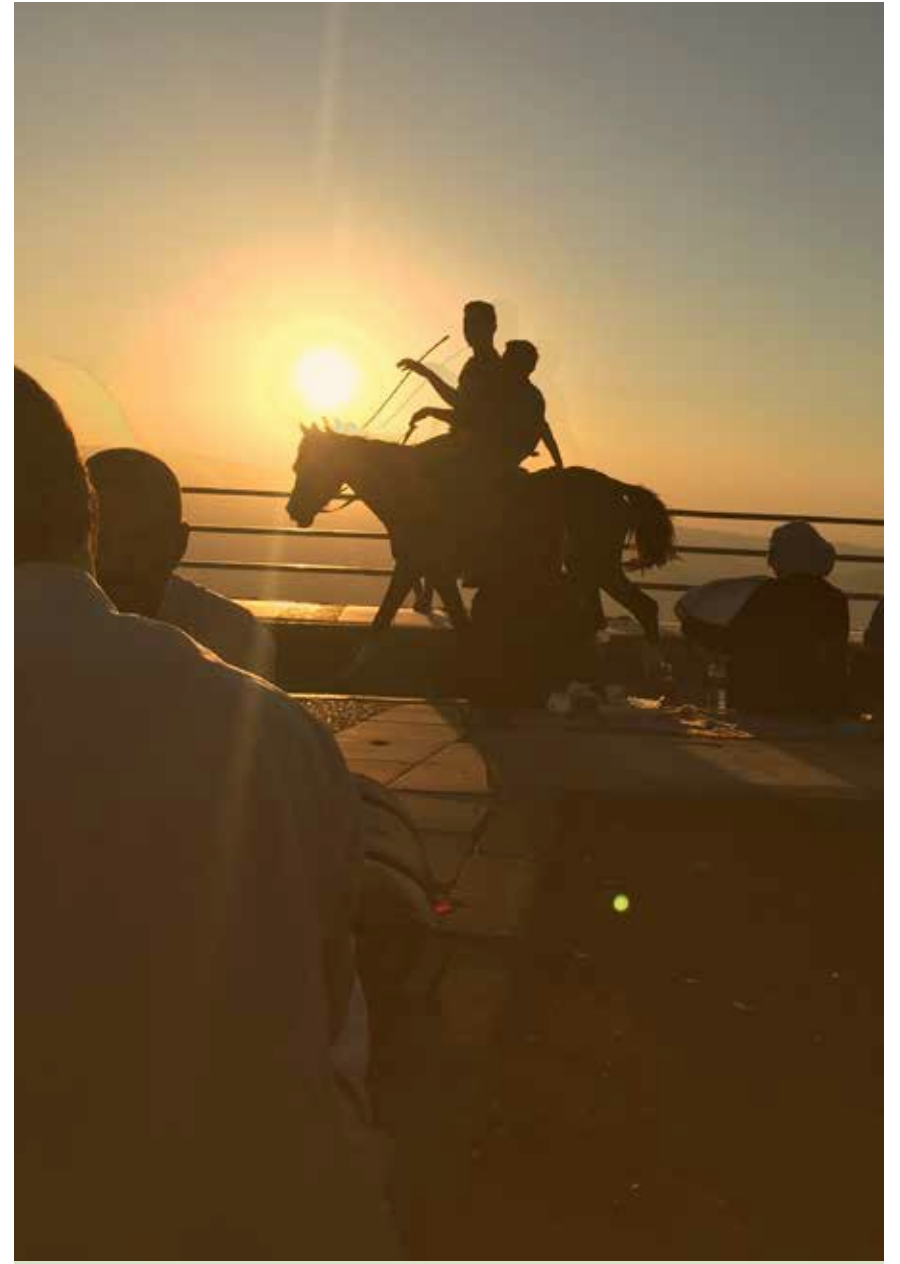
The researcher is not an objective non-influential bystander but also a research subject. Thus, as a good field researcher you should be:

- aware of your background, how it influences observations and interactions, and be transparent about it
- aware of the fact that results do not represent universally valid but momentary partial truths and should be understood as one interpretation out of many only
- ethical by treating informants as subjects, not objects, gaining informed consent from research subjects, anonymizing personal details, and by applying the *Do No Harm* and *Do Not Exploit* principle

## Step 4 Results Presentation

Go back to your research question(s) and aim to provide potential answers and questions worth exploring further by outlining your research journey and including examples from the field that can support your conclusions and possible recommendations.

! Turn to Annex A on page 228 for additional material



# Reflections & Outlook

Like city making, urban research is never finite, so the act of looking at the city of Amman through a gender lens needs to become a staff of life for urban professionals in order to truly make an impact in Amman's urban landscape. By using research as a bridge between theory and practice, the findings presented in this study can help shed light on what aspects are relevant for more gender-inclusive public spaces in Amman yet they can only be understood as a knowledge base or starting point for further research and debate. Different ethnicities, races, incomes, classes, abilities, and ages, for instance, play just as much a role in a person's lived experience as their gender. City makers must therefore think in an *intersectional* manner about women and men. After all, the different experiences between and among women and men are both just as relevant to gender-inclusive planning. Even though politically delicate, this also refers to different sexualities and gender identities of the LGBTQ+ communities who defy binary categorizations of gender. In addition, virtual spaces, publicly-accessible private spaces, and the role of cars as mobile private-public-spaces are relevant entry points for further research in order to better understand the lived experiences of men and women in Amman.

Kimberly Crenshaw, professor, lawyer, and leading scholar of critical race theory „Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.“<sup>1</sup>

Audrey Laude in *Sister Outsider* „There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.“<sup>2</sup>

To better accommodate different gender perspectives in city making, participatory processes need to provide formats especially tailored to women as well as marginalized members of Amman's society. Dismissing participation processes as a necessary evil, perhaps as a marketing tool even, instead of embracing them as valuable and value-adding mechanism for planning comes at the expense of its users and, on the long run, also for the city of Amman. One should also note that participation needs to be thought on all levels of urban practice which goes beyond the users, beneficiaries, or affected. It encompasses the engagement of diverse architects, planners, designers, social scientists, policy makers, investors, builders, and institutions since, in all fields, decision-makers still remain largely male-dominated while women and marginalized members of society are barely part of these bodies.

**Realistically, gender-inclusive public spaces do not necessarily arrive at an ideal feminist city but make living in a city simply more liveable.** Very pragmatically, gender-inclusive planning aims to provide spaces that are more accessible and enjoyable perhaps not for all but for many. In the end, spatial gender justice cannot come over night and it requires applying a gender lens not only to public spaces but also to other fields of planning, including urban governance, finance, housing, transport, energy etc. Side by side to changing perceptions of gender roles and changing male and female lifeworlds, cities like Amman can thus incrementally become more just and fair. In the meantime, gender-inclusive public spaces strengthen women's sense of belonging outside the domestic sphere and foster alternative concepts of masculinity as the boundaries become more blurred.

**Box 14 30 Years of Gender Mainstreaming in Vienna, Austria**  
It began with a photo exhibition on women's everyday life in the city, organized by Eva Kail, a renowned gender planning expert today, who shortly after became the head of Vienna's newly established *Frauenbüro* (German „Women's Office“) in 1992. Eva Kail and her team can now draw from 30 years of experience in which Vienna has not only become more suitable for women and girls but set the path to a „fair shared city“ for all in one of the most liveable cities in the world.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Crenshaw 2017  
<sup>2</sup> Laude 2007  
<sup>3</sup> Hunt 2019



# CASE STUDIES



# Case Studies

Based on the idea that public practices create public spaces rather than its physical characteristics, five places or sites of pronounced public urban life in Amman have been selected within the boundaries of Greater Amman. They illustrate different typologies of public space and, respectively, give insights into how men and women experience the city differently in more detail than hard facts and numbers are capable of. Al Mahatta Raghadan and Abu Darwish Square have been researched on by others and are revisited here to complement the existing body of research with new insights and angles. The Habibah Square, Istiklal Mall, and Matal Abu Nseir case studies have not received much attention yet as Amman's public spaces. The case studies do not claim to cover or represent the entirety of Amman's public urban life, rather they serve as informative glimpses thereof.

# HABIBAH SQUARE

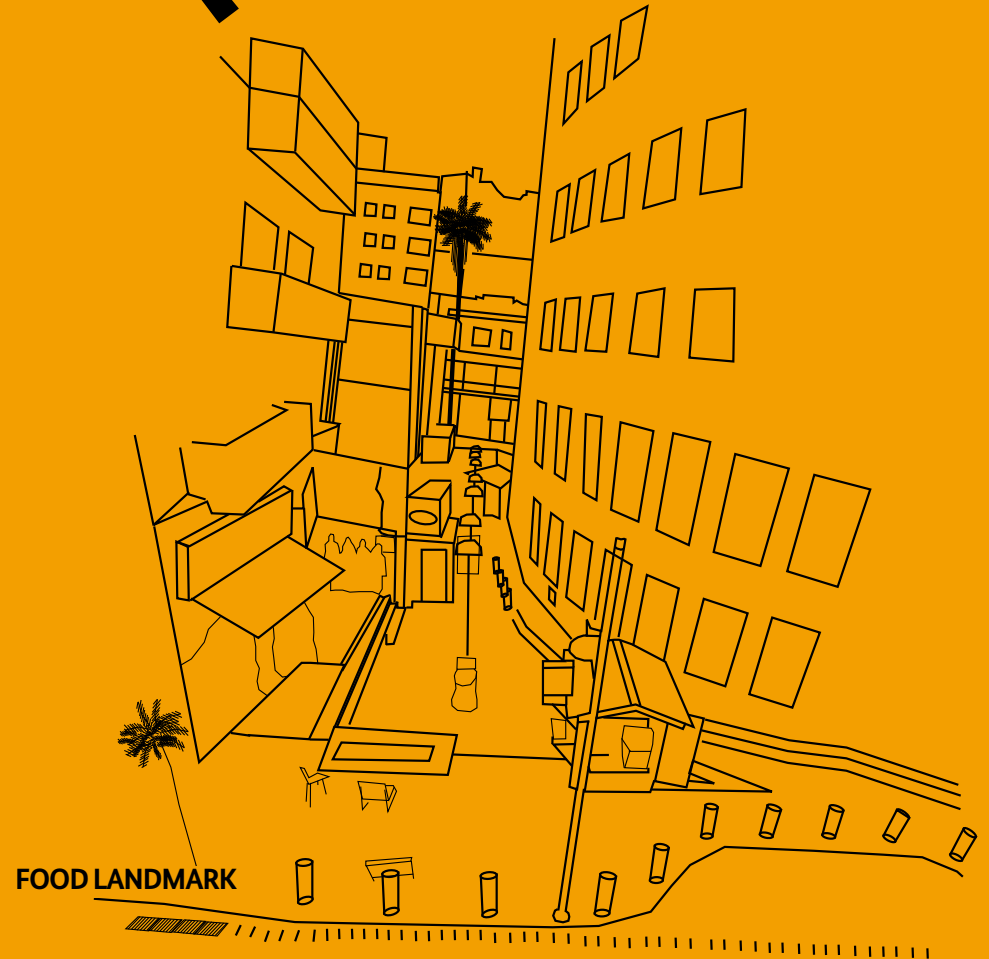




Fig. 1 Field of Research Mapping of Case Studies and Location of Research Site in Amman

## CASE STUDY SELECTION

Food landmarks that emerge from popular culinary experiences make up a great portion of the city's public urban life and are an influential typology of public space in Amman's urban landscape. Yet, they are not formally recognized as such in definitions of public space by the planning sector. Food landmarks are therefore even more so worth giving attention to when it comes to public space planning in Amman. The Habibah Square, located at the Habibah sweet shop in West Al Balad/ Downtown (see Fig. 1), stands out in particular as a food landmark for its allure has long surpassed the simple purchase of sweets. It has become a meeting point for customers and non-customers alike from near and far at nearly all times of the day and days of the week, making its public urban life so busy, continuous, and diverse like rarely found elsewhere in Amman. To learn from the success of the Habibah Square and to better understand how men and women, young and old, West and East Ammanis, locals and foreigners, and many others so readily share a social arena in Amman's public has motivated the selection of this case study.

### Key Findings & Themes

#### Reputation

The Habibah Square represents a reputable place which enables particularly conservative young women to spend time there without great fear of social repercussions.

#### Gender Separation

Because of its good reputation and safety levels men and women of all ages comfortably share the Habibah Square with each other.

#### Safety

With a number of security measures and a continuous presence of informal guardians, the Habibah Square is considered a safe place.

#### Young Single Men

Groups of young single men do not dominate the Habibah Square as much as in other public spaces of Amman.

#### Mobility

The Habibah Square is centrally located, walkable, and well connected to different modes of private and public transport.

#### Comfort & Discomfort

A variety of seating options and a clean environment enable different groups to make themselves comfortable on their own terms.

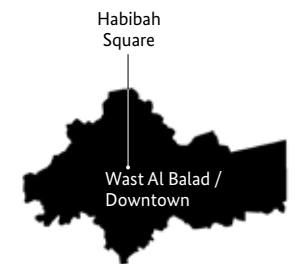
### Contributing Researchers

Rebekka Keuss  
Mahabba Ayesh  
Rama Halaseh  
Workshop Participants

### Field Data Collection

non-participant and participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, go-alongs, hang outs, male and female focus group discussions

No. of Field Visits	34
No. of Interlocutors	120



### Facilities

No public facilities, e.g. bathrooms, are available, however, restaurants and coffeeshops surround the Habibah Square and can function as substitutes.

### Accessibility

A visit to the Habibah Square can easily be combined with errands due to its location in a commercial area. It is also stroller-friendly thanks to barrier-free pavements.

### Entertainment

Beside knafeh, the Habibah Square attracts men and women with everyday spectacles like people watching and performances, especially on weekends.



Fig. 2 Public Space Typology Mapping of Selected Food Landmarks in Amman

## AMMAN'S FOOD LANDMARKS

Across histories and geographies, the act of eating has brought people together like very few other things have. In Jordan, where hospitality is taken particularly seriously, food is regularly shared even among strangers. It is therefore no surprise that many of Amman's unofficial landmarks have entered the collective memory by simply offering food (see Fig. 2). There is, for instance, *Reem* at Second Circle, ever producing long lines mostly of hungry men in pursuit of its famous shwarma. There is also *Hashem* in West Al Balad where families, singles, locals, and tourists alike frequently enter a game of musical chairs to get their table and share of falafel. On a larger scale, there are the „hungry streets“, namely Al-Madina Al-Munawara Street and Abdallah Ghosheh Street, that fill up with patrons in pursuit of a seat or some take away in one of the many restaurants that line the long straight roads. The list goes on and on, however, probably the most famous food landmark in Amman or even Jordan must be Habibah. Hailing from Jerusalem and Nablus, the famous sweet producers now run five branches in Amman with its first and oldest location in West Al Balad still up and running (see Box 1). Being the historical center, people have come to shop, sell, pray, stroll, eat, drink, play, and hang out in West Al Balad over decades. Its dense agglomeration of buildings, markets, alleyways, smells, sounds and people filled with countless stories and memories create a distinct image that is like nowhere else in Amman. It is also here where one can encounter the oldest sites in town of which many have lost little of their attraction and significance among Amman's inhabitants despite or thanks to their fragile appearance. As a food landmark, Habibah clearly belongs to the latter category. While Habibah produces and sells all kinds of sweets, their oldest branch focuses on *knafeh* (see Fig. 3).

- Abdallah Ghosheh Street
- Al Medina Al Munawarra Street
- Habibah**
- Hashem Restaurant Reem Shwarma
- Sooq Wuahdat karabij halabi Shop

**Box 1 History of Habibah**  
 „In the year 1951, Al-Haj Mahmoud Habibah and his brother Ahmad established *Al-Haj Mahmoud Habibah Sweets* at a small humble shop down town, on a side lane by the Arab Bank.“<sup>1</sup>

Fig. 3 Knafeh



<sup>1</sup> Habibah n.d.

# Setting

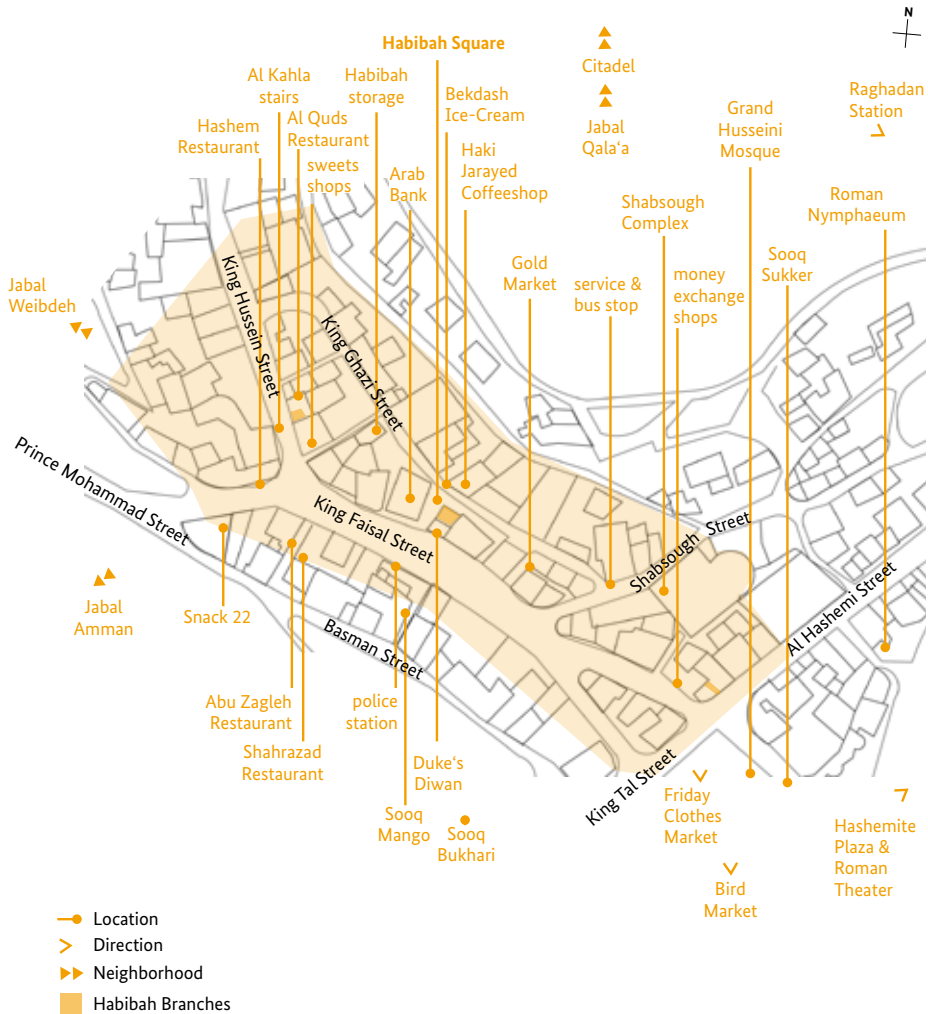


Fig. 4 Urban Framework Points of Interest around the Habibah Square

## THE HABIBAH SQUARE

The Habibah Square is tugged between the Arab Bank building, the Duke's Diwan, Amman's allegedly oldest building, and the adjacent King Ghazi Street which has recently been re-developed and declared a pedestrian-friendly zone by the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). Combined, they create a passageway or small open space that surrounds the Habibah shop (see Fig. 4 and 5). Because the shop is so small - it barely fits its employees and workspace, let alone its customers - everyone is given take away portions. Since the majority consumes their knafeh, still warm and fresh, on the spot, the Habibah Square is turned into the shop's outdoor eating area which is why this Habibah branch is also nicknamed „the standing Habibah“. Other Habibah branches, in comparison, do offer seating areas for their customers. Despite its popularity, there is no visible wayfinding signal other than the entrance sign of Habibah. So, one either belongs to the many who were shown its exact location by others, perhaps by parents, or one was simply able to spot the heightened commotion and the long waiting line in this particular alleyway in passing. Once at Habibah's, customers get in line with fellow knafeh seekers, waiting their turn seemingly more patiently than one would elsewhere as waiting embodies more of a social protocol than an obstacle here. Oftentimes, it is men who will get in line while women wait for them to return, following the societal image of the male provider and the female caregiver. Yet, women do not shy away from getting in line, too, as it seems perfectly acceptable here, even when it is not so much in other conservative queue settings in Amman (see Box 2). Once one gets a hold of a plate of knafeh, one might snap a few photos before digging in to save or virtually share the occasion.

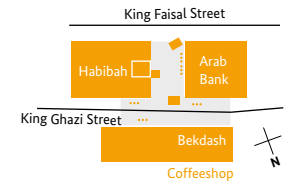


Fig. 5 Layout of Habibah Square

**Box 2 Waiting in Line as a Woman**  
 Sometimes women are given priority over men when in a queue. But this does not necessarily happen out of politeness or chivalry. An Ammani woman explains: „Once, I was the only woman in line. The vendor got afraid and quickly wanted to get rid of me. He was afraid of trouble because women make men uncomfortable.“ At Habibah, both men and women wait their turn and respectfully they do despite the tight space and the many male and female bodies standing so close to each other. Only the elderly, ill, pregnant, and women with strollers are occasionally given priority.

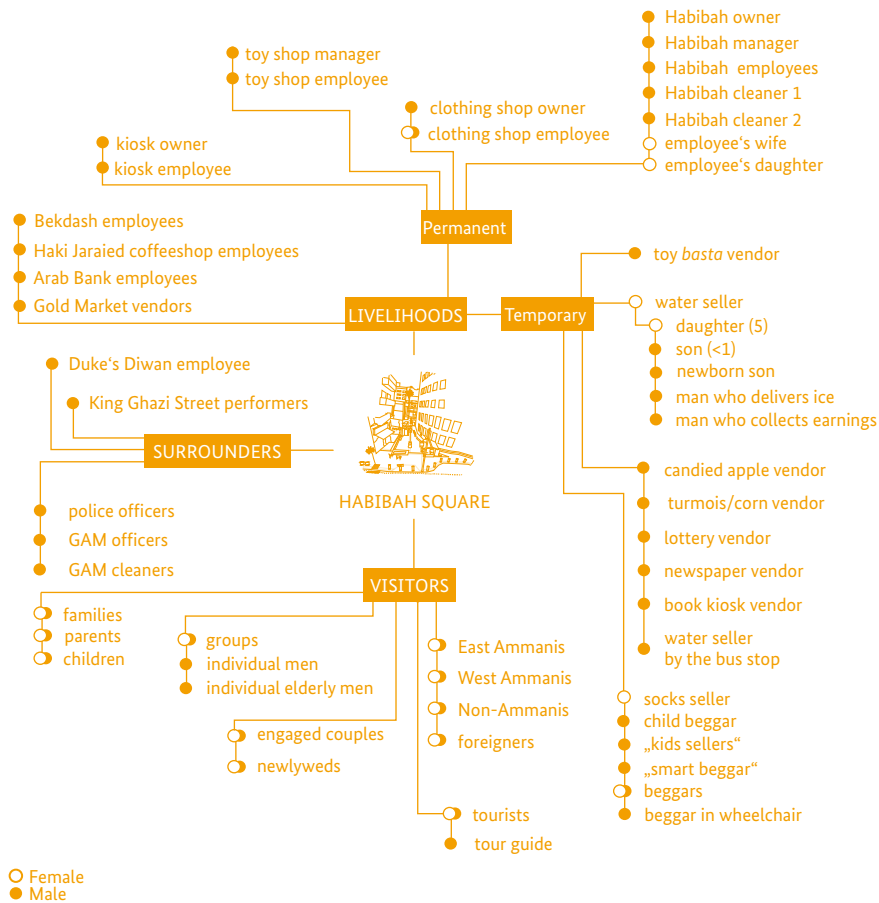


Fig. 6 Actor Network Selected Users of the Habibah Square

Either way, for a brief knafeh moment one gets to share an experience with people from different walks of life, turning the Habibah Square into a rare place of diverse encounters in the so largely segregated city of Amman. For some, their visit to Habibah ends abruptly with an unspectacular toss of used styrofoam plates and plastic spoons. But others - many actually - take a spare minute or hour even to linger. Some come back on a regular basis, every month, week, day, or multiple times a day for a variety of reasons. Essentially, all of these people combined turn a non-descript open air passage in West Al Balad into the lively Habibah Square (see Fig. 6 and Box 3).

**Woman walking from Al Mahatta Raghadan to the Habibah Square**  
 „I must eat knafeh once a month.“

**Regular male customer says in a joke (or not)** „I must start my day at Habibah...If I see a sweet lady, I will stay for a longer time.“

Surely, an indisputable pulling factor is its sweet dish but there is more to the Habibah Square than just knafeh, especially since there are so many alternative manufacturers in Amman to choose from. Here, women and men of all ages can experience things that are rarely seen on the streets of Amman. Especially warm evenings regularly give way to ordinary and extraordinary spectacles that spill over from and to King Ghazi Street, spanning over Bekdash ice cream performances (see Box 4), acoustic concerts, dancing and singing, acrobatics, foreign tourists like world travelers on bikes, a motorbike gang, and teenagers on skates. A general air of excitement is created through spontaneous appropriations without much vformal orchestration. After all, the Habibah Square is attractive because it is an attraction, a site of interest on the urban safari trail that appears to be an anomaly in West Al Balad, if not all of Amman.

**Box 3 The Social Production of Public Spaces** Urban spaces stand for more than a surface with defined boundaries and dimensions. After all, space can be both tangible and intangible, visible and invisible. French philosopher Henri Lefebvre has acknowledged this in his influential work *The Production of Space* where he explains that space cannot merely be understood as a physical, spatial entity. Instead, it is better understood as a social construct.<sup>2</sup> So, it is not materials, walls, flooring, and roofing but people who create a space, which they do through their presence, actions, thoughts, and memories. Physically, the Habibah Square is nothing but an alleyway and part of Amman's traffic infrastructure. Socially, this alleyway has become a meeting point for the people of Amman and a meaningful space for the public.

**Box 4 Bekdash Ice Cream** The Bekdash shop in King Ghazi Street has gained great popularity with the sale of Syrian ice cream. It is famous in Damascus and, thanks to Bekdash, can be consumed in Amman, too. But this is not the only reason for its popularity. The shop is located directly opposite of the Habibah Square and greatly benefits from its strategic location as they offer to top up a Habibah knafeh plate with a scoop of ice cream and do it in such a skillful and entertaining way that it regularly draws curious spectators. As a result, there is regular foot traffic going to and from Bekdash and the Habibah Square.

<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre 1991 [1974]

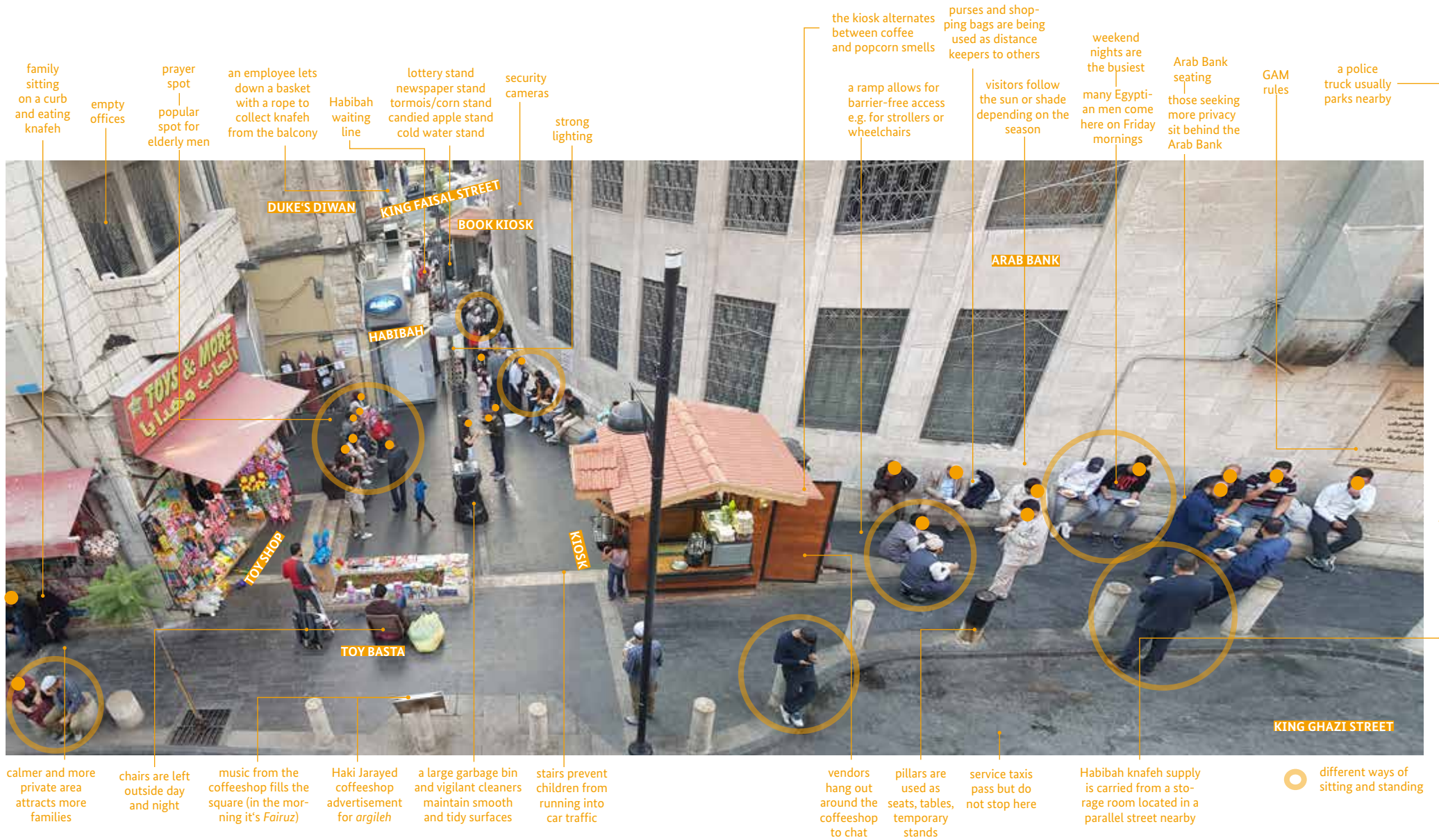


Fig. 7 Habibah Square in Wast Al Balad Perspective from the balcony of the Haki Jarayed coffeshop



abandoned Al Hussein Cinema  
 five car parks in King Ghazi Street  
 car park in the Shabsough Complex  
 car park near Jordanian Post  
 service taxi & bus stop  
 Habibah storage in parallel alleyway  
 "old Amman"  
 Jabal Amman  
 Jabal Al Hussaein  
 Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh  
 Jabal Al Weibdeh  
 Abdali  
 Ras Al Ain  
 gold market  
 Sooq Sukker  
 Sooq Nader  
 Sooq Astour  
 Sooq Bisharat  
 Sooq Mango  
 Sooq Halwini  
 Hashemite Square  
 Roman Theatre  
 Grand Hussein Mosque  
 Raghadan Station  
 Shabsough Complex  
 bakery in Shabsough Street  
 liquor store opposite  
 Shabsough Complex  
 former police station  
 permanent police truck  
 security center  
 planning regulations  
 public maintenance  
 private maintenance  
 private waste collection  
 public waste collection  
 social media  
 technology

**Box 5 The Role of Actants in Space**  
 While it is people or actors who create public spaces through their presence, actions, thoughts, and memories, they do not do so on their own. Therefore, a story about Amman's public urban life cannot be told without considering people's interaction with tangible and intangible non-human things, too, also called actants. In various constellations and to various degrees, they can have an influential role in the production of space or, in other words, carry agency within a network of actors and actants. As such, they open the gate to many interpretations and narratives of a space with the aim not to essentialize but to diversify.

Wast Al Balad  
 center of Downtown  
 King Faisal Street  
 traffic island with Washington trees  
 King Ghazi Street  
 coffeeshops  
 barber shops  
 fast food restaurants  
 juice shops  
 sweet shops  
 Jabri  
 banks  
 money exchange  
 ATMs  
 Bekdash  
 Sooq Hamidiya in Damascus  
 Al Kalha/Jadai Stairs  
 Hashem Restaurant  
 Shahrzad Restaurant  
 Abo Zaghle Restaurant  
 Al Sawwaf shop  
 Hourani kiosk  
 Abu Ali kiosk  
 Thaqafah kiosk  
 Palestinian juice shop  
 sugar cane juice shop  
 Bank of Jordan ATM  
 book shop near  
 Snack 22  
 book shop near  
 Abu Zaghle  
 barbershops  
 Greater Amman  
 Municipality (GAM)  
 fast food  
 take-away  
 staging  
 cash money  
 smoking rate  
 no argileh

GAM SIGN NEXT TO SEATING  
 FEMALE MANNEQUINS  
 TRADITIONAL FEMALE CLOTHING  
 ARAB BANK BUILDING  
 IMAGES OF ROYAL FAMILY  
 BLACK GARBAGE BINS  
 HABIBAH CLEANER VESTS  
 BROOM  
 CLEAN SURFACES  
 SIDEWALK  
 STONE  
 BENCHES  
 STONE POLLS  
 PAVED GROUND  
 DIRTY FLOOR  
 BIRD POO  
 KIOSKS  
 TOYS  
 LILOS  
 POLICE TRUCK  
 STREET LAMPS  
 SUN  
 SHADE  
 RAIN  
 TEMPERATURES  
 SMARTPHONES  
 PHOTOGRAPHS  
 CAMERAS  
 DIRTY FLOWER BED  
 NO FLOWERS  
 DRESS/OUTFIT  
 NO ANIMALS  
 MOBILE TABLES  
 MOBILE CHAIRS  
 ARABIC NOVELS  
 SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS  
 ADVERTISING FOR ARGILEH

clean appearance  
 parking space  
 parking ticket  
 traffic police  
 traffic situation  
 walkability  
 pedestrian-friendly  
 service taxis  
 buses  
 taxis  
 private cars  
 weather  
 gender roles  
 tradition  
 casual atmosphere  
 empathy  
 sympathy  
 tourism  
 local culture  
 popular music  
 Jordan kitsch  
 Bekdash performance  
 various socioeconomic backgrounds  
 different generations  
 famous streets  
 (Wakalat St, Rainbow St)  
 proximity to facilities & shops  
 celebrations/festivals

HABIBAH SIGNS  
 CORNER SIGNS  
 EMPTY UPPER LEVELS  
 FORMER TAILOR SHOP  
 KNAFEH  
 TEA/COFFEE/JUICE  
 SHWARMA  
 FALAFEL  
 CARDBOARD  
 BOOKS  
 NEWSPAPERS  
 LOTTERY TICKETS  
 PLASTIC BAGS  
 PLASTIC DISHES  
 WATER BOTTLES  
 WATER CUPS  
 STONE  
 MATERIALS  
 WHITE CHEESE  
 KNAFEH STOVE  
 COFFEESHOP BALCONY  
 ICE CREAM  
 STROLLERS  
 MOTORBIKES  
 TARP  
 BASTAS  
 SHOES  
 FRUIT&VEG VEHICLE  
 LOTTERY TICKETS  
 PORTABLE  
 BREAKFAST  
 PLASTIC BOX TABLE  
 OLD BMW  
 ACCESSORIES  
 EMBROIDERED DRESSES  
 PERFUME  
 PURSES SHOPS

no picnic  
 equipment  
 crowd/gathering  
 many shops nearby  
 variety of goods  
 social distance  
 proximity/proxemics  
 aesthetics  
 societal change  
 organization  
 orderliness  
 sufficient space  
 popular (sha'bi)  
 accessibility  
 affordability  
 needs and wishes  
 convenience  
 control  
 code of conduct  
 legal framework  
 parenting  
 mutual respect  
 electronic crimes  
 online promotions/ads  
 word of mouth  
 gram price of gold

EXPLICIT ACTANTS  
 Implicit Actants

**Box 6 Explicit and Implicit Actants**  
 Tangible objects represent explicit actants and non-tangible factors are implicit actants. Actants can embody anything, ranging from spatial architecture, materials, numbers and scales over everyday objects to social architecture, cultural norms, popular discourses, geopolitical changes, current news, and beyond. By combining different actants, a variety of perspectives of the space can be explored.

