Ammani Youth - Paradoxical Citizens on the Margins

Holly L. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd

Part of the Geography Commons

Recommended Citation

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.
AMMANI YOUTH- PARADOXICAL CITIZENS ON THE MARGINS

by

Holly L. Smith

Bachelor of Arts
Eastern University, 1999

Master of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2015

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Geography

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2019

Accepted by:

Amy Mills, Major Professor

Caroline R. Nagel, Committee Member

Jessica E. Barnes, Committee Member

Karen Culcasi, Committee Member

Rami F. Daher, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
DEDICATION

To SmithTeamSix- four of whom agreed to the ‘year of the hot lunch’ only to have it turn into three years of hot lunches… before giving up and learning to pack their own lunches. Cameron, Carter, Cobin, and Calleigh this journey was a team effort and I thank you for your telling me, “Mom- DO YOUR WORK!”

and

to the fifth- for always cheering me on and sustaining the team- Troy you are my rock.

also

For my father- Tom Hinrichs who taught me the value of education, my mother Sue who always believed I could, and my sister Heidi who not only set the standard but is full of surprises. Cindy’s Eriksen’s rescue operation to care for my kids while I took my comps and Troy was deployed allowed me to focus on being a student and made this whole thing much less insane.

I dedicate this to each of you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without Dr. Mills literally twisting my arm to apply for the program, twisting my brain to teach me how to think in new (and better) ways, and teaching me to twist my words to make them sound better, I wouldn’t have finished the journey. Her gentle spirit and quiet scholarly prowess made me believe I belonged, and I am forever grateful. To the rest of my committee members who pushed me to excel and continued supporting me along the journey: Dr. Nagel who demands excellence and showed me how to get there. Dr. Barnes- who’s tireless work ethic is the stuff of legends and always inspires me. Dr. Daher, who invested countless hours guiding me to get as close to the native truth as I could and who’s wisdom made this project infinitely better. Dr. Culcasi, who dove in and instantly held me accountable and proved a valuable guide.

To those peers who took me under their wings: Kwame who unknowingly signed up to be my life-long reader, Daniel, who taught me to not overcomplicate things, Mike who reminded me to see the people, and Beth who will forever be BFN. MEHOGGS: Angie, Divin, and Ben. The dungeon was a rewarding place because we were in it together. Your willingness to endure my Arabic, to be my top peer review crew, to always motivate, and to occasionally harass turned this journey into lighter team effort than if I tried to go solo. You are z best! Thanks also to the following organizations for supporting my research: Bilinski Foundation, Walker Institute, SPARC, Dera Parkinson Foundation, Rhude Patterson Foundation, and the Masachi Award.
ABSTRACT

Cities are complex social environments representing a convergence of many physical and human processes which influence how young people form their identities and plan for their futures. The role of urban environments on social processes has received substantial attention. However, significantly less attention has been focused on how urban youth are impacted specifically as political actors. Youth are particularly exposed to feeling the impacts of historical and on-going geopolitical issues in and surrounding their urban environments. Amman, Jordan is a compelling location to examine urban impacts on young political actors because of the clear geopolitical changes taking place in and around the city. Amman has nearly doubled in size following recent instability in neighboring Iraq and Syria, which has deeply affected neighborhoods, the makeup of the city’s population, and daily experiences of being Amman.

This study furthers our understandings of how youth are experiencing and managing urban processes across the local, regional, and global scales. How young people are responding to increasing neoliberal pressures and challenges felt throughout their daily lives provides insights for academics, policy makers, and other stakeholders focusing on youth and their social movements. By applying a critical geopolitics theoretical framework to a young urban population and introducing the concept of situated citizenship, this study illuminates previously unexplored adaptations and
applications of urban citizenship which may offer value applicability to other young urban populations.

In Chapter 1 I summarize the historical events which have created contemporary Amman’s unique situation. In Chapter 2, I review the critical urban citizenship and critical youth geopolitical literatures which frame my work. Then in Chapter 3 I outline my methodological approach to my research. I present a cultural mapping of Amman in Chapter 4 to detail how the three most dominant regions of the city add specific cultural layers to youth’s daily lives. In Chapter 5, I outline how the city itself serves as a place of exclusion within the shared mental mapping of Jordanian-ness. Specifically, I argue that young people experience a situated citizenship based on historical geographies and multiscalar relationships. In Chapter 6, I focus on the impacts of increasing regional pressure and decreasing opportunities which are compelling young people to decide whether to try and leave Amman for the chance to secure their futures or whether they will stay and try to fight for their rights to make the city. In Chapter 7, I review Jordan’s original social contract and how recent events have been testing the validity of this social contract for Amman’s youth. Then in Chapter 8, I highlight transformations within the city which are allowing youth to begin claiming Ammaniness as both an identity and strategy. Finally, I conclude with opportunities for future research and my closing thoughts.

My ethnographic approach to young people in the Middle East demonstrates how this understudied population is interconnected and urgently requires further examination. This dissertation contributes to filling this gap in knowledge about a critically important and growing population which is often misunderstood. Particularly, presenting stories of Ammanis across the socio-economic spectrum allows us to better understand the variety
of ways urban youth are adapting to on-going social changes. This analysis of youths’
daily small political acts can assist in our understanding of larger social movements,
which can promote greater effectiveness in future decisions about youth geopolitics.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication .......................................................................................................................... iii

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... iv

Abstract ................................................................................................................................ v

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... ix

Introduction: Ammani Youth in the Eye of the Storm ...................................................... 1

Chapter 1 Historical Context .............................................................................................. 26

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Urban Citizenship, Youth Geographies, and Feminist and Critical Geopolitics ................................................................. 38

Chapter 3 Methodology .................................................................................................... 65

Chapter 4 Mapping the City: Emblematic Cultural Spaces .............................................. 77

Chapter 5 *Situated Citizenship*: How Geography, History, and Scale Qualify Ammani Youth in Jordanian National Discourse ......................................................... 124

Chapter 6 Fight or Flight: Juxtaposing Rights to the City with Aspirations Of Elsewhere ................................................................. 168

Chapter 7 Beyond Jordan’s Social Contract: Messages to Create Young Neoliberal Citizens ..................................................................................................................... 213

Chapter 8 Redefining Ammaniness: How Young People Are Contesting and Claiming Belonging to the City ................................................................. 259

Conclusions ...................................................................................................................... 292

References ........................................................................................................................ 301

Appendix A: Appendix of Starter Questions ................................................................... 315
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Tribal Map Pre-Statehood Peake, Frederick G., and Henry Field. History and tribes of Jordan. University of Miami Press, 1958 ...........................................30

Figure 4.1 Cultural Map of Amman adapted from Ababa, Myriam and Parker, Christopher’s map in "Tunnel-bypasses and minarets of capitalism: Amman as neoliberal assemblage." Political Geography 28.2 (2009): 110-120 .........................................................................................................79

Figure 4.2 Neighborhood Map of Amman.www.orangesmile.com/common/ img_city_maps/amman-map -0.jpg accessed 06/1/2017 .............................................................82

Figure 4.3 A shop display in Wast al Balad selling both Jordanian and Palestinian head scarfs. Author’s photo...........................................................................................................87

Figure 4.4 Tradesmen working outside in Balad. Author’s photo........................................87

Figure 4.5 Market stalls in Balad. Author’s photo..........................................................87

Figure 4.6 Stairway connecting an upper and lower jabal. Author’s photo.........................88

Figure 4.7 Decorated road way in Balad. Author’s photo..................................................88

Figure 4.8 Roman Amphitheater bordering Balad Author’s photo. ..................................89

Figure 4.9 Tripadvisor website accessed 6/1/2017 ..........................................................91

Figure 4.10 arches above shops in Balad. Author’s photo.................................................93

Figure 4.11 Bookseller in Balad. Author’s photo............................................................94

Figure 4.12 Pavilion in Balad. Author’s photo..............................................................94

Figure 4.13 Arial view of stairway in Balad. Author’s photo............................................95

Figure 4.14 Housing area above shops in Balad. Author’s photo......................................95

Figure 4.15 Street stalls in East Amman. Author’s photo................................................97
Figure 4.16 Housing area of East Amman. Author’s photo..............................................98

Figure 4.17 Alley in Wehdat. Author’s photo .................................................................100

Figure 4.18 Stairwell in East Amman. Author’s photo...................................................100

Figure 4.19 Landscape view of East Amman. Author’s photo.........................................101

Figure 4.20 Doors of Wehdat. Author’s photos.............................................................102

Figure 4.21 Mosque in East Amman. Author’s photo....................................................103

Figure 4.22 Horizontal homes in East Amman. Author’s photo. ....................................103

Figure 4.23 Street in al-Wehdat. Author’s photo............................................................103

Figure 4.24 Courtyard in Abdali shopping center. Author’s photo. ................................104

Figure 4.25 Water fountain décor at the Boulevard. Author’s photo .........................104

Figure 4.26 Palm trees lite with neon in Abdoun. Author’s photo ..................................104

Figure 4.27 Alleyway lined with greenery in Abdoun. Author’s photo. .........................106

Figure 4.28 Zain Circle Commerical center. Author’s photo .......................................106

Figure 4.29 Ladies night in a West Ammani café. Author’s photo ................................107

Figure 4.30 Abdoun street. Author’s photo ....................................................................107

Figure 4.31 Home in West Amman. Author’s photo......................................................107

Figure 4.32 Abdali Mall. Author’s photo. ......................................................................109

Figure 4.33 Advertisement next to Abdali. Author’s photo. ........................................110

Figure 5.1 Podeh, Elie. "The symbolism of the Arab flag in modern Arab states: between commonality and uniqueness." Nations and Nationalism 17.2. 419-442. 2011 ..................................................................................................................144

Figure 5.2 “Middle East | King Abdullah goes undercover.” BBC News, BBC, 29 July 1999, news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/407193.stm ........................................144

Figure 5.3 “A contradictory scarf?” Why Palestine?”1 July 2009 whypalestine.wordpress.com/2009/07/01/a-contradictory-scarf/ .................................................................144

Figure 6.1 Hooked nose- “pure Jordanian” support for al Faisly Soccer Team while wearing the Red Shmaagh instead of the Black and White Palestinian head covering. http://kalemanews.com/Article.aspx?id=23260&c=2&nt=1#.WdX0qmiCxPY ..........192

Figure 7.1 A Jordanian Dinar. Author’s photo. ..............................................................218

Figure 7.2 Government of Jordan advertisement trying to quell the fear of rumored new taxes by delineating which products are excluded from taxes. Petra News published in April, 2017. http://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/Main.jsp?lang=ar, Accessed April 28, 2017. ..........................................................................................................................................234


Figure 7.4 The Jordanian symbol of the 100-year anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt https://www.arabrevolt.jo/en. accessed 03-06-2016. .................................................................240

Figure 8.1: The Rania Comedy Show. Madam Ghalia https://www.facebook.com/TheRaniaShow/about ..........................................................266

Figure 8.2: “Amman is our mother.” Published in al Ghad 29 March 2016 ..............279

Figure 8.3: Advertisement for a makeup class in Amman. https://www.sajilni.com/event/the-makeup-master-class-helder-marucci-5138...........................................................284

Figure 8.4: Royal family photo Facebook. Three females wearing knee length skirts and three males wearing western business casual attire. Published in People magazine: http://people.com/royals/queen-rama-and-jordan-royal-familys-photo-2016 ..........285

Figure 8.5: Casually dressed Royal family. Shared on Queen Rania’s Instagram account. The logos of branded clothing is visible as are jeans and t-shirts which are standard western wear for teenagers...............................................................285
INTRODUCTION

AMMANNI YOUTH: IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

This dissertation explores the new challenges and changes urban youth in Amman are facing due to regional pressures testing their confidence in their ability to remain in Jordan. Their desire to potentially leave Amman has implications on local and regional stability in the post-Arab Spring era. A key feature of the Arab Spring was the participation of young people who took to the streets across the region to express their discontent with a status quo that has provided little opportunity for youth to express their opinions or to achieve their goals. Although young Jordanians participated with their peers across the region in calls for reform, the main impact of the protests in Amman was increased instability, which compounded problems, created by political crises in Iraq and Syria. Newly closed borders in Iraq, waves of refugees from Syria, and complex relationships with Palestine and Israel combine to constrain young Ammanis, causing them to increasingly look elsewhere to pursue their dreams.

All socio-economic classes in this generation witnessed the Arab Spring, an event widely viewed by scholars as a defining, watershed moment in the lives of young people who were born between the years 1977-2000. This group represents approximately one third of the 400 million Arabs and according to Cole, they are significantly more urban, literate, wired and secular than their parents (Cole, 2014, 2). Scholars credit the collective attempt to overthrow once seemingly invincible regimes with creating a “New Arab,”
whose political experiences and expectations diverge from those of their parents’
generations because they lived under authoritarian regimes during their youths (ibid,
2014). But the young people I interviewed explained that their initial hopes for reform in
Jordan, as protests rippled through the Arab World, had quickly turned to fear as Syria
plunged into instability. Young people who used to visit Syria for lunch now wondered
when the chaos and bloodshed would finally end, allowing Syrians to return home and
their own lives to return to normal.

Like other countries in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, Jordan’s
population is quite young. The UN estimates that more than 70 percent of the country’s
citizens younger are than thirty years old. Further, nearly half of Jordan’s estimated 9
million citizens live in Amman. Despite their large share of the population, the current
generation of urban youth face marginalization by the state and society. Whether in terms
of exclusion from public spaces, the political sphere, or the labor market, Ammani youth
do not feel heard. A combination of the security state, tribal systems, and cultural norms
coalesce in highly controlled urban spaces to limit the voices of Amman’s youth.

A key goal of this research is to provide a platform for Ammani youth to share
their perspectives. I argue this is especially important as Amman is in the midst of several
pivotal transformations. The first transition I explore is that of Jordanians transitioning
from being subjects (who rely on the government for employment) to global neoliberal
citizens (who are expected to act entrepreneurially in the private sector): this transition
leaves young people to try to provide their own opportunities. However, most young
people do not have the resources to create their own jobs through entrepreneurialism, as
structural deficiencies as well as cultural expectations also limit self-employment.
Meanwhile, the public sector, which has traditionally been reserved for Jordanian-Jordanians\(^1\) not only continues to shrink but fails to offer opportunities in line with youth career expectations. The public sector is unable to absorb the excess of highly educated and unemployed young people. Crucially, they are also the first generation since the Arab Spring to feel the full impact of the stress to Jordan’s original social contract, which is accelerating their transition from royal subjects able to depend on royal patronage to neoliberal citizens who must provide more for themselves.

To understand how the transition from royal subjects to neoliberal citizens unevenly impacts Ammanis it is important to contextualize citizenship within three historical processes: Jordan’s project of nationalism, tribalism’s role in shaping belonging to the nation, and the impact of Palestine on Jordan from its founding in 1921. National identity and legal citizenship have become deeply intertwined since the 19th century; but national identity and citizenship do not map perfectly on each other, particularly in Amman since who or what can be considered Ammani is itself political. The tension between nationhood and citizenship can be seen in societies where cultural identities are key markers of political division. With some scholars questioning Jordan as a country, since the borders were drawn only recently, and others introducing the question of whether Amman is even a city since it was also only recently re-inhabited, the tensions between who is Jordanian and who is Ammani swirl. Being Jordanian has salience throughout the country but being Ammani has meaning in certain circumstances and in other instances is negated. Thus, urban citizenship in Amman is rife with political

\(^1\) Jordanian-Jordanians or ‘East Bankers’ are the terms most frequently used by my interlocutors to refer to Jordanians who trace their heritage to particular Jordanian tribes. These terms are used to distinguish “Original Jordanians” from Palestinian-Jordanians or ‘West Bankers.’
tensions. For Jordan’s urban youth being Ammani is not just an identity, it is also an act of urban citizenship used strategically to open economic, professional, social, and political opportunities.

While Ammanis change from royal subjects into neoliberal citizens, the city itself is undergoing rapid demographic transformation. Mass movements of new migrants from neighboring countries, which were accelerated by instability in Syria and Iraq following the Arab Spring, are driving this physical transformation. Between 2010 and 2015 Amman's population doubled from approximately 2,000,000 to 4,000,000 residents, and it is still growing (Nieberg, 2017). The UNHRC estimates 85% of refugees who have arrived in Jordan since 2010 live outside of refugee camps making them difficult to accurately count (Saswan, 2017). However, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan is estimated at 1.3 million, which adds to the nearly 150,000 Iraqis who have also moved to Jordan since 2010 (ibid, 2017). This unplanned population growth underlies Amman’s rapid transformation and exacerbates questions of urban belonging.

Scholarly literature on citizenship has been undergoing a critical transition from studying belonging based on purely national citizenship, towards a critical model which evaluates belonging through the study of daily experiences in urban spaces. Three key theoretical innovations in the study of citizenship provide a more nuanced way to analyze my research population. These innovations are: (1) access to rights mediated by various identities, i.e. citizenship is not a universal status; (2) citizenship not just rights but also a broader construction of belonging in a body politic/community, so is therefore shaped and constrained by cultural notions of who ‘we’ are; (3) contestation and negotiation of citizenship is an everyday thing, not just a ‘government’ thing; hence, we look at cities as
key sites of citizenship debates and claims. Scholars talk about urban citizenship as the methods and ways societies apply unwritten rules of belonging in the city.

However, understanding the diverse ways in which young Ammanis are impacted by ties that cross local, regional, and national scales demands a new way to think about their urban citizenship. I thus introduce the concept of situated citizenship to describe the paradox wherein the city is the social and political site within which young Ammanis construct their political ideas of belonging, and yet Ammani citizenship, belonging to the city, is situated by the cultural expectation to define oneself using geographies outside of the city, with links to paternal lineages. Designating identity as "Ammani" is not socially accepted by other Jordanians who complicate/minimize this identity by requiring a separate connection to another space instead of Amman. Because the concept of situated citizenship embraces these scalar paradoxes, it can aid scholars examining other cities with similarly complex populations.

The multiscalar considerations embedded in the concept of situated citizenship also addresses a weakness in the literature on urban citizenship: the debate in traditional citizenship literature focuses on the dichotomy between national citizenship’s "universalist" approach and critical citizenship literature’s "particularistic" approach. The critical turn in the citizenship literature thus examines how specific cultural norms privilege certain individuals over those from minority groups. Yet, within the political...

---

2 These geographies include traditional territories within Jordan as well as areas from neighboring countries, ie Palestinian-Jordanians or Lebanese-Jordanians. Amman has complicated inheritances of belonging since people have various levels of relative insider status. For example, a Lebanese-Jordanian would have greater belonging to Amman than I would be able to claim. This could be based on cultural, religious, and linguistic ties between these countries, but also recognizes the legacy of other groups being in Jordan for a longer period of time.
and geographical context of Jordan, the entire city of Amman is marginalized: Ammanis are thus socially required to maintain claims to geographies beyond the city. This social hierarchy is based on Amman’s “short” history and Jordan’s strong tribal system. The case of Amman can therefore expand contemporary citizenship literature by incorporating processes not currently included in the study of urban belonging.

Furthermore, while urban citizenship literature allows us to consider Amman’s cultural hierarchy of citizenship (instead of only legal definitions), Amman is a city that does not neatly align with these theoretical approaches because the entire city was repopulated roughly 100 years ago after a long period of dormancy. When it was reborn it was branded as extraterritorial space within the shared mental mapping of Jordanian-ness, which imagines Jordanians from rural or secondary cities as having more authentic connections to tribally based Jordanian belonging, due to the city’s lack of a large indigenous and politically connected tribal population. The concept of situated citizenship thus also embraces the ways in which Ammani urban citizenship and belonging are rooted, in part, in tribalism which situates Ammanis as simultaneously Jordanian and somehow less Jordanian than citizens from other locations within Jordan. Since youth without tribal connections who live in Amman face marginalization in civic, political, and economic spheres, youth distrust the circumstances of life in the city. This research contributes to the wider discussions of understanding young peoples’ senses of belonging and identity across multiple scales.

Indeed, the scalar impact of tribes is a second process which shapes belonging in

---

3 I explore this in more detail in later in the chapter. However, Amman was essentially a dormant city until the Mandate Period and is often referred to as a ‘new city’ relative to other Arab capitals.
the city. In Jordan, tribal membership is the most powerful and common frame with which people distinguish social groups, through tribal membership is complicated by the legacies of migration and war. My first encounter with tribalism in Jordan completely defied my prior notions of tribes. Indeed, prior to even beginning my formal interviewing process I witnessed and engaged with Jordan’s modern tribal system when I first observed a young man at an upscale coffee shop in West Amman. He pulled up next to the coffee shop along the crowded street and with music blaring out of his open convertible he called out and asked someone sitting at the café to move a car so he could park. His authority was interesting and I asked the waiter to tell me about him. His reply, “he is from a prominent tribe and gets what he wants.” Although I witnessed opulent displays of tribalism while in the United Arab Emirates, when the young man climbed out of his sports car wearing a leather coat, t-shirt, and jeans, it was my first experience of seeing this version of being urban tribal in Amman. However, I saw modern tribalism play out among Ammani youth many times after this in similar ways.