**Fig. 8 Actants Overview** of selected non-human actors (actants) that influence the production of the Habibah Square.

# Public Urban Life

## Reputation Gender Separation

**Box 7 Woman Sitting Alone at the Habibah Square** A young woman took the bus from Tafileh to Amman early in the morning just to return again later the same day. She has an important appointment in the city. Besides that she only wished to visit Habibah. So there she sits all alone on the stone bench, eating her knafeh, quietly watching people for over an hour. At one point, she buys knafeh for a beggar and chats with her seat neighbors. She is enjoying herself while waiting for her appointment.

## Female Interpreter „Spacing is everything.“

**Box 8 Embodied Space & Proxemics** Personal space - that is physical distance to level of comfort - varies from person to person and is strongly determined by cultural and social norms. One might imagine an invisible bubble that wraps around a person's body. Generally, one's personal space is larger among strangers and in public than among intimate relations. At the Habibah Square, physical distance between strangers of either sex can shrink to a minimum without much reluctance which is surprising given that people's physical distance in public is decidedly large among mixed groups elsewhere in Amman.<sup>3</sup>

Habibah's positive connotation to traditions, memories, nostalgia, and its impeccable reputation unmistakably rub off onto the social arena of the Habibah Square and make it a socially acceptable place to hang out, even during late hours, for groups of people who are under pressure to maintain a certain reputation, say women from conservative backgrounds (see Box 7). There seems to be an unspoken but common agreement among Amman's population that the Habibah Square is a „good“ place and it would be shameful to taint it in something „bad“. In reverse, certain practices that would be frowned upon in other places are acceptable here, for example, the act of sitting on the floor while eating take away food as a woman or talking to strangers of the opposite sex (see Fig. 9). During peak times, one can even observe women and men sitting extremely close together, a rare sight in Amman, although women generally tend to gravitate towards other women and men to other men (see Box 8). Other social norms persist, for example, women are expected to sit in a more crouched „feminine“ way while men take or are given ample space to stretch.

**Woman shopping in Downtown** „If I am tired I will just sit, nothing will happen, but the way of sitting is different. I sit in a more respectful kind of way. Also where I sit matters. I can't sit in the main street. I wanted to sit on the benches but there was no space so we came here.“

Some women remain anxious to find the most private setting available amid the square's publicness, for instance, by seeking out the more secluded and protective backside of the Arab Bank building next to a large police truck instead of the more exposed pillars next to the waiting line (see Fig. 7 and Box 9). Too much visibility can cause discomfort and will dramatically shorten a visit as especially women fear harmful looks, inappropriate comments, and badmouthing, in short: the social dangers. Some men have, therefore, adopted the practice of turning their backs to women and vice versa.

**Man (20s)** „When I sit near a women I try to give them my back to give them more privacy.“

The image of a good and safe space is emphasized by ever present police officers, strong lighting, and surveillance cameras. But, first and foremost, it is the informal guardians who make this place a safe one, such as the steady and manageable crowd, the Habibah cleaners, the adjacent shop or street vendors, and coffeeshop visitors (see Box 10-12). In a subconscious but collective manner, they continuously have an eye on the square, thus, creating a social surveillance system that contributes to keeping unwanted behavior like fights, shouting, sexual harassment, and criminal activities at bay. Groups of young single men, who are largely stereotyped to be troublemakers, are fairly underrepresented at the Habibah Square, even though they are not explicitly being excluded as the widely used „mixed groups & couples only“ policy does not apply here. What keeps this group of people away, among other factors, is precisely the square's strong emphasis on safety and comfort for families and women. For Habibah and nearby shops who specifically target families and women, e.g. by selling toys, female clothing, or gold, the issue of safety is also an economic factor and a

## Privacy

**Box 9 Police Truck** In order to provide additional security to the King Ghazi Street and the nearby Gold Market, a large windowless police truck is stationed in the immediate vicinity of the Habibah Square that conveniently also doubles as visual protection behind which visitors can hide. Every day and night, the armed police officers guard the street, occasionally patrolling the area on foot.

## Safety Young Single Men Mobility

**Box 10 Eyes on the Street** The American journalist Jane Jacobs has described the role and importance of a social surveillance system not only in terms of safety but also in terms of giving meaning to public spaces in her influential work *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* where she states: „there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street“ and „the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers“.<sup>4</sup> Nearly all of these qualities can be encountered at the Habibah Square.

<sup>3</sup>Low 2003

<sup>4</sup>Jacobs 2011 [1961]



**Standing & Eating Knafeh** It is mostly men who stand or walk around while eating. For some it is simply a habit since Habibah used to have no seating, others prefer not to occupy a seat out of courtesy. The primary standing spots are behind the selling booth, next to the kiosk, and in front of those seated.

park car near Habibah  
go by taxi to Habibah  
walk from/to public transport station  
walk from/to Habibah  
buy knafeh  
wrap knafeh for take away  
stay at Habibah for a bit  
leave Habibah immediately  
eat knafeh slowly  
eat knafeh quickly  
share a knafeh plate  
feed knafeh to each other  
stand around the kiosk  
eat knafeh while standing  
eat knafeh while seated  
sit on a stone bench  
sit on the ground  
sit on a pillar  
sit on a fence  
sit away from the queue  
sit close to the queue  
stand around a pillar  
walk around while eating  
eat knafeh as dessert  
eat knafeh for breakfast  
sit and wait  
sit with your back to the opposite sex  
look for a better spot  
keep distance to others  
be very close to others  
eat knafeh alone  
eat knafeh in a group  
take pictures of knafeh  
take pictures of yourself  
smile while eating knafeh  
talk while eating knafeh  
eating knafeh quietly  
eat Bekdash ice-cream  
eat knafeh with ice-cream  
eat falafel sandwich  
eat shwarma and fries  
eat homemade food  
eat popcorn, salted snacks, candied apples  
drink juice from elsewhere  
drink water, coffee, tea

purchase a lottery ticket, newspaper, a book, a toy, halal clothes etc.  
visit after Hashem  
visit after Shahrazade  
visit after shopping  
visit on the weekend  
rest after a meal  
rest after shopping  
recharge before shopping  
sit in the shade  
sit in the sun  
sit in the light  
sit in the dark  
sit on a carton  
protect clothes from dirt  
look around Habibah Square  
hang out in King Ghazi Street  
look at other people  
stare at other people  
avoid looking at other people  
make very fast eye contact  
walk by without stopping  
meet people you know  
recognize people  
mistake people  
see people you don't know  
avoid saying „good morning“  
avoid saying „hello“  
talk to strangers  
talk to nobody  
talk to person of same sex  
talk to opposite sex  
join a conversation  
talk to tourists  
talk to different people  
talk in different accents



**Talking to Strangers At Habibah Square,** conversations between strangers occur frequently and in a friendly, spontaneous manner - even between men and women, married or not. Usual inhibitions and reservations appear to be cushioned by Habibah's family-friendly atmosphere and good reputation.

talk in different languages  
hear different accents  
hear different languages  
hear unusual stories  
see unusual things & people  
ask for directions  
look at a map  
carry a guidebook  
perform

watch a show  
play music  
rollerskate  
ride a bike  
ride a motorbike  
dress up  
dress down  
wear traditional clothing  
wear religious clothing  
wear modern clothing  
push a stroller



**Sitting & Standing around a Pillar** Pillars are often used as substitute tables to carry knafeh plates or garbage. The pillars next to the Habibah waiting line are usually used as seating, particularly by middle-aged women. Similar to a doctor's waiting room, users fluctuate and only few remain seated for a long time.

watch your child  
carry a purse  
carry a bag  
carry shopping bags  
keep bag close to you  
place bag on lap  
place bag on the ground  
place bag next to you  
read newspaper  
scan books on display  
smoke cigarette  
smoke argileh  
talk on the phone  
type on the phone  
browse through smartphone  
beg for money  
beg for food  
donate money  
donate knafeh  
argue in public  
bully somebody  
avoid shouting  
avoid physical fights  
vie for customers quietly  
avoid bothering somebody  
make space for others  
clean the space  
sweep the ground  
throw away garbage  
leave garbage behind  
play with toys  
play a game with others  
walk through the crowd  
get in line and wait  
no jumping the line



**Sitting on the Ground** There is virtually no place in all of West Al Balad where one can see women voluntarily sitting on the ground and consuming food. Thanks to Habibah's more private and less exposed public alleyway, people seem to feel comfortable enough to sit on the ground without facing social repercussions.

go home before dark  
stay after dark  
pray in a corner  
pay no entrance fee  
take photographs  
take a video  
take selfies  
using toys as photo props  
using knafeh as prop  
create loud engine noise  
take a stroll

pay knafeh in cash  
balance knafeh plates  
hear a female voice yelling  
smack a street child  
talk about personal life  
discuss private matters  
talk about politics, economy, history, and Jordan in general  
remember old times  
find relief  
relax  
make a joke  
laugh out loud  
look bored  
have fun  
take off shoes  
act friendly towards strangers  
patrol the street for safety  
monitor Habibah Square  
maintain street lamps  
check shop and basta offers  
window shop  
un/load products  
open shops in the morning  
close shops at night  
close during Friday prayer  
arrange products outside  
sell products from a shop  
sell products from a kiosk  
street vending  
sell socks from a bag  
appropriate sidewalk  
bring your own chair  
sit on a private chair  
talk to potential customers  
sing while selling  
listen to Fairuz

valuable resource worth investing in as it also pays off in profits. Fear of theft is nearly non-existent judging by how carefree visitors handle their belongings. While the Habibah Square represents a safe haven, the many surrounding narrow and dark streets and alleyways resemble a rather dangerous labyrinth that deter particularly women from coming to this part of town, especially when alone and at night. Safe transit is, thus, another crucial factor for the success of the Habibah Square, which is somewhat catered for through diverse modes of transport options. Thanks to its central location and connection to major traffic nodes, the Habibah Square is oftentimes an enroute stop from and to Wast Al Balad, for example, through the nearby bus and service stop on Shabsough Street or through Al Mahatta Raghadan. It is also within walking distance to a number of neighborhoods (see Fig. 4). At least the last stretch must always be made on foot as the Habibah Square is part of a sidewalk network for pedestrians which vehicles cannot enter. Service taxis make up an exception and frequently drive past the Habibah Square on King Ghazi Street but only make a stop beyond earshot, which might come to the square's benefit as service drivers, no matter whether this is true or not, are believed to use rather vulgar language and to be the cause of much street harassment.

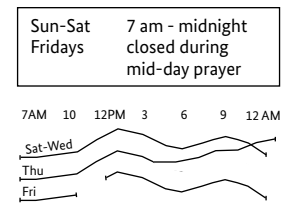
Beyond being a safe place of good reputation, the Habibah Square offers a number of features that make its experience a comfortable one and this is true even outside business hours (see Fig. 10). Long-standing visitors to Habibah, pun intended, could observe the gradual transformation of the place from standing towards more seating thanks to spatial changes made in recent years (see Box 13).

**Box 11 Toy Shop Vendor** Every morning, the toy vendor opens up his shop in a routinely manner while giving all of his attention to greeting and chatting with his male shop neighbors, from shop over kiosk to street vendor, as well as other regular users. He will then disappear in his shop just to re-emerge on the Habibah Square in regular intervals again, perhaps for some coffee or a brief glimpse.

**Box 12 Coffeshop Balcony** The Haki Jarayed coffeshop is located on the second floor in a building across the Habibah Square. Particularly in the afternoon and evening, its large balcony fills up with *argileh* smoking men and women who have full views onto the Habibah Square and King Ghazi Street while staying fairly hidden.

**Comfort & Discomfort Facilities**

**Fig. 10 Habibah Opening Times and Visitor Peak Times at the Habibah Square**

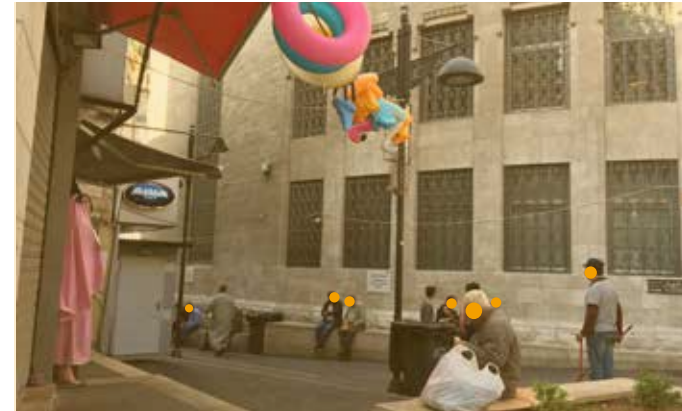


**Elderly Man and longtime Habibah customer** „There used to be chairs where we sat on.“

**Fig. 9 Public Practices** Selected Public Practices as observed at the Habibah Square



„Front entrance“ of the Habibah Square coming from King Faisal Street with views onto the Habibah sales booth, a book kiosk, newspaper stand, water seller, and the Bekdash ice cream shop



A weekday morning at the Habibah Square as seen from the King Ghazi Street. The visitors spread out in different corners of the square. An elderly man sits on a cardboard on the edges of a flower bed that turns into a *basta* for toys later in the day and at night.



A family with three young daughters and a baby in a stroller sits down on a curb by the toy shop in the pedestrian-friendly King Ghazi Street, the „backside“ of the Habibah Square. They are eating take away dishes but it is not knafeh from Habibah.



It is morning and an elderly man sits down on the stairs in front of the *hijab* shop to eat his plate of knafeh which he has placed on the ground in front of him. The upper levels of the building are empty so the door behind is not being used anymore.

**Box 13 Spatial Changes in the Habibah Square** Previously, moveable chairs were used for seating at the Habibah Square. Now, a stone bench wraps around the backside of the Arab Bank building, there are numerous stone pillars, an elevated flower bed, wide stairs with smooth surfaces, and a new pavement. In the winter of 2019, Habibah installed a large tarp for additional rain protection.

**Box 14 Manspreading & Purse-spreading** When people take up more space than necessary, it might be connected to manspreading, the act of using up more leg space than necessary when seated and often seen among men. Purse-spreading, the act of using a purse or a bag as a distance keeper, can more often be observed among women.

**Box 15 Habibah Cleaners** Equipped with brooms and vests with Habibah logos, two unintrusive men, a white-haired senior and a middle-aged Egyptian, take turns in diligently sweeping Habibah Square, come night and day, shine or rain. Prohibited to use the phone at work, they are limited in their outward communication and instead occasionally engage in face-to-face interactions with colleagues, vendors, customers, and whoever is interested in having a brief chat. Most of the time one sees them twirling around and cleaning. Only when the place is fairly empty, they take a (knafeh) break.

Thanks to the variety of seating and standing options now in place, different needs and wishes can be accommodated (see Fig. 7 and 9). Visitors who carry purses or shopping bags, for instance, can put down there belongings somewhere nearby without much difficulty. Especially the bench is wide enough to accommodate bags behind people's backs without taking away valuable seating space (see Box 14). In addition, strollers are not faced with as many obstacles here as in many other places in Amman due to a barrier-free ground with low curbs, smooth paving, wide space, and the option to avoid stairs. Spots that offer sun or shade, depending on what time of the day and season, often organize the popularity of seating. Since the seating and standing options also form the square's boundaries, people are offered unobstructed views to its center and surroundings, giving it its square-like character. As a result, children can play right in front of the watchful eyes of their parents and it surely is no coincidence that the toy vendors have put their products on display there, too. All surfaces are, moreover, frequently cleaned by GAM and Habibah cleaners (see Box 15). Some

**Habibah Visitors** „They keep sweeping all the time, even if it is clean.“ - „They keep watching people eat, waiting for them to be finished to take their plates and to put them rapidly in the garbage.“

visitors, often seniors, play it safe and bring along cardboard to protect themselves from overlooked dirt as well as the stone's hot or cold temperatures. Habibah's large black waste bins are, moreover, prominently positioned in front of the crowd's observant eyes. In this manner and in combination with a large GAM sign, consumers are made aware of the fact that trash should go into the bin like one would do when visiting the privacy of someone's home with respect to the hosts and the comfort of other users. Through the bin's central position, however, the act of tossing trash can trigger

attention that can also cause great discomfort to those who wish to remain unnoticed, for instance, women who regularly feel objectified. These visitors are likely to dispose of their trash through a middleman, a male guardian for instance, or find alternatives. Discomfort also comes from the fact that there are no public bathrooms nearby which naturally limits a stay at the Habibah Square and is more of an obstacle for women than men who are in need of a bathroom more frequently. Private establishments can occasionally fill this gap.

As a public alleyway, Habibah Square is open 24/7 to customers and non-customers alike and many people come here to rest amid the busy streets of West Al Balad for lack of alternative rest spots. Habibah's low knafeh prices on top make it affordable and accessible for a wider public, inviting actors who might be excluded elsewhere (see Fig. 11). They are tolerated if not desired even for they play an important part on the Habibah stage (see Box 16). In the presence of all family members, for instance, a harmonious family portrait can be painted and in the presence of the poor or beggars one can practice benevolence through publicly visible donations (see Fig. 6 and Box 17). However, users of the Habibah Square do not have to spend any money or justify their presence with a socially acceptable purpose.

**Widow and mother to six children who comes to West Al Balad to collect orphan rent once a month - and to eat knafeh at Habibah** „I don't spend my money unless it is necessary.“

**Father** „I take my family to Habibah once or twice every week, especially on Fridays.“

**Engaged Couple** A well-dressed man looks concerned. He does not want his fiancée to sit on the dirty stone bench, messing up her expensive outfit they so carefully selected. But he finally calms down and they start enjoying their three knafeh pieces, feeding each other and leaving the third piece for a homeless man after they have snapped enough photos to show to family and friends.

#### Accessibility Entertainment

Fig. 11 Habibah Price List

Knafeh 125 g	0.70 JD
Knafeh 250 g	1.40 JD
Knafeh 1 kg	5.20 JD
Water 250 ml	0.10 JD

**Box 16 Who is Missing from the Scene?** The Habibah Square represents a welcoming and non-discriminatory place to visit for there are no explicit barriers preventing anyone to go. Women, men, young, old, rich, poor - everyone is granted access. But are there really no barriers? Wide parts of the population in Amman mingle at the Habibah Square, yet, is the picture as complete as the Habibah narrative implies? What about non-Arab men and women of color like from Bangladesh, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, or Somalia? How come they are so rarely part of the scene? Is it because they are not attracted by what the Habibah Square has to offer or is it because they are not made to feel welcome by those present, forced to remain in their eternal role as „never-to-be-integrated other“ although they also constitute Amman's inhabitants?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Amale 2016

**Box 17 Families** Many families come to visit the Habibah Square on a regular basis for it is deemed a popular and socially acceptable pastime activity for young and old. As such, it somewhat represents a playground for children as well as adults. The adjacent King Ghazi Street provides additional attractions, particularly on weekend evenings. While there seems to be something for all family members, it most importantly offers a place for relief and quality time.

Anyone can simply rest their legs, seek distraction or entertainment, socialize, consume a drink or snack, or eat knafeh, of course, but it is rare that somebody will actually ask about a person's reasoning even when she or he is „doing nothing“.

**Four Men from Marka (30s)** Every Friday from mid-day until the evening, they get together at Habibah Square. During the week, they all work so they only find time to see each other on the weekend. Sometimes they walk from Rainbow Street to Wast Al Balad.

People use the Habibah Square also as a meeting place to spend time with those one would otherwise perhaps become estranged to, thereby strengthening social bonds across generations, backgrounds, and worldviews. In a way, the Habibah Square is attractive because anyone can pass by as long as one plays by the rules which seem more relaxed than in other places of Amman. As such, it draws elderly men for whom visits to the Habibah Square have become an everyday activity, female individuals in want of having a moment to themselves, street vendors and beggars trying to benefit from Habibah's commercial success, and many more (see Fig. 6 and Box 18).

**Box 18 Elderly Men** Many elderly men regularly come to the Habibah Square to indulge in knafeh and old memories. They are often alone, standing and eating in the corner behind the selling booth next to the stairs. Some are dressed in formal suits, some stay around to read the newspaper, have a smoke, or chat with a friend or stranger. Some also take off their shoes as if at home.

**Elderly Man (80) who has visited Habibah since his childhood** „I still love to come here - if nobody wants to come I just go by myself.“

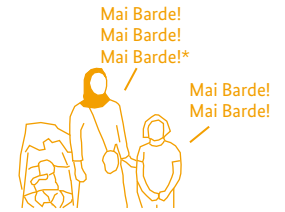
**Male Retiree (70s)** „I always come here. I don't have many other options to visit.“

**Two Married Sisters from Sahab visit the Habibah Square once a month** „We come here to have fun alone without our mother-in-law.“

**Male Gold Vendor** „The pedestrian street was the worst. Women can relax while kids play all over the place as if it is an amusement street and a playground for kids under 15.“

For those who come not as visitors but as workers, the Habibah Square simultaneously represents their point of sale, outdoor advertisement, social security, and informal worker's union. For this reason, one can observe adjacent shop and street vendors regularly congregating during business hours, standing in front of their shops, sharing news,

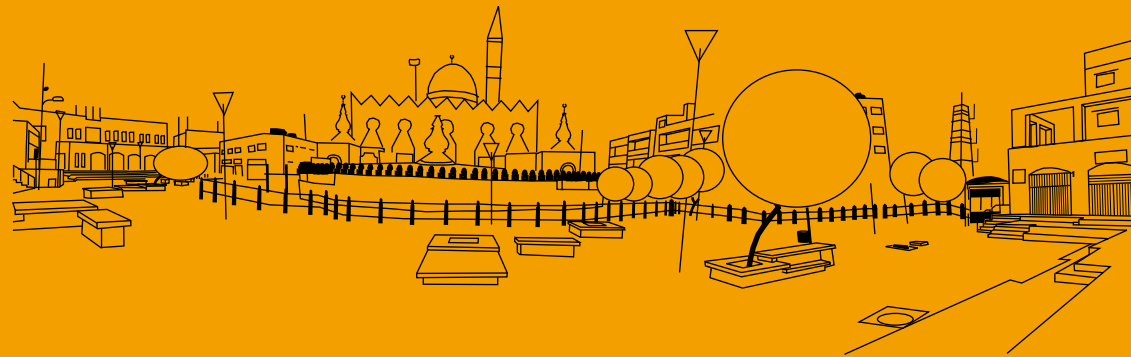
supporting each other's sales, and taking occasional knafeh breaks while selling their products. This ritual get-together stands for more than plain idleness as their daily social interactions contribute to ensuring their livelihood. This is true for male workers but only partially so for female workers. The few women whose workplace is the Habibah Square are not part of this congregation and largely stay to themselves, especially since earning an income is still considered a man's job. The few female workers are often from precarious backgrounds and are forced to work in mostly informal conditions. Most prominently and audibly, there is the female water seller by the waiting line (see Box 19). She has accumulated numerous unpleasant experiences while working in an environment that is essentially part of, as she says, a „beggar woman's“ street life in Wast Al Balad. Both herself and her accompanying young daughter have been yelled at, hit, patronized, and generally mistreated by visitors and others while struggling to carve out a decent living with the sale of water bottles. Her presence much depends on the organization of street vendors and the benevolence of Habibah's management who do not formally manage this alleyway, yet have great control over it. Under the bottom line, the Habibah Square is in the hands of GAM but partly managed like a private space with Habibah being the main shareholder. Consequently, one might wonder what effect on public urban life it could have on Amman, particularly for women, if other establishments were given room and permission to spill over onto the streetscape, too. This is not to suggest that formal ownership of public goods should be handed over to businesses as it essentially describes the act of privatization. Rather, more leniency in the self-management of public goods can be a potential entry point towards more gender-inclusive public spaces like the Habibah Square if used as a place of learning.



**Box 19 Female Street Vendor** Nearly every day, she sells 300 ml water bottles for a quarter dinar each, trying to make a living for her and her seven children. Habibah also sells water but her offer is better value for money and it supports a young struggling single mother. Eating knafeh makes one thirsty, so her water is in high demand. With a loud distinct voice that echoes beyond Habibah's Square, she cleverly vies for customers: „Mai barde, mai barde, mai barde\*“, she screams at the top of her lungs. Some consider this soundscape part of the amusement, others a nuisance but Habibah's management condones her activities so she stays put. She is in her late 20s and rarely seen alone. Usually, her daughter and her baby son accompany her. For the children, the Habibah Square has become their nursery where staff and visitors are their educators, for better or worse. The daughter helps her mother's work. Both know the places and people around very well which prompts her to conclude that „the paved street is an unsafe place“. As a coping strategy, she has tied a close-knit but fragile social network. She is considered „a beggar woman“, she says, and has been jailed by the municipality many times because of that. Her wish: to have her very own kiosk. For now, she remains in her place as one of the few female street vendors in Wast Al Balad, ever dependent on the benevolence of people that surround her.

\*English „cold water“

# ABU DARWISH SQUARE



„FAILED“ PROJECT



Fig. 1 Field of Research Mapping of Case Studies and Location of Research Site in Amman

## CASE STUDY SELECTION

„Failed“ projects exist in every city around the world. In a way, they are a staple of city making as they are important platforms of learning. The Abu Darwish Square in Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh is a prominent example thereof which has already been given much attention to by urban planners, practitioners, and scholars before, all trying to figure out why this so carefully planned square has turned into a failure according to its local residents. This case study is dedicated to exploring this question from an ethnographic point of view with a focus on male and female perspectives in order to better understand the local code of what is considered socially and religiously acceptable in public. Deconstructing the cultural mismatch of public space planning and the needs and wishes of conservative communities as encountered in Al Ashrafiyeh can then guide future - more successful - public space planning in Amman’s conservative communities.

**Contributing Researchers**  
 Rebekka Keuss  
 Riham Madi  
 Workshop Participants

**Field Data Collection**  
 non-participant and participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, go-alongs, hang outs, male and female focus group discussions

No. of Field Visits 38  
 No. of Interlocutors 175



### Key Findings & Themes

**Facilities**  
 Technically, the Abu Darwish Square is well equipped with public facilities but they are inadequate and, thus, oftentimes not useable.

**Comfort & Discomfort**  
 Lack of access to adequate facilities, insufficient privacy, unattractive entertainment, and fear of dangers cause more discomfort than comfort.

**Accessibility**  
 Visitors can use the square at all times and for free and price levels of surrounding shops are fairly affordable. As such, it becomes an attractive place for those who have no places to go elsewhere.

**Mobility**  
 The square is well-connected to public transport and a walkable sidewalk network while private vehicles face more difficulties on the surrounding streets.

**Entertainment**  
 Recreational elements are limited (e.g. no sports facilities or playground). Mainly it is the seating options, the mosque, and the surrounding shops that attract more male than female users.

**Privacy**  
 Due to the wide open space of the square and the auditorium-like setting, visual and vocal privacy is limited.

**Safety**  
 Security measures are largely defunct and police presence nearly non-existent. The square’s safety level is perceived to be very low.

**Young Single Men**  
 Young single men keep women and families away as they are considered the cause of poor safety as well as the square’s bad reputation.

**Reputation**  
 The square’s bad reputation has a direct impact on its users, especially young single women. Those trying to maintain a good reputation thus avoid the square.

**Gender Separation**  
 In this conservative area, women and men are meant to stay separate in public. It is therefore frowned upon to see couples at the square.





## A NEW PROJECT ON THE BLOCK

The black and white stripes of the Abu Darwish Mosque in Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh (English „highest point“) can easily be spotted on top of one of Amman’s hills. Constructed from the 1940s to 1961 by Mustafa Hassan „Abu Darwish“ Sharkass as his legacy and grave for himself and his wife, the Sufi mosque boasts elements of Mamluk and Ottoman architecture and comes with a Quran school and today’s Mohammad Iqbal Elementary School. Fast-forward to 2007, this architectural landmark became the center of attention for an urban re-development project, spearheaded by the former Amman Institute with grants from the Danish government. The much acclaimed Danish architect and planner Jan Gehl had paid Amman a visit and selected the Abu Darwish Mosque as a suitable site for a new square that would equally focus on East and West Amman. Jordanian architect Ayman Zuaiter, known for his context-sensitive neo-traditional approach, was then commissioned to design the square. While Jan Gehl emphasized people watching qualities that allegedly would attract locals and tourists alike as he believes people attract people, Ayman Zuaiter advised against it with the knowledge that the residents are rather conservative and prefer to stay private. Three new buildings on a pedestrianized area of 45,000 sqm emerged from this collaboration. So, an intersection with a service taxi stop, groundlevel shops, and an informal football field made way for the Abu Darwish Square (see Fig. 8 and 9). While it started off as a promising project, it has eventually failed to meet residents’ needs and wishes. Instead, it has become a source of great disturbance and contributed to the overall stigmatization of Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh as a whole.

**Head of Mosque’s Committee** „The square ruined this neighborhood in every sense. This used to be a reputable neighborhood...I love Al Ashrafiyeh but I can’t live here anymore. I moved to Tlaa Al Ali.“

**Male Shop Owner in Taj Street** „In the past 10 years, we have seen things here that you only see in movies. Al Ashrafiyeh has become one of the least livable neighborhoods in Amman.“

Fig. 2 Public Space Typology Mapping of Selected „Failed“ Urban Development Projects in Amman

# Setting

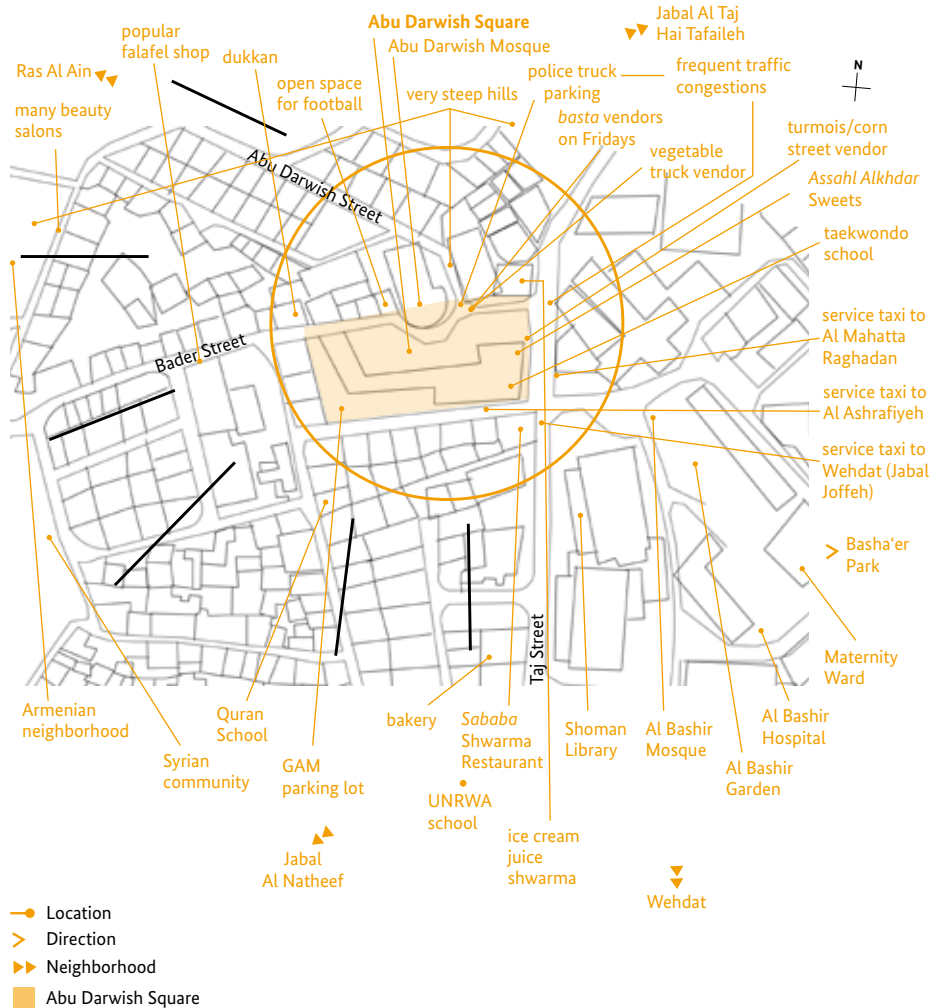


Fig. 3 Urban Framework Points of Interest around the Abu Darwish Square

## THE ASHRAFIYEH COCKTAIL

The Abu Darwish Mosque unmistakably attracts the eye of any passersby and it may very likely be the first thing a first-time visitor will spot on the Abu Darwish Square. Only at a second glance, one's gaze will shift to the plaza-like open space in front of the mosque which is dominated by smooth limestone surfaces. Users of the space are largely exposed to the at times brutal or soothing heat and light of the sun unless they can secure one of the seating options scattered across the plaza with the occasional tree providing shade. A small viewing platform can be found next to the mosque. Additionally, a set of stairs encloses most of the plaza and doubles as auditorium-like seating at the doorsteps of 17 dark-brown wooden gates, housing single-story spaces for charitable associations, a barber shop, a photography shop, an optician, and several artistic workshops (see Fig. 4 and 10). A two-story cultural center with a public library and a retractable event hall that opens up to the plaza offers English and computer literacy classes, *dabke* dances, painting lessons, as well as lectures and special events. The cultural center is connected to a parking lot and a parking garage as well as public bathrooms.