Membership in a tribe offers young people a place at the top of Jordan’s social hierarchy. This practice predates the defeat of the Arab armies by the Israeli forces when Transjordan absorbed roughly one-third of the 700,000 displaced Palestinians and the hierarchy was amongst tribes even then (Alon, 2007). Therefore, since Amman became the capital of the nascent state of Jordan, Palestine and Palestinian-Jordanians have not only shaped the city but also the ways in which the state sees and interacts with Amman. This third element of Amman’s history—the impact of integrating Palestinians while simultaneously maintaining their right to return home - began almost immediately during repopulation.
As I explain in Chapter 5, the Palestinian cause and subsequent Jordanian Civil War were the primary generational challenges of Amman’s previous two generations of residents. Historically, the divisions between East bank/West bank Jordanians were felt most strongly in the city since rural areas are mainly home to Transjordanians. In 1970 the simmering tensions between the Palestinians and Jordanians exploded in a Civil War, called Black September, which played out on the streets of Amman and ended with thousands dead and a city wracked by shelling. With support from a Nasserist Pan-Arab movement and the backing of the Arafat’s PLO in the West Bank, the fedayeen (Palestinian fighters) attempted to assassinate or overthrow King Hussein and to seize control of the government. Despite the fedayeen successfully high-jacking three civilian aircraft to call attention to their cause, the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) was able to extinguish the majority of the rebellion before October. King Hussein regained firm control of the Government of Jordan and set about systematically eradicating threats from within the borders of his country. This included: formally disengaging from the West Bank and a Jordanization program meant to cleanse the Government of Jordan and JAF of potential threats. Following the battle of Black September, the Government of Jordan firmly “Jordanized” public sector work and Palestinians were treated with suspicion. Palestinians were now considered too risky to be trusted to work within sensitive parts of the government and were expelled from the security forces. These social events deeply impacted the city.

Indeed, since Amman’s rebirth starting in 1921 the entire city has been made largely by and for migrants and refugees. Its relative lack of autochthonous residents makes it a space of marginalization on the social scale of Jordanian-ness. Although
official statistics are not published, Amman's unofficial statistics “place up to 80% of the city’s population” as Palestinian-Jordanian (Khirfan, 2018, 204). The ways Amman’s residents, who are both Jordanian and yet not fully Jordanian, experience their sense of identity through their daily urban citizenship thus calls for further analysis.

By embracing the critical turn away from legal definitions of citizenship and toward processes of cultural and political belonging operating at multiple scales, my project recognizes that multiculturalism, supranationalism, and cosmopolitanism are creating new forms of identity. Therefore, I examine how young individuals and groups create, experience, and negotiate sometimes-conflicting dimensions of identity, issues that are especially important for youth because they are building Jordan’s future.

While Ammanis are still Jordanians, many have additional connections to other regional identities. Jordan is important because it is a regional node, as evidenced by: Jordan’s interconnectedness with regional instability and violence; its relatively stable status since the Arab Spring; serving as a home for waves of migrants from nearby states; and the ways in which globalization and urbanization are changing the processes of political and cultural belonging. Jordan is important because it is especially here where regional connections and consequences are so dramatically present in the ways in which young people think about their attachment to this country over the long term. As Jordan’s largest city, Amman is home to roughly 4 million people (Nieberg, 2017). Yet due in part to the cultural practice of identifying with towns of origin (rather than town of residence), and to the relative recentness of migrations to Amman, most people do not identify as being from, or "of" Amman (for a discussion of a similar process in Istanbul, Turkey, see: Mills, 2010, 2). Yet, in Chapter 8 I highlight how despite the disincentives to claiming an
Ammani identity, some youth have begun to claim an identity as Ammani through everyday, micro-political acts.

Young Ammanis strategically perform and claim their identities to different groups based on perceived advantages. It is a political act to claim Ammaniness or assert claims as Palestinian-Jordanians, Lebanese-Jordanians, or Jordanian-Jordanians. These place-based aspects of identity are being shaped within an urban context heavily influenced by state-authored discourses about youth. For example, Jordanian state discourses which seek to transform young people into neoliberal global citizens encourage them to become peacemakers or activists (although only for particular approved topics, e.g. environmental issues or gender rights), or entrepreneurs (explored further in Chapter 7). These new discourses often serve as push factors for youth to emigrate, because they imply that young people are unable to reach their dreams in Amman and should instead seek their futures elsewhere, even if they are welcome to return home over the long-term. Even after the high level of participation of young people in the MENA region in the political movements surrounding the Arab Spring, this group remains an understudied population in scholarly literature. While citizenship literature has begun to consider youth as active political agents (instead of viewing them as ‘citizens in the making’), this research focuses predominantly on the Global North. My work contributes to filling this gap by including Middle Eastern youth in the emerging literature on critical youth geopolitics.

My urban focus provides another contribution to this new literature, as cocontemporary youth geopolitical studies are typically located in schools or other spaces.

---

4 Or any other variety of hyphenated Jordanian.
of civic education. While these spaces are important geographies of youth identity formation, we must also consider the informal spaces where youth develop and perform their identities amongst one another without explicit formal supervision. In this way, this research builds on and adds to the scholarship examining youths’ multiple identities at the city level. Although my study takes place at the scale of the city, the concept of situated citizenship explicitly recognizes the ways in which this generation of young people connect and identify with one another across multiple scales. Situated citizenship incorporates how notions of political and social belonging in the city are formed through relational attachments to multiple locations and also to Jordan's past and future (Massey, 1995). I highlight how young Ammanis perhaps unknowingly support a system which, due to a failing social contract, implicates them as paradoxical urban citizens: as both Jordanian and simultaneously less Jordanian due to living in the city.

I analyze the making of belonging to argue that the city, Jordanian culture, and the state all work together to deemphasize spaces and people in Amman, situating Amman below other areas of Jordan. In Chapter 5 I identify four interrelated observations about the relationships between historical geography and contemporary citizenship in terms of how young Jordanians imagine their identities in relationship to others, or their places in the world. I present these insights using a series of themes, and each theme is supported with excerpts from transcribed qualitative data.

My first theme focuses on how young people in the city of Amman have a sense of being Jordanian, but do not feel purely Jordanian. This duality is due at least in part to the strength of Jordan’s tribes and a system of tribalism which ensures that the only people who can be fully Jordanian are those with tribal roots. Everyone else falls lower
on the scale of Jordanian-ness. A person born and raised in the city of Amman is marked as less Jordanian than those who identify or are identified by connections to their tribal village. Urban identities are situated and can be paradoxical since Amman is not a tribal center. To be “pure” Jordanian one must belong to a tribe. Non-tribal Ammanis born in Jordan with full citizenship rights are situated lower on the scale of Jordanian-ness based on not belonging to a tribe. Young people’s identity becomes confusing in part due to political events that occurred when Jordanian national identity was being created. More specifically, during Jordan’s modern founding, Emir Abdullah deliberately tried to create ambiguity in geographical borders while trying to expand his kingdom (Frisch, 2002).

Next, I explore how paternal lineage is a determinant of identity for Ammani young people. Since Amman is not a culturally acceptable place to identify family origins, lineage is inherently linked to geographies outside of the city. Whether your roots are from Jordan or not, you must identify as coming from somewhere other than Amman. Indeed, geographies other than Amman situate the citizenship of Ammani youth. If an Ammani young person’s paternal ancestors come from tribal villages in Jordan, but outside of Amman, he or she is considered highly Jordanian. But, if an Ammani young person’s paternal ancestors come from outside Jordan, Palestine, for example, he or she is considered less Jordanian.

The third theme which emerged from my research is the importance migration plays in the character of Amman. As a city built by and for migrants, Amman serves as a place of refuge and its population is highly attuned to the values of hospitality. Jordan’s

---

6 As in the Arab Gulf, tribalism in Jordan centers on social affiliation and does not refer to the Orientalist idea of a static or primitive society. Jordanians can be both tribal and modern (Cooke, 2014).
history of continual migrations causes a culture of hospitality which deeply influences youth. Although the role of the native minority matters in Jordan, in Amman where most residents descend from migrants, national allegiances are less important than the values of hospitality.

Finally, I highlight the importance of multi-scalar belonging among Ammani youth. Before the establishment of the nation-state, people within the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region created their identities based on other scales of group belonging including tribal scales. Group affiliations that have been forged since the founding of the state of Jordan also operate at larger and smaller scales than the nation-state. Youth identified themselves to me as belonging to transnational groups and to local groups instead of prioritizing being Jordanian as their primary scale of belonging. The localized scale of belonging for young Ammanis needs further interrogation, especially as belonging to the scale of the city situates youth as less Jordanian. Section 5.4 examines other scales of belonging which young people identified with more than national or urban scales. The data I collected from my interviews provides new information about how the built environment conditions Ammani youths’ identities, their sense of belonging, and how they envision their futures as they navigate contemporary social movements and increasing regional pressures.

THE URBAN CONTEXT: A BIFURCATING CITY

Amman is, in many ways, a bifurcated city. Amman was reborn in 1878 after a long break in permanent settlement (Hacker, 1960; Shami, 2007), and became an official town in 1903 and the capital city in 1921. Therefore, Amman’s modern rebirth includes 140 years of settlement, 115 years of urbanization, and 97 years of being the cultural and
national capital of Jordan. Yet for much of these nearly 100 years the capital city has struggled with a negative reputation including being declared: "Not a city" (Shami, 2007); "the third ugliest city in the world" (U.CityGuide, 2013); and "one of the five most expensive Arab cities" (Forbes, 2017). Because of this negative reputation, most tourist itineraries consider Amman merely an entry point in which travelers should barely pause to see antiquities before getting out of the city. Indeed, the rapid repopulation and unplanned nature of Amman’s growth has created many infrastructure problems which create challenges in daily life. However, despite the challenges the city faces and being decried as a ‘new city,’ Amman is more than just a transit point: it is a space where nearly half of Jordanians live and many more work, thus playing a crucial role in the processes shaping the future of the state as a whole. This future is inextricably linked to the city's young history.

Despite having significant historical roots reaching back thousands of years, Amman virtually disappeared off the map until just over 100 years ago. When the city was reborn out of the ashes of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, it began its new life as a small village with just a couple of thousand inhabitants (Hacker, 1960). Situated in the valley of one of the few bodies of water in the area, Amman was surrounded by seven jibaal or hills. Even had the city’s new occupants wanted to lay out the nascent city on legible and systematic patterns, the combination of a rapidly growing population and the contours of these steep hills and valleys would have made it difficult. Instead, the city organically grew in haphazard and unplanned ways to accommodate Amman’s growing population.

Historically, the initial city residents were primarily people coming from the
collapsing Ottoman Empire, along with merchants from surrounding countries (including from Lebanon) who worked together to build the city. However, following the Circassians and other Caucasians who migrated to Jordan (in the 1870s), massive waves of immigrants have arrived in Jordan from Palestine (1948, 1967), Iraq/Kuwait (1991, 2003), and now Syria. These migrants have greatly expanded the population, size, and socio-political diversity of Amman.

These historical developments, from the modern expansion of Amman as the capital of Transjordan to the recent waves of immigrants, have made the city what it is today. Thus, one of Amman’s central contradictions is that while it is a very old city, it doesn’t fit into Orientalist models of the "Islamic City" which dominate urban literature of the region (Abu Lughod, 1987). Instead Amman’s distinctiveness comes from its diversity (Daher, 2011). Yet we have very little understanding of how the heterogeneity of this increasingly cosmopolitan and rapidly growing city impacts the ways in which young people form urban attachments to place.