**Elderly Male Resident** „When the mosque was first constructed, there was nearly nothing around, only open space with some sheep and a *hawooz* which provided water once a week.“

**Male Resident from the Armenian Neighborhood:** „I take people who visit to see the mosque. It is part of the history.“

The Abu Darwish Mosque used to be a stand-alone structure. Today, it is surrounded by a dense residential area, steep and small busy streets, as well as the all-dominant Al Bashir hospital, built in the 1950s (see Fig. 3 and Box 1). To the south, along Taj Street, one can find a number of affordable shops, among others, for falafel, shwarma, fried

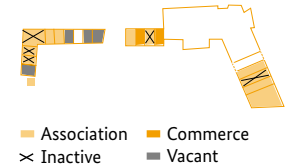
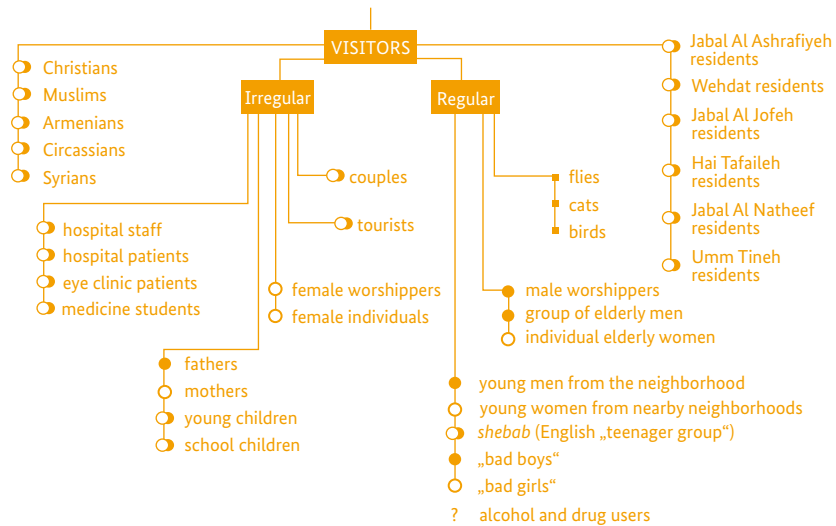
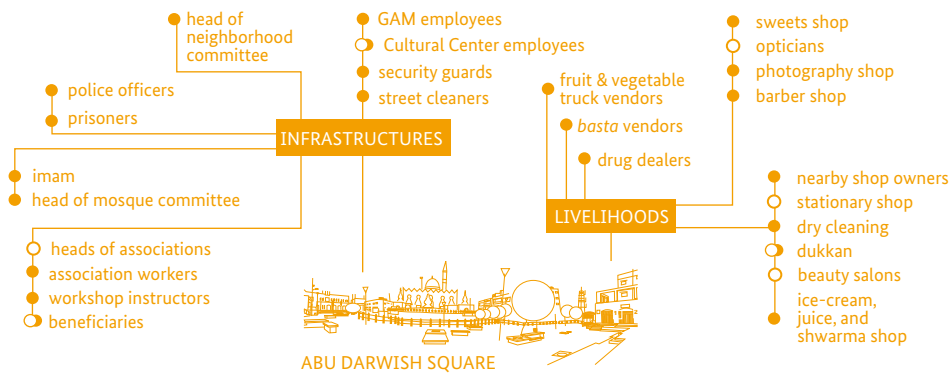


Fig. 4 List of Associations at the Abu Darwish Square

- 1 Jordan Medical Services Association
- 2 Jordanian House
- 3 Amman and Balkan Cultural Association
- 4 Yarmouk Founders Association
- 5 Source of Faith Association
- 6 Challenge and Creativity Association
- 7 Jordan Handicraft Producers Association
- 8 Electronic Integration of Heritage / Solidarity for the Deaf

**Box 1 Al Bashir Hospital** This public hospital is widely known among Ammanis for being comparably affordable and for treating prisoners, too. The latter come with handcuffs and police escorts while a police truck parks and waits outside next to the Abu Darwish Mosque.



○ Female ? unknown  
 ● Male ■ non-human

Fig. 5 Actor Network Selected Users of the Abu Darwish Square

chicken, coffee, tea, sweets, juice and ice cream (see Fig. 6). One of the two Shoman Library branches in Amman is located nearby and it is seemingly packed all day every day (see Fig. 7). It is especially popular among male and female students from the area and the hospital, some preparing for their classes and exams, others simply hanging out in the entrance's arcade or on a colorful bench and table. Going further south, there is a large intersection beyond which the Wehdat Camp is located and whose residents also make use of the Abu Darwish Square (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 6 Price List for Selected Items at the Abu Darwish Square

0.20 JD	Falafel (per piece)
0.65 JD	Knafeh (half piece)
0.50 JD	Arabic Ice Cream
0.50 JD	Coffee
2.00 JD	Shwarma Meal (3x Sandwich)
0.60 JD	Small Shwarma
0.75 JD	Ice Cream Cone
0.60 JD	Soft Ice Cream Large
0.75 JD	Juice Small
1.50 JD	Juice Large
0.25 JD	Water Bottle (600 ml)
0.50 JD	3x Plain Ka'ak Bread

Fig. 7 Library Opening Hours

Cultural Center	
Sat-Thu	8 am - 3 pm
Fridays	closed

Shoman Library	
Sat-Thu	9 am - 9 pm
Fridays	3 pm - 9 pm
Winter	till 8 pm

**Young Man** „I used to come here 2-3 years ago. But why come here when you can go to a higher class area? The area is not nice, it's a sha'bi area.“

**Female Kioks Owner** „This neighborhood is full of bad things. Our neighbors were drug dealers and we didn't know it... My shop is on sale now, I only ask for 3.000 JD. One buyer said he would take it for 1.000 JD.“

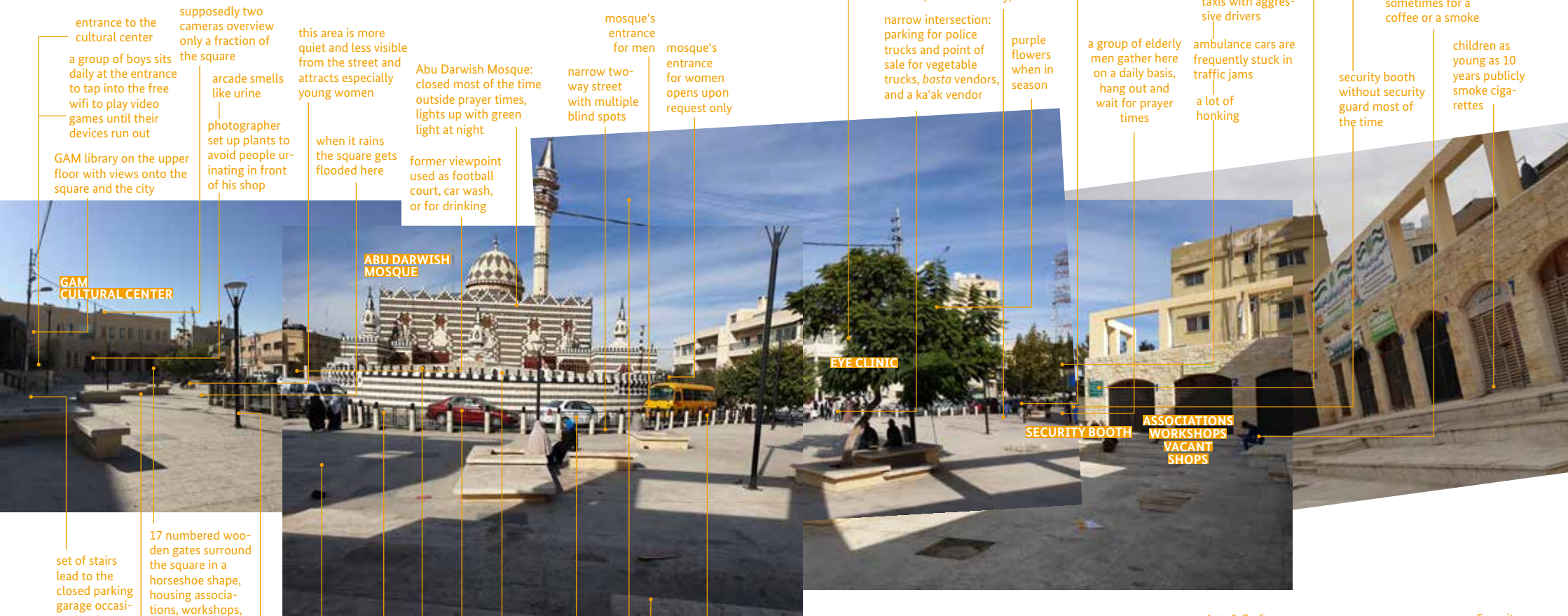
**Head of the Neighborhood Committee** „My father loved Al Ashrafiyeh, he didn't want to live anywhere else.“

Many would describe Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh as a sha'bi area which usually refers to a poorer and more conservative lifestyle. Truth is, the people in the area have a variety of backgrounds that can partly be traced back to Amman's various migration histories. This makes the neighborhood not only a dense but also a diverse one. A white female Muslim resident from Serbia wearing the niqab once referred to the area as a „cocktail“ where Jordanians, Palestinians, Armenians, Syrians, Europeans, Circassians, as well as Orthodox, Christians, and Muslims live side by side (see Fig. 5).

**Female Beauty Salon Owner** „Al Ashrafiyeh is a nice neighborhood, you know. It has an equal presence of Christians and Muslims. We, at the beauty salon, benefit from both holiday seasons.“

**Male Resident on Armenian Neighborhood:** „The community was very close. It's different now. Most of my friends have emigrated. I only have two friends left here. Armenians are a minority here now.“

Fig. 8 Abu Darwish Square in Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh Perspective from the middle of the square



entrance to the cultural center  
 a group of boys sits daily at the entrance to tap into the free wifi to play video games until their devices run out  
 GAM library on the upper floor with views onto the square and the city

supposedly two cameras overview only a fraction of the square  
 arcade smells like urine  
 photographer set up plants to avoid people urinating in front of his shop  
 when it rains the square gets flooded here

this area is more quiet and less visible from the street and attracts especially young women  
 Abu Darwish Mosque: closed most of the time outside prayer times, lights up with green light at night  
 former viewpoint used as football court, car wash, or for drinking

mosque's entrance for men  
 mosque's entrance for women opens upon request only  
 narrow two-way street with multiple blind spots

a number of opticians surround the square due to this eye clinic  
 children's play area with mobile games that are stored in the security booth and can be used for a small fee (in summer only)

narrow intersection: parking for police trucks and point of sale for vegetable trucks, *basta* vendors, and a *ka'ak* vendor  
 purple flowers when in season

food waste piles up in the benches and attracts a lot of flies and some cats  
 elderly women, mothers with children, and hospital staff as well as patients tend to sit down under the trees here

Al Bashir service taxis with aggressive drivers  
 ambulance cars are frequently stuck in traffic jams  
 a lot of honking

signboard with rules that are meant to protect the square from wear and tear

workers at the sweet shop take their breaks here, have a smoke, drink coffee, and chat with the elderly men  
 small groups and male individuals sit down here, sometimes for a coffee or a smoke

security booth without security guard most of the time

children as young as 10 years publicly smoke cigarettes

set of stairs lead to the closed parking garage occasionally shows traces of alcohol bottles  
 17 numbered wooden gates surround the square in a horseshoe shape, housing associations, workshops, shops, or vacancy

though the square is lit at night, there are still many dark spots

boys play football, cycle, rollerskate, and frequently get into fights

some boys climb onto the mosque and „cause trouble“

the mosque's rooftop had to be renewed multiple times due to vandalism

shoes often dangle off the electricity lines  
 cars park in small parking bay

visitors of the square have to search for the nearest fence opening to get in or out  
 many parts of the square are broken or have been removed, including benches, garbage bins, and stairs

on Fridays, men gather and pray under the little shade from the trees or the building

in the evening, young men often sit on the fence  
 boys sometimes jump on the back of a van and take a short ride on the auxiliary road

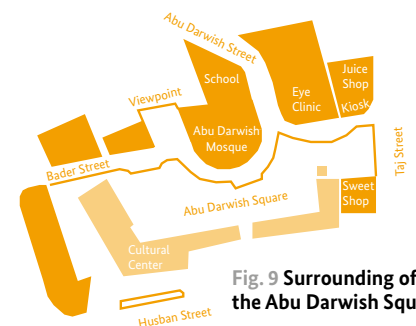


Fig. 9 Surrounding of the Abu Darwish Square

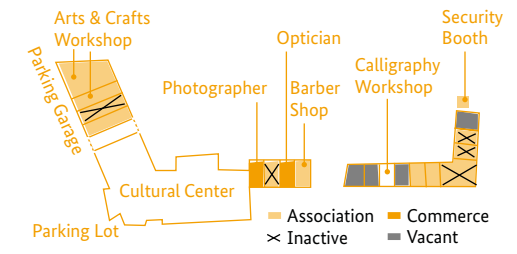
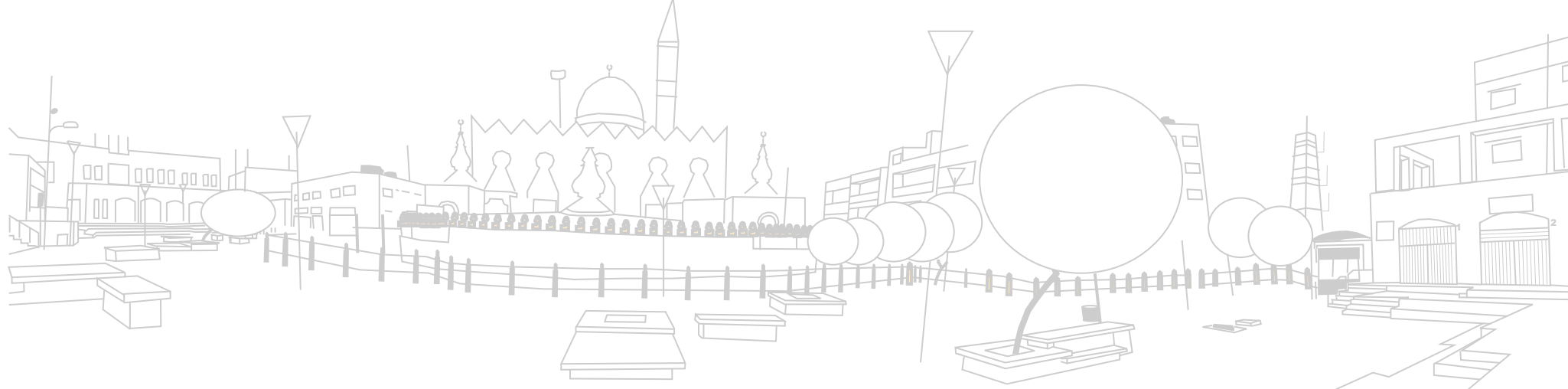


Fig. 10 Facilities at the Abu Darwish Square

Mayor Omar Maani  
Jan Gehl  
Ministry of Culture  
Ministry of Awqaf  
Ministry of Planning  
and International  
Cooperation  
IRADA  
economic  
empowerment  
home business  
bad business  
electricity bills  
internet  
online connectivity  
virtual space  
street-vending  
licenses  
meeting point  
anonymity  
curiosity  
recognition  
(mis)trust  
dependencies  
close-knit community  
family  
obligation  
control  
ownership  
deceit  
conservatism  
societal pressure  
reputation  
misunderstanding  
misconception  
culture  
Culture  
a way of life  
judgment  
hospitality  
violence

Mustafa Hassan  
"Abu Darwish" Sharikas  
Islam  
Sufism  
Sunнизм  
Mamluk architecture  
Ottoman architecture  
weather  
aesthetics  
visibility  
inaccessibility  
closure  
noise pollution  
topography  
landscaping  
many hardscapes  
few softscapes  
limited green elements  
maintenance  
mismanagement  
suspicion  
insects  
animals  
commerce  
traffic node  
Ayman Zuaiter  
(Tibah Consultants)  
Ammar Khammash  
Mazen AlHares  
(mosque committee)  
urban planning  
systems  
mixed-use areas  
'mashrou'  
saha  
failure  
investments  
foreign donors  
Danish government  
GAM  
Ministry of Tourism

car repair  
Kia Sephia  
Diana minibus  
silver Hyundai  
white mortuary van  
cigarette smoke  
argileh smoke  
smell of urine  
smell of garbage  
metal bins  
car fumes  
stolen bins  
trees  
smell of corn  
smell of fast food  
smell of burned  
materials  
wind breeze  
heat of sun  
closed passageways  
cold stones  
fence  
wet ground  
square access points  
different tiles  
orange light  
call to prayer  
loud Arabic music  
ambulance siren  
police whistles  
Cultural Center  
library with a view  
rehearsal hall  
Abu Darwish Street  
gallery  
(Abd Al Hamid)  
associations  
"Shoman library"  
photography shop  
hair & beauty salons  
barber shop  
service taxi stops  
optics shop  
stationary shop  
medical supplies shop  
mosaic workshops  
calligraphy workshop  
drawing workshop  
Al Sahl Al Akhdar  
Hanini  
sweet shop  
parking lot  
Sababa  
Restaurant  
Restaurtant  
schools  
inaccessible parking  
UNRWA schools  
security guard booth  
taekwondo center  
children's play area  
eye clinic



before prayer  
after prayer  
Cultural Center  
opening times  
(till 15:00)  
Shoman library times  
school schedules  
busy around 7-10 pm  
dangerous  
after 10 pm  
water days  
(Tue + Wed)  
religion  
money  
rumors  
gossip  
stories  
school  
teachers  
school boys  
school girls  
diets  
foreign media  
(from Iraq, Egypt)  
hospital

crimes  
hope  
hopelessness  
misery  
social circles  
nostalgia  
rules & regulations  
safety  
security  
fragmentation  
health  
education  
unemployment  
purpose  
abandoned areas  
waqar al makan  
(Eng. "sacredness  
of the place")  
migration  
diversity  
melting pot  
gender segregation  
fun  
role models  
mosque opening times  
Jumma prayer  
daytime  
nighttime  
curfew  
weekend  
holidays  
Ramadan  
Eid  
elections  
shops on Taj Street  
close at 10 pm  
associations open  
"whenever they want"  
basta times

**Fig. 11 Actants Overview of selected non-human actors (actants) that influence the production of the Abu Darwish Square**

EXPLICIT  
ACTANTS

Implicit  
Actants

Wehdat (Camp)  
Sharifa 21  
Armenia's Jewel bakery  
Loulai bakery  
Aisha Umm Al  
Moomeneen library  
sunflower seeds  
coffee cups  
shop signs  
small flower pots  
sun  
bustas  
shade  
backpacks  
hat  
bicycles  
rollerblades  
school uniform  
white coat  
taekwondo suits  
trash  
crutches  
flower pots  
eye patches  
Guy Fawkes masks  
metal cans  
face masks  
styrofoam boxes  
(before Covid19)  
puddle of rainwater  
rain  
flood  
gift shop sign  
blue shop numbers  
dirt  
spilled drinks  
mosque's key  
arcade  
wooden gates  
male mosque entrance  
female mosque entrance  
graffiti  
black and white stripes  
citadel  
hill  
inaccessible view  
library view  
vegetable truck  
police truck  
gas truck  
cars  
new road  
traffic  
accidents

# Public Urban Life

## Facilities Comfort & Discomfort

Some call the urban development project Abu Darwish „square“ (Arabic *saha*), others call it the „project“ (Arabic *mashr'ou*) with a hint of resentment in their tone (see Fig. 9 and 12). And when listening to the people in and around Al Ashrafiyeh, one could suspect there is not much to admire about either despite its high-flung promises. In fact, many

**Woman from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh on the Abu Darwish Square** „No, no, the *mash'rou*? No way! I only live close to it, I don't go there, never. No no, my daughter doesn't even pass by it. The route is shorter if you walk through the square but we take the longer road. Even when I am with her she says mom let's not pass by the *mash'rou*, it's full of drunk people and bad boys... We might go to the mosque during Ramadan only.“

**Woman working at the Abu Darwish Square** „You have picked the worst place for a study. This is a bad area, a lot of problems happened here. I see girls harassed all the time. I come through the backdoor everyday. I don't like to pass by.“

**Imam** „This square is a gathering place for bad people. Families wouldn't sit here. During the holidays, the square is very busy and people who need to use the bathroom come to the mosque. It's very disrespectful.“

changes have been made to the original plans, as the architect and local residents recall (see Fig. 13). The trees planted are fewer and smaller than anticipated due to miscommunication and limited funds, the mosque is no longer lit as it used to be for lack of clarity about electricity bill payments, and most of the provided garbage bins have been broken or stolen. Why the public bathrooms have been closed is not entirely clear but, as a consequence, the mosque becomes a substitute

Fig. 12 The Abu Darwish Square before (above) and after redevelopment (below)



Fig. 13 Original plans of the Abu Darwish Square in comparison to how it looks today

which agonizes the imam as he finds it unfit for a place of worship, irrespective of the fact that the mosque is nearly always closed for women and only opened during prayer times for men anyway (see Box 2). Also the viewpoint next to the mosque, offering vast views over Amman, is no longer accessible. After incidents of children coming dangerously close to the edge during their football games and intoxicated men actually falling off the viewpoint an unsurmountable metal wall was installed for safety and has not been re-opened since.

**Imam** „We stopped the funerals. There is not enough parking. There used to be funerals everyday.“

**Male Shop Owner on Taj Street** „The movement they designed, it's like they never did a traffic study. The hospital is here, how can the ambulance get stuck in traffic at the entrance of the hospital?“

**Man from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „Have you seen the slope next to the eye hospital? Who would go up that road?“

The Abu Darwish Square is accessible via various modes of transport. First off, the neighborhood has a fairly extensive sidewalk network for pedestrians and distances between different points of interest are short. This comes to the advantage of children, young students, mothers, and elderly although the latter might prefer motorized transport due to the slopy topography. Service taxis and yellow taxis stop very closeby between the square and the Al Bashir hospital and provide good connections to

**Box 2 The Sacredness of the Place** Mosques are places of worship and sanctity and are to be approached with respect and dignity. The construction of the Abu Darwish Square, according to many, has tainted the *waqar al makan* (English „sacredness of the place“) through practices like people watching, public display of intimacy, gambling, fighting, cursing, the consumption of food, beverages, *argileh*, alcohol, and other drugs.

**Head of Mosque's Committee** „People who want to look at the mosque can do so in passing. We don't want them to sit in front of a mosque. This isn't a beach, you can't come here to sit with your girlfriend and with your friends. Even the families and children disrespect the mosque. The smell of *argileh* as we pray, the trash thrown over the mosque's roof...“

## Accessibility Mobility

pray in the mosque  
 pray in front of the mosque  
 pray in front of the imam  
 wait for the mosque to open  
 close the mosque quickly  
 look at the mosque  
 listen to the Imam  
 choose a place to sit  
 sit down in the square  
 find shade



**Break Things**

Young boys and teenagers come to the square to throw and break things - it seems it can be anything. Many parts of the square have been destroyed and the remains of broken rocks and missing metal remain visible to any visitor of the square.

find a clean spot  
 stay under a tree  
 move away from a tree  
 sit on the stairs  
 sit on a cardboard  
 sit in front of the shop  
 face the mosque  
 face Taj Street  
 face the building  
 complex  
 pull out a plastic chair  
 buy a snack/sweets  
 eat a snack/sweets  
 admire the place  
 loathe the place  
 take pictures  
 pose for pictures  
 take selfies  
 keep eyes down  
 watch people  
 stare at someone  
 pssing  
 wear prayer costumes  
 dress modestly  
 dress traditionally  
 wear pajamas  
 take shoes off  
 chat with somebody  
 judge somebody  
 sit in silence

read something  
 sit in the library  
 greet people you know  
 see unfamiliar faces  
 recognize someone  
 cross the square in hurry  
 assist somebody walking  
 avoid the square  
 change location  
 secretly go to the square  
 stay as short as possible  
 stay as long as possible  
 leave by Maghreb prayer  
 run across the square  
 play in the plaza  
 play football  
 play tag  
 hit somebody with the ball  
 use the internet  
 play video games  
 hack a game  
 pay for games  
 talk on the phone  
 pass around phone number  
 lie about whereabouts  
 and missing metal  
 rollerskate  
 skate with a microphone  
 climb a tree



**Go to the Mosque**

The red door opens during prayer times for men. Women rarely go to pray here so their entrance, also a red door, stays closed and is only opened upon request.

climb on the mosque  
 climb on cars  
 jump on cars  
 push a broken car  
 climb on the fence  
 through shoes up  
 spill drinks/food  
 get breakfast  
 throw trash on the ground  
 throw stones  
 break things  
 argue with somebody  
 scold somebody  
 fight with each other  
 watch a fight  
 hit somebody

cry  
 shout  
 harass  
 curse and swear  
 swear at God  
 show middle finger  
 throw water on somebody  
 carry a knife  
 smoke cigarettes  
 smoke argileh  
 pass cigarettes to a child  
 drink coffee  
 hang out alone  
 hang out with company  
 come regularly  
 come occasionally  
 create a traffic jam  
 wash car  
 close shop during prayer  
 unload gas bottles  
 sell vegetables  
 sell secondhand  
 collect trash  
 collect metal cans  
 drag plastic baskets around  
 sell Fine tissues  
 sell perfume  
 sell tormos/corn & balloons  
 sell ka'ak (sesame bread)  
 cover somebody's sales  
 gain (mis)trust through regular presence  
 set up kid's games  
 sell cotton candy  
 park next to the square  
 park behind the cultural center  
 park underground  
 park for a long time  
 honk the car horn  
 drive by several times  
 play loud music from the car  
 play loud music in the square  
 pause music during call for prayer  
 play Quran radio  
 count money  
 repair something  
 feed cats  
 leave food for cats  
 shoo away a cat  
 shoo away annoying people  
 leave security booth empty  
 sit in security booth



**Climb a Tree**

Many users of the square are children. Yet, no children games are in sight so instead games are invented on the spot, like climbing on a tree.

get rid of flies  
 enjoy windy breeze  
 hold hands  
 push a stroller  
 carry a baby  
 make inappropriate gestures  
 fear strangers  
 close street with tape  
 skip school  
 hear about a crime  
 pay for influence  
 scared for life  
 chat in the library  
 escape  
 study at the library  
 hang out at the library  
 clean square  
 leave square dirty  
 run out of power  
 visit the eye hospital  
 celebrate a birthday  
 festive shooting  
 attend a workshop  
 draw paintings  
 draw calligraphy  
 create mosaics  
 dance dabke  
 teach a lesson  
 hold hands  
 kiss hands  
 check if anybody is looking  
 hide in a corner  
 dry bread  
 control somebody  
 ignore somebody  
 ignore something  
 set something on fire  
 have a funeral  
 have a wedding  
 be intoxicated  
 remove rain water with buckets  
 use ablution facilities  
 ask for help  
 help somebody

other parts of Amman thanks to its direct route from/to Al Mahatta Raghadan. Private cars, different to more car-friendly areas in Amman, might face some difficulties reaching the Abu Darwish Square because of clogged traffic, unusual car manoeuvres, and ambulances trying to reach the hospital quickly. Following complaints and a petition, an auxiliary road was restored on the formerly fully pedestrianized square. The two-way road now circles around the mosque and is separated from the open space through a hip-high metal fence to protect pedestrians from car traffic, however, it also disrupts natural pedestrian movements and its curvature creates unclear traffic flows, blind spots (especially in the Abu Darwish Street junction) as well as challenging driving conditions with cars parked along the fence (see Fig. 13). On top, according to some residents, these cars host illicit activities, ranging from car washing over street vending to the sale of substances which further feeds into the public's general negative perception of the square (see Box 3). The parking garage might have been able to diffuse some traffic challenges but it has been closed to the public for similar reasons as other access points and passageways connected to the square have been closed: to eliminate spaces for unwanted activities like alcohol and drug consumption and gatherings in invisible corners. A number of other activities are explicitly forbidden, however, it does not prevent them from happening (see Fig. 14-16).



„Do not play football, do not bring argileh, do not light fire, do not play on bicycles or scooters.“



„This place has surveillance cameras.“

**Fig. 15 GAM Signboards at the Abu Darwish Square** All forbidden activities can be encountered at the square and most surveillance cameras are no longer intact.

**Box 3 Cars Parked Along the Fence** Every once in a while, a group of teenage boys and young men mostly found sitting in front of the barber shop cross the square to communicate with the cars parked in the auxiliary road behind the fence. What occurs here is left to people's imagination - and imagine they do. Most of the time, the possible explanations circle around drug dealing and other illegal activities.

**Fig. 16 Soft Landscaping** To avoid that especially young men mingle or urinate next to his shop, the photography shop owner has placed plants and flower pots in selected spots.

**Fig. 14 Public Practices** Selected Public Practices as observed at the Abu Darwish Square



Quiet passageway connecting the Abu Darwish Square with the residential Husban Street



One seating option seems to be particularly popular: it provides shade from a tree that carries purple blooms when in season and users can lean their backs against the stone while having a good view onto the mosque as well as the square



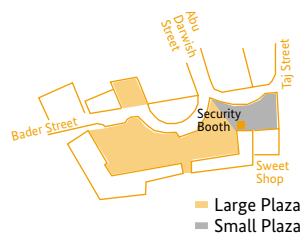
View from the library in the cultural center onto the large plaza of the square, the auxiliary road, the viewpoint, and the city of Amman



View of the small plaza from the auxiliary road onto the sweets shop, a seating area, a fence opening, and people gathering next to the sweet shop in the shade



**Entertainment  
Privacy**



**Fig. 17 The Abu Darwish Square with its small and large plaza**



„I don't like to stay at home. I leave the house around 7:30 to visit a friend's shop until around 3 pm, then I come here for the *Asr* prayer and to see my friends here.“

**Box 4 Elderly Men at the Small Plaza** Most prominently, a handful of elderly men come to the square practically every day to pray at the mosque - and to hang out next to the security booth. In a way, they have fully appropriated their nook with seemingly exclusive access rights as it is only them who make use of this part of the square. Rarely does a woman join them and, if so, she is most likely someone's relative. The men occasionally expand their territory by moving around the plaza or sitting on the sweet shop's stairs, using cardboard and pillows for more comfort while leaning their backs to the walls and taking off their shoes. Sometimes, a plastic chair is added to the circle, illustrating how much this group of elderly men seems to feel at ease in this public square.

**Group of Men from Umm Tineh** „You know who comes here? People who don't have enough money to go somewhere else.“

Although materially, visually, and functionally connected, the Abu Darwish Square is essentially fragmented into separate sections with varying degrees of privacy. Most clearly, there is a distinction between the smaller and larger plaza area (see Fig. 17), each attracting different people and different activities, thus, appearing to have different characters and lives of their own (see Box 4 and 5).

**Woman (30) from Wehdat** „The other [smaller] side of the square is safe because of the sweets shop. But it's also louder, there is too much noise from the hospital and the cars.“

**Co-Researcher's Field Diary** „The flies are part of the space now, all fly sizes that exist are here!“

**Woman from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „The square is too small. Anybody can hear you and know what you talk about.“

There is usually more commotion on the smaller plaza due to its proximity to shops, especially the nextdoor sweets shop, public and private transport, street vendors, clinics, and the greater number of seating. During the day, many elderly women and mothers with young children sit down here to consume take away food or a homemade meal, to chat and gossip, to watch their children play, or to rest. Sometimes, hospital staff in white or green robes and patients with eye patches, crutches, bandages etc. come here for a break but they usually stay on the premises of the Al Bashir hospital. The square's seating comes in concrete blocks with in-built flower beds that show no traces of plants but a good amount of garbage and food that, first and foremost, attracts flies and street cats. The larger plaza is more open and quiet during daytime as many activities occur behind closed doors in the surrounding buildings with no or little interaction with the public sphere. Outdoor activities on the plaza are generally limited to commuters crossing the square, mothers picking up their



„We go back home after school, eat, and then come here...till our devices run out of power.“

**Box 5 School Boys and Wifi at the Large Plaza** Nearly daily after school, a group of boys sits down on the window sill of the cultural center or in the arcade in front of the entrance (which smells like urine) to tap into the *Zain* wifi network to play video games like *PubG* on a phone or tablet. Access to the 24 hours of free wifi requires a *Zain* phone number but not all boys have a *Zain* subscription so they ask around until they find somebody willing to lend them their number. In the public eye, these boys are considered a nuisance, bothering people at the square, wasting their time on video games, and blocking the space in front of the cultural center. Its employees sometimes try to intimidate them by pouring water on them, yet they keep returning.

**Safety  
Young Single Men  
Reputation  
Gender Separation**

children from school, the Shomann Library, or the cultural center, workers roaming the square, young men carrying bags of bread home, and young girls and boys strolling around. During the day, school

**Teenage Boy from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „We come here every day. We come here to break things.“

**Boy (13) from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „I used to smoke in third grade. All my friends used to smoke.“

**Head of Neighborhood Committee** „The couples sit here without any shame. They were hugging the other day.“

boys are the dominant group as they play football, roller skate, and climb trees across the entire plaza for lack of a playground. Fights break out quickly but usually end just as abruptly. Some people come to the plaza to seek solitude, perhaps to do something that is considered immoral or indecent. This can include young boys smoking cigarettes, young women sitting at the square, and couples wanting to be more intimate (see Fig. 14).

**Imam** „When it gets dark here, the worst type of people come in.“

**Elderly Female Resident** „I have seen a boy knifing another in front of my eyes. I ran back home quickly, I will never go there again.“

The square is meant to be a lively place of gathering amid Al Ashrafiyeh, yet it seems to attract not as many users as anticipated. Past 5 pm, 10 pm, let alone during nighttime, the atmosphere changes dramatically as the women disappear from the scene and the number of male users temporarily picks up as well as words of warning not to set foot onto the square to avoid „troublemakers“. Bloody knife fights and murders have occurred here, all the while security and police remain largely absent (see Box 6). Thus, unsurprisingly, numerous stories have been told about this square, tainting it with an extremely bad reputation. It would be wrong to downplay all of them, though it would also not do the place justice to believe everything people say since much is grounded in hearsay. What can be

#### Box 6 A Matter of Security

According to the plans, the Abu Darwish Square should have surveillance cameras, regular police patrols, and a security guard stationed at the fixed booth in the middle of the plaza. In reality, however, none of the measures have been followed through. Allegedly, only two surveillance cameras are currently functioning, both recording only a fraction of the square in front of the cultural center and the viewpoint. Police patrols also no longer occur on a regular basis.

In fact, police presence is rather scarce, as a resident complains, creating the impression that the police has abandoned this area and, thereby, leaves people to deal with conflicts, even violent ones, to themselves. As a result, most residents simply avoid certain places and hours out of fear. The security booth contributes little to a sense of safety at the square as it has, in all reality, been turned into a storage room for children's games, chairs, and other miscellaneous items by day and a place of gathering by night. Not a single security guard is in sight most of the times except for occasional „safe“ hours.

**Young Man from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „Many houses in Abdoun have police protecting them and we can't even get one police man. They should look at this area before it dies completely.“

**Teenage Boy from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „Many people benefit from the absence of a security unit here. We had security but they asked to remove them - Al Tafaileh. Tafaileh at GAM, Tafaileh at the cultural center, it's Tafaileh everywhere.“

said with greater certainty, however, is that especially young single women risk to „contract“ a bad reputation from the square and the consequences can become a real safety threat. Based on what can

**Man (26) from Wehdat** „A girl's reputation is everything.“

**Teenage Boy (18)** „If I ever see my sister set foot on this square, my father will kill her.“

**Mother from Wehdat whose daughters attend classes at the Abu Darwish Square** „I got one of the employees' phone number so I can check on the girls when they go in and out of the center.“

**Woman standing alone in the Large Plaza** „I don't come here, I am just waiting for someone.“

be observed at the Abu Darwish Square, there specifically seems to be a connection between a woman's bad reputation and the presence of young single men, the latter being a potential cause of the former. Co-existence seems to be no option. Who are the women who dare to use the square then? Al Ashrafiyeh's populace calls them „bad girls“ who ask for attention from men, do not dress decently, smoke in public, and secretly meet with their boyfriends. Even quicker is people's judgement on young single men, considered „bad boys“ on all imaginable levels with little chance for a clean slate. Since the common code of conduct in this conservative neighborhood demands that women stay with women and men with men, particularly if young and single, it will almost certainly attract blameful looks by both women and men alike if both sexes sat and interacted together.