What is known currently is that youth radicalization and apathy are flourishing. Aware of this, the Government of Jordan has focused on young people as the key to future state stability. Since the Arab Spring the Jordanian state has increased its investments in internship programs as a way to address their high youth unemployment. Additionally, on August of 2015 they hosted the UN’s “Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security,” which drew participation from 100 nations and resulted in the signing of the Amman Youth Declaration. The Declaration is intended to present a “common vision and roadmap towards a strengthened policy framework to support [young people] in transforming conflict, preventing and countering violence and building sustainable
peace” (United Nations, 2015). The choice of Jordan as the host for this convention reveals that not only is the Government of Jordan attempting to proactively provide their youth with positive interventions to avoid radical jihadism, but that the international community also recognizes the pivotal role Jordanian youth hold in the stability or instability of the region. This stability is affected by social hierarchies which prescribe how these youths’ futures will unfold.

Talking to youth in their current place as citizens enables me to address warnings from scholars to incorporate marginalized “cultural citizenship” to the fore to complicate and add nuance to the Western-constructed category of youth (Abu El-Haj, 2007, 311). This dissertation examines the experiences and perceptions of young people who may feel too Ammani to be "fully Jordanian," but still have some sense of being Jordanian.7 By bringing their voices into the conversation my hope is to provide a platform for their greater inclusion. Indeed, as I delved into the geographies of inequality in Amman, I paid attention to the historic paths along which Jordan’s minorities and the ruling regime have traversed to arrive at the current construction of power.

My interviews with Ammani youth indicate that young people feel trapped by rapidly diminishing economic opportunities; many also feel confined by regional tensions and conservative cultural norms. This pattern can also be observed in other locations through studies of youth as interconnected geopolitical agents who are being impacted by local, regional, and global pressures (Hörschelmann, 2008; Benwell, 2016). According to a Jordanian journalist, illicit drug use and suicide rates are climbing as youth struggle

---

7 While the term “pure Jordanian” does not bear up under any critical analysis, it is the term most frequently used by my interlocutors to describe national belonging to Jordan as an identity.
under the pressure of living in the “eye of the storm” (Saswan, 2017).

However, these hardships are not felt evenly throughout the city: youth from families with higher income levels explain they are protected from the worst consequences of regional struggles due to their educational opportunities and professional paths. They further elucidate that competition for low salary jobs increased as large numbers of Syrians, who are legally paid a lower minimum wage, now occupy these low paying positions, which become socially coded as “foreign” jobs (McDowell, 2009). This competition thus does not impact the educated and upper classes the same way as it impacts middle and lower-class youth. However, this shift in the labor market means East and West Amman continue to grow further apart in the mental mapping of the city as many jobs in East Amman pay less than those in West Amman.

Palestinian-Jordanian residents of parts of East Amman face pressure to reflect a commitment to returning to Palestine instead of demonstrating comfort within, and commitment to, Amman. In these spaces, the urban landscape is intentionally left to show signs of aging and disrepair instead of being continually improved.8 These same parts of the city are also disproportionately impacted by the post-Arab Spring arrival of Syrian refugees to the city. This additional pressure on poorer neighborhoods in East Amman increases the perceived cultural divide between the East and West sections of the city. According to my interviews, the broad class divisions that divide Ammani youth are mapped alongside the cultural divisions to create a general image of the city as divided between a poor East Amman and a wealthy West Amman.

This bifurcated imagined geography does not accommodate the actual occasional

---

8 Although economic status may contribute to some East Ammanis decision or inability to upgrade their homes, social pressures to retain the ‘right to return’ permeate.
mixing in various parts of the city. However, mapping the cultural divisions in the city onto East and West Amman does offer young people a way to visualize broad class differences, and is how virtually all youth describe the city. Although I am taking care to acknowledge nuances, including the middle-class families sprinkled throughout the city, and including in the poorer parts of West Amman and the wealthy parts of East Amman, the young people I interacted with universally share an imagined geography steaming from Jordan’s historical roots and development that distinguishes a poor East Amman and a wealthy West Amman.

This cultural mapping of class divisions has intensified with the experience of uncontrolled urban expansion. The image of the city as divided is also exacerbated by the city’s increasing global interconnectedness, an issue I explain in more detail in Chapter 7. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is most important to note that there is not one common Ammani youth experience, but that young people in Amman have multiple and divergent experiences of the city. Regional tensions complicate the existing cultural pressures youth in the city already experience.

CONTEMPORARY PRESSURES EXACERBATE CULTURAL TENSIONS

Regional Tensions

As the Jordanian government tentatively works to reopen commercial links with Iraq and Syria, the berm (an extraterritorial space beyond the Jordanian border) has been reinforced to prevent the spread of *DAESH*. *DAESH* is used in the MENA region as a more locally acceptable acronym for Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) since it is both an accurate acronym-- *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham* (the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant)-- and a play on the pejorative term *da’ech*, or bigot. I use DAESH
throughout this project instead of ISIS. Since the Arab Spring, the changing regional context and unpredictable geopolitical situation has transformed a neighboring country from a place which urban youth thought of as site of educational, career, and leisure opportunities into a threatening place. This changing perception reinforces the Government of Jordan's ‘stability first’ discourse.

The majority of my 60 respondents report that the lesson they learned from the Arab Spring was a negative one: they wish people had stayed home instead of protesting since nothing good (indeed, according to them only harmful things) came from the protests. Although Jordanians’ protest signs and chants called for reforms and not regime overthrow, the actions of surrounding nations created regional instability that directly impacts the daily lives of Jordanians (Schwedler, 2017). In addition to increased inflation and competition for jobs, the threat of DAESH has seeped into the daily lives of many Ammani youth.

The threat is not simply an external one: indeed, Jordan has steadily risen and is currently ranked by the United States Government as the second highest exporter of foreign fighters to DAESH (Sharp, 2017). Even as DAESH’s territorial control fades, the ideological threats between moderates and extremists continues in both the online realities and the daily lives of young Ammanis. Homegrown terrorism rocked the sense of national a ’man (security) which was previously considered unshakable, when Jordanian fighters loyal to DAESH killed tourists in Karak Castle in December 2016. This attack prompted the US State Department to issue a travel warning indicating the threat against foreigners in Jordan has risen and cautioning Americans about travel to Jordan. Further, the Center for Strategic Studies at University of Jordan released a report
in 2017 highlighting the increasing number of Jordanians who feel that having refugees outside the camps “highly threatens the security and stability of Jordan” (Saswan, 2017).

Another act of domestic terrorism rattled the kingdom in August of 2018, when youth belonging to a local tribe (normally considered regime loyalists) detonated a bomb under a vehicle belonging to the security forces who were on duty at a music festival in Fuheis, a suburb of Amman (Hamed, 2018). The terrorist event extended to Salt, a city north of Amman, the following day when security forces surrounded a building. The news coverage of the building collapsing went viral and rumors on social media were rampant. In the end, four members of the security services and three homegrown terrorists died. While this event failed to register beyond the region, the specter of local youth, particularly from the tribes, participating in domestic terrorism, continues to reverberate in Jordan since it cannot be dismissed as the work of outsiders.

Beyond these security concerns youth also expressed frustration with the ideological battle between typically more liberal Islamic values in Jordan, on the one hand, and the more conservative Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and DAESH to the north, on the other hand. Numerous youths stated that perceived shifts towards conservative cultural norms negatively affect their daily lives, citing religious or conservative restrictions as factors in their wanting to leave Jordan. Notably, a handful of youth declared themselves to be agnostic or atheist and felt that they could not be openly secular in Amman, particularly since the fallout from the Arab Spring, which they feel allowed radical ideas influenced by DAESH to spread via Facebook and other social

---

9 A deeper exploration of young Ammanis use of and daily encounters with social media is a potential additional extension of this research topic but was not central to this particular project.
media outlets. Several respondents mentioned that they think more Jordanians are covering their hair now than in the past, and I also observed many Christians wearing necklaces with crosses to identify their faith. Symbols of an absence of faith would be harder to identify but would be jarring in a society which prizes faith.

Several respondents reported that new “DAESHI” ideas have gained traction, and that people they considered friends had supported a nightclub bombing during a New Year’s celebration in Istanbul in 2017, saying, “Muslims out partying deserve to die.” Social media provide young people new insights into ideological battles raging around them, but also influences cultural norms within the city. Again, these new geopolitical pressures are layering on top of existing cultural norms, which I turn to now.

Cultural Norms

Cultural norms this generation struggles to reconcile are being fervently tested in Amman. Before delving into the tensions between what are broadly framed as "Western popular ideas" and "local" conservative ideas it is important to examine the concept of youth from a Jordanian cultural perspective. Having lived in Tunisia previously I was aware of the cultural practice within many MENA countries of socially requiring youth to live with their parents until marriage. From my research before arriving in Amman, I knew this practice is also widespread in Jordan. However, it wasn’t until I became friend with Jordanians in their mid to late 30s that the full impact of such an extended period of youth and the resultant waithood it creates that I understood the need to include a much broader coalition of young people in my study. Bayat supports this expansion by calling our attention to the very categorization of “youth” being a Western construction coming largely from cities, which he argues needs to be denaturalized and understood in a
particular context of Muslim youth (2009, 29). Bayat further advocates for studying young Muslims as political actors through a culturally contextualized lens instead of through a normalized Western lens when he states, “Due to a combination of the shifting moral politics at home, and the processes of globalization, youth cultures are developing in novel and little understood ways” (Bayat, 2005, 60). He follows up this sentiment by issuing a call for researchers to engage directly with young Muslims instead of simply writing about them.

Indeed, it is critical to distinguish between Western cultural norms in which a young person is considered independent and often encouraged to be self-sufficient at the age of legal age of emancipation, after schooling is complete, or upon finding gainful employment and local cultural norms. Societal expectations for youth to “launch” into adulthood in the West contrast with Middle Eastern values which dictate that young people typically stay with their parents until marriage. Youth is often extended in this context as young people would be breaking cultural norms by “launching” out independently. Based on the definition of adulthood being contingent on moving outside of the family home, Ammanis typically don’t reach this marker until they are married: the period of being "young" can thus be quite long.

The frustration from delayed social independence is a known and studied phenomenon not only in the Arab World, but elsewhere in the Global South as globalization deepens economic and social inequality (Honwana, 2014). This issue was discussed almost exclusively by my female respondents, as the male respondents stoically did not share this intimate part of their lives with me per cultural norms.

Throughout Jordan many marriages are traditional and based on family
arrangements. Among the affluent population, most of whom have travelled abroad, arranged marriages have been steadily declining. However, dating is still often part of an intricate system of open secrets, as it can be frowned upon, even in cosmopolitan Amman. Nearly a quarter of my informants mentioned they had a boyfriend or girlfriend, and while their mothers are aware of the relationship, they can’t tell their fathers. The period of “waithood” in Jordan is increasing and is among the highest in the world as men are marrying at age 29 and women marry close to 25 (Ajaka, 2014). In this societal context it is very rare for a young person to leave their parents’ homes until they are married, and marriage can’t happen until the potential groom has the financial ability to both pay for a costly wedding and to obtain housing for the newlyweds.