**Female Tawjihi Student (17) from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „If I sit here, I will be shamed. Even when I see a girl sitting alone, I would judge her for choosing to sit among the boys.“

The square's bad reputation does not only keep away women trying to maintain a moral public image but also families and when families are absent - so is the case in most public spaces in Amman - indecent or illicit behavior becomes more prevalent. When there is no formal security in place, the presence of families can, to a certain

extent, function as a substitute security system which is powerful enough to contain immoral activities and to soften or even eliminate reputational repercussions. Likewise, families can serve as public barometers for what places are acceptable or unacceptable in conservative societies. The Al Bashir Garden inside the hospital's compound, for example, shows similar phenomena as the Abu Darwish Square since it is publicly accessible and in close proximity with overlapping user groups (see Fig. 18). The garden, however, is far less stigmatized and sometimes attracts families as it holds more positive than negative character traits.

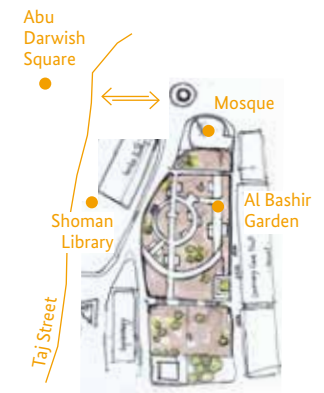
**Group of Women from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh, Wehdat, and Jabal Al Taj** „The people and families who come here can't afford to go anywhere else.“

Despite all the negative connotations, the square has not failed the people in all aspects. A number of voices do express their appreciation but, in the same breath, elaborate that it is not the square that is the issue. It is much more the mismatch of the location, design, and the local culture that caused people's repulsion. The associations and the cultural center, formally entrusted to build a bridge between institutions and the local population, largely turn a blind eye to what occurs in the square and thereby contribute to its public disapproval and decay. Fact is, when economic situations deteriorate and social segregation increases, societal tensions are bound to rise. Meanwhile, investments don't arrive in Al Ashrafiyeh and it appears, the Abu Darwish Square has been left to its own dynamics of power and control (see Fig. 11), leaving little leverage for formal institutions to be involved.

**Photography Shop Owner** „The project is great, wonderful, but not here. It is not suitable for East Amman.“

**Volunteer at an Association** „All these associations are here for personal interests...No society is here for the people, most of them are here for political opportunism.“

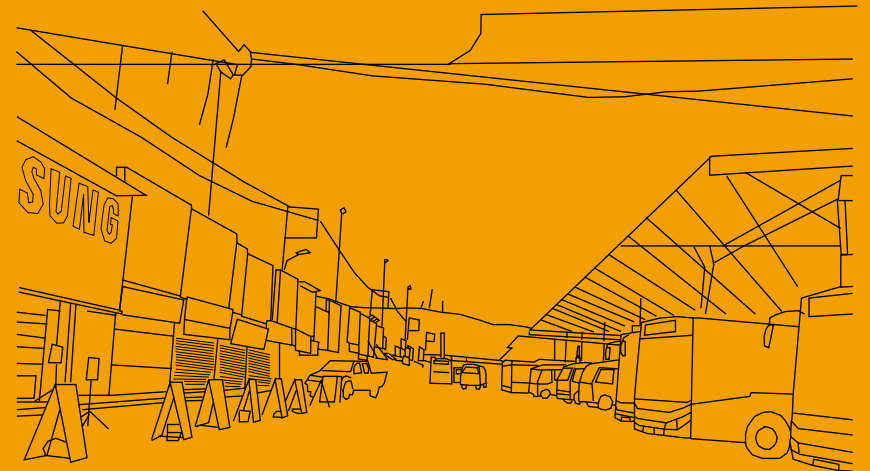
**Female Daily Visitor (40) of the Abu Darwish Square** „This place is public. You will see the sweet and the sour.“



**Fig. 18 Al Bashir Garden**  
Even though it is part of the hospital complex, the Al Bashir Garden is not only being used by medical patients and staff but also by residents as it is more secluded and greener than the Abu Darwish Square. Still, this garden is not everyone's cup of tea as the patients' appearances are not always easy to digest. Once, when a family set up a picnic, for instance, they fled the scene immediately when a woman took out her IV and threw it on the ground in front of them.

**Two Girls (16) skipping school** „When we escape, sometimes we come here [Abu Darwish Square], sometimes we go to Al Bashir Garden. It is nicer, there are trees at least, plus it is calmer.“

# AL MAHATTA RAGHADAN



PUBLIC TRANSPORT STATION

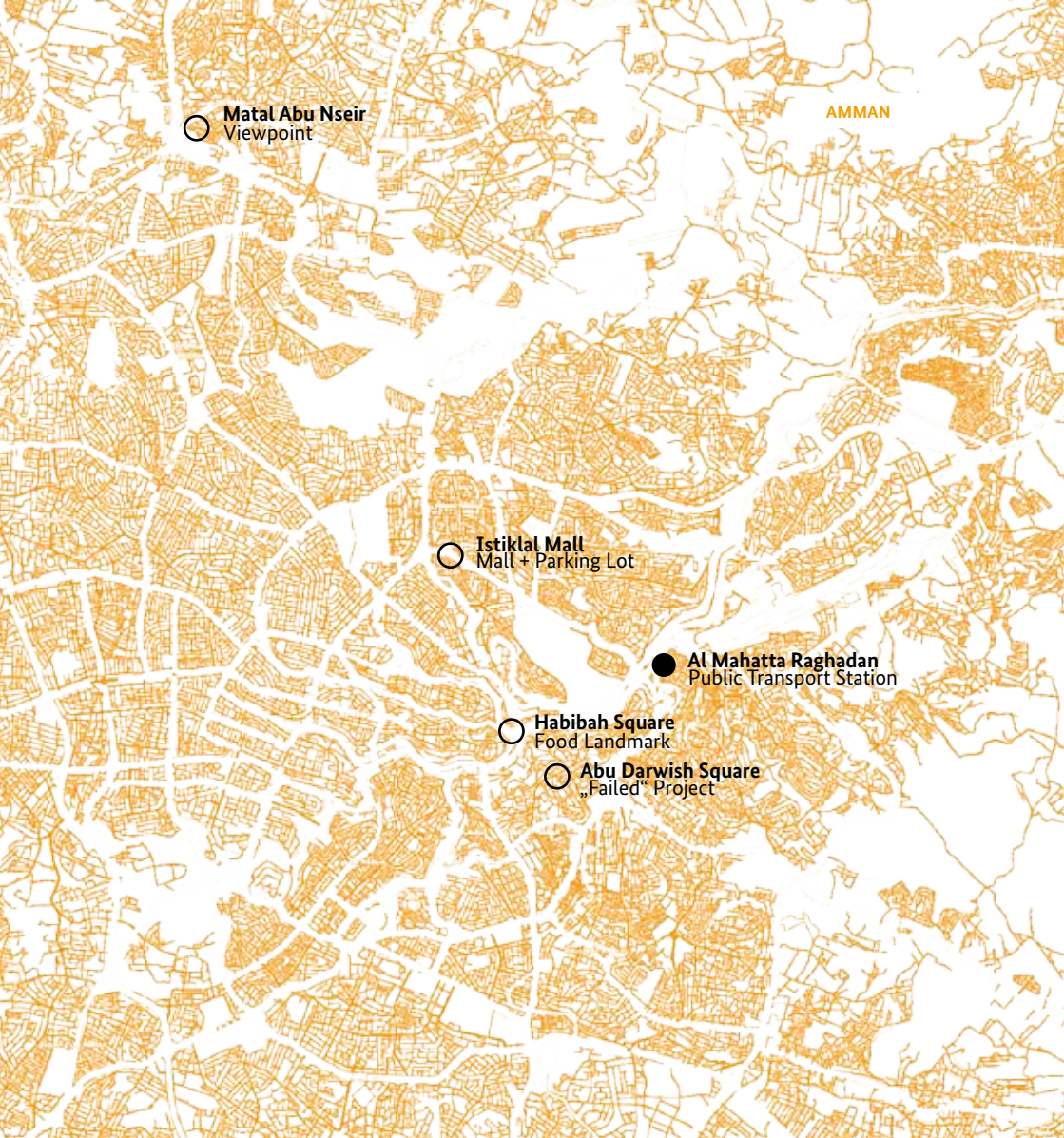


Fig. 1 Field of Research Mapping of Case Studies and Location of Research Site in Amman

## CASE STUDY SELECTION

Public transport hubs inherently attract a wider public and, in theory, target all demographics. In Amman, however, where public transport remains stigmatized, it is mainly reserved for those who do not have the means to access private transport. Because most vehicle owners and breadwinners are male, this applies to women more often than men as well as the marginalized. In order to better understand how Amman's public transport stations do or do not accommodate for the needs and wishes of various types of users, Al Mahatta Raghadan was selected as a case study while attention is given especially to women's experiences in this male-dominated space. Besides being a crucial node for everyday encounters in Amman, Al Mahatta offers alternative glimpses into what role public transport hubs are capable of playing when they provide for more than plain transport.

**Contributing Researchers**  
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 Workshop Participants

**Field Data Collection**  
 non-participant and participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, go-alongs, hang outs, male and female focus group discussions

No. of Field Visits 37  
 No. of Interlocutors 174



### Key Findings & Themes

**Mobility**  
 Al Mahatta is rather hostile for pedestrians while traffic flows are often unclear and obstructive.

**Accessibility**  
 Al Mahatta is centrally located, yet its connections are not ideal. Price levels, however, are fairly affordable.

**Entertainment**  
 Men and women can travel and shop at Al Mahatta in the many shops and markets. Worshippers can attend the mosque. Vulnerable groups can turn to the charity *Tkiyet Um Ali*. There are no green spaces or children's areas.

**Facilities**  
 Al Mahatta provides public bathrooms though they are inadequate for mothers with young children. Furthermore, there is no available seating at the station.

**Privacy**  
 Women seek privacy in public bathrooms while men domesticate the public according to their needs.

**Reputation**  
 Women are careful to maintain the image of decency and a level of invisibility through conservative clothing and inconspicuous activities. Ideally, women avoid loitering and appear to have a clear purpose.

**Comfort & Discomfort**  
 Many users lament the extraordinary long waiting times to catch public transport, especially during

rushhours. Also, the low level of cleanliness and the station's layout does not meet much approval.

**Young Single Men**  
 As a publicly accessible place, young single men can spend time at Al Mahatta without great difficulty. Street harassment is widespread in the male dominated station but, counter to popular belief, it does not only come from young single men but all male demographics.

**Safety**  
 A number of security measures, such as flood lights, police presence, and continuous crowds, ensure Al Mahatta's safety nearly around the clock although they concentrate in certain areas only to which especially women stick to.



Fig. 2 Public Space Typology Mapping of Amman's Main Transport Hubs

## AMMAN'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### Box 1 The Raghadan Complex

In 2003, the Raghadan Station was moved to its current location to temporarily make room for an urban re-development project funded by the Japanese government and what is now known as Raghadan Complex (see Fig. 2).<sup>1</sup> Once the constructions were finished, the transport hub was meant to return. The finishing date came and went by, however, without any sight of the former users and uses returning, even though the re-developed space turned out to be unsuitable and has become more of a parking lot since. Those trying to go back have been prevented from doing so and were referred to the "temporary" location instead which made some people wonder whether Al Mahatta was ever meant to return in the first place. The recently introduced Amman Buses and the future bus rapid transit system (BRT) provide some relief in Amman's public transport sector, though it still cannot meet the demands for a city of Amman's size in population and land. According to current plans, Al Mahatta will become a main BRT station and then receive formal legitimization as a permanent traffic node.

**Coaster Driver (54)** „I prefer old Raghadan station for being closer to Downtown and it was easier for people to use it.“

In Amman, motorized vehicles are the dominant mode of transport. The city's architecture and infrastructures accommodate for it on such a scale that it is largely hostile to the pedestrian. Despite or rather because of so much attention given to cars, multiple times a day Amman's streets clog up and a short-distance journey can easily turn into an hour-long drive.

**Co-Researcher on being stuck in traffic for 3h during rushhour on a bus ride heading towards Al Mahatta** „The journey took nearly as long as it takes to get to Aqaba - and it has a seal!“

An extensive, well-functioning, and diversified public transport network then becomes all the more important in order to release traffic tensions, leaving aside other positive effects like the environment, health, economy, and quality of life for the moment. Yet, public transport in Amman remains inadequate. This comes at the expense of those who do not have access, the means, or desire to make use of cars, may it be their own, borrowed, or hired. So, instead, they have to embrace the shortcomings of the existent public transport system, resort to moving within a smaller radius, or search for alternatives.

**Woman on using Public Transport at Al Mahatta** „We don't have choices.“

Those using public transport will be familiar with the main public transport hubs (see Fig. 2). Raghadan Station or Al Mahatta (English „station“) stands out as a major traffic node for its central location and for being more than a simple transport station. In fact, at Al Mahatta, one is rather under the impression to be at a market place with a station and not the other way around. Surely its relocation from the Raghadan Complex in 2003 and its ongoing temporary status has greatly contributed to its emergence (see Box 1). So, despite its namesake, Al Mahatta represents not only a public transport station but also a makeshift place of commerce, encounter, shelter, worship, and exchange.

<sup>1</sup> Khalil 2019

# Setting

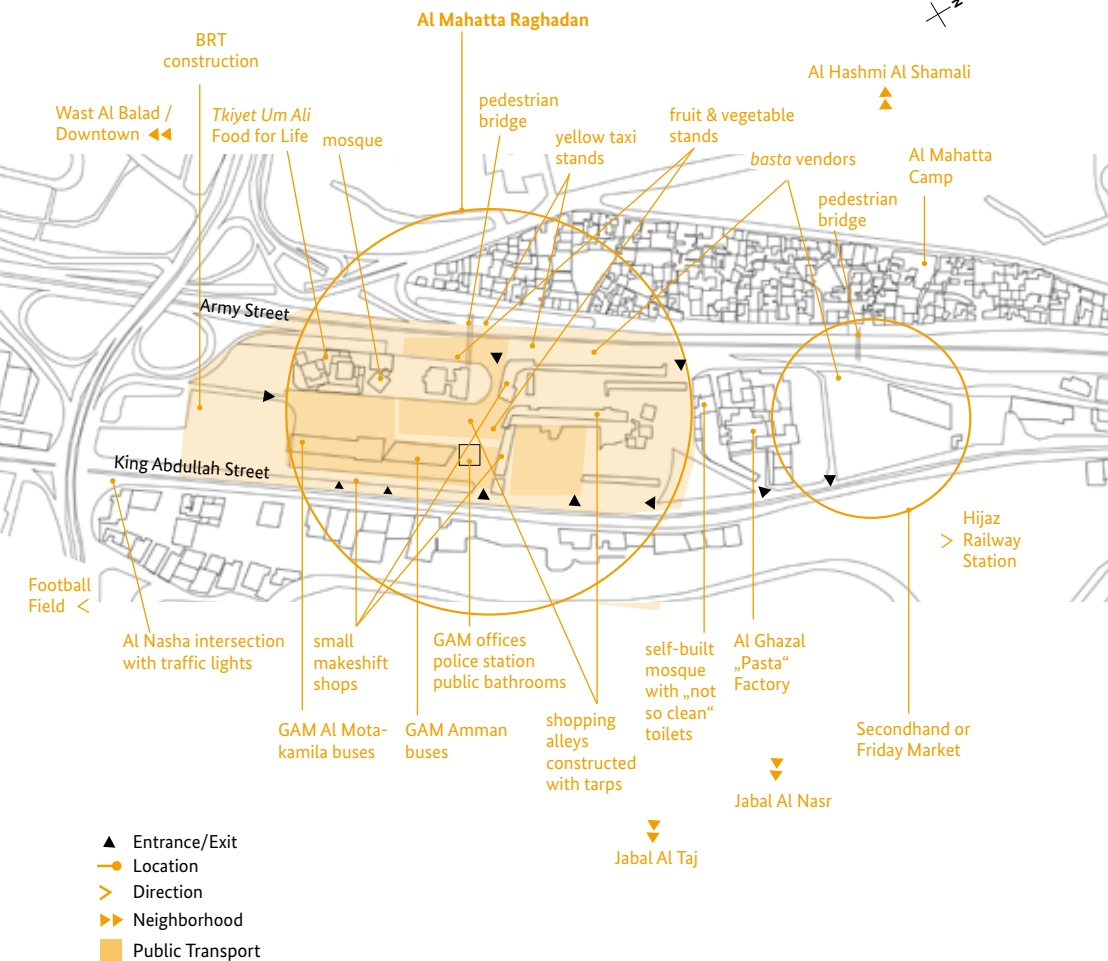


Fig. 3 Urban Framework Points of Interest around Al Mahatta Raghadan

## AL MAHATTA RAGHADAN

Tugged into a valley, also known as Wadi Mahatta, Al Mahatta is located at the eastern gateway to West Al Balad between Army Street and King Abdullah Street (see Fig. 3). Despite being a central station, many points of interest like Downtown's shops and restaurants are still a long walk or extra ride away from Al Mahatta. Certainly, the area has seen more glorious days when the Hijaz Railway Station, only a stonethrow away, was an important stop on the Damascus to Medina route. With the train no longer running for passengers, the train station follows suit with the area's general air of abandonment.

**Station Cleaner** „Do you really believe that any changes will happen? We have been hearing this for 13 years and nothing changes.“

Al Mahatta is essentially split into two halves, divided by *Al Ghazal Modern Flour Mills & Macaroni Factories Co. Ltd.*, commonly referred to as „pasta factory“. It thrones above the area like a fortress. The part closer to West Al Balad, which forms the center of attention in this case study, mainly consists of a public transport station and a market. Neither concentrates on one area but splinters into various parts. Moreover, there is a mosque, the headquarter of the *Tkiyet Um Ali* charity organization, an informal parking lot, and an administrative high-rise building at its center. Public transport is spread into three areas (see Fig. 6-8): a large roofed open space dedicated to buses and coasters [Area A], one area with service taxis and coasters [Area B], and one area with buses, coasters, and service taxis all together [Area C] (see Fig. 4). Some university buses latch onto the station via King Abdullah Street without actually entering it, providing a smooth transition for students and their onward journeys. Area A is generally enclosed by numerous mobile phone shops and a

Fig. 4 Modes of Transport at Al Mahatta



GAM Amman Bus



GAM Al Motakamila Bus



Coaster



Service Taxi



Yellow Taxi

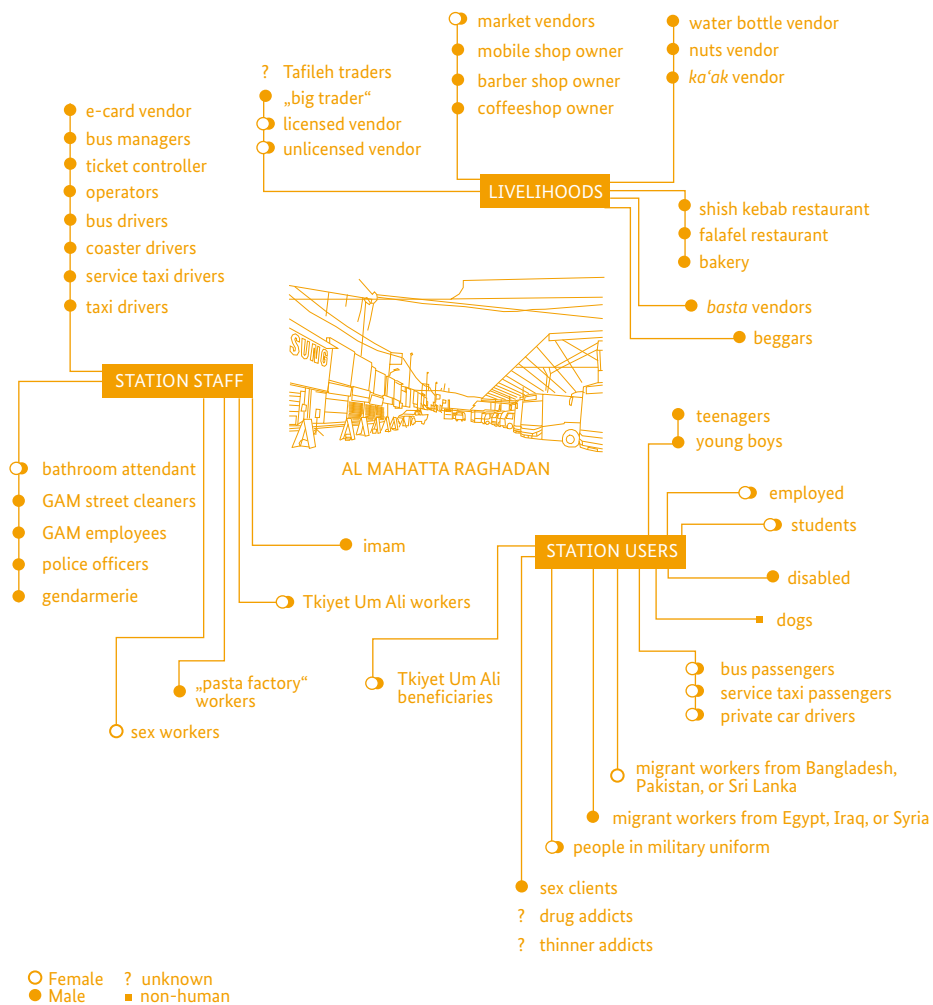


Fig. 5 Actor Network Selected Users of Al Mahatta Raghadan

sizeable market offering vegetables and fruits as well as household appliances, clothes, and anything else one could wish to purchase on his or her way from and to the station. Area B and C, lined with more solid shops, are generally less commercial than Area A. The high-rise building houses GAM offices, a police station, and public bathrooms for women and men. It also functions as a spatial separator while its facilities stay within close reach.



Secondhand market with the „pasta factory“ in the background

The part closest to the Hijaz Railway Station is largely empty land which holds Amman’s largest open air secondhand market. Apart from a pre-existent building for secondhand clothes, numerous *basta* stands sell anything from used cutlery over car tires to diapers here at affordable prices even for the poorest in Amman (see Box 2). This Friday Market, not to be confused with the Friday Market in Ras Al Ain, can be found here any day and time of the week though it does come into full swing on Fridays after *Jumma* prayer. Spatially, the secondhand market remains mostly confined to its half due to internal policies and agreements, although, public transport and secondhand sales come into contact when vehicles drive through the market and take the one-way outbound road that loops right through the *bastas*.

**Box 2 The Secondhand Market**  
Vendors sell their goods on *bastas* that can come in wooden boards and self-constructed tables or plain blankets on the ground. Some vendors spend their nights on-site in makeshift beds although they are not homeless. Others can make a lucrative living off their secondhand sales.

**Young Woman whose uncle works at Al Mahatta** „Do you think the vendors here are poor? Never think of that. They receive very high daily profits.“

**Basta Vendor at Al Mahatta** „They live in deteriorated conditions. If you see their houses you will understand why it may be better to sleep here than their houses.“

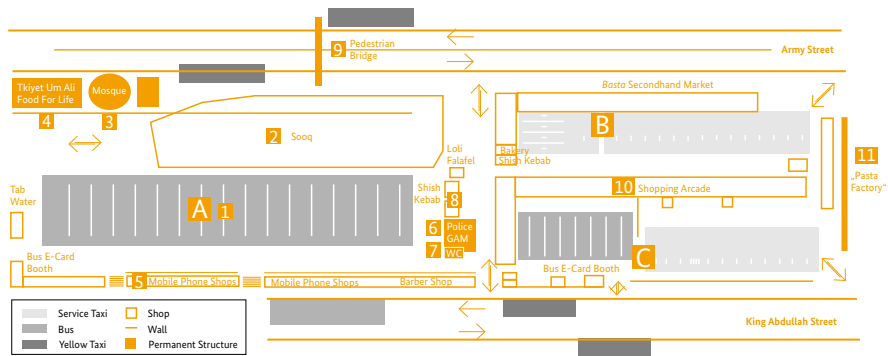


Fig. 7 Overview of Public Transport Section at Al Mahatta

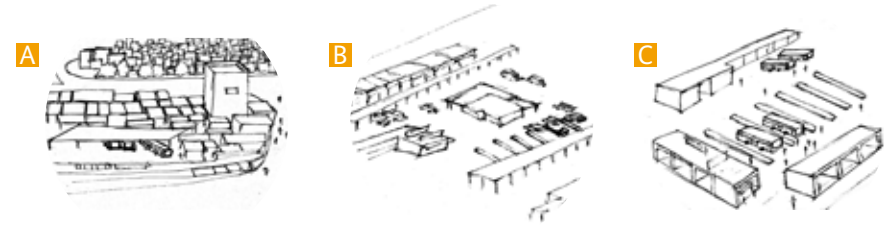


Fig. 8 Student Drawings of Public Transport Areas at Al Mahatta

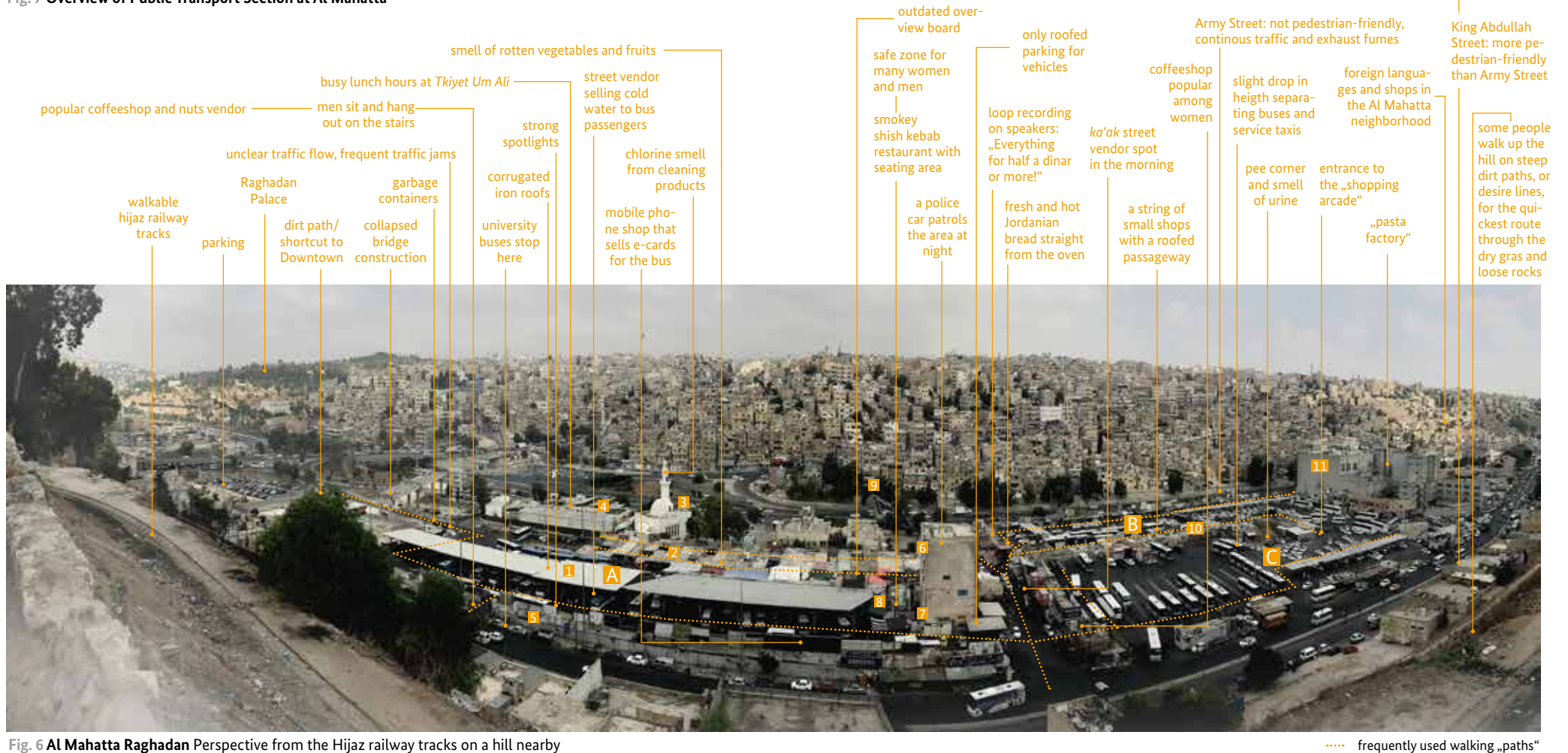


Fig. 6 Al Mahatta Raghadan Perspective from the Hijaz railway tracks on a hill nearby

..... frequently used walking „paths“





Fig. 9 Actants Overview of selected non-human actors (actants) that influence the production of Al Mahatta Raghadan

# Public Urban Life

## Mobility Accessibility



Desire paths at Al Mahatta up the hill towards Jabal Al Nasr, accessible to the able and fit

Large-scale road structures cut Al Mahatta off from its surroundings, emphasizing the station's spatial disconnect to other parts of the city and leaving many parcels, literally, abandoned. On Army Street, for instance, two pedestrian bridges are the only pedestrian-friendly spatial links from Al Hashmi Al Shamali (see Fig. 3). As a result, residents living in adjacent neighborhoods like Jabal Al Nasr, Al Hashmi Al Shamali, or the Al Mahatta neighborhood could be within walking distance, yet they mainly form the backdrop to the commotion in the valley. In a way, the whole station floats as a solitary island within Amman's urban framework, reinforced by the fact that neither its topography nor built environment much foster many connections. For lack thereof, Al Mahatta deters potential users from coming in the first place, others make do with the limitations and carve out paths spontaneously (see image on the left). The safest and most convenient way of accessing the station remains motorized transport, after all. But once on site, it is not easy for vehicles to manoeuvre through the crowds and tight paths due to the unclear directions of traffic. Walking suddenly becomes the dominant mode of movement, however, outside the protective vehicles pedestrians are more exposed to certain discomforts and dangers.

**Man from West Amman** „Look around you...who walks in this town?“ [in reference to lower socioeconomic groups]

Users of Al Mahatta largely stem from low-to-middle-income households as Ammanis who can afford private transport will most likely do so (see Fig. 5). To use public transport in Amman requires a certain savvy and knowledge of the system (see Fig.10 and Box 3). Factors like fare price, length of journey, time of day, gender, ability, traveling alone or with companions further determine whether it is better to catch a bus, coaster, or service taxi. Prices are fairly affordable but a journey can get costly when there is no direct connection and one pays multiple fares. Since there is no comprehensive overview of routes and schedules, identifying the best route can become tricky and turn into a crowdsourcing endeavor, too. So, by asking around family and friends, bus drivers, operators, and fellow passengers, information is slowly puzzled together. This is common practice in Amman's everyday life where a saying goes: “Those who are not afraid to ask will never be lost”. Meanwhile, it forces passengers to rely on potentially unreliable sources who, thus, do not necessarily end up with the best but the *next* best mode of transport.

**University Students on Al Mahatta Raghadan** „Like a puzzle“ - „I get lost there.“ - „Me too, every time.“ - „I disagree.“

**Bus Ticket Vendor to Customer** „You better ask the bus driver as he knows the bus schedule.“

**Female Student from Zarqa** „I frequently take the bus from Jordan University going directly to Zarqa. Once I accidentally took the bus going to Rusaifa first, which took much longer. Nobody had told me that there is a difference.“

Many people in Amman say Al Mahatta is unclean, unorganized, too crowded, smelly, loud, exhausting, time-consuming, inconvenient, dull, depressing, sad, ugly, poor, cheap, and dangerous. For them, Al Mahatta represents no place of interest and, perhaps, even fuels imaginations of fear and

**Fig. 10 Al Mahatta's Operating Hours for Public Transport**

Sat-Thu	6 am - 10 pm
Fridays	selected routes and schedules

## Box 3 How to get from A to B?

In 2015, Ma'an Nasel created the *Unofficial Transport Map* which to this date remains the most helpful public transport tool in Amman, even though the map is incomplete, now partially out of date, and reserved to only those who know about it and know how to use it. In 2019, the official *Khotoutna* App was launched by GAM with support from the creators of the *Unofficial Transport Map* in an effort to improve the situation further by updating routes and providing live information on vehicle locations. The application could be an enormously helpful tool but it regularly faces technical difficulties, remains incomplete, and is also reserved only to those who know about it, know how to use it, and who have access to a compatible device. Under the bottom line, a comprehensive overview of Amman's public transport network remains a future vision while one might wonder whether it is ever attainable given that schedules cannot be fixed due to Amman's tight traffic conditions and routes more resemble recommended paths, less a clear line.

## Entertainment

take the Amman Bus  
take another GAM bus  
take a coaster  
take a service taxi  
take a yellow taxi  
hitchhike  
work inside the station  
work outside the station  
work in shifts  
work long hours  
take a break  
ask about a price  
haggle/negotiate  
pay fixed price  
pay in cash  
pay too much  
pay too little  
pay later  
pay with an e-card  
recharge e-card  
arrive/leave on foot  
arrive/leave by public transport  
arrive/leave by taxi  
arrive/leave by car



**Looking for a Place to Sit and Rest** Since there is no designated waiting area and urban furniture is very limited at Al Mahatta, sitting down or resting is only possible on whatever is given (e.g. sidewalks, curbs, cardboard, ground). Neither option is ideal, particularly for women.

sit between the buses  
sit in a bus/service  
sit in the front seat  
sit in the back seat  
sit in the middle seat  
sit in the last row of a bus  
sit in the front rows of a bus  
sit in a window seat  
sit in an aisle seat  
sit on a curb  
sit on the ground  
squad on the floor  
sit on an elevated sidewalk  
create makeshift chairs  
look for a seat next to same sex  
look for a spot next to same sex  
move away from opposite sex  
offer seat to a woman  
offer seat to elderly  
sit on an old chair  
sit on bricks  
sit in a bus/service  
shrink in a seat  
sit comfortably  
stand  
walk  
walk fast  
not run  
hurry  
stroll  
move around  
look around  
talk to nobody  
talk to neighbors  
talk and laugh in a low voice  
ask drivers  
ask controllers  
ask passengers  
carry a child  
carry shopping bags  
carry travel bags  
put bags down  
pull travel bags  
assist with bags  
change vehicle  
continue journey on foot, by bus, service, taxi, private car

take multiple vehicles  
sit during the journey  
stand during the journey  
form a line  
get in line  
wait in line  
wait in a locked bus  
wait alone  
wait with somebody  
wait in a group  
stand close to avoid cut in line  
leave a line  
return to your slot in line  
cut the line  
skip in line  
form a circle  
offer your spot  
miss an appointment  
use a smartphone  
do nothing  
watch people  
keep head down  
avoid eye contact  
stay quiet  
speak on the phone  
smoke a cigarette  
smoke cigarette inside a vehicle  
smoke while working  
drink coffee or tea  
throw cup on the ground  
sweep the ground  
collect the trash  
clean an area  
place a carton box as a trash can  
throw trash next to the carton box  
listen to music on headphones  
share headphones with somebody  
accompany somebody  
escort somebody  
guard somebody  
leave somebody unprotected  
move independently  
move freely  
avoid certain areas  
rest  
find no rest  
have a strong personality  
act in a respectful way  
scare somebody  
look scared  
harass somebody  
yell at someone  
make a scene  
avoid a scene  
observe somebody being sexually harassed  
stay out of people's business  
budge into people's lives  
sexually harass somebody  
whisper to somebody  
intimidate somebody  
flirt with somebody  
hit on somebody  
make an unsolicited comment  
send flying kisses  
stare  
ogle  
eye somebody suspiciously  
put somebody under pressure  
ignore somebody's comment  
look tired  
keep physical distance from opposite sex  
flock with people of your own sex  
cry  
hide crying  
roam the shops  
roam the market  
roam the secondhand market  
go to the mosque  
go to the auxiliary mosque  
pray across the street of the mosque  
pray at the mosque  
pray next to vehicles  
eat breakfast  
share breakfast from a metal tray  
boil your own tea or coffee  
bring homemade food  
buy food from the restaurants  
buy food on the road  
use the public bathroom  
use the mosque's bathroom  
know about bathrooms  
pee in public  
change diaper's next to a sink  
change diaper's on a cardboard on the floor or ground  
breastfeed in the bathroom  
breastfeed in the mosque  
feed baby with a milk bottle  
let baby cry without breastfeeding

pray in the mosque  
chat in the mosque  
lie down in the mosque  
sleep in the mosque  
escape from heat in the mosque  
find comfort in the mosque  
find serenity in the mosque  
cross a big road  
walk up the hill to Jabal Al Nasr  
take the pedestrian bridge  
take a set of stairs  
spot dogs in the dark  
sleep on makeshift beds  
cover goods with a cloth  
leave goods over night  
guard goods over night  
switch on lights and electricity  
switch off lights and electricity  
call out to customers  
chant to customers  
smoke in secret  
smoke in public  
smoke a lot  
smoke argileh  
place a small bag under a shirt  
gather in an unorganized assemblage  
park car inside the station  
park car on the parking lot  
park car along a main road  
park car under a roof  
park car in open space  
place a bag next to your seat  
make space for vehicles  
wait for pedestrians to move  
wait for vehicles to move  
clog up entrance  
giggling  
joking  
teasing  
bragging  
showing off  
people watching  
hang out  
gather  
gossip  
drink juice or slush  
take food home  
avoid eating in public  
avoid raising your voice  
look outside the window  
interact  
refrain from interaction  
protect neighbors  
threaten neighbors  
raid informal vendors  
do not confiscate products  
burn campaign in yellow vests  
use notebooks for sun protection  
honk  
show some hair out of the hijab  
climb up/down a hill  
play on the cliffs  
take a break on the cliffs  
take a break at the green bottom of the cliff in spring  
walk on a dirt path  
spot dogs on cliff  
spot dogs in the station at night  
offending somebody  
cursing somebody  
tense up inside the station  
relax inside a vehicle  
report an incident  
ignore an incident  
sleep  
wake up  
move around routinely  
move around randomly  
move with a purpose  
loiter  
avoid loitering  
recognize people  
stop knowing each other  
compete with others  
avoid people's territories  
Infringe on people's territories  
get in trouble  
cover up goods  
leave goods overnight  
look out for each other  
fight  
feel bored  
feel entertained  
shop groceries  
shop clothes  
shop for shoes  
shop for mobile phones  
shop for women  
shop for secondhand  
shop for antiques  
chat to fellow drivers while driving

stand around with colleagues  
appear busy  
feel back pain  
look for a job  
holding a notebook  
eating candy/chips  
clean the car  
knitting while waiting  
take advantage of aging  
go places  
read the Quran  
feel humiliated  
be embarrassed



**Wait in Line** To secure a seat in a bus or service taxis, passengers neatly form queues that often become very long due to tight traffic conditions, mismatch in supply and demand of vehicles, and an unclear public transport system. No seating or weather protection is available during the 30+ minutes of wait time.

kiss on the cheek  
kiss twice on the cheek  
check phone for information  
check phone for messages  
talk to somebody on the phone  
drive fast  
hit the breaks a lot  
interact  
listen to Egyptian Mahraganat songs  
listen to Quran radio  
listen to Fairuz  
assist/help somebody  
campaign in yellow vests  
donate water  
distribute no sweets on holidays  
stand out without hijab  
get off anywhere  
get off at a bus/service stop  
know everyone around you  
know nobody around you  
talk in a rude manner  
talk in a polite manner  
look tired  
have experience with Al Mahatta  
know Al Mahatta well  
know little about Al Mahatta  
navigate public transport  
spray graffiti  
read graffiti  
grope somebody  
play with a cat  
inherit selling spot from father  
change uniform  
put on make up  
adjust hair and hijab  
meet boyfriend  
meet girlfriend  
watch the train pass  
spray graffiti  
read graffiti  
pay without a receipt  
pay with a receipt  
offer a service  
offer products  
hang out in front of the shop  
wash floors in front of the shop  
inherit shop  
nagging  
see people being upset  
shout at each other  
demand correct prices  
demand higher prices  
shop for a window  
maintain internal policies  
break internal policies  
study the area  
smoke argileh

**Male Coffeeshop Owner at Al Mahatta** „I like nothing about Al Mahatta. It has a huge lack of services and no hope to have it more organized or developed much.“

**Male Shop Owner at Al Mahatta** „The last two years the station became better and more secure because the vendors saw the money coming in and they started to get better in dealing with others.“

**Female Co-Researcher from West Amman** „I had never been to Al Mahatta before. The very first time, I was alone and it was dark and I must admit, I was a bit afraid but after a while it changed.“

danger (see Box 4). As a result, they end up never setting foot onto its premises. Others find great delight in the liveliness, authenticity, solidarity, affordability, aesthetics, chaos, variety, diversity of things, colors and people at Al Mahatta and consider it a welcome distraction from their daily routines. This way, Al Mahatta becomes a refuge, especially for women who have little time for self-care.

**Working Woman 1** „Before i go back home, I pass by the market to entertain myself or to buy things for my family whenever I receive my monthly salary.“

**Woman (40s) from Sahab** „I like to shop from here when I am near because the prices are affordable.“ [see Fig. 12]

**Working Woman 2** „I enjoy that my friends and I meet in the early morning before we go to work.“

**Working Woman 3** „The morning bus drive is the only time i have the chance to think away my miserable life.“

**Mother (20s) from Al Hussein Camp who is being mistreated by her husband and spends most of her time at home with the children** „I feel good about coming to the station. If I had the chance to get out of the house regularly, I would come to the station regularly. I love that there are lots of people around from different backgrounds.“

Transport hubs inherently attract a wider public whose main interest lies in transit. The average user, therefore, dedicates a limited amount of time to the station by default. If the minimum amount of time is so excessive, however, the boundaries between moving and lingering turn blurry. The act of waiting, as a consequence, becomes an intrinsic element of Al Mahatta and driver for other activities (see Fig. 11). Both women and men come to Al Mahatta, for instance, to buy groceries, to visit the shops or secondhand



#### Box 4 Urban Transformations

The Boulevard in Al Abdali was often mentioned by interview partners as preferred example of Amman's recent urban development with its high-quality materials and „beautiful people“. In the same breath, though, they lament that the high-quality materials and beautiful people do not arrive in places like Al Mahatta.

Fig. 12 Price list for Selected Items at Al Mahatta

0.45 JD	Service Taxi (to Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh)
0.45 JD	Mecca St Bus
0.35 JD	Downtown Bus
1.00 JD	E-Bus Card
0.50 JD	Amman Bus Ticket
2.50 JD	1 kg of Grapes
1.00 JD	1 kg Oranges
1.50 JD	1 kg Olives
0.60 JD	Nammora (Sweet)
0.50 JD	Pomegranate Juice
0.10 JD	Mint Tea
0.50 JD	Coffee
1.50 JD	Tea for Drivers
0.25 JD	Coffee for Drivers
0.15 JD	Mosque's Bathroom Fee
0.15 JD	Public Bathroom Fee
5.00 JD	Book (Arab/Eng)
2.00 JD	Russian Gold Anklet
3-5 JD	Pair of Jeans
1.00 JD	Secondhand Toy
1.00 JD	10 Pieces of Clothes
0.25 JD	„Any Secondhand Item“
150 JD	Antique Coins
20 JD	Precious Stones
0.50 JD	Shish Tawooq Sandwich
1.00 JD	3 Kebab Sandwiches
0.50-1 JD	Shopping Assistant Hire
1.50 JD	Hair & Beard Cut

Fig. 11 Public Practices Selected Public Practices as observed at Al Mahatta



Al Mahatta's bus station (Area A) on a winter afternoon



Service taxis get in line to collect passengers in their dedicated lane according to their destinations. The number of passenger and drivers regulates who has to wait for whom and for how long according to the logics of supply and demand.



At Al Mahatta, there is no waiting zone, nor installed seating for passengers. So they stand or resort to sitting on the ground while waiting up to an hour or more either in an organized line or in a crowded gathering.



View of Al Mahatta at night from the pedestrian bridge by the „main entrance“ on Army Street. The market stands are well-lit and flood lights provide additional lighting and safety.



**Fig. 13 Men domesticating Al Mahatta** Service taxi driver making tea in his trunk (top), service taxi drivers praying next to their cars (middle), men sitting together on plastic chairs in front of their business (bottom)

market, to eat and drink from the restaurants, coffeeshops, and street vendors, or to pray at the mosque. As an urban catchment area for the marginalized, vulnerable groups, in addition, come to collect food from *Tkiyet Um Ali*. Though both women and men fairly equally visit the station, the presence of men feels especially strong because of the high number of male workers. Most of them spend 10+ hours per day and 6-7 days a week in the station and end up domesticating the public to some extent, for example, by gathering in small groups in front of their shops or on sidewalks, setting up a spontaneous living room with chairs, a table, and *argileh*, by taking regular coffee or cigarette breaks, frequently praying outside, engaging in conversations, and by creating a more or less familiar atmosphere with fellow workers (see Fig. 13). Female workers in the station make up a very small minority and are much less visible.

**Male Shop Owner** „We are family here.“

It is further surprising not to see many children around despite the many mothers and families using the station. One of the reasons is that the station is neither considered safe nor children’s-friendly for lack of a children’s area, for example, a playground. Green areas that could sooth not only parents’s minds but also of other users of the station are also non-existent. Only in spring, some vendors mentioned, a patch of green at the bottom of the hill on King Abdullah Street is turned into a resting spot (see Fig. 3).

**Female Worker at Al Mahatta** „I used to bring my daughter here but she got bored and it is unsafe for her so I stopped.“

Facilities  
Privacy

Despite such great numbers of people transiting through Al Mahatta on a daily basis and the long waiting times, sheltered resting spots are scarce so that they have to be created informally and spontaneously (see Fig. 14). For women, this means that

**Workign Woman (25)** „I hated both winter and summer when I had to wait for 40-45 minutes for the university bus without a shelter or a seat.“

**Mother (20s) from Al Hussein Camp** „I feel embarassed about sitting on the pavement. When I get tired from walking or waiting in line, I continue walking around to move the blood in my legs.“

**Female Student waiting 45 minutes for her connection at Al Mahatta** „I don’t do much but wait in line. It is boring but I have gotten used to it and there is no alternative. Besides, this is what all people do.“

seating is virtually non-existent as it is frowned upon if women sit, for example, on the ground. Out of fatigue some do it anyways or come up with unconventional coping strategies:

**Elderly Women sitting on a curb between the bus bays with her friend while she is knitting** „We are taking advantage of aging. We are old enough not to feel embarrassed sitting on the sidewalk.“

**Elderly Woman (58) sits down in a random coaster as she feels ill and finds no comfortable place to sit but she knows that all buses drive in loops and will return to Al Mahatta eventually** „I am not going to Hai Nazzal. I just couldn’t keep waiting on my foot any longer so i got seated in the bus until my transportation arrives.“

Those who spend a lot of time outside their home, naturally, also have to use the bathroom outside. It currently costs 0.15 JD per visit to the public or the mosque’s bathroom, which used to be free a few years ago and are, now, unaffordable for many workers in the station who earn small salaries but need the bathroom up to 8-10 times per day due to old age, illness, or high beverage consumption.

**Bus Driver (57)** „I barely can afford the toilet fee as an old man and I can excuse the elderly people who work at the station for long hours when they openly urinate.“

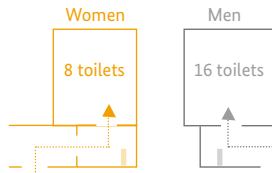
Since most workers are men, for whom it is acceptable though not preferred to urinate in public, this dilemma is quickly resolved at Al Mahatta (see Fig. 15). But it causes another nuisance: the spread of urine odor. A woman faced with a similar predicament has to go through greater troubles as she either has to pay the toilet fees, beg for a free pass, or find a spot where she can urinate and nobody sees her.



**Fig. 14 Different Forms of „Seating“ at Al Mahatta** (top to bottom) 1 three elderly men sitting on cardboards and chatting behind two young women standing in line 2 woman sitting on a curb in front of a shop 3 two young men sitting down between the buses 4 man with crutches remains standing for lack of adequate seating



**Fig. 15 Man openly urinating by a wall at Al Mahatta**



**Fig. 16 Public Bathrooms**  
Located in Area A on the ground-floor of the high-rise building

**Box 5 A Woman's Right to Risk and Play** In her book *Why Loiter?* the social urban scholar Shilpa Phadke discusses women's right to risk and play outside their homes.<sup>2</sup> She says, instead of forcing women to justify why they are, where they are, and when they are with whom, the more inclusive approach would be to decrease potential risks for women in public. According to Phadke, loitering presents itself as an effective tool for women to push this mindshift and to reclaim public spaces simply by doing nothing but hanging out in public space. As such, the city can be redefined as an inclusive one, based on respect for differences.

Many mothers with young children, in addition, face the challenge of finding a suitable place to change diapers or to breastfeed. Fortunately, there are public bathrooms at Al Mahatta, even with a fairly spacious vestibule (see Fig. 16). Still, they are

**Widow (59)** „When I was younger I never had a place to breastfeed in public so the baby kept crying. Sometimes I went to the mosque to change diapers. Sometimes I would grab a carton and put the baby on the sidewalk or a corner of the street and so did other women.“

not ideal for children as there is no table or seat other than for the female attendant, surfaces and floors are not particularly clean, and the bathrooms are frequently used by female smokers. This is the case because the enclosed bathroom, invisible to the public, does not only meet bodily needs, it essentially also doubles as a communal space where women can retreat to and feel at ease without having to justify their presence or behavior (see Box 5). They can take off their veil, take a rest and sit on the ground, change their clothes, fix their hair and makeup, confide and solidarize with each other - and smoke cigarettes without being seen by men as it is socially not acceptable for women to smoke in public.

**Woman (55) Smoking inside the Mosque's Bathroom** „Do you want the men outside to kill me if they saw me smoking?“

Another such a retreat is located in the female section of the mosque where similar activities take place with the added advantage that the mosque's bathroom is considered to be cleaner and the prayer room more comfortable for naps, some reading, long chats with female companions, or solitude, silence, and tears.

To avoid potential stigmatization or to circumvent unpleasant experiences, many women are, generally, careful to maintain the image of decency in public. So, nearly all women at Al Mahatta are dressed in “decent” Islamic clothing, veiled in a *hijab*, *jilbab*, *abaya*, *niqab*, *khimar* or wrapped in a

*thob*. Ideally, they are also accompanied by women or male family members or simply avoid being seen alone. According to conversations with female Ammanis from conservative backgrounds, a „decent“ woman always speaks softly and respectfully, makes space and shrinks her body whenever necessary, adheres to a nighttime curfew, and wears only little makeup. She does not run, shout, raise her voice, laugh out loud, sit down on the ground, get close or smile at men, work to make an income, smoke in public, eat or drink on the street, complain about harassment, create a scandal, hang out, linger, or loiter without purpose and, in sum, makes every effort to make her public appearance as short-lived and invisible as possible.

**Young Woman at Al Mahatta** „Men can sit and stand however they want... I have to shrink my body to keep a safe space and not have our bodies touching each other.“

**Two Women (late 20s) staring at a Female Co-Researcher who is eating hot and fresh zaatar bread** „We never eat in the station!“

Surely, these criteria of a “decent” woman better describe an extreme than a lived reality, yet, all of them can be encountered in one form or another at Al Mahatta. Women who do not follow suit, so the believe of many men and women at the station, ask for or deserve to be treated differently, harassed or punished (see Fig. 17). Yet, to the dismay of both men and women, men in Al Mahatta frequently sexually harass women through inappropriate comments, staring, and grabbing.

**Woman (55) who believes it is a woman's fault if she gets harassed** „It happens all the time that women get harassed but no man could approach a decent and strong woman.“

**Female Worker at Al Mahatta** „I don't walk around in the station. There are people who might harm anyone with bad words or actions.“

**Two Men (19) on Street Harassment** „It will happen anyway, it is in our blood.“ - „We are used to it. It is a bad habit we have in the society. Any girl you see, throw her some words and keep walking.“

**Male Shop Employee** „If I had a sister I wouldn't let her use the station.“



**Fig. 17 Examples of Verbal Street Harassment overheard at Al Mahatta**

<sup>2</sup>Phadke 2011 and 2016

Women, consequently, very consciously adopt a number of coping strategies, for example, putting on a “street face”, which means strong posture, purposeful steps, and serious facial expressions, in order to keep unsolicited comments and questions at bay. Also, counter to popular belief, young single men are not the only group of men who sexually harass women although they are widely considered a nuisance wherever they go by seemingly everyone but themselves because of that. Harassment comes from all male demographics at Al Mahatta and beyond.

**Two Woman (30s) on walking through Amman** „I am constantly fighting in the city. I never fight abroad, I don't feel like I need to fight. Here I feel like I am a beast.“ - „Do you also have your street walking face?“ - „Yes!“

**Woman (25) at Al Mahatta Raghadan on young single men** „Fear the elder men, not the young guys. If you yelled at a young guy he would escape while an old man would really cause harm, emotionally or physically.“

#### Box 6 The Daily Rhythms of Al Mahatta

##### Sundays to Wednesdays

##### 7:00-9:30 1<sup>st</sup> Rush Hour

balanced gender ratio, mostly workers and students, shops are closed except for coffeeshops, the bus card booth, and a *ka'ak* bread street vendor

##### 9:30-11:00 Calm Period

waiting lines grow shorter, shops begin to open, workers and drivers have breakfast, housewives, mothers and children, and elderly come to the station to do their regular shopping

##### 11:30-12:30 2<sup>nd</sup> Rush Hour

greater mix of people, number of shoppers, students, high school students, street vendors, hawkers, beggars increases, *Tkyet Um Ali* distributes lunch

##### 13:00-16:00 Busy But Not Too Busy

there is a general commotion in all parts of the station, fewer women and more men by the hour

##### 17:00-19:00 3<sup>rd</sup> Rush Hour

employees in professional clothing return from work and occasionally do some shopping

##### 19:30-22:00 Slow Wrap Up

less and less people are at the station (very few women), flood lights and individual light bulbs are switched on, workers and drivers wrap up the day, market and *basta* vendors cover up their stands with cloths, cleaners change shift, a guard starts his duty, a police car patrols the station, some secondhand vendors (including children) prepare to spend the night, sex workers begin to roam selected spots, the last buses leave around 22:00

##### 22:00 - 6:00 Silence of the Night

the station is silent and appears bare and empty, a few service taxis (e.g. to Jabal Al Hussein) try to attract late-night customers, a few shops close late

##### Thursdays Weekend Excitement

slightly more hectic than weekdays due to weekend preparations and inner-city or outbound travels, sons help their fathers in the shop, for a small fee boys offer to push around bags in shopping carts

##### Fridays Relief & Recreation

fewer buses and service taxis are available, some shops are closed, fruits and vegetables are no longer fresh, most shoppers come to buy clothes, more private cars and families with children (with strollers) than usual are present, after Friday prayer the station gets busy and families are replaced by a large number of men visiting the secondhand market, many carry a prayer carpet under their arms, the transport zones are fairly quiet compared to other days, most routes going to Rusaifa/Zarqa

##### Saturdays Transition Day

neither busy nor empty, many people visit public hospitals, mostly men present, young men hang out on curbs and corners

While both men and women can become victims of psychological or physical violence, it is assumed by society that men are well-equipped to self-manage potential dangers at Al Mahatta. So, if anything, men will fear only other men, not women, though some men did mention that they try to stay away from the female sex workers who come to the station in the evenings and, allegedly, attack people sometimes (see Fig. 5). The same cannot necessarily be said about women. What applies to the majority of women at Al Mahatta is that they tend to move within safe zones to protect their personal and reputational safety or at least to create the illusion thereof as there can never be a guarantee for it (see Box 7). Word-of-mouth or personal experiences mostly inform these invisible zones and most of them are found in and around Area A due to its continuous and manageable stream of people and commotion, strong lighting, occasional security and police presence, a fairly open space without dark corners, as well as nearby places of interest commonly frequented by other women. These include the market area, the women's public bathroom, a kebab restaurant (see Fig. 18), and a certain coffeeshop who, according to some female users, sells better brands and whose vendor is especially polite.

**Female User of Al Mahatta** „Wherever there is a crowd, I feel safer.“

But not only spatial territories can provide a feeling of safety for women. Certain time windows can also produce more comfort than others (see Box 6). Morning and noon rush hours produce the most gender-balanced crowds at Al Mahatta, whereas late mornings are dominated by housewives. Afternoons and evenings see a continuous stronger presence in men, particularly on Fridays after prayer. Nighttime excursions are commonly avoided by women.

#### Safety

**Box 7 The Differences Between Danger, Fear, and Risk** Perceptions of *danger* are shaped by culture, as they are “learned, shared within groups, and influence the way the world is interpreted and understood”. Similarly, the feeling of *fear* refers to an “inner emotional state”. Only the concept of *risk* actually refers to the “likelihood of experiencing a crime or some other harm” and can, as such, serve as an objective foundation for safety and security measures.<sup>3</sup> Safe zones and times are, furthermore, somewhat linked as safe zones can provide a feeling of safety during unsafe times and vice versa.

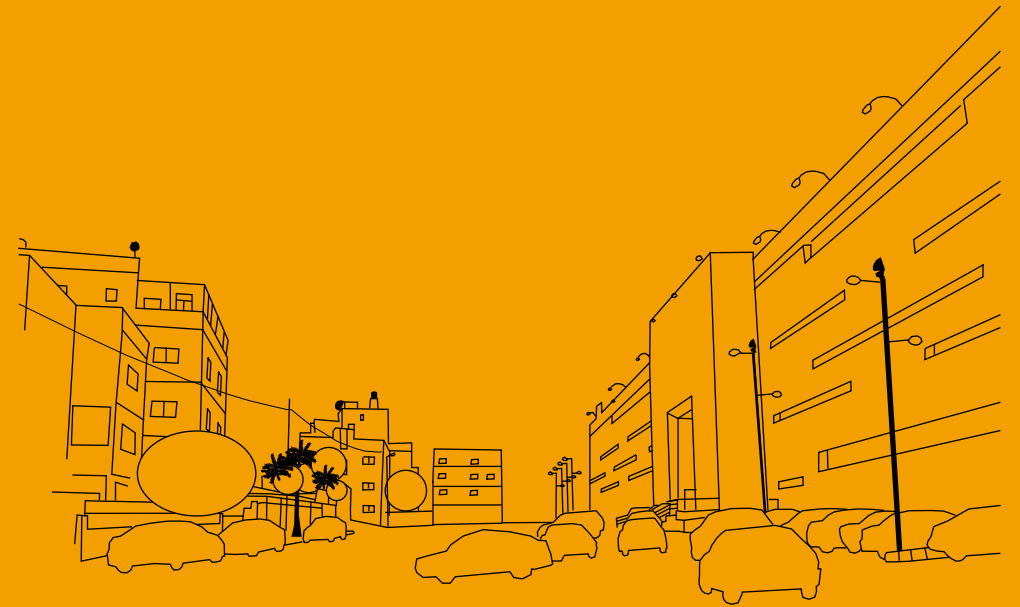


Fig. 18 A Safe Space for Women

The kebab restaurant located slightly hidden behind buses, market stands, and clouds of barbecue smoke in Area A is one of the few establishments at Al Mahatta with a designated seating area where employees wear branded t-shirts and hygienic gloves, and a dedicated supervisor receives orders and payments while the dishes smoothly reach their customers. Judging by the comparably high fluctuation of female costumers, the restaurant's attention for hygiene and good customer service seems not only a selling point but also an attractive factor for female users of Al Mahatta.

<sup>3</sup> Merry 1996

# ISTIKLAL MALL



MALL + PARKING LOT





Fig. 1 Field of Research Mapping of Case Studies and Location of Research Site in Amman

## CASE STUDY SELECTION

When public spaces do not meet the needs of a city's inhabitants, private spaces can turn into surrogate public spaces in which, however, users have to comply to certain terms and conditions. Shopping malls are prominent examples thereof whose purpose is essentially to make profits. The users become consumers and if users cannot consume, they will not be granted access. Despite or because of their exclusive nature, malls are widely popular in Amman. In order to better understand in how far malls provide an environment and atmosphere that seems so much more appealing than publicly governed spaces motivated the selection of this case study. Istiklal Mall, specifically, was chosen as a research site as it stands on the threshold between East and West Amman while leaning closer to more conservative and traditional ways of life. It is also considered a family mall whose dominant users are women, one of the few places of encounter in Amman where this is the case.

### Key Findings & Themes

#### Entertainment

Shopping, a food court, a children's play area, and special events attract especially families and female visitors to the mall.

#### Safety

With a number of security measures in place, including numerous security guards, the mall feels safe.

#### Young Single Men

The number of young single men is strongly controlled to protect its mostly female visitors. On evenings, many roam the streets and parking lots around the mall.

#### Reputation

As a strongly controlled family mall, Istiklal Mall represents a rather reputable place, however, it is also perceived as *sh'abi*.

#### Privacy

Its big box architecture naturally turns the mall into a large island of privacy. Further privacy inside the mall is found in selected facilities (e.g. coffeeshops, bathrooms, prayer room, gym).

#### Gender Separation

Generally, women and men at Istiklal Mall stay separate except for children in the play area.

#### Comfort & Discomfort

Istiklal Mall offers a fairly clean and maintained environment that protects its visitors from harsh weather and street harassment.

#### Facilities

Female-friendly seating, bathrooms, prayer rooms etc. are easily accessible at Istiklal Mall.

### Contributing Researchers

Rebekka Keuss  
Riham Madi  
Workshop Participants

### Field Data Collection

non-participant and participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, go-alongs, hang outs, male and female focus group discussions

No. of Field Visits	33
No. of Interlocutors	126



### Mobility

Istiklal Mall is well connected to different modes of transport and offers stroller-friendly walkable paths and elevators.

### Accessibility

Price levels at Istiklal Mall are fairly moderate, yet, unaffordable for those who cannot spend. As a result, it is harder for them to access the profit-oriented mall.



## MALL URBANISM IN AMMAN

How and where people shop can tell a lot about the nature of a city and its public spaces. Historically, Downtown Amman has been the main go-to place for shopping. Over time, alternatives then joined Amman's retail landscape, spanning over district or neighborhood markets (e.g. Sooq Wehdat or Sooq Hai Nazzal), car-friendly retail strips (e.g. Gardens Street), pedestrian-friendly shopping streets (e.g. Wakalat Street or Rainbow Street), and shopping malls (e.g. Mecca Mall, City Mall, Taj Mall etc.). As Amman's public sphere is often rather unwelcoming, especially towards women, shopping malls in particular can fill an important gap. They protect its users from nuisances of the streets - or at least the suggestion thereof - and give peace of mind while one can shop and do other things though they often also take away access to fresh air and natural light. All of this comes at a price,

*Female Student (24) from Jabal Al Nuzha „Malls are nicer than streets, safer for people and more enjoyable when you find everything in one place.“*

one that is not affordable to all. This turns malls less into safe havens but highly controlled private enclaves where the privileged and marginalized part ways. Thus, malls show what kind of everyday life emerges when private owners are given leeway to pair neoliberal interests with nearly anything that attracts potential customers. Formal frameworks largely seem to support and promote this kind of mall urbanism, given that malls are plenty and popular in Amman (see Fig. 2). In privately-controlled spaces, however, users are not given much say in the package they buy in unless it is profitable. Righteously, users are called consumers in this context because they are discouraged from actively shaping the space. Instead, they passively consume the goods, services and facilities offered without any incentives or means to appropriate the privately controlled space in a non-profit-oriented way.

Fig. 2 Public Space Typology Mapping of Shopping Malls in Amman

# Setting

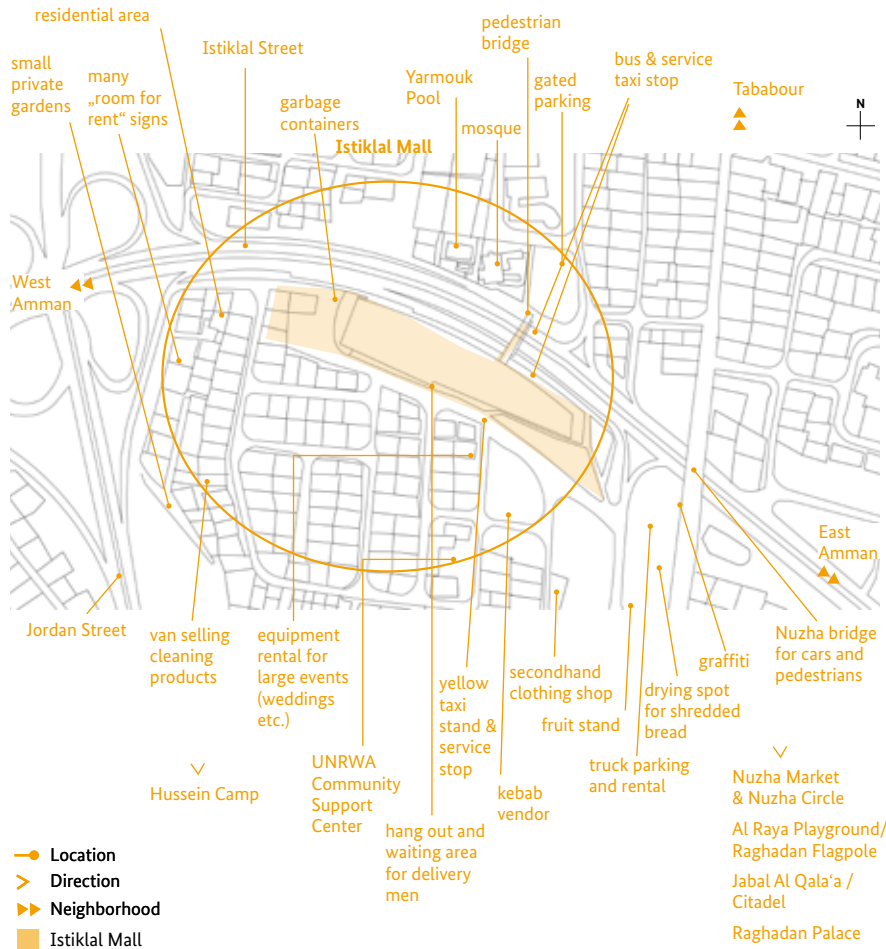


Fig. 3 Urban Framework Points of Interest around Istiklal Mall

## ISTIKLAL MALL

**Elderly Male and nextdoor neighbor of Istiklal Mall** „There was no road here, just a hill where hyenas used to live. We planted many trees here... The mall is new, it was only built 10, 11 years ago.“

Located between the elusive borders of East and West Amman stands Istiklal Mall (English „Independence Mall“) in Jabal Al Nuzha. This neighborhood has seen many transformations in the past few decades, most visibly through the construction of Istiklal Street as well as Jordan Street, both large-scale highways that wrap around Jabal Al Nuzha in wide valleys and forming its borders. Jabal Al Nuzha itself is predominantly marked by residential buildings that are located to the right and left of several *sooqs* (English „market, shopping area“) around Nuzha Circle (see Fig. 4). In this built environment, the big box architecture of Istiklal Mall appears somewhat out of place and disproportionately large for its location (see Fig. 3 and 5). There are split opinions about whether residents prefer the *sooqs* or Istiklal Mall for shopping so, in the end, it is the logics of the free market that regulate customer flows: wherever the prices are lower, this is where most people will go.

**Co-Researcher's Field Diary** „Istiklal Mall disrupts existing urban patterns...it feels like a massive wall that shields the neighborhood and isolates it.“

**Family living next to Istiklal Mall** „We'll go where the lower price is at. Even C-Town sometimes is cheaper than the market and the variety is more convenient.“

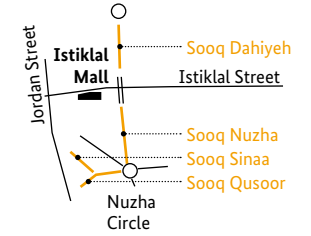


Fig. 4 Shopping Options around Istiklal Mall The shopping street between the mall and Nuzha Circle boasts a number of small shops along busy streets and sidewalks where vendors occasionally stand in their doors, smoke and drink coffee while waiting for customers. Here, one can find car mechanics, shwarma and falafel restaurants, bakeries, sweet shops, supermarkets, clothing and jewelry shops, pharmacies, opticians, gyms, banks, schools, and a mosque as well as a number of street and *basta* vendors selling anything from socks over grapes to tea out of a golden pot. As such, the mall's shopping experience stands in stark contrast to the one encountered in the immediate environment.

Fig. 5 Istiklal Mall in Jabal Al Nuzha Tugged between Istiklal Street and the residential buildings of Jabal Al Nuzha, Istiklal Mall can easily be spotted from all directions as it, literally, stands out. At night, spotlights make the building even more visible as its illumination overpowers the darkness of the surrounding open space. Its location seems strategically fitting as it is easily accessible by car, by public transport, or on foot. A pedestrian bridge, leading directly to one of the mall's entrances, enables users to safely cross the highway. Buses stop underneath both sides of the bridge. Taxis collect passengers on the footsteps of the mall's southern entrance.