While I didn’t specifically ask about personal relationships, this issue surfaced when I asked, “What is the largest challenge for Ammani youth?” Notably, several wealthy and western educated female youth shared intimate details of their sex lives with me, but only after asking me to use pseudonyms to protect their family names. Both covered and uncovered women spoke about the burden placed upon them by having to preserve their family honor and several shared difficult stories of having to wait for marriage based on family circumstances. Although my male respondents did not share frustrations about their sex lives (or lack of) with me, cultural restrictions are a large factor in this lack of forthrightness about these frustrations, and it is likely this is as much of a source of tension for them as it was for the female respondents. However, since this wasn’t a critical portion of my research, I did not employ a male research assistant to explore this in greater depth. It is worth noting however that increasing periods of waithood put additional pressures on young peoples’ intimate lives.
These cultural norms are increasingly creating tensions as young people encounter Western ideals of being young and dating in popular media. Jordanians are exposed to these concepts not just through films and television, but also in person, as many middle and upper-class Jordanians travel to the West for University educations. Many youths talked about the difficulties they experience once they have had the freedom of living independently abroad, but then return home to an environment where they are constrained by society. Examining the layering of new geopolitical pressures on top of these cultural tensions is the basis for my inquiry into young Ammanis’ daily lived experiences and their perspectives about their futures.

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1 I summarize the historical events which have created contemporary Amman’s unique situation. In Chapter 2, I review the critical urban citizenship and critical youth geopolitical literatures which frame my work. Then in Chapter 3 I outline my methodological approach to my research. I present a cultural mapping of Amman in Chapter 4 to detail how the three most dominant regions of the city add specific cultural layers to youth’s daily lives. In Chapter 5, I outline how the city itself serves as a place of exclusion within the shared mental mapping of Jordanian-ness. Specifically, I argue that young people experience a situated citizenship based on historical geographies and multi-scalar relationships. In Chapter 6, I focus on the impacts of increasing regional pressure and decreasing opportunities which are compelling young people to decide whether to try and leave Amman for the chance to secure their futures or whether they will stay and try
to fight for their rights to make the city. In Chapter 7, I review Jordan’s original social contract and how recent events have been testing the validity of this social contract for Amman’s youth. Then in Chapter 8, I highlight transformations within the city which are allowing youth to begin claiming Ammaniness as both an identity and strategy. Finally, I conclude with opportunities for future research and my closing thoughts.
CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Jordan’s history prior to independence provides important temporal context for this study, situating contemporary Amman within Jordan’s larger history. In the first section of this chapter I lay out Jordan’s exit from the Ottoman Empire, an act which resulted in becoming a British Mandate. Next, I describe how the Hashemites forged a symbiotic relationship with Jordan’s tribes (explained more fully in Chapter 7) during the Mandate Period. Following the introduction of the Hashemites as Jordan’s ruling family, I outline Jordan’s transition from a Mandate to an independent state. I conclude by describing how Jordan’s transition away from being a British protectorate involved America becoming Jordan’s primary patron. This history is necessary to understand how Ammanis’ citizenship became situated, why the social contract developed the way it did, and the choices young Ammanis are making now- whether they seek their dreams elsewhere or contest the social parameters of being Ammani.

1.1 BECOMING JORDAN: EMERGING FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Prior to becoming an independent nation-state, the population on the land which would become Jordan was primarily a confederacy of tribes loosely controlled by the Ottoman Empire (Rogan; 1994; Alon, 2007). Generations of men within the region earned money by protecting pilgrims heading to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj. The construction of the Hijaz railway obviated this job but did not lead to other forms of
investment or development, as Jordan did not offer any natural resources. Despite being on the margins of the Empire, Jordan was at the center of the Great Arab Revolt in 1916, which precipitated the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Emir Abdullah (who would become the first King of Jordan) was a key figure rallying Arab tribesmen into an alliance with the British against the Turks (Frisch, 2002). While some soldiers joined as mercenaries, others were motivated by the Hashemite discourse, which highlighted the king’s purported descent from the Prophet Mohammed, and which emphasized the need for a unified Arab nation.

After leaving the disintegrating Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Transjordan became a British Mandate. Despite adopting the new name Transjordan and emerging as a newly bounded state, Jordan was not a blank slate on which to invent a new nation. Pre-existing tensions and differences between tribes living on the land before statehood came to impact both the built environment and efforts to form Jordan as an imagined community (Salibi, 1998; Alon, 2007). While the territory may have been sparsely populated, historic power struggles between people living in and moving throughout the country left lasting imprints in the building, governing, and imagining of community in Amman.

Although Jordan is acknowledged to have retained a large tribal structure within both the government and within society, there is a tendency in Western literature to treat Jordanian tribes as a homogenous group. In fact, Jordan’s population has long been diverse. Contributing to this diversity have been Circassians, who sought safe-haven in the Ottoman Empire after fleeing Russian expansion the 1860s, as well as dozens of distinct Bedouin tribes with large differences particularly noticeable between the northern
highland tribes and southern desert tribes.

1.2 THE BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD - BECOMING THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM

The early alliances between tribal leaders and the British were struck between weaker leaders who needed patronage and external support to survive, while stronger leaders stayed out of the government as long as possible. Alon argues that, “Jordan’s creation is commonly viewed as little more than a strategy to serve British interests. However, it is more correct to understand it as the evolution of a separate and unified political entity as a result of both British imperial interests and the moves taken by Abdullah in conjunction with important segments of local society” (Alon, 2007, 40). Although weak tribal leaders aligned with the British primarily in the middle of the country, powerful Bedouin leaders in both the north and the south of the country each aligned directly with Emir Abdullah. This geography of tribal alliances highlights how, from the nation’s founding, the base of support for the Hashemite regime lay on polar ends of the country, while being noticeably absent in the central section, where the city of Amman is located.

The high level of autonomy Emir Abdullah enjoyed partially stems from his desire to maximize the expanse of his potential Kingdom to include Syria. Correspondences and speeches show his intent to use Transjordan as a springboard to establish a larger kingdom (Alon 2007, 37). Additionally, since the Hashemite family did not originate in the lands of Transjordan, it was in his interest to define a Transjordanian quite loosely, as his legitimacy was not based upon birth within the new borders. As Winston Churchill gave Abdullah control of the kingdom for a six-month trial period, the
Emir moved quickly to secure the loyalty of the tribes. What emerged from his initial attempts to form a government was “two almost separate systems of government” (Alon 2007, 41). While the settled population was controlled by the state government along modern lines, the semi and nomadic tribes were controlled by Abdullah under traditional lines, thus exacerbating the tensions between these populations.

Lacking the financial resources to buy their loyalty, Abdullah instead wrote into the constitution and governmental organization mandates for representation from each tribe. This dismayed the British, who were shocked when Abdullah continued in his Bedouin ways, eschewing the palace to live in a tent. While privileged governmental positions were established for the nomadic tribes, they were also exempted from taxes. This placed a high burden on settled citizens who were not proportionally represented in the government. This division continues in Amman today and intensifies as large numbers of Palestinian-Jordanians settle in urban settings and pay high taxes but have less representation in the government. Meanwhile “Original Jordanians” continue to enjoy the privileges of their forefathers, which are ingrained in the government.

Based on this nuanced mapping of the diverse tribal hierarchies (as seen in Figure 1.1) which outlines locations and regions based on tribal names, it is possible to understand how Amman was marginal to the country’s power structure from the beginning, despite its central location. This marginalization of the city is also seen in official political discourse, popular imaginations, and literature about Jordan, which relies heavily on idealized imagery of Bedouin tribesmen. The prevailing national narrative erases the population of Amman, whose settled tribal lineage is elided by the notion that to be “a son of Jordan” is to trace one’s lineage to tribes whose power resides beyond the
city. In the Bilad al Sham\textsuperscript{10} nations, this phenomenon is unique to Jordan as notable families did not direct citizenship through cities; instead the royal family directly bestows citizenship (Ababsa, 2011). Indeed, in-grouping and out-grouping which predates the founding of the nation continues to impact the city today through an “economics of notables” which, although well understood locally, is notably absent from literature on the city (Alon, 2007 50).

\textbf{Figure 1.1} Tribal Map of Jordan before Colonization Peake, Frederick G., and Henry Field. \textit{History and Tribes of Jordan}. University of Miami Press, 17, 1958.

As mentioned previously, scholarship about Jordan typically uses statehood as the

\textsuperscript{10} The historical area north of the Hejaz including Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and the portions of Egypt and Turkey which touch the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean.
as the starting point with which to understand contemporary issues. This leads to the mistaken “blank slate” analysis which scholars of post-colonialism, including Alon, apply to pre-colonial lands. Yet, even with low levels of built infrastructure in Amman, the tribal hierarchies which predated statehood clearly demarcated who could use, move through, and had rights, to land. Alon explicitly traces the definition of in and out groups to tribal differences between settled and nomadic tribes (2007, 33). This hierarchy erupted in Amman when the British were forced to pay attention to Jordan due to incursions from the Saudis to the South and threats from Abdullah to annex France’s Syrian mandate. To calm these potentially destabilizing actions, they created distinct government programs which were then capitalized upon differently by diverse local actors.

These programs were overseen by King Abdullah, who had a clear preference for nomadic tribes and himself was a “natural Bedouin.” (Alon, 2007). One of the aforementioned major programs launched by the British was the creation of the Arab Legion, which would later evolve into the Jordanian military, creating a military officer corps from the sons of notable sheiks. Although the Arab Legion was a national program, it further solidified the importance of nomadic tribes by giving increased military authority to southern tribes, ostensibly so they could fight off invasions from the south. This act built the authority of nomadic tribes far from the capital into the government structure. However, even as British flags were raised and uniforms distributed, the allegiance of the people belonged firmly to the tribes. The second major government program created during this time was one of the primary practices of the colonial exercise - the privatization of land. Tribes in the north were co-opted through the land reform
program which allowed large swaths of land to be claimed through privatization, as the British did not want the northern tribes to continue to threaten Syria. Yet this seemingly simple plan to co-opt locals by dispersing the lands in Amman and the northern parts of Jordan to tribes was complicated by tribal differences, largely ignored in scholarship about the city.

The Adwan tribes registered large swaths of land in the north of the country and traded their former fully nomadic lifestyles for semi-nomadic farming lifestyles. They partnered with the British-led Reserve Force (later the Arab Legion) for security and were able to counter raiding tribes from Syria without needing to maintain large tribal defenses. With the acquisition of this land, they also secured vast water rights (Alon, 2007, 30). Conversely the Bani Sakhr tribes, also located in the north, but closer to Amman, took the opposite approach and did not align with the British. They instead imprisoned the British field officer when he attempted to collect taxes. This regional divide reveals the level of difficulty the British faced when trying to form a centralized government “on the cheap.” Their efforts resulted in the north remaining divided into two main power centers. The exercise of land privatization unfolded quite heterogeneously.