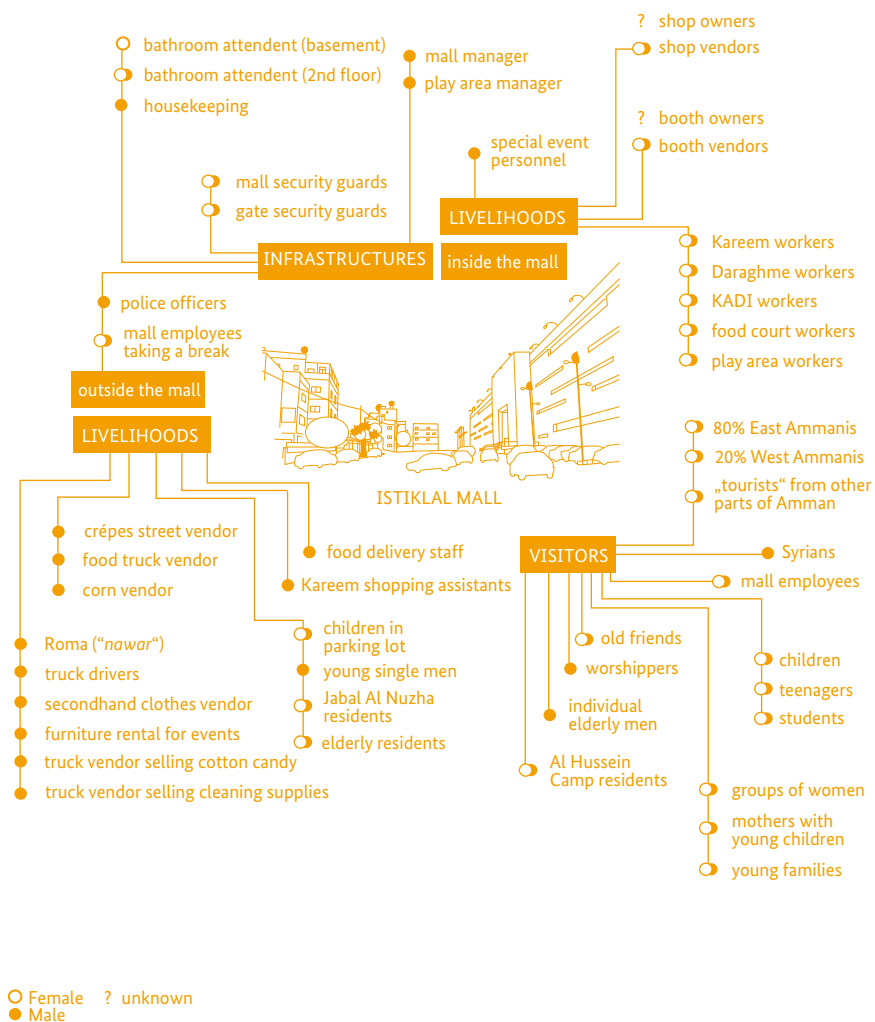


Fig. 6 Actor Network Selected Users of Istiklal Mall

Istiklal Mall was constructed in 2007 as a *waqf* with a 20 year lease from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (see Box 1). In 2013, new owners and managers took over the business and initiated some constructional changes, renovations on the facade, and introduced new regulations which have been generally welcomed by its users as well as by nextdoor residents since it has also upgraded the area (see Fig. 7). Shops and facilities spread

**Elderly Male and nextdoor neighbor of Istiklal Mall** „They know what a mall should look like. They added expensive facade materials, changed the elevators, the escalators, too. It looks like a mall now. It looked awful before.“

**Man (19) from Jabal Al Nuzha** „Our family used to live there but we moved away because the drugs and prostitutes got too bad. These days it is not as bad anymore but we will not move back.“

out on 40.000 sqm and four levels: the basement, groundfloor, first floor, and second floor (see Fig. 8 and 12). The building itself has no outdoor area and is entirely enclosed. Only parts of the top floor allow for panoramic views through a glass front. Although the mall has an integrated parking garage, numerous additional parking lots surround Istiklal Mall and since the available parking space exceeds the demand, additional parking lots are rented from private owners (see Fig. 9). Istiklal Mall is not a famous mall in Amman. In fact, many Ammanis have never been there or even heard about it. It is rather nondescript and small compared to well-known malls like City Mall, Mecca Mall, or Taj Mall (see Fig. 2). It mostly caters to a less affluent, middle to low income or *sha'bi* (English „popular“) clientele which often refers to a more conservative part of the population (see Fig. 6). According to the management, most visitors live within a radius of approximately 10 km.

**Mall Administration** „This is East Amman, the nature of the people is different...about 80% of customers come from East Amman, 20% from West Amman.“

**Female Vendor** „Fancy people never come here. We go to them, they don't come to us.“

**Box 1 Awqaf and Islamic Affairs** *Waqf* (English „endowment“) describes an Islamic institution under which an owner purchases land or property that benefits users for specific purposes, including the profits that are generated through a *waqf*. Oftentimes, *awqaf* (plural of *waqf*) are tied to a public service, e.g. mosques and prayers, and as such attract a larger public. These places of gathering are managed by the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places and, thus, follow different legal and institutional frameworks than land and property owned and governed by GAM. *Awqaf* are widespread and active in Amman and therefore have a vast impact on the city's urban landscape as well as public life.<sup>1</sup>



Fig. 7 Istiklal Mall in 2013 and 2014 before and after renovations

<sup>1</sup> Sait and Lim 2006



Istiklal Mall's main pedestrian entrance with a taxi stop



Istiklal Mall's parking lots and Nuzha's shopping street



pedestrian bridge to the mall spanning over Istiklal Street



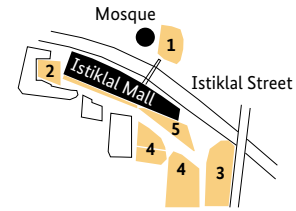
special event for children in the mall's basement area



shop window of one of the many Islamic clothing stores



Istiklal Mall's food court and seating area



**Fig. 9 The Social Life of Parking Lots at Istiklal Mall** There are five outdoor parking lots that are directly or indirectly affiliated to Istiklal Mall and each appears to have its specific dynamics and life of its own:

**1** Gated parking lot across the pedestrian bridge next to the mosque where a watchman looks after the cars, observes who comes in and out, and opens and closes the parking gate according to mall opening times; worshippers and children from the neighborhood come here

**2** Parking lot close to the immediate residential area, slightly hidden behind the mall, deserted except on weekends when parking space is in high demand; boys and men play football here, sometimes young men and couples come to hang out in their cars, there are garbage containers and burn stains, a number of graffiti bear witness to the men who have immortalized their names and phone numbers on the walls of the mall

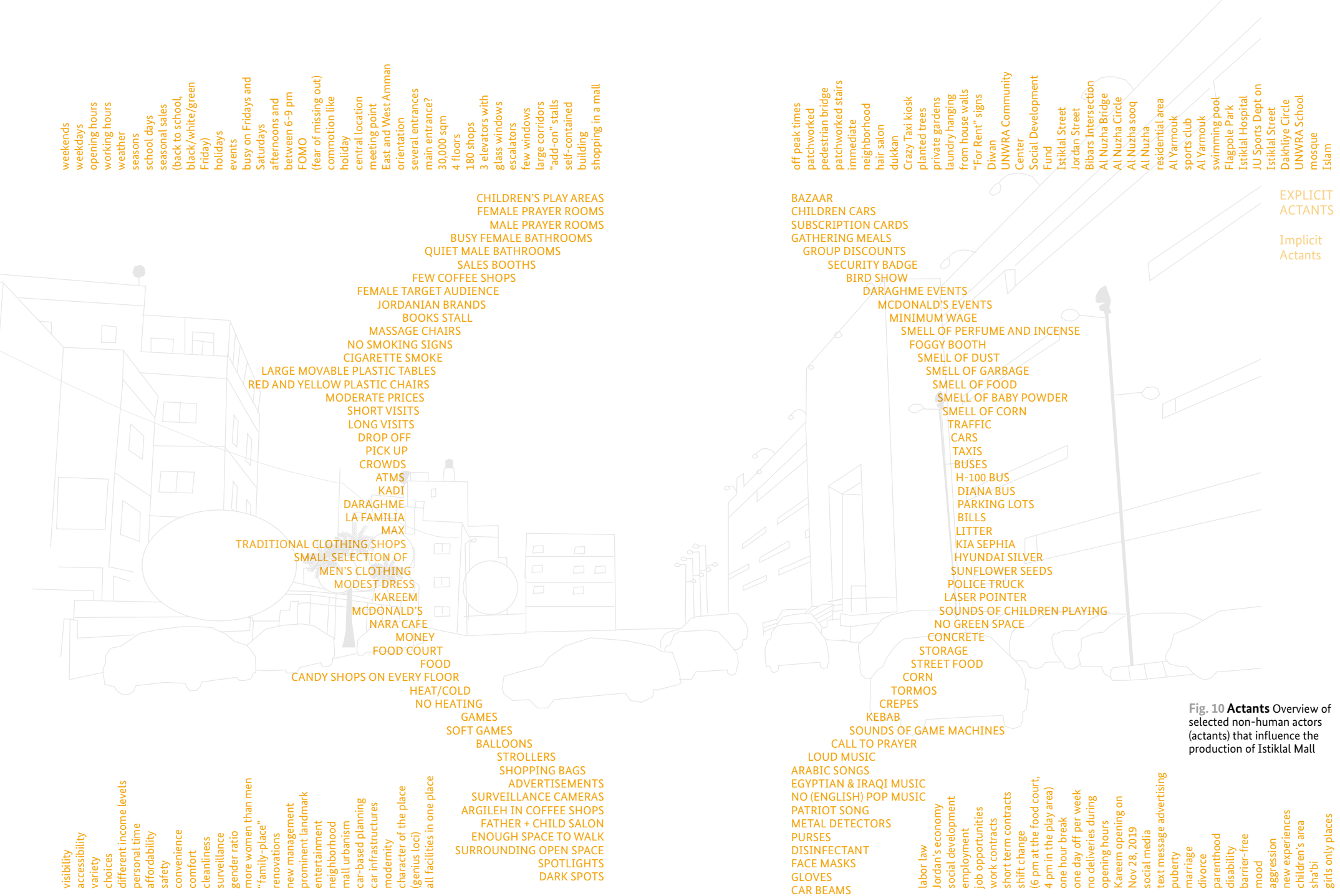
**3** Large unsealed parking area close to the Al Nuzha Bridge where a number of trucks are parked to advertise their services of which some supply the mall with goods; bread is dried and prepared here under the scorching sun by residents and later to be sold in large bags to livestock owners and the very poor

**4** Sealed parking lot right next to the trucks, holds a secondhand clothes shop and is rather dark at night

**5** Main outdoor parking lot for the mall, busy with people parking, waiting, playing, hanging out



**Fig. 8 Istiklal Mall Perspective from the parking lot**



weekends  
 weekdays  
 opening hours  
 working hours  
 weather  
 seasons  
 school days  
 seasonal sales  
 (back to school,  
 black/white/green  
 Friday)  
 holidays  
 events  
 busy on Fridays and  
 Saturdays  
 afternoons and  
 between 6-9 pm  
 FOMO  
 (fear of missing out)  
 commotion like  
 holiday  
 central location  
 meeting point  
 East and West Amman  
 orientation  
 several entrances  
 main entrance?  
 30,000 sqm  
 4 floors  
 180 shops  
 3 elevators with  
 glass windows  
 escalators  
 few windows  
 large corridors  
 "add-on" stalls  
 self-contained  
 building  
 shopping in a mall

visibility  
 accessibility  
 variety  
 choices  
 different income levels  
 personal time  
 affordability  
 safety  
 convenience  
 comfort  
 cleanliness  
 surveillance  
 gender ratio  
 more women than men  
 "family-place"  
 renovations  
 new management  
 prominent landmark  
 entertainment  
 neighborhood  
 mall urbanism  
 car-based planning  
 car infrastructures  
 modernity  
 character of the place  
 (genius loci)  
 all facilities in one place

CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS  
 FEMALE PRAYER ROOMS  
 MALE PRAYER ROOMS  
 BUSY FEMALE BATHROOMS  
 QUIET MALE BATHROOMS  
 SALES BOOTHS  
 FEW COFFEE SHOPS  
 FEMALE TARGET AUDIENCE  
 JORDANIAN BRANDS  
 BOOKS STALL  
 MASSAGE CHAIRS  
 NO SMOKING SIGNS  
 CIGARETTE SMOKE  
 LARGE MOVABLE PLASTIC TABLES  
 RED AND YELLOW PLASTIC CHAIRS  
 MODERATE PRICES  
 SHORT VISITS  
 LONG VISITS  
 DROP OFF  
 PICK UP  
 CROWDS  
 ATMS  
 KADI  
 DARAGHME  
 LA FAMILIA  
 MAX  
 TRADITIONAL CLOTHING SHOPS  
 SMALL SELECTION OF  
 MEN'S CLOTHING  
 MODEST DRESS  
 KAREEM  
 MCDONALD'S  
 NARA CAFE  
 MONEY  
 FOOD COURT  
 FOOD  
 CANDY SHOPS ON EVERY FLOOR  
 HEAT/COLD  
 NO HEATING  
 GAMES  
 SOFT GAMES  
 BALLOONS  
 STROLLERS  
 SHOPPING BAGS  
 ADVERTISEMENTS  
 SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS  
 ARGILEH IN COFFEE SHOPS  
 FATHER + CHILD SALON  
 ENOUGH SPACE TO WALK  
 SURROUNDING OPEN SPACE  
 SPOTLIGHTS  
 DARK SPOTS

off peak times  
 patchworked  
 pedestrian bridge  
 patchworked stairs  
 immediate  
 neighborhood  
 hair salon  
 dukkan  
 Crazy Taxi kiosk  
 planted trees  
 private gardens  
 laundry hanging  
 from house walls  
 "For Rent" signs  
 Diwan  
 UNWRA Community  
 Center  
 Social Development  
 Fund  
 Istiklal Street  
 Jordan Street  
 Bitbars Intersection  
 Al Nuzha Bridge  
 Al Nuzha Circle  
 Al Nuzha soq  
 Al Nuzha  
 residential area  
 Al Yarmouk  
 sports club  
 Al Yarmouk  
 swimming pool  
 Flaggpole Park  
 Istiklal Hospital  
 JU Sports Dept on  
 Istiklal Street  
 Dakhiye Circle  
 UNWRA School  
 mosque  
 Islam

BAZAAR  
 CHILDREN CARS  
 SUBSCRIPTION CARDS  
 GATHERING MEALS  
 GROUP DISCOUNTS  
 SECURITY BADGE  
 BIRD SHOW  
 DARAGHME EVENTS  
 MCDONALD'S EVENTS  
 MINIMUM WAGE  
 SMELL OF PERFUME AND INCENSE  
 FOGGY BOOTH  
 SMELL OF DUST  
 SMELL OF GARBAGE  
 SMELL OF FOOD  
 SMELL OF BABY POWDER  
 SMELL OF CORN  
 TRAFFIC  
 CARS  
 TAXIS  
 BUSES  
 H-100 BUS  
 DIANA BUS  
 PARKING LOTS  
 BILLS  
 LITTER  
 KIA SEPHIA  
 HYUNDAI SILVER  
 SUNFLOWER SEEDS  
 POLICE TRUCK  
 LASER POINTER  
 SOUNDS OF CHILDREN PLAYING  
 NO GREEN SPACE  
 CONCRETE  
 STORAGE  
 STREET FOOD  
 CORN  
 TORMOS  
 CREPES  
 KEBAB  
 SOUNDS OF GAME MACHINES  
 CALL TO PRAYER  
 LOUD MUSIC  
 ARABIC SONGS  
 EGYPTIAN & IRAQI MUSIC  
 NO (ENGLISH) POP MUSIC  
 PATRIOT SONG  
 METAL DETECTORS  
 PURSES  
 DISINFECTANT  
 FACE MASKS  
 GLOVES  
 CAR BEAMS

labor law  
 Jordan's economy  
 social development  
 employment  
 job opportunities  
 work contracts  
 short term contracts  
 shift change  
 (6 pm at the food court,  
 4 pm in the play area)  
 one hour break  
 one day off per week  
 no deliveries during  
 opening hours  
 Kareem opening on  
 Nov 28, 2019  
 social media  
 text message advertising  
 puberty  
 marriage  
 divorce  
 parenthood  
 disability  
 barrier-free  
 mood  
 aggression  
 new experiences  
 children's area  
 shabi  
 girls only places

# Public Urban Life

## Entertainment

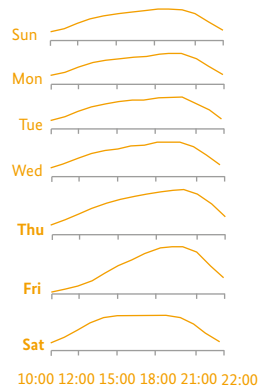
Istiklal Mall can perhaps be best described as a family-oriented mall that targets the needs and interests of families and specifically those of mothers and children. This becomes visible in a variety of ways. The majority of the shops found at Istiklal Mall, for instance, mainly cater to women, many selling female Islamic clothing. Only the large clothing chains like *Daraghme* or *La Familia* also sell clothing for men.

Fig. 11 Istiklal Mall Opening Hours and Peak Visiting Times  
Data retrieved from Google

### Opening Hours

Sat-Thu	10 am - 11 pm
Fri	2 pm - 11 pm

### Peak Visiting Hours

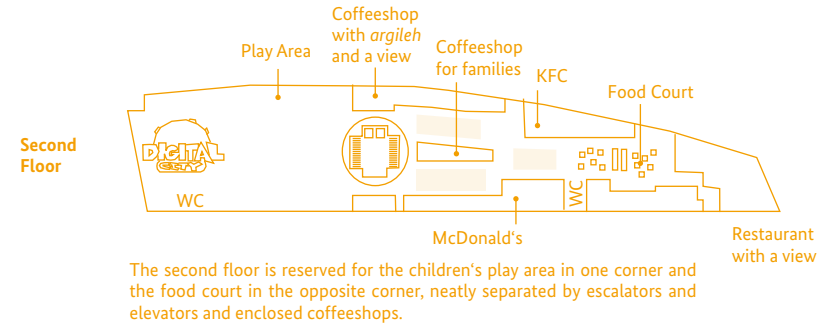


**Female Vendor** „This is a family mall. It is safer than the streets.“

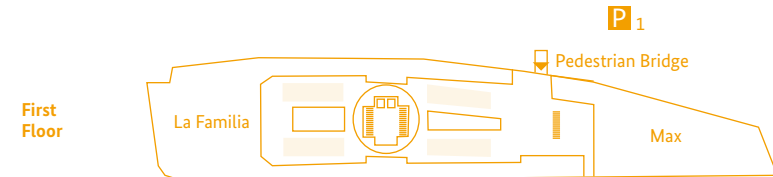
**Young Man hanging out with his friend in the parking lot** „I never went inside again after I quit working there. There is nothing for us. It is boring.“

**Young Woman and mall employee spending time at Istiklal Mall** „Yesterday, my [female] cousin came to the mall and we had the best day.“

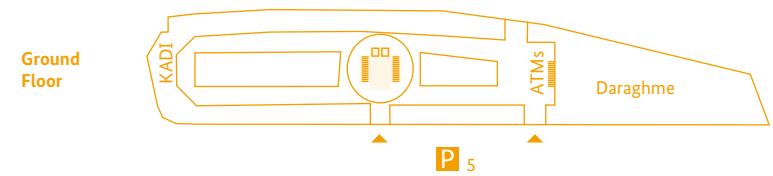
The nature of malls is that they do not only offer opportunities to shop for goods but that they provide a full shopping *experience* that enables or prompts visitors to pair shopping with other modes of consumption and opportunities to spend (see Fig. 11). This especially comes to the advantage of primary caregivers - that is mostly women - whose domestic duties can take up a lot of their time. Being able to find a variety of things under one roof, thus, allows caregivers to save time. Istiklal Mall is no exception to that while it offers additional attractions apart from plain shopping. Most prominently, there is the food court, a must



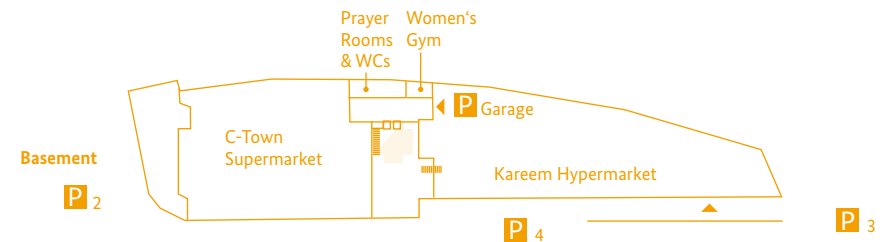
The second floor is reserved for the children's play area in one corner and the food court in the opposite corner, neatly separated by escalators and elevators and enclosed coffeeshops.



More shops and booths selling food and drinks can be found on the first floor to which also the pedestrian bridge across Istiklal Street connects to.



Visitors can access the mall through one of the two entrances on the southern side of the building. The ground floor mainly holds a number of clothing shops, including Islamic fashion and the highly popular *Daraghme* and *KADI* clothing chains. In November 2019, a *Kareem Hypermarket*, a large supermarket chain, opened on the ground floor for which one part of the parking garage was surrendered to. It is the only shop at the mall that can be entered without having to walk through the mall itself as its entrance is directly accessible from the outside.



Supermarkets, banks, prayer rooms, a women's gym, and access to the parking garage are found in the basement.

Fig. 12 Overview of Istiklal Mall

play in parking lot  
sell in parking lot  
sit in parking lot  
play football  
roller skate  
sit in massage chair  
deliver tea and coffee  
to shops



**Hang out in Parking Lot**  
There is much to see in the parking lot where numerous people pass through every night. With or without car, neighborhood kids will lean on a car and watch.

forget a place  
create reference points  
remember where something is  
get lost  
be stuck in traffic  
park outside lines  
wait in the car  
drop off somebody  
pick somebody up  
shop  
window shopping  
buy groceries  
hunt for sales  
earn points to play  
eat  
pray  
hang out with peers  
smoke cigarette  
catch somebody smoking  
smoke argileh  
smell food  
smell perfume  
chat with a friend  
enjoy  
have some alone time  
stress out  
hurry  
use the bathroom  
sidetalk  
address costumers  
visit an event  
watch a performance  
dance  
dance with laser pointer

play  
play loud music  
run around  
scream/yell  
cry  
nag  
sit together  
laugh together  
take photos  
sit and wait  
walk around  
stroll  
feel safe  
going home  
pushing a stroller  
leaving stroller  
unattended  
use emergency door  
take the elevator  
take the escalator  
keep children busy  
watch children play  
draw money from ATM  
pay bills  
take a break  
go outside  
sit on a curb  
complain  
carry shopping bags  
struggling with shopping bags  
look for offers  
receive discounts  
watch people  
see new faces  
enjoy elevator view  
carry child up the stairs  
hold hands with child  
check out men  
check out women  
advertise  
read advertisements  
hear about offers  
sit in massage chair  
sit on benches in play area  
find a job at the mall  
get fired or quit job  
take day off  
study for exam  
play with phone  
love the mall  
hate the mall  
prohibit photo cameras  
write on the wall  
watch a tree burn  
watch police, ambulance,

or fire fighters  
go through security  
being stopped by security  
work around security  
be warned by security  
adhere to rules  
break rules  
un/load goods  
count goods  
work and study  
work part-time  
work full time  
check on each other  
tell on each other  
exchange gossip  
stop greeting each other  
speak to the opposite sex  
avoid interaction with the opposite sex  
add table + chairs to the food court  
clean up yourself  
let somebody else clean up  
have a crush on somebody  
waiting for wife  
wait for a taxi  
call a taxi via app  
sit on entrance stairs  
stare at somebody  
verbally harass somebody  
look at private parts  
refer issues to superior  
deal with issues



**Smoke a Cigarette** It is prohibited to smoke in the mall but the shops and booths are exempt from it which essentially boils down to the fact that it is possible to smoke nearly everywhere.

patrol entrance  
hand out balloons  
win a prize  
drive around  
lean on a car  
leave one door open  
roll window down  
make deliveries  
scold somebody

put out chairs in front of the building  
walk to/from work  
arrive early/late  
leave early/late  
can't hear each other  
feel suffocated  
carry argileh in backpack  
have money to spend  
don't have money to spend  
make minimum wage  
fear raise of minimum wage  
negotiate price  
pose for pictures  
upload on social media  
go crazy on SALES  
video chat while shopping  
buy luxury goods  
buy basic goods  
let somebody quickly finish shopping quickly  
receive ads through social media or the phone  
sell Fine tissues  
hear about drugs  
wash cars/trucks  
let water flow anywhere  
advertise truck rental  
try to look confident  
check/clean car  
hire a day laborer  
sell things around the mall  
order food  
speak in a different accent  
put on headset  
street vending  
store business gear  
shop at the end of the month  
dry bread crumbs in the sun  
being rude and unfriendly  
being friendly and helpful  
joke around  
wear jacket/scarf inside the mall  
smoke in the car  
have tinted car windows  
fight with each other  
argue with security

for most malls, as well as the children's play area (see Fig. 12-14 and Box 2-3). They attract most people as it can be counted on that, even if the mall has few visitors, the second floor will unlikely remain empty. Both the play area and the food court are particularly busy on weekends because the mall then turns into a weekend destination, especially for families (see Fig. 11). Few men come to the mall alone and there are even fewer male-only groups apart from the men who work at the mall. The mall truly attracts mothers and other women with young children. Especially in the play area mothers can entertain their children and keep them busy so they can also entertain themselves if they wish. The food court is mostly being used by smaller and larger female groups of different ages. Not all visitors to the food court have the intention to eat or drink though. Many simply take advantage of the mall's central location and use the food court to meet with friends, to sit and rest, or to study. Since the tables and chairs are not fixed, they can flexibly be adjusted to all kinds of different situations.

**Two Mothers, one with a newborn baby** „We just need a place where we can sit without our children. We come here so they can play while we sit and talk in peace...even gyms don't have any places for children to play.“

**Group of Women (20s/30s)** „It is impossible to go anywhere that doesn't have a play area for children.“

**Family from Al Hashmi Al Shamali in the play area** „You always need to spend money but there are places to sit, food, and bathrooms.“

**Group of seven Female Teachers in good spirits** „We know each other from school but all live in different places. Istiklal Mall is in the middle between where everybody lives...We come here to sit, talk, eat, and sneaky check out some men.“

Apart from the play area and the food court, the mall and selected shops occasionally organize special events. These can come in the shape of a bazaar, a new shop opening, holiday celebrations, or many other formats. All of them regularly draw large crowds including men and women, depending on the event and occasion.



**Box 2 The Food Court** It includes a number of booths ranging from local fast food chains over international players like *McDonald's* and *KFC* to specialty food like chimney cake or candy. Many offer special gathering or family meals. In a horseshoe shape, the booths surround a large seating area that is furnished with tables, chairs, and benches, TVs, and a trampoline corner for children.



**Box 3 Children's Play Area** The play area is equipped with a variety of games for children up to 13 years of age. It offers a climbing wall, an ice skating rink, virtual reality games, table games, different versions of merry-go-rounds, several games of chance, different types of fair-ground rides, face paint, trampolins, obstacle courses, and much more. Teenagers older than 13 and adults are only allowed to enter the rollercoaster. Generally, the games are more or less equally used by boys and girls alike.

Fig. 14 Prices per Game

Carousel	1.25 JD
Ice Rink	2.50 JD
Trampoline	2.50 JD
VR Game	4.00 JD
Rollercoaster	1.50 JD
Bumper Car	1.50 JD

#### Special Offers

**20 JD** for a 60 JD Game Voucher  
**30 JD** for a 130 JD Game Voucher + Family Shwarma Meal (L)

**50 JD** for a 250 JD Game Voucher + Family Shwarma Meal (XL)

**75 JD** for a 400 JD Game Voucher + Free Children Desk

**100 JD** for a 600 JD Game Voucher + Free Bicycle Size 16

Fig. 13 Public Practices Selected Public Practices as observed at Istiklal Mall





Istiklal Mall from the outside at night (left), its atrium (middle), and its different floors (right)



A variety of games can be found in the *Digital City* play area on the second floor of the Istiklal Mall



Two women and three children walking comfortably through the corridors side by side while pushing a stroller



On each level, brown, comfy massage chairs are set up. Tired customers can activate them with a few coins for a few minutes but what is more likely is that they are simply being used as chairs

**Safety**  
**Young Single Men**

Nighttime is prime time for *zo'ran*, the “bullies of the street”, that is young single men driving around and hanging out in their cars. While they do, they roll their tinted windows down, play loud music, drive in loops, chainsmoke cigarettes, drink Turkish coffee, eat sunflower seeds, and watch people, especially women, passing by who can then expect to receive unambiguous comments from them (see Fig. 13). Scenes like these occur frequently at Istiklal Mall’s parking lots since young men everywhere are drawn to where young women are (and vice versa). This, however, describes exactly the situation that many women aim to avoid and wish to protect themselves from by entering private, controlled, safe spaces like Istiklal Mall.

**Man (19) from Jabal Al Nuzha** „*Sallih a'alnabi* (English „God’s blessings upon the Prophet“!) I told you this is the norm in Al Nuzha. Any girl a boy sees, he has to comment.“

**Two Young Working Woman from Gardens and Jabal Amman** „We should change the people, not the streets. It’s their behavior that causes problems. I don’t feel comfortable walking in the streets. Even old men look at me...You can’t be comfortable when you feel you’re being watched.“

**Group of Female Teenagers** „We don’t let any boys walk in with us to the mall. They’ll think we want to be their girlfriends.“

The low number of male users inside Istiklal Mall is not a coincidence but fully intentional as its entrance policy deliberately restricts the number of men, young men especially, whose presence would otherwise prevent families and women from visiting the mall. As a consequence, many men righteously feel discriminated, arguing that it is not fair to denounce all men as „troublemakers“. A few years back, fights often used to occur between security guards and male visitors unsuccessfully trying to enter the mall (see Box 4). They only decreased when more young single men were simply granted access as it diffused the tension and increased the pool of customers.

**Male Worker (30s) at Istiklal Mall** „Not every man is bad. I had a guest here once who got stopped by the security. I was really embarrassed.“

**Box 4 How to Enter Istiklal Mall as a Young Single Man?**

- waiting to „hitchhike“ into the mall with a woman or mixed group who is willing to take young men across the gate and past the security guards
- carrying a valid water, electricity, or phone bill and showing it to the security guards while explaining that they just came to pay the bill
- trying to apply for a job and providing more details about it if asked
- wanting to return a product showing the corresponding branded shopping bag, product with price tag, and the receipt
- young men opening their wallets and showing large money bills to prove that they are able to spend
- knowing the security guards through an informal middle man or middle woman
- knowing the security guards through frequent visits that have made a young man eligible for the mall
- having a neat appearance that conforms to other visitors’ appearances and mannerisms

**Male Security Guard** „It depends on the look. If he looks suspicious, I will not let him in. If he wears two to three necklaces, certain bracelets, a certain hair cut...“

**Male Syrian Workers paying their bills** „They are watching us. We have to leave when we finish.“

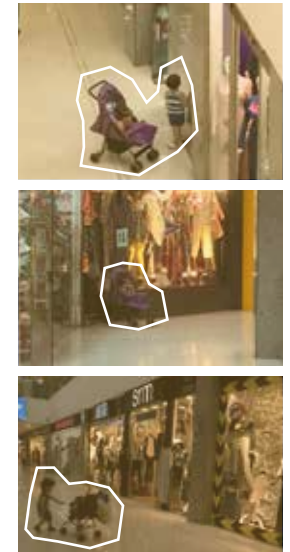
**Group of Men** „It is unfair to stop men at the entrance...at least specify certain times when men are allowed to enter.“

To ensure the mall’s general safety and to keep an eye on customers and employees alike, gate securities with optional metal detectors and bag and body searches, surveillance cameras and male and female security guards are distributed on all levels. In addition, there is a special tasks force that discretely deals with „troublemakers“ if needed, careful to maintain a peaceful atmosphere and not to cause a scene.

**Security Guard** „These are the days of social media. If a scene happened, it would be bad for the mall’s reputation and its investors.“

Depending on capacities, a police truck parks at the main gate during evening hours. Should anything happen that would require police force, the local police station will show up immediately as the mall is of high economic value for Jabal Al Nuzha and therefore prioritized. Under the bottom line, Istiklal Mall feels safe. So much, in fact, that mothers seem to feel comfortable enough to leave their children unattended while they shop and move from store to store (see Fig. 15).

With little interaction to the outside world, Istiklal Mall as a whole represents a fully contained urban island of privacy. As a result, the mall is also considered a fairly reputable place where women can go to without fear of being stigmatized by their community. Much of it is owed to the fact that the mall is simply *known* to be a family-oriented place with strong control systems. Yet, common codes of conduct do not cease to



**Fig. 15 Unattended Children at Istiklal Mall** Sequence of a purple stroller being pushed through the hallways by a mother who cannot enter the shops with the stroller because there is not enough space so she has her children stay with the stroller while she shops

**Reputation**  
**Privacy**  
**Gender Separation**



#### Box 5 A Note on Smoking

A number of no smoking signs adorn the walls inside Istiklal Mall.

While most visitors adhere to this rule, it seems no problem to smoke anyway - for men at least. A number of men, thus, peacefully light a cigarette without facing any consequences, especially in the food court area. Women who smoke in public are frowned upon, especially in conservative settings so women at Istiklal Mall either do not smoke at all or they seek less visible places to smoke, such as coffeeshops or the bathroom.

#### Comfort & Discomfort Facilities Mobility

**Box 6 Housekeeping** The food court has an ever-present „housekeeping“ team, clearly distinguishable in their orange t-shirts and cleaning supply carts. They ensure that each table is tidied and mopped after usage so customers can feel comfortable in a clean environment.

**Box 7 COVID19 Measures** During the pandemic, malls were closed for weeks. Upon re-opening, the visitors were not allowed to enter without a face mask and gloves. Once past the entrance gate, most people took them off, however, and only occasionally did the security personnel caution visitors to wear them. For additional safety, a dedicated worker in a blue full body suit disinfected tables and chairs in regular intervals in the food court, worshippers had to bring their own carpets for prayer, the number of gym users was decreased, and all shops provided hand sanitizers. The play area was closed even after re-opening.

apply for conservative women in public, for instance, visiting the mall unaccompanied, visibly smoking, or engaging in excessive contact with the opposite sex. Those who seek even more privacy and distance to others at the mall can find it in one of the pricier and enclosed coffeeshops and restaurants. They separate men from female groups and families in their seating areas as is standard practice in many other establishments within Amman and they allow users to smoke *argileh* in the otherwise non-smoking mall (see Box 5).

**Young Woman visiting the mall with her sister** „This is a family mall, it's safer than the streets“

**Group of Female Teenagers on visiting the mall** „Our parents trust us.“

**Mother with Daughter (14)** „Open areas are scary.“

In addition to being a safe environment in which one can find entertainment, Istiklal Mall pays extra attention to visitors' comfort in order to encourage longer stays through a number of strategies of which some are addressed here. First off, without much effort, the mall's building provides a temperate refuge from Jordan's hot summer climate. In winter, however, for lack of heating, the mall can become uncomfortably cold, too. Secondly, the mall offers a variety of experiences so different preferences can be met and potential clashes avoided. Those seeking a calm and quiet environment, for instance, should avoid weekends when the play area's and food court's soundscape pierces through all levels. Thirdly, in terms of maintenance, the mall's management tries to keep a certain level of cleanliness and tidiness by employing „housekeeping“ staff who also followed up on protective measures against COVID19 (see Box 6 and 7). Fourth, particularly mothers of young children appreciate the mall's walkable and stroller-friendly pathways thanks to wide hallways with smooth, obstacle-free surfaces as well as the installation

**Woman grabs housekeeper's mop and cleans the table herself while he watches her** „I have more experience than you.“

**Co-Research's Field Diary on a Friday visit** „It is almost impossible to discuss anything here. The play area is incredibly loud.“

**Female Vendor on the lack of heating during winter** „I was freezing yesterday. It's very cold inside.“

of elevators and escalators. In contrast, Amman's sidewalks and most other public spaces are nearly entirely inadequate for the use of strollers and prolonged walks. Fifth, at Istiklal Mall, women can find bathrooms next to the food court, in the play area, and next to the prayer rooms in the basement which takes several worries off their mind (see Fig.16). Last but not least, the mall is easily accessible due to its central location and good connections to buses, service taxis, private taxis as well as walkable points of interest, vast parking spaces, and a fairly large pick-up zone. This is useful because, for example, husbands oftentimes drop off their wives and children at the mall without accompanying them inside just to pick them up again a few hours later.