The British achieved the most success in trying to form a central government in the center of the country, where tribes had existing agreements and tradition did not permit raiding amongst one another. This group of tribes largely continued to operate under the Mandate as they did under Ottoman rule. Identity as a new state of Transjordan was an easy transition among these tribes trading in nomadic life for agricultural and more urban life caused very little tension in and around Karak. Although no taxes were collected in this area, the British were pleased with how well the transition from nomadic
lives to settled lives went in this region. The moderate success which occurred in the middle of the country gave way to near anarchy in the south. In the south, the Ma’an tribes consisted of heavily armed and rugged camel herders. Like the tribes located in the center of the country, this confederacy of tribes was devoted to defining and defending their land. However, it must be stressed again that Abdullah’s preference for the Northern and Southern Bedouin tribes is intertwined in the fabric of the government. Despite the settled tribes receiving compensation in the form of land to align with Abduallah, the real strength in Amman lies not with land ownership but with tribal alliances tied to military and government services. Taxation on land in Amman is much higher than in rural areas, yet in terms of recognition within the Government of Jordan, it is worth much less. This disconnect has been studied by scholars exploring identity issues in Jordan but is often overlooked in analyses of the city.

The period of loose British control, with less than 20 field officers occupying the country in the 1920s and 30s, was soon replaced by a larger force that tightly controlled the establishment of infrastructure and government institutions. A massive migration to Amman from the desert brought the growing Transjordanian new landed elite into the capital to conduct government business. These powerful Sheiks and Emir Abdullah shared similar goals focused on maintaining control of large amounts of land and their favorable tax exemptions, despite becoming settled. “Establishing law and order and protecting the agricultural communities was the first priority of the government” (Alon 2007, 73). This converged with British goals, as a less mobile polity was easier to control, count, and tax. Although some hold-outs resisted a settled life and abhorred the idea of being part of a census, a severe drought, lasting from 1929-1936, decimated their
population. Livestock who survived had little arable land and the few remaining tribes were further devastated by a historical locust swarm that nearly erased their livelihoods. Seeing their weakened and vulnerable state, invading tribes from Saudi Arabia raided at will.

The confluence of these events finally caused the tribes to appeal to Amman for help. The British responded by sending the Royal Air Force (RAF) to repel the invading forces. To bolster ground defenses, they began appointing sons of prominent sheiks to the newly formed Desert Patrol. This entwined the fate of the Bedouin with the fate of the Hashemite Kingdom, and the generous salaries saved the impoverished tribes. The process of controlling the desert tribes in Jordan was unique in the former Ottoman Empire as it was done with very little violence. The resistance caved internally as tribes saw greater benefit in unifying with the new government than trying to survive alone. In exchange for their loyalty, the tribes received unparalleled privilege within the government. This entanglement was paramount to the land program that the British started in earnest in 1927, which lasted until the 1950s (Alon 2007, 126). This historical review of how land was privatized, prioritized, and planned offers several insights into how Amman came to be divided up prior to, and just after, statehood.

It is essential to understand the original national divides based on tribal affiliation in order to understand subsequent divides in the city based upon newer social layering and codified laws. Historically, the initial city residents were primarily people coming from the collapsing Ottoman Empire, along with merchants from surrounding countries (including from Lebanon) who worked together to build the city. However, following the Circassians and other Caucascians who migrated to Jordan (in the 1870s), massive waves
of immigrants have arrived in Jordan from Palestine (1948, 1967), Iraq/Kuwait (1991, 2003), and now Syria. These migrants have greatly expanded the population, size, and socio-political diversity of Amman. Scholars have very little understanding of how the heterogeneity of this increasingly cosmopolitan and rapidly growing city influences the ways in which young people form urban attachments to place today. My research partially fills this knowledge gap by situating their contemporary attachments to the city within a deeper historical context. Indeed, as I delved into the geographies of inequality in Amman, I paid attention to the historic paths along which Jordan’s minorities and the ruling regime have traversed to arrive at the current construction of power.

1.3 CONCLUSION: INDEPENDENT BUT STILL RELIANT

Transjordan gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1946. As part of the independence movement, Transjordan’s name changed to The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Emir Abdullah became King Abdullah. The planning of Amman became less of an Anglo-Hashemite project, and more simply a Hashemite project. While Jordan was able to become a fully independent country, it has been reliant on foreign aid since its founding. Although the British ceased to control Jordan politically, a large conglomerate of external donors continues to support Jordan financially. In 1946 when Jordan gained independence from the British, who were weakened from fighting in WWII, the cost of employing the majority of Jordanians in the government required new support. Internal support came in the form of “loans” from the patrons to the Amir who covered his personal shortfalls when British allowances were not enough or subsided. These were effectively grants and not loans, as it was known they wouldn’t be repaid (Rogan, 1994).

External support previously provided by the British now came from a variety of
donors including the United States, international organizations (including the World Bank and other aid agencies), and countries from the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC). A major shift from British sponsorship to American sponsorship was complete by 1951, when the Eisenhower doctrine went into effect and the US began giving Jordan $1.4 million dollars of aid annually.

In addition to securing new financial support from outside sponsors, breaking from Britain also required an anti-colonial identity. Massad argues that this new anti-colonial identity was ready-made in the exclusionary new version of Bedouinism which occupied the military, and which become the “true national identity” (Massad, 2001, 164). This exclusive national identity is partially supported by American military aid, allowing the government to be independent, but remaining reliant on outside donor support for financial support.

Outside support has also been shaping Amman's urban landscape since 1948, when the first mass exodus of Palestinians crossed the Jordan River following the Arab-Israeli War. When the combined Arab forces lost to the Israeli army the subsequent loss of Palestinian land resulted in many Palestinians fleeing their homes, forcibly and voluntarily. Palestinians in large numbers sought refuge in neighboring countries including Jordan and Lebanon. This influx of Palestinian refugees contributes to the imagined geography of Amman as a divided city.

First, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) established Jabal el Hussein Camp, a space just under a half square kilometer which has since swollen from the original 8,000 refugees to today’s more than 32,000 registered refugees (Al-Husseini, 2011). A secondary refugee camp was established in East Amman in 1955 by
the UNRWA and now over 50 years later it is still formally titled Amman New Camp. However, it is locally known as al-Wihdat and plays a significant role in the popular mapping of society in the city, as I outline further when discussing Amman’s famous soccer rivalry in Chapter 6 (UNRWA, 2018). Wihdat is also slightly less than a half square kilometer with a registered population of just over 57,000 refugees.

Both spaces were designed to be temporary housing solutions for those fleeing violence, but who intended to return home when it was safe to do so. Although Jordan was just one of the nations that absorbed fleeing Palestinians, when the West Bankers settled in Amman, it reinforced Amman’s regional position as a space of refuge since its modern reincarnation. Today UNRWA tents have been replaced by buildings which conform to the Greater Amman Municipality’s (GAM) building codes requiring stone facades; these structures are often built using informal methods of upgrading and expansion.

The complex national and regional histories behind Amman's development and bifurcation not only set the stage for young Ammanis' situted citizenship, but also illuminate how the social contract in Jordan developed into one which currently provokes many young to seek their dreams elsewhere.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: URBAN CITIZENSHIP, YOUTH GEOGRAPHIES, AND FEMINIST AND CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of situated citizenship I present in this dissertation is based on an integration of four related bodies of literature: urban citizenship, youth geographies, critical, and feminist geopolitics. Situated citizenship conveys the complex simultaneous belonging of people who live in Amman to the city and the nation of Jordan on one hand, who by the virtue of living in Amman, need to on the other hand locate their heritage to other locations outside of the city. This explanatory framework provides clarity for understanding how Ammanis are culturally obligated to shift their performances of identity based on the share mental mapping of belonging among Jordanians. While the processes and performances of multiple identities play out across a variety of scales, my work specifically examines the ways young people develop and apply their senses of belonging and exclusion in terms of urban citizenship. The following sections address the ways Ammani youth form their urban citizenship through daily political actions. I begin by presenting an overview of how contemporary urban citizenship literature builds upon and critiques the established literature on citizenship. Next, I review contemporary trends in scholarship in youth geographies before discussing critical and feminist geopolitics. I end with my argument for using these four literatures in combination, a new and necessary approach to understanding urban youth in the Middle East.
As an urban social geographer, I am examining the role of the city in the lives of its young residents. This spatial lens necessarily incorporates an appreciation for the fluid nature of place.\footnote{11} Amman in particular is a fluid location, due to large waves of migrants rapidly transforming both the urban space and the urban culture. This dissertation embraces fluidity by examining geopolitical pressures and their impacts on how youth are claiming belonging and creating their identities within their daily lives and across their broader communities.

Since simply claiming an Ammani identity is inherently a political act, any study of young people strategically shifting their primary identities to best leverage their insider status or decrease their outsider status demands incorporating feminist framings of micro-politics with youth geography. Following the work of Skelton (2010) and Benwell (2016), I merge critical geopolitics with youth geographies to reveal how youth are acting in inherently political ways which need different lenses than the state-centric nationalistic focus of classical geopolitics. Further, foregrounding youth in the process of daily resistance to their situated citizenship responds to scholarship that demands consideration of youth as political actors instead of dismissing them as simply future citizens. By combining these literatures, I retain a focus on the importance of place and everyday spaces, while also incorporating youth perspectives and their spatial discourses on life in the city. Indeed, young Ammanis participate in micro-scale political acts across local, regional, and global scales. The city provides the spaces for the acts of inclusion, exclusion, control, and resistance that play out in young people's everyday lives.

\footnote{11} Dorren Massey argues against the concept of space as static. Instead she highlights how places have multiple identities, are ongoing processes instead of being frozen in time, and are not clear enclosures, but are the spatial circumstances within which diverse personal experiences occur (Massey, 2005).
2.2 URBAN CITIZENSHIP

Critical citizenship literature emerged as a critique of traditional citizenship literature’s narrow focus on the national legal definition of citizenship (Secor, 2004; Isin, 2008; Holston, 2008). Specifically, early theorizations of citizenship highlighted rights and freedoms between the governed and their government within a clearly defined nation-state context. In the last few decades, critical citizenship theorists have been problematizing notions of citizenship by exposing the socially constructed nature of national boundaries since borders’ meaning are imbued by society. Based on the social construct of nationalism, they argue forms of citizenship based on social hierarchies need further exploration separate from legal citizenship.

Literature on critical citizenship has proliferated with hundreds of articles and books on different forms of citizenship: including post-national (Soysal, 1994; Jacobson, 1996; Feldblum, 1998), transnational (M. Smith and Guarnizo, 1998 and R. Smith, 1997), dual (Spiro, 1997; Jones-Correa, 2001) and multicultural (Kymlicka, 1995; Hooker, 2005). Contemporary circumstances of globalization and multiculturalism have inspired this scholarship on new types of citizenship. Virtually all contemporary scholarship treats citizenship as a perpetually evolving, non-linear process tied to both nation-states and to current economic systems. While legal citizenship remains in crucial ways linked to the territorial state, greater recognition that substantive access to rights and privileges which are connected to race, gender, class, and places of origin is now being explored. Hyphenated identities—like “Palestinian-Jordanian” or “African-American”—require understanding additional nuances of identity making than those based simply on a singular bounded territorial space. Citizenship, in other words, is not a monolithic,
universal category. It becomes meaningful through various forms of identity, through membership in particular categories like race and gender (or tribe, in the case of Jordan).