**Woman from Hussein Camp** „We don't go out a lot. You need a lot of money to go out. I don't have enough money to go inside the mall.“

**Divorced Woman sitting in the parking lot with her daughter** „I don't go inside the mall. I can't afford it. Why remind myself of my misery? I don't want to crave what I can't afford.“

**Male Syrian** „The supermarkets always do the same. The offers end before the 1st of the month when we get our coupons from UNHCR.“

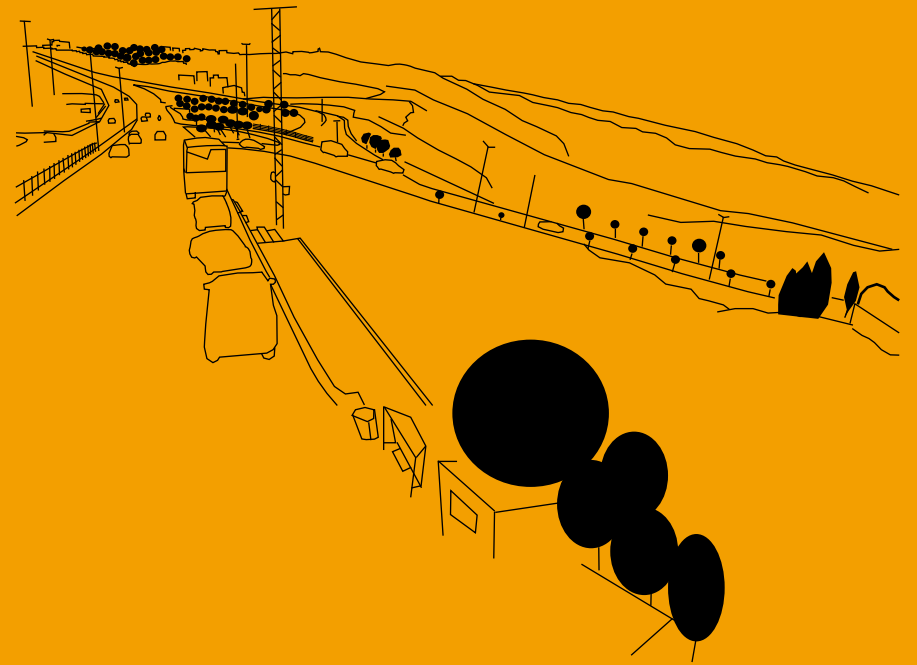
The greater issue with publicly accessible commercial private spaces is that they hand out exclusive rights to those who can afford to spend and exclude those who cannot. After all, a visit to Istiklal Mall is hard to enjoy without expenses. This is problematic as social segregation runs deep in Amman's urban landscape and promoting malls as attractive escapes even further estranges people standing on the outside and inside.



**Fig. 16 A Female-Friendly Women's Bathroom** Istiklal Mall's bathroom next to the food court has been turned into an even more female-friendly space thanks to its attendant's attention for detail: A plastic chair is readily available for breastfeeding, resting, or smoking a secret cigarette, there is a small diaper changing station with a piece of square cloth and a heart-shaped pillow next to the sink, and there is another smaller heart-shaped pillow that hangs on a hook spiked with hair pins for women fixing their *hijab*. Finally, the attendant also always carries a supply of sanitary products with her for women on their monthly period. In this manner, this women's bathroom informally better meets women's needs since most female bathroom designs do not.

#### Accessibility

# MATAL ABU NSEIR



VIEWPOINT

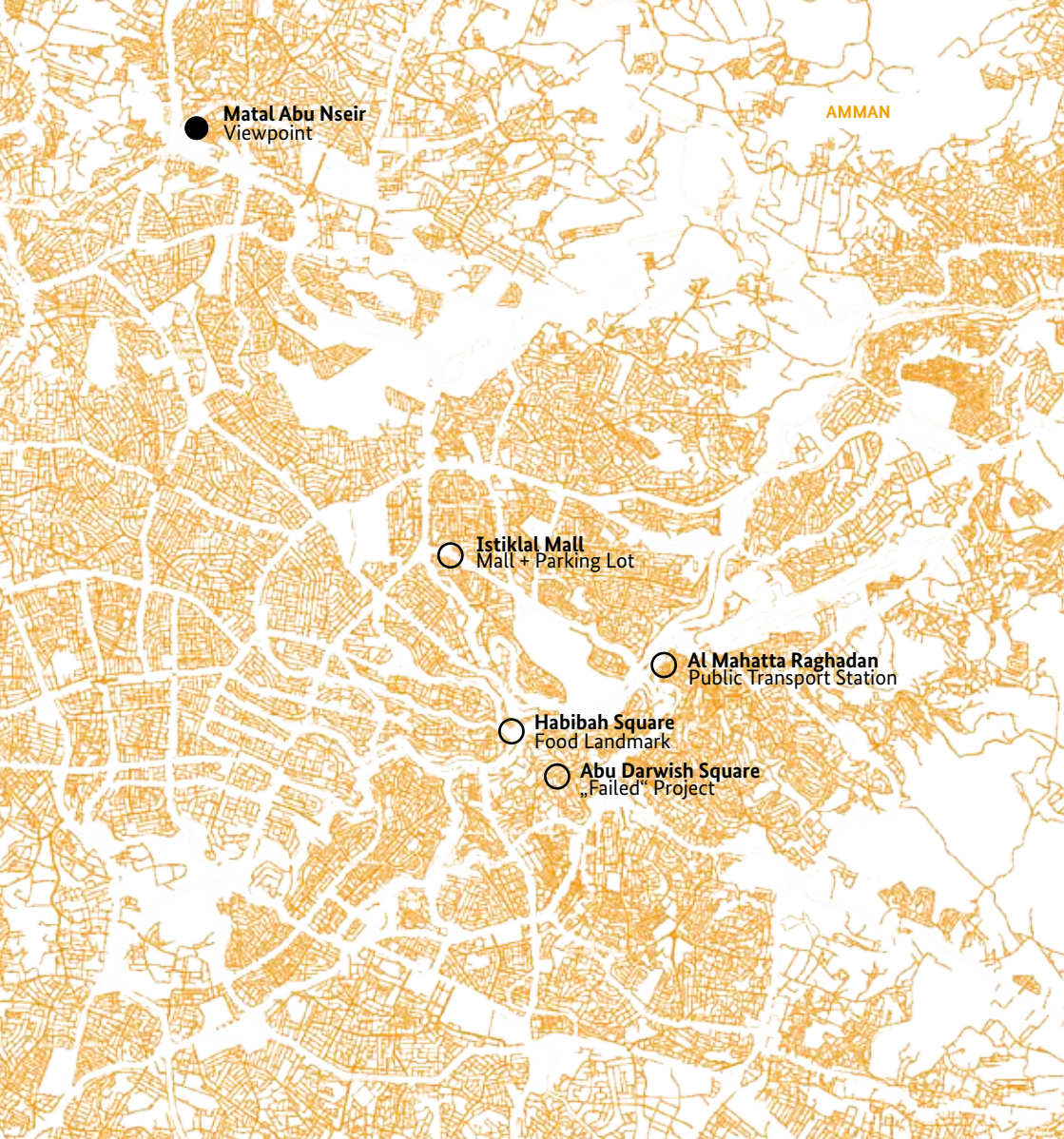


Fig. 1 Field of Research Mapping of Case Studies and Location of Research Site in Amman

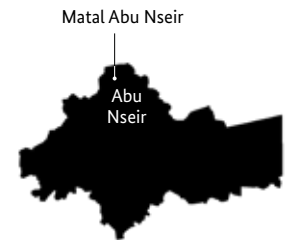
## CASE STUDY SELECTION

Matal Abu Nseir represents a popular informal public place in Amman in which people are granted access to a fairly affordable, inclusive, safe, and green public space that is as enjoyable as much or as little as one makes it to be. In order to better understand how this materializes on the ground motivated the selection of this case study. Entertainment and facilities fully fall onto the user's ability and responsibility to improvise, which tends to result in rather female- and children-unfriendly solutions. In this context, the car represents an important vehicle for enjoyment, comfort, safety, and privacy, since it represents the dominant mode of transport and main meeting point. The disproportional strong presence of men then frequently becomes the cause of discomfort for other user groups and a threat to their personal and reputational safety. Under the bottom line, informal public spaces are attractive because of their DIY character but can be just as deterring for the same reason.

**Contributing Researchers**  
 Rebekka Keuss  
 Mahabba Ayesh  
 Workshop Participants

**Field Data Collection**  
 non-participant and participant observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, go-alongs, hang outs, male and female focus group discussions

No. of Field Visits	29
No. of Interlocutors	110



### Key Findings & Themes

#### Accessibility

As an admission-free open space, Matal Abu Nseir is accessible and affordable to a wider public.

#### Mobility

Matal Abu Nseir is well-connected to different modes of transport, most importantly through car infrastructures. Thus, pedestrians face the most challenging conditions.

#### Entertainment

As an informal public space, Matal Abu Nseir becomes whatever one makes out of it. This can encompass eating, drinking, smoking, resting, gathering, thinking etc., all the while the view stays in sight.

#### Facilities

Facilities at Matal Abu Nseir are not provided, which can become a deterrent especially for women who depend on public bathrooms more than men.

#### Safety

During daytime, Matal Abu Nseir feels safe for women and men, less so at night for lack of lighting and other security mechanism except for police patrols.

#### Young Single Men

Many young men come to the viewpoint with or without a car till late at night and, by doing so, keep other users from coming.

#### Privacy

Cars as mobile meeting points offer a fairly high level of privacy and, thus, attract many couples. So do selected hidden spots outdoors.

#### Gender Separation

Female and male groups rarely mix apart from couples and families.

#### Reputation

Indecent public behavior is harmful for both women and the neighborhood.

#### Comfort & Discomfort

Sunsets and weekends attract large crowds to Matal Abu Nseir, which can become a nuisance for families, conservative women, and residents.

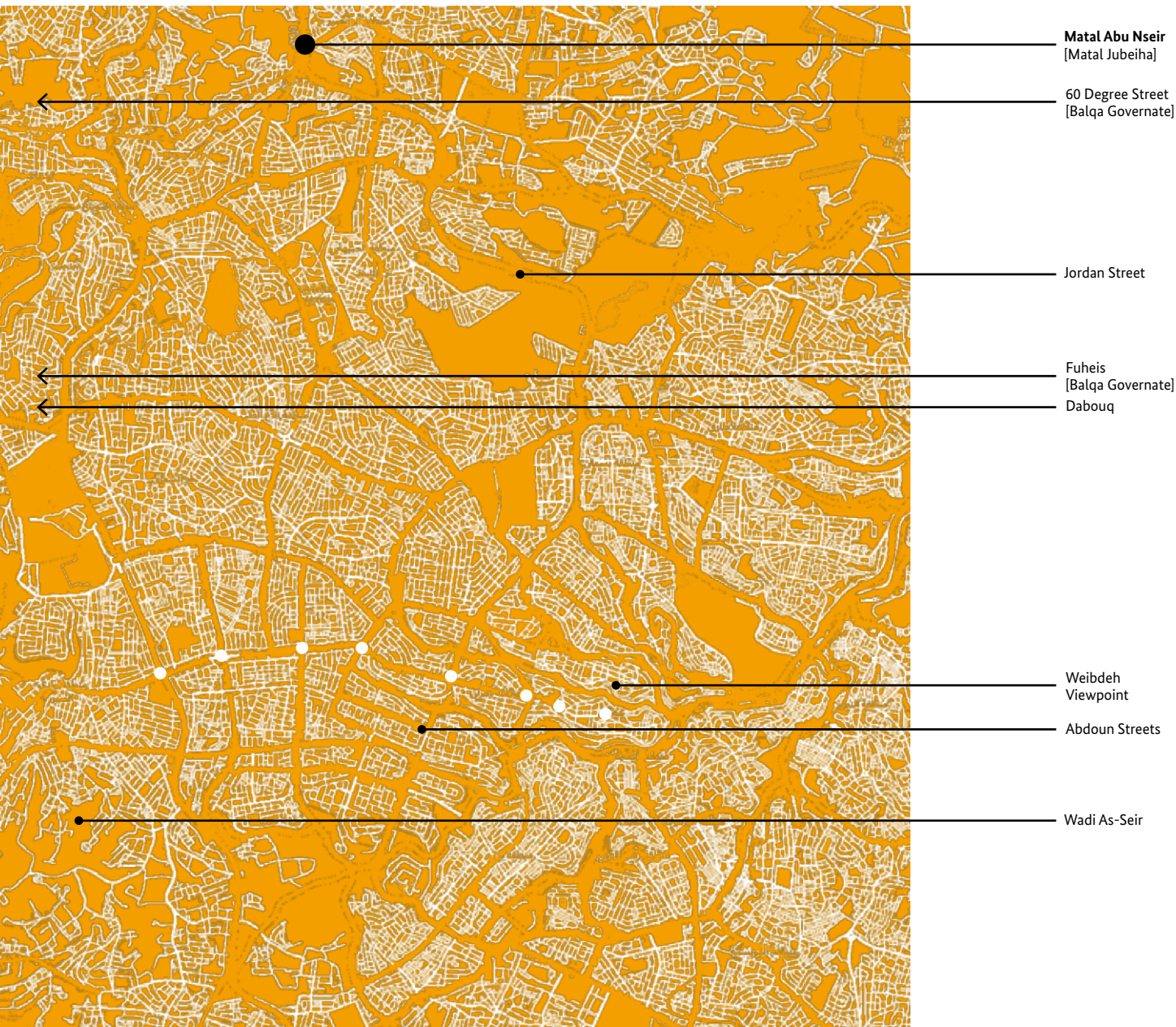


Fig. 2 Public Space Typology Mapping of Selected Viewpoints in and around Amman

## AMMAN'S HILLS & VIEWPOINTS

Amman's hilly topography and its origin story make hills (Arabic *jabal*) and hilltop viewpoints (Arabic *matal*) ever-present elements of the city. Many are hardly noticeable or recognized as one and seem to disappear in Amman's street network and built environment. Others, on the other hand, regularly turn into crowded gatherings and have organically emerged as popular meeting points for people from all walks of life. Despite their popularity, none of Amman's viewpoints - except for the Citadel - are explicitly embedded in formal definitions of public space for they are created spontaneously on public or publicly-accessible land and draw their popularity from precisely its informality. Without entry fees, opening times, gatekeeping mechanisms, or explicit rules and regulations, these open spaces allow for practices that more controlled public spaces in Amman do not tolerate. On the downside, they also come with certain anxieties more controlled spaces are better able to protect from or even eliminate. In this manner, Amman's viewpoints provide raw closeups of the city's public urban life when not controlled formally, including everything it entails - the good, the bad, and what lies in between. Many Ammanis are already familiar with the so-called „60 Degree Street“ on the way from Amman to Salt whose viewpoints have become famous and made way for lucrative hospitality businesses. In

Amman, some of the popular viewpoints are found in Jabal Al Weibdeh, Abdoun, and on the outskirts of Amman's built environment, for instance in Fuheis, where Jordan's capital meets the countryside (see Fig. 2 and 3).

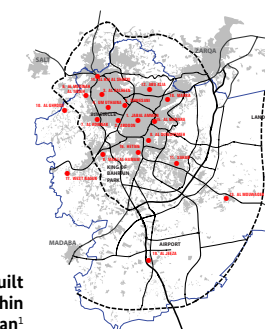


Fig. 3 Amman's built environment within Greater Amman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> GAM 2008: 125

# Setting

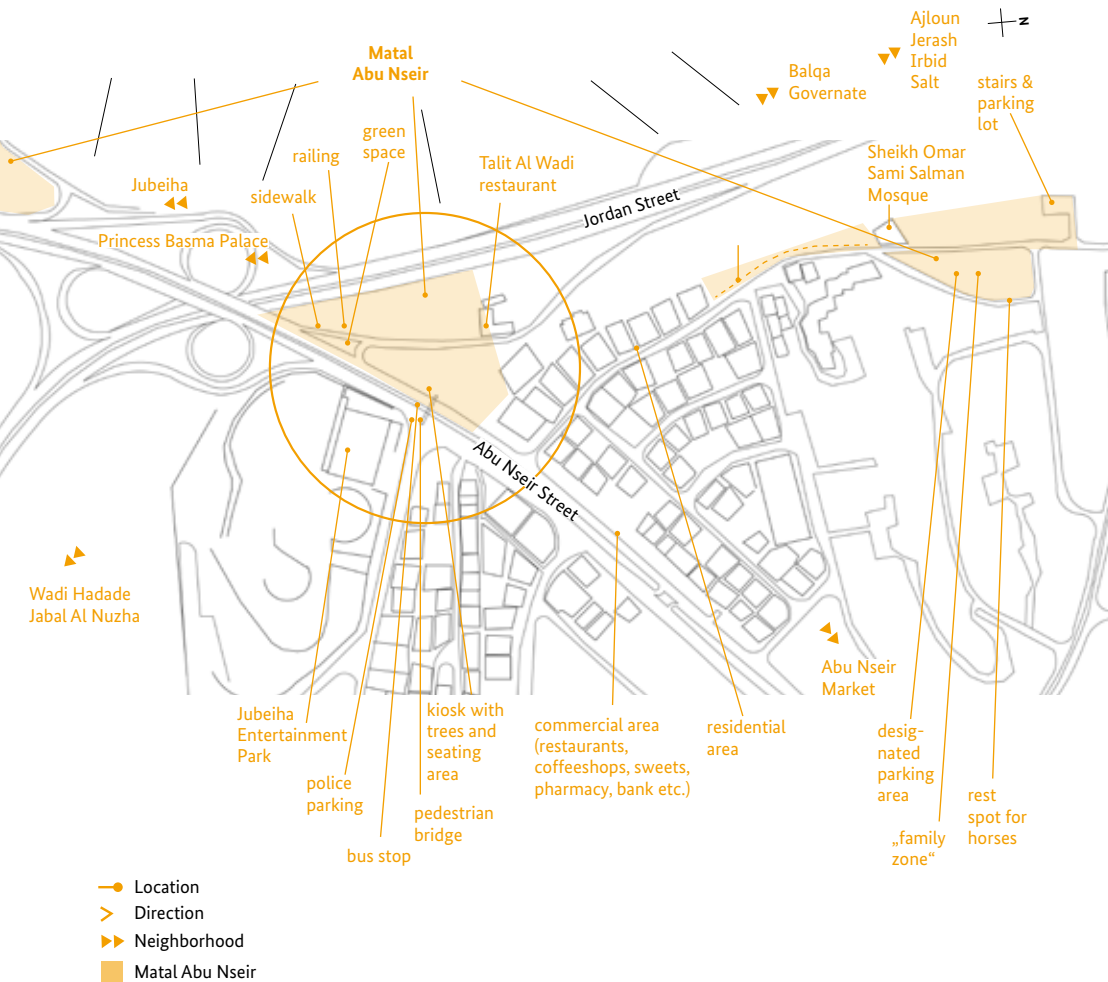


Fig. 4 Urban Framework Points of Interest around Matal Abu Nseir

## MATAL ABU NSEIR

The Matal Abu Nseir (English „Abu Nseir Viewpoint“) belongs to the better known viewpoints in the city. Its astonishing location - surrounded by vast cliffs, mountains, and a large valley with few buildings in immediate vicinity - regularly attracts visitors from near and far (see Fig. 5). As its name already suggests, the viewpoint is located in the Abu Nseir district on the northern fringe of Amman on the borders to the Al Balqa governate. According to an urban expert of Amman, Abu Nseir represents a middle-income district with a well-functioning housing project and, as such, is neither clearly identifiable with West or East Amman. As Matal Abu Nseir also pours into the Jubeiha district, it is sometimes referred to as Jubeiha Viewpoint, as well. The Jubeiha Entertainment Park, to which according to some residents the viewpoint owes its fame and popularity, has been closed for renovations for some years now and it is not clear when it will reopen again.

**Male Visitor** „I can't imagine my life without the viewpoint because it really is a breathing place for the citizens and the visitors.“

**Husband & Father** „The people of Abu Nseir are lucky, it's exactly like Qasioon in Damascus, Syria.“

Generally, there are no clear boundary markers for Matal Abu Nseir, instead, a few reference points frame the viewpoint, namely the Princess Basma Palace, the Abu Nseir Street, the Jubeiha Entertainment Park, a solitary kiosk, a restaurant, a mosque, a few residential buildings, and the plateau's edges (see Fig. 4). The area between Abu Nseir and Jubeiha is overall an elevated one, it thus boasts a number of spots with great views that can be found along the same plateau as Matal Abu Nseir. But these viewpoints tend to be further off the main road, more hidden, and better known among residents while entirely unknown to the wider population.



Fig. 5 Instagram post depicting Matal Abu Nseir or Matal Jubeiha Numerous entries of the viewpoint can be found on social media platforms under hashtags like #al\_jubayhah #jubeiha #jordanlife #westernAmman!

**Male Student from Saudi Arabia** „Whenever I post pictures of this view on WhatsApp, Instagram, or Snapchat, my friends in KSA show astonishment about it.“



Qasioon in Damascus, Syria

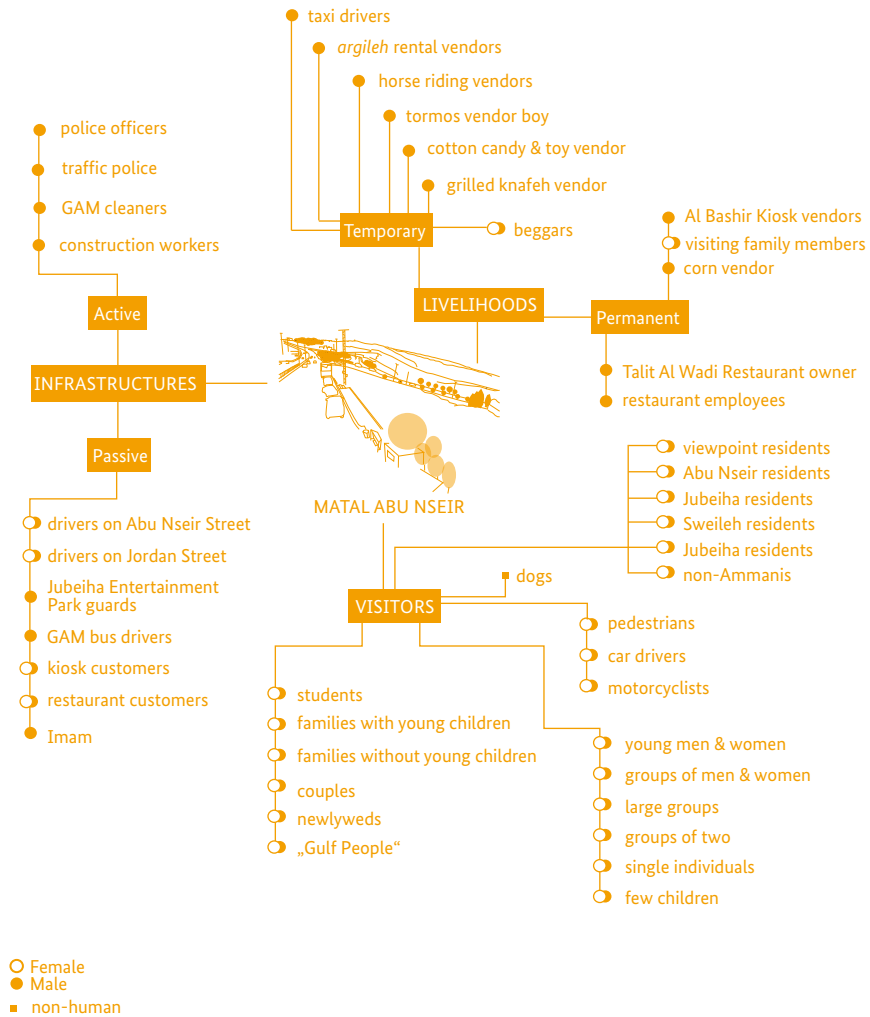


Fig. 6 Actor Network Selected Users of Matal Abu Nseir

Therefore, they cannot be considered to belong to the Matal Abu Nseir. Matal Abu Nseir is then what belongs to the urban memory and is passed on through word-of-mouth. Maps are only helpful to those who know at least roughly where to search (see Fig. 7). Car infrastructures and ongoing traffic form the backstage to Matal Abu Nseir, including the heavily frequented four to six lane Abu Nseir Street and a large interchange that connects to the just as busy Jordan Street. Due to the topography as well as the traffic infrastructures that cut the viewpoint into several parts, Matal Abu Nseir is essentially a splintered one. This holds true for its geographic as well as its social dimensions (see Fig. 8-10). Given that viewpoints are informal public spaces, formal land use plans do not provide a great deal of information on what functions they fulfill, what activities they accommodate, and who and what is included in the catchment area. Instead, viewpoints override, replace, or appropriate existing plans by inserting spontaneous functions and activities (see Fig.17).



Fig. 7 Locating Matal Abu Nseir  
The viewpoint's location is rather fluid which e.g. becomes apparent by the fact that Google Maps offers three nearby but different destinations for Matal Abu Nseir

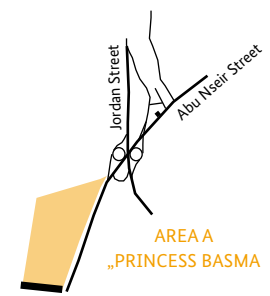


Fig. 8 Matal Abu Nseir near Princess Basma Palace Area A is located parallel to Abu Nseir Street next to the Princess Basma Palace. Its gravel extends all the way to the edge of the plateau where large rocks await before it goes downhill. This area is popular among „Gulf people“ from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or UAE. Their presence becomes visible in their dress, accents, and foreign license plates.

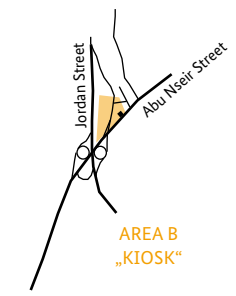


Fig. 9 Matal Abu Nseir around the Al Bashir Kiosk Area B is tugged between a triangular traffic island, a kiosk, and a restaurant, and the busiest of all fragments. As such, it can be considered the nucleus of Matal Abu Nseir. It wraps around a pedestrian bridge, a bus stop, a railing, a defunct byroad, a brownfield, parking spots, and a side street that connects to Jordan Street.

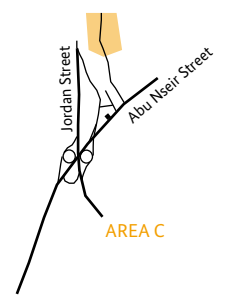


Fig. 10 Matal Abu Nseir around the Residential Area Area C is connected to the other areas but least visible from the main road. It is located near the mosque, tugged between residential buildings, and overlooking Jordan Street. Here, a set of stairs and a small walking path with a dead end is regularly appropriated as a meeting point and for seating. Several paved areas additionally turn into parking spots for visitors who prefer the more quiet parts of Matal Abu Nseir.



Fig. 11 Matal Abu Nseir Perspective from Al Bashir Kiosk onto Area B of the viewpoint



Fig. 12 Area B at Matal Abu Nseir



IMPLICIT ACTANTS

Explicit Actants

car speed  
car seat  
car windows  
car door  
trunk  
radio  
loud music  
Iraqi music  
Lebanese music  
smartphones  
cameras  
photography  
manaqjesh  
shwarma  
corn  
noodle soup  
nuts  
coffee & tea  
karak tea  
sahlab  
lentil soup  
juice  
disposable dishes  
trash  
argileh pipes  
coffee cups  
plastic bags  
cigarette buds  
alcohol bottles  
broken garbage bin  
garbage containers  
pile of trash  
horses  
strong wind  
fresh breeze  
weather  
sun  
sunset  
sunrise  
colors of the sky

view  
fog  
dust  
Jordan Street  
Balqa Governorate  
Baq'a Camp  
mountain range  
hill  
valley  
building lights  
car lights  
street lights  
carpet of lights  
stars  
moon  
slope  
cliff  
flat surface  
soil  
rocks  
tents  
pine trees  
bushes  
concrete  
pavement  
Talait Al Wadi restaurant  
large glass windows  
mosque  
Jubeiha Entertainment Park  
Al Bashir Kiosk  
cars  
car models  
4x4s / SUVs  
convertible car  
motorbikes  
Gulf license plates  
(Kuwait, KSA, UAE, Bahrain)  
highways  
traffic



commercial area  
restaurants  
coffee shops  
sweet shop  
argileh shop  
defunct byroad  
one way road  
railing  
no urban furniture  
no designated parking  
no public facilities  
pedestrian bridge  
sidewalk  
kiosk structure  
concrete blocks  
traffic triangle  
(non) built-up areas  
few street lamps  
street island  
intersection  
Abu Nseir Street  
Yejoz Street  
Princess Basma Palace  
Abu Nseir  
Jubeiha  
furnished apartments  
in Jubeiha  
universities  
Abu Nseir soooq  
residential area  
Abu Nseir housing project  
parks in Abu Nseir  
gym with a view  
other viewpoints

shade  
rain  
storm  
wind howling  
windiness  
fresh temperatures  
snow  
argileh  
argileh flavors  
full argileh service  
smell  
Amman Bus  
bus stop  
taxi stop  
graffiti  
food vans  
bring your own chair  
picnic blanket  
carpet  
cushions  
tea pot  
dishdash  
slippers  
street signs  
black & yellow curb  
markers  
GAM flags  
Jordan flags  
exercise  
sports clothing  
dog leash  
construction work  
water delivery truck  
smell of car exhaust  
car sounds  
people talking  
people laughing  
smell of goats  
open space  
green space  
residential area

**Fig. 13 Actants** Overview of selected non-human actors (actants) that influence the production of Matal Abu Nseir

# Public Urban Life

## Accessibility Mobility



Fig. 14 Al Bashir Kiosk

Run by three brothers, one of which lives in Abu Nseir, this kiosk is open seven days a week from early morning till late at night. Its name derives from the Al Bashir Hospital in Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh where the kiosk was formerly based before it was relocated to Abu Nseir by GAM. As the only built structure at the viewpoint, the kiosk does not only fulfill cravings for drinks and snacks but also satisfies the need for guidance, comfort, and safety. The kiosk owners take care of the place and the people by providing self-built concrete benches, self-planted trees, entertaining conversations and life advice, orientation, and even financial support.

### Kiosk Vendor

„I don't bring orders to the car door. People have to come to me.“

„Women trust me so much that they regularly come to me to talk about their fights at home.“

Technically, Amman's fresh air and open spaces are accessible to anyone at all times at no cost and always open to a wider public, even if attempts of privatization or formalization increasingly aim to regulate their access. In a way, it seems counterintuitive to look for a pleasant viewpoint in a place that is surrounded by car infrastructures and air pollution then. Yet, it is precisely this car-friendly environment, irrespective of potential health risks, in combination with a car-friendly attraction that make the Matal Abu Nseir so successful and popular in the car-centric city of Amman. Its perceived remoteness from the rest of the city paired with the convenience and enjoyment of a car ride are additional pull factors to Matal Abu Nseir as the act of driving is not only a means to reach a destination but also an important element of Amman's public urban life. For other modes of transport, a formal bus stop, a number of yellow taxis, as well as a pedestrian bridge are readily available in front of the Al Bashir Kiosk (see Fig. 12). The kiosk thus turns into an important reference and transfer point, especially for those who arrive at Matal Abu Nseir for the first time as well as those who do not come by car (see Fig. 14). This essentially refers to women and marginal groups who are more likely to depend on alternative transport as the majority of car owners in Amman are men.

**Kiosk Vendor** „I am a major reference point to many visitors.“

**Wife & Mother** „He is a decent man...He is the tour guide for the area.“

For nearby residents, who are more familiar with the area and neighborhood, it is not uncommon to walk to Matal Abu Nseir, even though the fast-paced traffic next to the viewpoint is no minor threat to one's personal safety. On top of that, the area's terrain and urban morphology cannot be considered to be a pedestrian- or children-friendly environment, let alone for wheelchairs or strollers (see Box 1). Nonetheless, one can occasionally spot men and women running or walking their dogs in the open space of the viewpoint while young children stay near their families.

**Young Woman (14) with sister** „We came here by foot, our house is closeby.“

**Male Resident (50s)** „We feel like the viewpoint is part of our house. We sit here for a while and then return back to our houses on foot.“

**Woman from Abu Nseir** „I love the viewpoint, especially during sunset, but I want to walk. I feel that I am in the middle of the street there and if I walked on the land, my clothes will become dirty and I may fall down and hurt myself.“

While access to the viewpoint is free and expenses can be limited to transport, the costs of a car cannot be carried by everyone. Price levels for food and drinks for consumption at Matal Abu Nseir are more democratic as they come in a wider price range. One economic option is to bring homemade food which users are welcome to do in this public space. With the adjacent Abu Nseir Street, the viewpoint is further well-connected to a variety of nearby restaurants, coffeeshops, and other shops that can supply visitors with take away food, coffee, tea, and other snacks and drinks. On site, there is only the mentioned kiosk where the prices are similar to other kiosks in Amman. For a more formal gastronomic experience, there is the Talit Al Wadi Restaurant. Their menu has fairly moderate, yet higher prices compared to its more informal alternatives (see Fig. 15 and 16).

### Box 1 Walking around Matal Abu Nseir

Most parts of Matal Abu Nseir are accessible by foot, however, on the uneven terrain, the walking experience can quickly turn into an obstacle-ridden hike as opposed to a carefree stroll. The triangular traffic island in Area B is an exception to this with its paved ground, sidewalk, and a railing facing the valley. As a result, the site often turns into an assembly point for pedestrians as well as those seeking to snap a photo.