Further, supranational group belonging in institutions like the European Union exemplify the scalar dimensions of these process, as multiple overlapping memberships exist within identity groups. Dependent on social circumstances (or desired goals) a person could feel more or less European, or more or less of their particular ‘national’ identity. This critical turn recognizes that national identity is itself a social construct and that while identity and citizenship are linked together, co-producing one another, they can overlap, be in tension with one another, and also appear contradictory.

Both processes of citizenship and identity formation create senses of belonging and exclusion but have amorphous borders based on cultural norms. Scholars now view citizenship as extending beyond basic rights and responsibilities by including socio-cultural identities that allow citizens to navigate social hierarchies with greater or lesser ease. Understanding how people view themselves as they perform and claim multiple layers of identities has become a fundamental element of the critical citizenship literature (Secor, 2004; Isin, 2008; Holston, 2008). Critical citizenship brings both sides of the citizenship equation into focus. Citizenship is, at one level, granted by a sovereign state, but it is, at another level, claimed and negotiated by people in their relationships with the state and with each other. The key point geographers make is that these processes are grounded in the spaces of everyday life. The urban becomes the terrain on which people claim belonging and membership and attempt to exclude others. Therefore, examining urban citizenship illuminates not only how citizenship is imposed upon, or awarded to the individual, but also understands citizenship as it is claimed/accessed individually.
For example, in her groundbreaking work, Secor (2004) argues for viewing citizenship as “logic of alterity” and as a set of discourses and practices translated unevenly across social spheres instead of as just legal rights. Her work in Istanbul reveals that people have fundamentally different ideas about what citizenship entails including what rights and responsibilities people have to each other and to the national community. As seen in her case study, people often have totally different understandings of what is within the bounds of ‘citizenship’ and rights. These different interpretations of rights and responsibilities typically emerge as debates around the use of urban space, and the way people behave in that space. Secor’s work pushes us to new questions about citizenship including: Is someone being more or less of a citizen by wearing a miniskirt or a hijab in public? Should public parks ban homeless people or provide public spaces to them? Is it legitimate for restaurants to serve alcohol when citizens may have religious beliefs prohibiting alcohol? These basic questions about urban space become fraught with meaning about who ‘we’ are and what our rights and obligations are to the state and to each other.

This lens allows scholars to understand how diverse youth experience and strategically apply both their “otherness” and their “insiderness” simultaneously while creating their personal identities. In Amman this allows us to understand youth performing their Ammaniness as part of both the insider and outsider group, depending on their social circumstances. Among a group of Palestinian-Jordanians, being Ammani is not exclusionary. However, among Jordanian-Jordanians, being Ammani could indicate that you are not originally from Jordan, thus creating exclusion. Therefore, the same identity would carry different weight/value/obligation, etc.) depending upon the
context in which it was performed/claimed. These ideas are developed more in work by others including Antonsich's creation of an analytical framework to understand belonging (2010), Varsanyi’s exploration of undocumented citizens in the city (2006); and Lister’s feminist approach to cultural citizenship (2017).

Geographers studying citizenship are also raising questions about the impact of economics on urban citizenship and the use of public spaces. Variegated citizenship implicates the process of citizens within the same political situation being subject to different social citizenship based on their economic means, as they are afforded more rights due to their capacity to invest funds in exchange for greater access than those who are unable to contribute as much financially. This economic framing impacts our understanding of social inclusion and exclusion across a variety of public settings. Meanwhile the notion of space has been challenged by the concept of relational citizenship.

Massey’s scholarship is at the forefront challenging us to think about how relational accounts of space can be utilized in order to advocate new, normative and potentially liberating spaces of political practice Massey (2004, p. 6). By looking at young Ammanis who have not met their peers in other parts of the Arab World through a relational citizenship lens it is possible to see how they can create a citizenship bond which subverts the traditional geographies of citizenship.

Building on the notion of citizenship as a set of uneven practices and discourses, Holston’s (2008) critical work in Brazil illuminates how urban residents resist the social layering created by formal citizenship through constructing their own homes as spaces of belonging. This “insurgent citizenship” focuses on the oppressed urban citizen who is
fighting for equal social and legal rights through personal efforts to build informal housing in the city (2008). However, in Amman belonging is most often situated by claiming belonging to spaces outside of the city. Thus, building physical structures would not help youth to advance in the social layers of the city, as the physical location within the city is incongruous with identity claims situated in external sites.

Likewise, despite encouraging scholars to historicize citizenship as a form of social control in the global south, the focus of Isin’s “Theorizing acts of citizenship” is to ask, “who is the other?” in a particular space (2008). This enables us to understand the spatial relativity of being “othered.” Someone who is generally considered an “other” can actually be entitled, depending on the space in which they exist. This expansion upon the traditional citizenship literature is applicable in many settings but doesn’t allow us to fully understand the dynamics of Amman since the entire city is "othered" by the collective Jordanian mental map. However, this key question speaks directly to Secor’s “logic of alterity” since it examines the discourses surrounding who belongs in specific social circumstances, and the fluidity of individuals’ actions to claim or hide their identities. While the scale of the city is difficult to encompass, Isin (2008) argues that locations within the city are better understood by asking whom is “othered” in a particular space.

These contemporary theories of citizenship allow scholars to move beyond a discussion of rights and into belonging based on multiple scales (Hobsbawm 1990; Staeheli 2008). Additionally, scholars using a critical citizenship approach include multiple theories about the role of community, evolving rights, and shifting duties. Despite this richness and complexity, one commonality running throughout this
contemporary body of theoretical work is an examination of how the intersection of power, politics, and identity works to enable or to prevent people from accessing their rights and claiming belonging. Another consistent theme among this body of literature is a discussion of the contestation around what counts as a ‘right’ and what constitutes belonging in the first place.

Citizenship creates a formal status which officially recognizes and defines belonging, identity, rights, and responsibility. It also distinguishes between insider status for those who have been given formal citizenship and outsider status for those who lack that formal status. Harvey’s “Rights to the City” theory pushes the "us versus them" dichotomy by interrogating the level at which individual urban residents have the ability to shape their spaces, but it has become a fraught term used by policy makers, activists, and a diverse array of stakeholders (Harvey, 2008). In Harvey’s original conception, the Right to the City was a call for people to stake claims to urban spaces instead of allowing capitalism to erase the human element of belonging to and shaping the spaces within the city. Critics fear that Harvey’s initial communal component of space belonging to the people has been lost due to the popularity of the phrase as a tool of urban movements.

Citizenship inherently means being defined as part of a particular community. Yet contemporary scholarship illuminates the ways in which a person may belong to multiple groups which can overlap, contradict, and be used strategically. Furthermore, the boundaries of these communities can be either amorphous or quite sharply defined. Belonging is complex.

Benedict Anderson’s (2006) notion of “imagined communities” provides the dominant framework for understanding how citizens who haven’t met and likely will
never meet can share a sense of belonging to the same community group. Anderson argues that a common consciousness forms between individuals due to the pervasiveness of cheap and ubiquitous mass communication as well as the spread of capitalism. These modern systems allow vast numbers or people to “imagine” themselves as connected to others through a common language, ethnicity, history, and culture. While this allows people to imagine themselves as Jordanian on the one hand, it also allows them to belong to the imagined communities of: global youth, Muslims, Christians, tribal members, and/or Arabs. This emphasis on (or access) to the “imagined community” expanded citizenship scholarship in multiple directions.

Other scholars moved from studying citizenship as part of particular political and legal groups to a more personal and intimate understanding of citizenship, which impacts individuals in their daily lives as they move through the city. Critical scholars interrogate citizenship through the lens of daily life, including a focus on the “ordinary” through ways “laws and social norms are entwined with the routine practices of daily lives” (Staeheli, 2012, 5). For Ammani youth it is normal to claim belonging to a place they are unlikely to ever see.

For my research this raises questions about the normalization of socially being obligated to belong to places outside of young peoples’ daily lives. The social norms which dictate tribal youth living in Amman must travel to their tribal seat to vote structures and informs how they perceive and feel their routine practices of daily life. Their daily home is excluded from this civic practice. Likewise, Palestinian-Jordanian youth for whom the social norm is to talk about ‘the right to return’ to a place they have never been to are also impacted by the routine practice of their elders reinforcing the idea
of someplace else being home, creating a daily experience of not being home in Amman. Further examinations of citizenship through lived experiences include looking at “Spaces of freedom” encompassing spaces online and public spaces like Tahir Square (Fahmi, 2009, 100).

A critical urban view helps maintain the fluid and shifting nature of identity while creating opportunities for the resistance against a hegemonic national scale of identification. This approach allows us to understand different ways of seeing youth and how they use micro-political acts to express their citizenship in a variety of ways which do not conform to governmental or dominant social definitions. These types of scholarship require deep ethnographic methods to engage people in places where they experience their daily citizenship in subtle ways. My project builds on this approach by looking specifically at my research population of young Ammanis’ urban citizenship through lived experiences. The following section explains how the social processes of developing and performing multiple citizenships directly impacts urban youth.

2.3 YOUTH LITERATURE

This dissertation merges the insights of youth geographic literature, where an emerging subset of scholars treats youth as geopolitical actors, with an explicit review of youth geopolitical literature. Until recently, geographers studied youth as presumably disinterested or uninformed about political movements (Skelton, 2013). Youth were coded as future political actors who had little long-term impacts on salient political issues (ibid). Skelton is at the forefront of pushing geographers to understand how the “liminal” positioning of young people between legal citizens and juveniles makes them interesting political actors worthy of study (2010). In her 2010 article, "Taking Young People as
Political Actors Seriously: Opening the Borders of Political Geography," she reviews the last ten years of youth geographic literature to draw attention to the link between feminist geographers and youth geographers, emphasizing how this alliance is producing relevant work on liminal spaces, caring, and marginalization from adult male institutions. She also addresses the main critique against contemporary youth geographers that their work is so micro-level that it has limited ability to be scaled up. My work follows her cautionary prescription to avoid this limitation by looking at youth as local, regional, and global actors.

Although most of the critical geopolitical scholars do not explicitly address youth, their critiques of power production run parallel with the writings of youth geographers. Youth geography is an expanding field with scholars working to complicate and expand traditional concepts of youth framed primarily in Europe and America. While a separate subfield labeled critical youth geopolitics is not yet fully established, similar deconstructions of power and assumptions about youth as political actors have been occurring for at least the last decade.

Skelton and Valentine (2005) illuminate how even projects focusing on youth have an inherent adult bias. Scholars including Aitken enter this conversation to challenge assumptions framing childhood or youth as a natural and established time period instead of being a culturally normative and socially defined period (2005). Skelton explicitly argues that the nascent sub-field of “youth geography and critical geopolitics should be “mined” in tandem to produce rich veins of research and new ways of seeing young people as political actors (Skelton, 2013, 133). She further advocates for pairing youth geography with another strong subfield, such as feminist geography in order to
strengthen the new subfield as it examines how youth access and use the city. New
geographies of youth scholarship are opened up by this feminist pairing including skate
parks, bus stops, and interstitial spaces underutilized by adults.