Fig. 15 Opening Times

Al Bashir Kiosk	
Sun-Sat	8 am - 11 pm or 3 am
Talit Al Wadi Restaurant	
Sun-Sat	10 am - 12 or 2 am
Argileh Vendor	
Sun-Sat	5 pm - 12 am

Fig. 16 Price List for Selected Items at Matal Abu Nseir

Al Bashir Kiosk	
0.50 JD	Hot Drinks
0.25 JD	Water Bottle
0.50 JD	Hot Coals
0.40 JD	Juices
Talit Al Wadi Restaurant	
3.00 JD	Coffee + Small Water
5.00 JD	Argileh + Drink or Snack
Informal Vendors	
3.50 JD	Argileh Rental (Full Service)
0.50 JD	Horse Ride
0.50-0.75 JD	Corn

**Kiosk Vendor** „It is the same price as in the other shops and kiosks. There is an intense competition between us. We cannot raise the prices, otherwise we would lose our costumers.“

drive to the viewpoint  
walk to the viewpoint  
chill  
hang out  
relax  
reflect  
enjoy yourself  
bring along food  
eat homemade food  
eat take away food  
eat a snack  
eat nuts  
barbecue  
drink coffee or tea  
drink Karak tea  
drink juice  
drink sahlab  
drink alcohol  
order coffee from the car  
take photos of a drink  
take photos of the car



**Eat Takeaway Food The Abu Nseir Street and the Abu Nseir Sooq is very close to Matal Abu Nseir and many visitors bring along food or drinks from there, may it be shwarma, pizza, ma-naqueesh, Turkish coffee, or something else.**

feed each other  
sit in the restaurant  
use bathroom at the restaurant  
make conversation  
enjoy the view  
play music  
listen to music on the phone  
play and run around  
practice for an interview  
reflect  
start dreaming  
sit silently  
sit in a car  
sit on a car  
stick head out of the car  
sit next to the car  
stand next to the car  
sit on sidewalk  
sit on the ground  
sit next to the kiosk  
sit behind the kiosk  
sit under a tree  
sit on a slope  
sit on a rock  
sit on a cardboard  
sit on cushions  
sit on stairs

sit in the shade  
sit in the sun  
sit in the dark  
sit separately  
sit near opposite sex  
fill up a car  
pull out chairs from the car  
roll out a blanket  
run down a hill  
stand on the bridge  
cross the bridge  
wait for one another  
walk home together  
bring a chair  
bring blankets  
cry  
laugh  
harass women  
feel harassed  
leave abruptly  
stopped by police  
show ID  
smoke argileh  
smoke cigarettes  
rent argileh (1JD for 1-2h)  
rent argileh for 3.50 JD  
choose a flavor  
smoke argileh in the car  
protect argileh from wind  
keep car door open  
buy street food  
sell street food  
ride a horse  
breathe in deeply  
ignore highway  
fear the fast traffic  
watch the sunset  
watch the sunrise  
look at nightlights  
park for a long time  
park briefly  
park alone  
park with company  
park with boyfriend  
park with girlfriend  
park next to the highway  
park on the road  
prefer a byroad  
block a car  
arrange to meet beforehand  
have a picnic  
meet with other families  
take photos  
take selfies  
share photos on social media  
show off  
keep to yourself  
avoid interaction  
talk to selected figures  
meet with another family  
avoid other people  
recognize someone  
come every day  
come every week  
come every month  
visit for the first time  
come occasionally

notice foreign license plates  
roll window down  
keep window up  
open trunk  
keep trunk open  
place argileh next to the car  
patrol area  
send people away  
turn up the music  
arrive by taxi  
fix taxi car  
clean taxi car  
take a break  
walk around  
walk down a slope  
walk carefully  
hold hands  
keep warm  
enjoy breeze  
watch the weather  
watch the rain  
get wet from the rain  
stay dry inside  
watch the snow  
enjoy the sun  
lean on railing  
block another car  
find a parking spot  
find no parking spot  
park behind cars  
avoid facing cars  
step out of the car  
step into another car  
step into a stranger's car  
place bricks to keep cars away  
choose an area  
come in the morning  
come in the evening  
leave after sunset  
stay after sunset  
throw away trash  
clean up trash  
feel cold  
feel refreshed  
feel relaxed  
drive by viewpoints  
walk along the highway



**Sit in the Car Alone Especially during daytime, many men come to the viewpoint alone, make themselves comfortable in their car, smoke and browse their phones, just to leave again after a short while.**

walk around one area  
avoid an area  
avoid a time of the day

listen to the surroundings  
observe the surroundings  
stay in busy and loud area  
stay in calm and quiet area  
cook tea  
prepare argileh  
protect argileh from wind  
prepare food



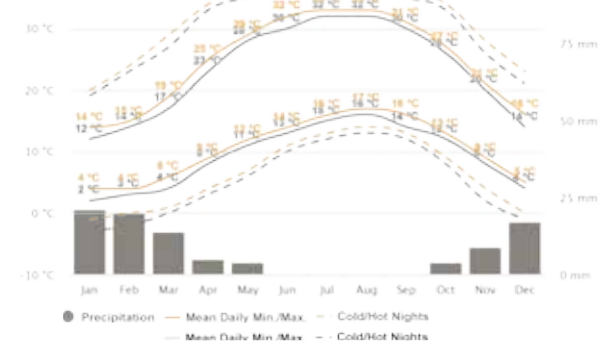
**Smoking Argileh Both men and women smoke argileh at the Matal Abu Nseir although women tend to do it less visibly. Some smoke in their cars and keep the doors open while they do, some smoke in the open space, can be called on an advertised phone number, or in a shop on Abu Nseir Street. For a small fee, water can be bought and coals lit at the kiosk.**

lean into cars  
beg for food or money  
start an argument  
fight with each other  
prevent a fight  
fight about a woman  
take off shoes  
take a nap  
talk on the phone  
browse the phone  
revisit personal spot  
go for a run  
exercise  
take dog on a walk  
bring drums and jam  
leave the city  
pee at a tree  
leave immediately  
bother somebody  
not bother somebody  
feel safe  
feel bored  
write a poem about the place  
create reference points  
ask somebody for orientation  
make a fire  
take care of trees  
join a conversation  
turn off lights  
turn off engine  
ask for money at the end of month  
leave children at home

Fig. 17 **Public Practices** Selected Public Practices as observed at Matal Abu Nseir

Most obviously, Matal Abu Nseir attracts people with its views, hence its title. More precisely, though, it is the panoramic views onto the mountains of Jerash and Salt, picturesque hues of red, pink, and yellow during sunrise or sunset, as well as the vastness of Amman's limestone buildings by day and the carpet of city lights and starry skies by night that regularly draw Ammanis specifically to this viewpoint. In addition, since Abu Nseir's elevation is higher than many other parts of Amman, average temperatures here tend to be lower than elsewhere in the city. In summer, Abu Nseir's microclimate thus allows for a refreshing coolness amid the city's summer heat whereas, during winters, Abu Nseir is sure to be one of the first or only districts to see snow (see Fig. 18 and 19). In either case, both seasons create spectacular sights that regularly draw large crowds to Matal Abu Nseir whenever there is a good opportunity.

Fig. 19 **Average Temperatures** Downtown Amman (orange) compared to Matal Nseir (grey)<sup>3</sup>



Given the overall heterogeneity of users, Matal Abu Nseir's views seem to appeal to all kinds of demographics - men, women, young, old, singles, families, individuals, groups, locals, and foreigners (see Fig. 6 and Box 2). Young children are the only exception which rather seems to be a selling point for the place than a disadvantage.

**Entertainment**



Fig. 18 **Snow in Abu Nseir**<sup>2</sup>

**Male Resident (50s)**  
„It's an amazing place in winter, especially when it rains.“

مطار العفلق  
جلست في قنبر العبيده بهمان  
عسوسه مخلصه كسل فليسبق بندانسه  
مشروء على النما بجزا اممان  
والفيس قبيشه قاطنه  
ما هو طبل المقق براق الامران  
ياكس في راسه عسا العاكين كلسه  
فكاسي الكشوري كطاشي والاوسان  
وسوروسن كيم كزين مشعله  
قمرست عدلاوي وسعدت عسنان  
وسعدت كسي عسور كيبالي والسه  
عنت الحيا وقت زون بظان  
وسرست عروسه صولكس مسسا كلسه  
لا عسنا بيوسن بكوروس ولا كلسان  
بيوسن كلسنا بيوسون مسسا وسلسه  
عسنا اممان مسسا فوسنا السه اسنان  
وانكسي كجامل كسي اسنان المشعله  
في حيلة فكر الحشاره والاوشان  
وسيداسه العظهير مسسا كسبي وسلسه  
كافور مسسا بلشع عسور بهمان  
واعبه كسي وكسور كلسنا راطله  
ولا عسا بوسن رحمت حمره اممان  
عسلي مشطس كسل فليسبق بندانسه

**Box 2 Matal Abu Nseir & Art**  
The viewpoint appears to leave few people cold and, in fact, turns many into romantics, pensive nostalgics, dreamers, and artists. It is thus not too unusual when more or less professional artists visit the viewpoint to capture the scenery in their respective art, for example, in photography. There is also a poem about Matal Abu Nseir titled „The Viewpoint of Lovers“ by Madloul Al Thufeiri.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Facebook 2015  
<sup>3</sup> Meteoblue 2020  
<sup>4</sup> Hayat Irbid 2010

**Two Girls who live together nearby** „We come here very often, this place is very special to us. We use it to talk and to laugh and cry together.“

**Young Man crying about his many problems** „I use the viewpoint to reflect on my life and to dream...I dream about living in a foreign country.“

**Young Man from Abu Nseir** „This site is popular among newlyweds or newly married couples.“

**Mother (40s) from Abu Nseir** „I prefer not to bring my children here. It is too stressful. I will spend all my time watching them and yelling at them.“

#### Facilities

Undoubtedly, Matal Abu Nseir does not resemble a formal ready-made public space but an informal ready-to-be-made space. The public is consequently asked to mold, appropriate, and adjust the place according to their needs and wishes as much as social, economic, and legal frameworks allow for. Improvisation becomes key in this context and forms part of the attraction for some, or deterrant for others. In the absence of, for example, formal public facilities, urban furniture, parking, means for entertainment, and businesses, they are carved out spontaneously according to needs, demands, and pre-existing conditions (see Fig. 17 and 20):

**Family from Shafa Badran regularly meets up with other families at Matal Abu Nseir** „We bring everything with us - food, beverages, dessert, and water cups. We stay till midnight and maybe more.“

**Kiosk Vendor** „I could have had seats and *argileh* but I prefer not to. I prefer a free place to sit around the kiosk.“

On arrival, for lack of dedicated parking spots, cars end up parking wherever it seems simply alright to do (see Fig. 11). The seating options are equally diverse. Most people choose to stay seated in their cars or in their opened trunk, especially when in a larger group. Others bring their own foldable or plastic chairs or have a whole set of cushions, blankets, and carpets ready to be rolled out. For the fully unprepared, sidewalk curbs, concrete slabs, small or large rocks, or a simple cardboard discretely tugged under one's behind will do the trick. Some visitors prefer to stay near the kiosk. It provides benches, wind protection, and shade thanks

to the surrounding trees planted by the kiosk owners (see Fig. 14). The sidewalk nextdoor attracts especially young women who like to sit there with their peers as it gives them a good (over)view of the scene. Wherever there are people, waste seems not far either. For lack of sufficient waste bins and out of convenience, large amounts of waste pile up wherever the wind blows, occasionally picked up by children who transform them into momentary toys to the dismay of hygiene-conscious mothers and fathers. Wherever people spend an exten-

**GAM Cleaner** „We, the ones who are cleaning this place, suffer a lot, especially when it is windy and the wind direction is Eastern, which starts to blow everything away and the trash is flying and spreading everywhere.“

ded time, they naturally need bathrooms, too. At Matal Abu Nseir men might disappear behind a tree or bush to relieve themselves, residents and visiting families highly disapprove of. Women have it more difficult and may approach the Talit Al Wadi Restaurant to use the bathroom, provided they are aware of this option and willing to use it (see Box 3). Many women prefer leaving the place

**Family Picnic** Everything was set up and ready. Suddenly, a young man came running to relieve himself behind a tree nearby. The family was appalled and left the place immediately.

**Female Co-Researcher's Field Diary** During one of her early visits to Matal Abu Nseir, she was not aware of the bathrooms at the restaurant. So, when she needed to use a bathroom, she simply left to go home.

altogether. Furthermore, informal vendors regularly turn Matal Abu Nseir into their point of sale by offering coffee, tea, *argileh*, or grilled knafeh out of a car or van. Some move around to sell snacks like corn, nuts, or seeds on foot. Some of these vendors are from the nearby Baqa'a Camp or members of the marginalized Roma community (derogatively referred to as *nawar*). Perhaps most prominently, a group of teenage boys offer rides on colorfully decorated horses (see Box 4), offering entertainment to costumers and an income to its vendors.

**Box 3 The Talit Al Wadi Restaurant** Established in 2015, the restaurant is open seven days a week from noon till around midnight and 2 am on weekends. Evening hours are the busiest. Especially students who like it more secluded and less improvised, both male and female, gather here during evenings to smoke *argileh*. A large window front allows visitors to admire the view from the comfort of their seats and tables in a protected room. Young men are not allowed to enter alone unless they have a reservation, for which they are given a table downstairs in a separate room. The bathrooms are located in the restaurant's entrance area and can be accessed without coming into contact with patrons. The walking distance between the restaurant and the triangular traffic island in Area B is around 150 m.

**Box 4 Horseriding in Amman's Public Spaces** In numerous green spaces of Amman, horseriding is being offered though often prohibited. Matal Abu Nseir is no exception to that and numerous horses can be spotted on nearly any given day. They are ridden by young teenagers from the nearby Baqa'a Camp who offer their horseriding services to the young and the young-at-heart for the price of 0.50 JD for a standard ride. Only very few actually own their horses, the majority rents them for a daily fee of 15 JD.

**Horse Riders** „We don't eat if we cannot pay 15 JD.“

Fig. 20 Examples of Improved Facilities at Matal Abu Nseir



Row of women sit down on the sidewalk curb next to the kiosk, bus stop, and highway in Area B



Man relieving himself behind a very visible bush in Area B



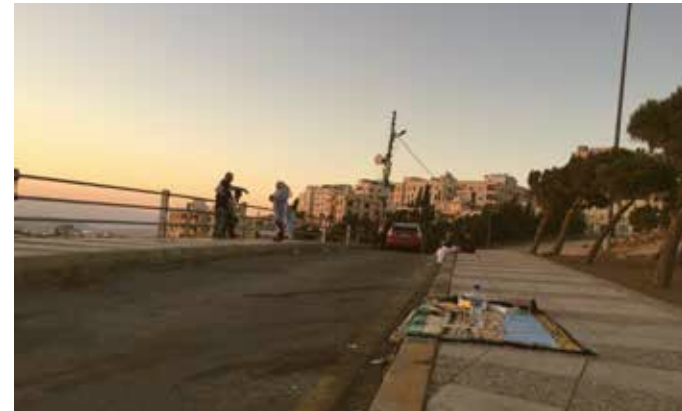
Informal *argileh* vendors transporting *argileh* equipment by taxi and setting up a sales point on the triangular traffic island in Area B



View from the triangular traffic island at Matal Abu Nseir (Area B) during sunset



View onto Jordan Street, the Talit Al Wadi Restaurant, and a line of parked cars next to the brownfield



A family taking pictures with the sunset in the background, someone reading on a carpet, and others sitting on the sidewalk curb at the triangular traffic island in Area B



Four young women sitting on the ground next to the kiosk under the trees, looking into the valley and at the sunset while eating, drinking, and smoking *argileh*

Since needs and wishes vary at Matal Abu Nseir, all improvisation activities are subject to a constant negotiation with all parties involved. Most of the time, this is a peaceful, rather subconscious process. However, it can be a breeding ground for conflicts, too. Social control and codes of conduct help navigating these but it takes informal and formal guardians to ward them off, such as the users themselves, local residents, regulars like the kiosk owners, or police patrols. There are no additional

**Two Female University Students who come to the viewpoint every week**  
„No one bothers us. It is a safe place.“

security measures in place at the dark and unlit viewpoint, so, in the end, the most effective safety strategy is to avoid or leave Matal Abu Nseir altogether once it feels unsafe. Dominant groups thus have it relatively easy to assert their position which practically boils down to the fact that informal public spaces like Matal Abu Nseir are surrendered to young men, especially on weekend nights. Alternatively, when retreat is not considered a desirable option, the car becomes a key player in one's sense of safety at the viewpoint (see Box 5).

**Young Man from Jabal Al Ashrafiyeh** „The best way to avoid problems is to have a car. You move around in your car without hearing anything... I don't get out of my car.“

**Group of Female University Students** On a Thursday evening, three young women step out of their car and experience so much street harassment that, within minutes, they return to their car and drive off.

**Young Man (17) about Matal Abu Nseir** „Our father tells her [his sister] not to stay there and to come back immediately if there are too many men or men only.“

Beyond their function as mobile safe spaces, cars also grant its passengers a certain level of privacy, one that is largely respected by other visitors of the viewpoint. Only police patrols might barge in by knocking on people's windows, particularly if it is couples or groups of young men. For emphasis, cars are also unlikely to face each other and, ins-

tead, either park bumper to bumper or at a reasonable distance. For those using the viewpoint without a car, privacy in outdoor spots can be found, for instance, in Area A, slightly further away from the main road and closer to the cliff-like rocks on the edge of the plateau (see Fig. 8). The area's inaccessibility for automobiles and the countless shards of broken glass scattered on the ground highly limit the presence and control of families or police, especially at night. Thus, they allow for activities that would be subject to public scrutiny.

Though separation of different groups and gender is not strictly encouraged or enforced, certain parts of Matal Abu Nseir appear to be reserved for some through an unspoken mutual agreement while the boundaries remain unclear, open to change and are, in the end, negotiated in the moment only (see Box 6). Generally, men tend to make use of the entire viewpoint at any given time either in groups or alone. Accordingly, women tend to visit the viewpoint more in selected areas during daylight hours and less so during nighttime unless accompanied by their family or a trusted male companion as the presence of women can cause great discomfort for women trying to avoid harassment and a bad reputation and men trying to stay out of conflicts.

**Married Couple & Residents** „This place is the breather spot for residents.“ - „This place is really amazing. I don't mind having visitors enjoying it. But sometimes girls come alone and during daytime most of the users are couples. The main problem, however, are night visitors, most of them teenagers who play loud music, make a lot of noise, and leave the place dirty. I heard from neighbors that some of the youngsters are selling drugs.“

**Mother with Daughters** „I like to take my daughters out because they want to go out. We spend a nice time together and, to be honest, I don't like them to come here alone. I prefer to accompany them. I know that they are in university and well-raised but I don't know how the boys here act and behave. After all, we are a conservative family.“

**Young Man from Abu Nseir** „I prefer going to the viewpoint with my guy friends because my parents might see me here if a girl was with me.“

**Box 6 Family Zone [Area C]**  
Many families stay in the quiet, less crowded Area C near the mosque and the residential buildings. By planting large concrete rocks or garbage containers in bottleneck roads and other spots of potential nuisance residents make sure that cars cannot park everywhere so peace and tranquility is being maintained. In addition, police regularly patrols the streets and keeps an eye on illegal activities like alcohol and drug consumption or public display of intimacy. Such activities do not only disrespect the sanctity of the mosque but can also harm the neighborhood's reputation.

**Young Man from Abu Nseir** „In summer time, many families come here [Area C]. Sometimes they barbecue or bring their food and have *argileh*. Sometimes residents tell people to leave, especially after 10 pm or if there are noisy boys or loud music. Oftentimes, the police men come here and tell everybody to move their cars immediately.“

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**A**

TEMPLATES FOR  
ETHNOGRAPHIC  
FIELD RESEARCH

**B**

SURVEY &  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**ANNEX**

## FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_

Weather \_\_\_\_\_

Comfort Level \_\_\_\_\_

Smell \_\_\_\_\_

Atmosphere \_\_\_\_\_

Sound \_\_\_\_\_

Current Events \_\_\_\_\_

## OBSERVATIONS

## MAPPINGS

## USERS & USES

## QUOTES

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & FURTHER QUESTIONS

## FIELD RESEARCH QUESTION POOL

### OBSERVATIONS

#### Location

Describe where you are in relation to Amman.  
What modes of transport do people use in order to reach this place (at different times)?  
How is this place in/accessible?  
What did you know about this place?  
What do other people say about this place?  
What role does this place have in Amman? What role does this place have in Jordan?  
How is this site significant? For whom (not)?  
What facilities are there?  
How are the facilities being used?  
What facilities are missing?

#### Self-Reflection

How does your experience of the place change as a wo/man, an East/West Ammani, youth/middle-aged/ senior person etc.?  
What's your mode of transport?  
How do you move?  
How are you dressed?  
Are you changing the way you talk/walk?  
Are you changing anything in your behavior?  
How do you think people will perceive you?  
Describe the „shoebox“ you expect to be placed in by the users of the place.  
What are you doing in the place?  
How are you researching?  
How do you move around?  
Where do you stand still?  
How are you taking notes? What do think people will think about you?

#### Genius Loci

Describe the place in your own words.  
Describe the atmosphere of the place.  
How is your mood?  
Are you tired, hungry, bored, excited, fit etc.?  
How do you feel being here?  
What impression does this place make?  
Do you feel un/safe? Why?  
What stories do you associate with this place?  
What events do you associate with this place?  
How is this place connected to other places?  
List the objects you find in the place.  
What objects greatly influence the place?  
Is there any writing on the wall?  
What other written texts can you detect?  
What visuals/images can you see?  
Mention everything else you find interesting.

#### Natural Environment

Describe the topography of the place.  
Describe the current weather. Is it changing?  
Is it hot/cold?  
How is the air? How is the wind?  
How is the lighting/shading?

Is the place clean/dirty?

Is all of the above pleasant/unpleasant?  
What do you hear/smell/taste/feel?  
Detail the sounds/odors/tastes/feelings.  
Is it loud/quiet? Is it un/pleasant?  
What kind of waste do you see?  
What do people throw away? And how?  
Are there any animals? Describe the situation.  
What materials dominate the place?  
How do people interact with the materials?

#### Built Environment

Is the place enclosed or open?  
Describe the built environment around you.  
Describe the open space around you.  
Are there any shops/offices/residences/parks?  
Describe them and their effect on the place.  
What „landmarks“ can you find around you?  
How would you rate the scale of the place?  
What kind of urban furniture can you detect?  
Are there any makeshift elements (e.g. selfmade seating and tables)?  
Describe the traffic infrastructure (cars/pedestrians/ cyclists/etc.).

#### Time

How does the place change during mornings/middays/ afternoons/evenings/nights/weekdays/weekends?  
Describe/Guess why the changes occur.  
Can you see signs of how this place was used before (yesterday/last week/last year, last 5 years, last 50 years etc.)?  
Can you still see signs of the place's history? Or are there no signs at all?

#### User Experience

Who is using the space (e.g. wo/man, old/young, etc.)?  
Who is not?  
How do they make use of the space (alone/group/ family etc.)?  
What social arenas can you detect and why?  
What are the social markers?  
Are there any regular users? Who and why?  
Are there any characters who stand out?  
What do people do? What do they not do?  
What behavior is in/acceptable?  
What are people attracted to?  
What do people avoid?  
What kind of interactions can you observe?  
What kind of conversations do you hear?  
Are you part of interactions/conversations?  
How do people interact among peers?  
How do people interact with strangers?  
Describe these situations in detail.  
Describe the experience for pedestrians.  
Describe the experience for car drivers.  
Describe the experience for other modes of movement.

Where and how do people move around?  
How is this place organized?  
Are there any hierarchies?  
Can the place be divided into different areas?  
Do areas change or generally stay the same?  
Describe/Guess why the division takes place.

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### INTERVIEWS

What is your name? (anonymized)  
What is your age?  
Where are you from?  
How many siblings do you have?  
What do you do (work/study etc.)?  
Please describe a normal day in your life.  
Please describe your day yesterday.  
What are you planning to do tomorrow?  
What are you planning to do on the weekend?  
How do your weekdays/weekends differ?  
Where do you go frequently? What do you do there?  
Who do you spend most of your time with?  
Are you happy? Please describe why/why not.  
Where in Amman have you been?  
Where in Amman have you not been?  
Where would you like to go?  
Where have you been outside of Amman?

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#### Remember:

Observe what you can see and beware of who or what is missing, take note of differences and similarities, and pay attention to the extraordinary and ordinary. Even the smallest detail can be relevant so try to be the best non-fiction storyteller you can be.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Historical Developments

How has this place changed?  
Who/what was here before?  
What did people do?  
What do people still do?  
What (global/local) historical developments have an impact on how people use this place?  
What is the history of the site?  
Are there any future plans for this place?

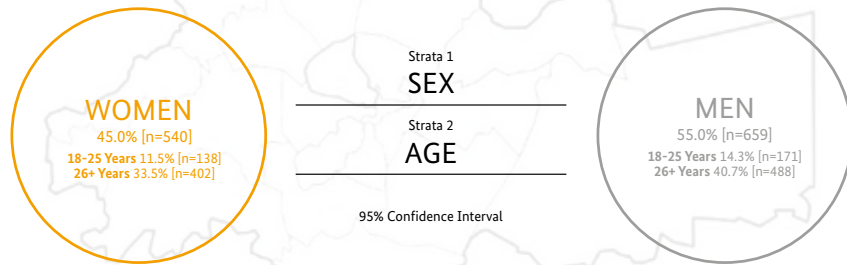
#### Rules & Regulations

Who owns the land of the place?  
Who owns the land around the place?  
What is forbidden to do here?  
What is allowed to do here?  
How is this enforced?  
What laws influence this place?

#### Testing

use available urban furniture  
consume food & drinks  
use facilities & objects  
walk & drive in the place  
play in the place  
spend time in the place

# Survey & Questionnaire



## QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

**Sample Area**  
Amman [22 Districts]  
**Sample Size**  
1,199 valid respondents  
[540 women; 659 men]  
**Data Collection**  
February 2020  
**Survey Instrument**  
Questionnaire with 24 questions;  
ca. 20-30 minutes per questionnaire on handheld tablets  
**Randomized Stratified Sample**  
Sex [women; men]  
Age [18-25 years; 26+ years]  
**Level of Confidence**  
95% [p-value < 0.05]

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**Date and Place**  
July 2020, Al Hashmi Al Shamali  
**Sessions**  
3x 2 hours for 7-8 questions each  
**Participants**  
*Session 1*  
9 women (30s-40s years) from Al Hashmi Al Shamali & Al Mahatta  
*Session 2*  
10 women (30s-40s years) from Jabal Al Nuzha  
*Session 3*  
9 men (18-25 years) from Al Hashmi Al Shamali

The cross-sectional mixed methods study is based on ethnographic field research conducted before the survey's implementation. The survey instrument was drafted by the study's research coordinator based on initial qualitative research findings and with support from the ILCA project team as well as the quantitative research coordinator. The questionnaire covered 24 questions related to public space and gender in Amman and, on average, took ca. 20-30 minutes per interview. MEMRC, the quantitative research company, administered the questionnaire from 12-24 February 2020 within Amman's 22 districts through 12 enumerators and 4 supervisors who were equipped with handheld tablets. Before the data collection period, the enumerators and supervisors had received a half-day training and the questionnaire was piloted on 30 respondents in the sample area. Overall, MEMRC collected the data from 1,199 valid respondents. After the survey, three focus group discussions (2 women only, 1 men only) were held in July 2020 and further qualitative field research was conducted.

## Q1. General Information

Gender Male / Female  
Age 18-25 / 26-33 / 34-41 / 42-49 / 50+  
Marital Status Single / Married / Divorced / Widow / Other  
Household Size (No. of People) 1-3 / 4-7 / 8-11 / 12+  
Children under 16? yes / no  
Level of Education  
Illiterate / up to Grade 10 / Up to Secondary / Diploma / Bachelor's Degree / Master's Degree or above  
Level of Income per Month of Respondent  
No Income / 1-160JD / 161-320JD / 321-480JD / 481-640JD / 640+JD  
Period of Residence in Amman in Years  
less than 1 / 1-2 / 3-10 / 10+  
Occupation Worker or Employee / Student / Neither

## Q2. I spend time outside of my home:

A less than 2h per day  
B up to 3h per day  
C up to 5-8h per day  
D more than 8h per day

## Q3. Why do you usually go outside of your home?

A To enjoy myself/for entertainment  
B Because I have to  
C I actually prefer staying home

## Q4. What do you do when outside your home?

A. Do my duties (e.g. work, study, volunteer)  
B. Visit family/relatives  
C. Visit friends  
D. Go out for entertainment (e.g. coffeeshop, cultural event, party, mall)  
E. Pray  
F. Relax and reflect  
G. Shopping (e.g. soooq, supermarket, mall, downtown)  
H. Watch people  
I. Eat and drink  
J. Take children to play  
K. Do my hobbies (e.g. sports, arts & crafts)  
L. Do sightseeing  
M. Medical Treatment  
N. Other

## Q5. On average, where do you spend most of your time when not at work/study or at home?

A. Gardens and Parks  
B. Squares  
C. Circles  
D. Historical Sites/Landmarks  
E. Sidewalks  
F. Neighborhood Streets  
G. Large Roads  
H. Stairs  
I. Hills  
J. Places of Prayer  
K. Markets  
L. Well-known Streets  
M. Other

## Q6. In general, how do you feel when in public?

A. relaxed  
B. free  
C. happy  
D. stressed  
E. unsafe  
F. scared

## Q7. Does Amman have sufficient places that you need and enjoy outside?

A. Yes, Amman offers everything I need and enjoy.  
B. Yes, Amman offers everything I need and enjoy but it is hard for me to access them.  
C. No, Amman lacks places I need and enjoy.

## Q8. In which part of Amman do you live?

A. East Amman  
B. West Amman  
C. I don't like these categories  
D. I live in Amman  
E. District Name

## Q9. Where in Amman do you prefer to hang out?

A. East Amman  
B. West Amman  
C. North Amman  
D. South Amman  
E. Downtown  
F. Anywhere  
G. Nowhere, I prefer hanging out outside Amman

## Q10. Why do you like spending time there?

A. there are useful places  
B. there are interesting places  
C. there are safe places  
D. I feel free there  
E. it is close to my home  
F. it is away from my home  
G. other

## Q11. What are the top reasons that make you avoid certain places in Amman?

A. I am prevented from going to certain places by family members  
B. I am not allowed to enter a certain place  
C. I don't have time to go around the city  
D. I fear a place is not safe  
E. If there is not enough privacy (too visible, too close to other sex)  
F. If it is too crowded (too many people around)  
G. If it is too empty.  
H. If it is too noisy.  
I. If I cannot smoke argileh there.  
J. It will give me a bad reputation to be seen in certain places  
K. I fear having my (digital) image being used against me  
L. I fear being mistreated  
M. Other

Q12. Which of the following features make you attracted to certain places in Amman?

- A. seating
- B. tables
- C. bathrooms
- D. entertainment (e.g. games, eat&drink, shops, smoking argileh)
- E. recreational facilities (e.g. football, basketball, chess, swimming pools)
- F. greenery
- G. water elements
- H. children games (e.g. playground)
- I. accessibility for people with disabilities
- J. low transport costs
- K. use of facilities for free
- L. near home
- M. presence of few cars
- N. parking
- O. clean space
- P. near place for prayer
- Q. historical site
- R. shopping options
- S. other

Q13. Where do you go if you have to use the bathroom when you are outside?

- A. I ask to use the bathroom in the nearest establishment (restaurant/coffee shop/mall/library/museum etc.)
- B. I go to the nearest mosque
- C. I go to the nearest public bathroom
- D. I do my business somewhere outside (tree/bush,-corner,behindawall,etc.)
- E. I go home/ I avoid using bathrooms outside my home

Q14. What type of transportation do you mostly use within Amman?

- A. Public Bus
- B. Service
- C. Taxi
- D. Ride Hailing App (e.g. Careem, Uber, Other)

- E. Own Private Car
- F. Somebody Else's Private Car
- G. Bicycle
- H. Walk
- I. Other

Q15. Do you sometimes use private cars as a place to spend time/hang out?

- A. No, I only use it as a means to get from A to B
- B. Yes, I like to sit in the car and hang out

Q15.1 If yes, why would you prefer a car over other places in Amman?

- A. Because cars are comfortable and convenient.
- B. Because I want to show off a car to others.
- C. Because I can move around (and park anywhere with a car.
- D. Because I like to drive around.
- E. Because I like to see many different places and people.
- F. Because nobody will find it strange if I am by myself in a car.
- G. Because the car gives me a feeling of safety.
- H. Because I can do things in a car that I might not be able to do outside the car.
- I. Because my peers and I are often not welcome elsewhere in the city.
- J. Other

Q15.2 If yes, what do you do when you hang out in or by the car?

- A. I park somewhere to reflect
- B. I park somewhere to enjoy a view
- C. I park somewhere to hang out with my friends
- D. I park somewhere to smoke argileh
- E. I park somewhere to be with my partner
- F. I drive around for the sake of driving around
- G. I drive around to look at other people
- H. I drive around to listen to loud music
- I. I drive around to celebrate
- J. Other

Q16. So what makes you feel safe in a place?

- A. surveillance cameras
- B. permanent security guards
- C. male police officers
- D. female police officers
- E. security checks
- F. fence or gate
- G. when there are people
- H. when there are families
- I. no illegal/dangerous activities
- J. when it is daytime
- K. sufficient public lighting
- L. good reputation
- M. nearby buildings and shops
- N. when a place is familiar to you
- O. when a place is far from home
- P. when a place is close to home
- Q. nearby place of prayer
- R. no abandoned buildings and broken objects
- S. when the place is clean
- T. other

Q17. What makes a place "bad" (bad reputation)?

- A. unsafe place
- B. traces of alcohol and drug consumption
- C. presence of young male
- D. presence of couples
- E. no presence of families
- F. a history of criminal activities
- G. excessive dirt and waste
- H. used by large groups
- I. noise and loud music
- J. stigmatized neighborhood
- K. presence of shops and coffee shops
- L. other

Q18. Can you name one or more places with a bad reputation? [open-ended question]

Q19. How do you know whether a place has a bad reputation?

- A. from neighbors
- B. from people who are living around this place
- C. from the news (TV/Print)
- D. from social media
- E. from people on the street
- F. from friends
- G. from family
- H. from places of worship
- I. from a person who is often there (e.g. guards, vendors)
- J. from my own observations
- K. other

Q20. Do you regularly receive annoying comments/looks/gestures from other people in Amman?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Q20.1. If yes, by whom?

- A. Women
- B. Men
- C. Women and men

Q20.2 If no, why do you think that is?

- A. I am polite and friendly
- B. People usually do not notice me
- C. I am a religious person
- D. I don't notice it
- E. I don't go out
- F. I am a strong person
- G. I am a man
- H. I am a woman
- I. Other

Q22. A man passes a woman on the street and comments on her: "Mashalla". He is most likely...

- A. flirting with her
- B. giving her a compliment
- C. verbally harassing her
- D. ridiculing her

Q21. Have you ever been touched inappropriately by strangers?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I refuse to answer

Q23. Please indicate your most suitable answer for each statement:

(1 Strongly Agree, 2 Somewhat Agree, 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 Somewhat Disagree, 5 Strongly Disagree)

1. Women above 18 years may leave the house after sunset alone
2. Women above 18 years may leave the house after sunset in a group
3. Men above 18 years may leave the house after sunset alone
4. Men above 18 years may leave the house after sunset in a group
5. It is acceptable for a woman to be in a mixed (female + male) group without her family outside her work.
6. It is acceptable for a man to be in a mixed (female + male) group without his family outside his work.
7. There should be more segregated places in Amman (female or male only).
8. Women have to wear a hijab in public.
9. It is acceptable to comment on a strangers dress and behavior.
10. It is the woman's fault if she is being verbally and/or physically harassed.
11. All men should be allowed to enter malls, cinemas, etc. without their families.
12. All women should be allowed to enter malls, cinemas, etc. without their families..
13. Women have the right to go wherever and whenever they want to.
14. It is acceptable for men to eat and drink in public.
15. It is acceptable for women to eat and drink in public.
16. It is acceptable to sit very close next to a stranger of the other sex in public.
17. It is acceptable to stand very close next to a stranger of the other sex in public.
18. It is acceptable to raise the voice in public as a woman.
19. It is acceptable to raise the voice in public as a man.
20. It is acceptable for a woman to smoke cigarettes in public.
21. It is acceptable for men to stare at women.

Q24. What would attract you to go out more within your immediate vicinity? [open-ended question]



## ABOUT THE STUDY

When observing Amman's public, one thing soon becomes clear: men and women experience the city differently. Motivated by this imbalance, this study explores Amman's public spaces from a gendered perspective. It aims to shed light on the nature of public urban life and the mechanisms of in- and exclusion by painting a picture of women's and men's unequal lived experiences as well as the factors and causes thereof. It also illustrates how spatial and behavioral features currently foster or counter gender division in the public sphere which can - when identified - be embedded in a strategy towards making a city more inclusive and, meanwhile, also more safe, resilient, and sustainable.

In order to better understand as a prerequisite to change, this work begins with outlining ideas of public space that currently circulate in Amman's urban planning sphere as well as research landscape. It then moves on to different readings of public space and addresses the role of gender therein, paving the ground for further explorations into everyday life of Amman's people through the lens of five case studies as well as a city-wide quantitative survey. Finally, gender-inclusive planning approaches are being discussed and illustrated in order to encourage the implementation of more gender-inclusive public spaces in the city's future.