Instead of feminist scholarship, Benwell states his intention to synthesizes the
efforts of scholars bringing together youth geographies with critical geopolitics. The
abstract of his anthology states it will address how:

“Young people, and in particular children, have typically been marginalized in
gеopolitical research, positioned as too young to understand or relate to the adult-
dominated world of international relations. Integrating current debates in critical
gеopolitics and political geography with research in children’s geographies,
childhood studies and youth research, this book sets out an agenda for the field of
children’s and young people’s critical geopolitics” (Benwell, 2015,1).

A primary focus of this scholarship is on how societies are framing and perceiving their
youth. Rech (2014), for example, studies at how youth are framed as both potentially
violent destabilizers and as likely recruits for military service by state actors.
Globalization due to its role in connecting youth in addition to spreading social and
economic changes is the key lens through which multiple scholars examine perceptions
of youth (Katz, 2004; Aitken, 2005; and Ruddick, 2003).

Given the youth ratio of the MENA region, youths’ recent participation in social
movements including the Arab Spring, and their potential to determine the future of the
region towards either further democratization or towards further extremism, youth within
the MENA should be a primary focus of this emerging field of study. Although youth are
an understudied group, their thoughts and actions provide a provocative perspective on
the future of the region. Skelton’s review article of ten years of youth geopolitical
scholarship offers some insights into youth political perspectives. Notably she details
scholarship of the boundaries governments around the world draw around youth’s actual
and potential agency with activism and citizenship (Skelton, 2013). Her insight on the prescribed types of activism governments are willing to allow young people to engage in, is reflected by a key informant in Chapter 7 who describes how many unemployed Ammani youth are spending their idea time as volunteers. Just as Skelton, this key informant questions the efficacy of these efforts since they are constrained by governmental actions.

Instead of a clear academic shift, like the one I will outline between geopolitics and critical geopolitics, youth geopolitics is evolving as a subset of youth geographies as scholars incorporate critical analysis into their research. Scholars including Weller note with excitement an increase in work on youth geographies is taking place across both the Global North and the Global South (Weller, 2006). However, even with the excitement in the field about the move towards more critical analysis, several scholars are calling for more nuanced understandings of youth as political actors. Bayat argues that youth should be studied as a distinct category instead of being studied as part of another research project since their experiences and motivations are unique and valuable in their own right (Bayat, 2010). Cole meanwhile states that youth themselves are trying to correct this slight by writing themselves in as the subjects instead of objects of youth movements (Cole, 2014). Evans concurs with these conclusions but pushes further to argue that western framings of youth need to be complicated by the realities on the ground in Global South settings which have different associated rights and responsibilities as young peoples’ access to education, expectations around work/family, and community often do not align with western youths’ experiences (Evans, 2008). Using more critical analysis similar to critical geopolitics for studying youth opens up areas of research for different
methodological and theoretical approaches including: citizenship, education, political actors, religion, lived experiences and social hierarchies.

One such rich case study of German students protesting the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 revealed a vibrant multiscalar level of political awareness and activism in youth. Hörschelmann partially attributes this to the particular history and cultural memory of Germans who carry the legacy of their nation perpetuating atrocities in World War II which they seek to prevent from reoccurring (2008). The impact of how societies experienced tragic events such as war on the political psyche of youth is an area which needs further interrogation to have greater understandings of and possible predictability for future youth social movements. In a later piece Hörschelmann further problematizes conceptions of youth resistance to the status quos via protests or political organizing, which are often portrayed by powerful stakeholders through a skeptical lens of either criminality or inexperience (Hörschelmann, 2015). She argues, however, that resistance is actually related to a specific catalyst or cause which first engages youth with politics, instead of a lack of experience. Although Cole is not a geographer, his work aligns with the trend in youth geography to deconstruct the uneven power dynamics that marginalize youth and youth political action.

Cole envisions youth in the Middle East as developing a mindset distinctive from that of their elders through a confluence of trends, including increased literacy rates, social media connections, and the willingness to protest against broken social contracts (Cole, 2014). In this way he challenges scholars and political commentators who attribute the Arab Spring either to religiously extremism or youth disaffection. For Cole, although religion is one element of life for the “New Arab” it is neither a homogenous nor
determinant factor which explains the political activism of the youth who participated in the Arab Spring (Cole, 2014). Instead he is able to show how access to social media, global communications, and increased global connectivity has allowed youth to challenge authoritarian political institutions that were considered immutable. By combining an area studies approach with what I label a "critical youth geopolitics" approach, he is able to portray young political actors with political goals that are not only distinct from their parents, but also from one another. Indeed, although the older generations in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, were seemingly resigned to life under dictators, the youth in these countries challenged the status quo to topple the governmental order that once appeared invincible.

While Jordanian youth only tentatively participated in the Arab Spring, they are nonetheless part of Cole’s generation of “New Arabs” who became political to challenge existing power dynamics. Overthrowing the regime was not the intent of Ammani youth who participated: instead, they sought to reform the traditional and tribalistic systems which marginalize them. Although they were not actively seeking the same types of changes as their peers in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria who risked civil war, their voices are still worthy of bringing to the fore as their desires are underrepresented. The ways which they envision their lives differently than how their parents envisioned their own lives has enormous significance for the ways in which region is changing.

Both Bayat and Cole contextualize their work on youth geographies in the Middle East. In this setting, the dichotomy of youth as “future citizens” versus youth as they currently are frames them as either future opportunities or current threats. Bayat refutes the assumptions which imagine youth in the Middle East as more exceptional than in
other parts of the world due to their religion, culture, relatively high education and low unemployment. The authors in his anthology argue that even the concept of youth is a new mainly urban and modern idea since youth traditionally worked at much younger ages, and this new category of youth are facing unique challenges based on their location and revised social roles (Bayat, 2010). However, his book contends it is the presence of authoritarian or religious regimes that do not accommodate youth movements that affords youth in the region more transformative power than youth in other regions with greater inclusion. Cole adds his perspective to these authors by concluding that youth in the Middle East are a generation which has been “awakened” by their increased literacy, education, skills and technological advances over their elders.

Like Cole, Bayat points to the polarization among highly observant and less observant religious youth as one distinction which needs to be made so that scholars avoid the temptation to envision the youth of the region as a homogenous group. Weller synthesizes these perspectives and concludes that the lived hierarchies which youth experience are erased by their framing as “future citizens” instead of viewing them as they currently exist (Weller, 2003). My research with Ammani youth provides a platform for bringing their experiences as current citizens within social hierarchies to the forefront. Unseen young perspectives on how regional pressures intensify Amman's urban physical and cultural changes are thus the focus of this explicitly youth centered project.

2.3 CRITICAL AND FEMINIST GEOPOLITICS

In this section I first review the emergence of critical geopolitics as a distinct subfield from classical geopolitics so that I can then apply a feminist geopolitical framing to youth in Amman. The scale of geopolitics is problematic for my case study, but we can
better view the micro-acts of politics which youth in Amman engage with daily by tracing the movement of geopolitics through its critical phase to the application of feminist geopolitics. Classical geopolitics is the study of statecraft and the ways that geographical space (topography, physical features) affect relationships between states. Yet, when citizens of the Global South began to question the inherent “goodness” of western capitalism and the policies of the US in particular, this framing was exposed as problematic (Agnew in Dodds, 2013).

Scholars of critical geopolitics intervened in this post-Cold War moment to deconstruct the naturalized assumptions of state power, shifting the academic focus towards the exercise of state power through discourses (Toal, 1996). Before critical geopolitics could gain resonance within the academy, it was necessary to decouple it from the stigma attached to German, Nazi-era geopolitical theories (Dalby in Agnew, 2008). A foundational scholar of critical geopolitics, Toal was able to shed this association by shifting the emphasis from the ‘great game’ of international relations to an examination of the discourses created by the state in order to make sense of the world and to exercise power. Prior to his seminal work, Critical Geopolitics, the state’s power was taken for granted: Toal is credited with solidifying critical geopolitics as a sub-discipline which exposes how states make power. This reveals how states’ narratives of places reflected political motivations rather than static, geographical truths. Toal demonstrated that the entanglement between state power making and geographic representations was elided in traditional international relations theories. His post-structural approach argued for deconstructing naturalized geographies to study how power is embedded.

The shift from a multipolar global political system to a unipolar political system
did little to erase underlying tensions about the world order. While some scholars and policy makers anticipated a smooth transition of democracy within non-democratic nations, democracy instead ricocheted in unexpected ways based on local path-dependencies. I will be paying attention to how western inspired democratization efforts interacts with the blending of minorities into the existing Jordanian social hierarchy and how this impacts Amman's youth, a process which was explored through critical geopolitical analysis of minority issues in Eastern Europe (Deets, 2006). In Jordan, both democracy and the rewriting of the social contract have proceeded in fits and starts, instead of the idealistic smooth transition political scientists envisioned.

Much attention has been paid to US/European discourses about the Middle East, but Middle East states also produce their own geopolitical discourses. Jordan imagines itself as a place of refuge and moderation in the Arab world and beyond. Three generations of Jordanian kings have followed the political adage, “a friend to all and an enemy to none” when framing its relationships with its neighbors. Ordinary Jordanians interpret and act upon these geopolitical constructs by enacting their roles as providers of refuge and peacemakers. However, in my interviews young people question their capacity to affect larger geopolitical issues and often spoke about larger actors pulling all of the strings. These alternative geopolitical concepts place Jordan in a more passive role than in the active leadership role which the government seeks to portray. This is important because it undermines the narrative the Government of Jordan uses to solicit donations and external support from outside sources that rely on Jordan as a critical ally capable of affecting regional politics. If young Jordanians eschew this role and instead seek to leave Jordan to pursue other opportunities instead of embracing the responsibility
associated with the government's framing of the country, it will shape the future of not only Jordan but also the region.

The critical geopolitics scholarly perspective is highlighted in Frisch’s scholarship about Jordan, which analyses speeches made by each of the state’s Kings. Frisch uses these speeches to argue that the State discourse is one of intentionally “fuzzy” national identity (Frisch, 2002). Frisch illuminates how the Hashemite regime used scalar language to articulate their vision of their kingdom in a way that included part of the French Mandate in Syria. Through speeches given by the Kings, as well as written interviews, it is possible to expose how the boundaries, as defined by the colonial powers, were smaller than the ambitions imagined by the Hashemite regime. The discourse of a “fuzzy” identity served the purpose of supporting the expansion of the state (Frisch, 2002). This emphasis on the discourses created by the state and state actors aligns with Toal’s focus on discursive power, since Frisch extends his analysis to include speeches from the leader of the nation as intentionally framing the official discourse with nuances absent from state documents.

Scholars (Agnew, 2004; Gamlen, 2008) following Toal grounded these state discourses in local experiences and popular discourses, instead of just official discourses, in order to highlight how peoples’ experiences, differ from official rhetoric. This shifted not only the scale from the state to the local, but also the methodology from official documents to unofficial accounts and ethnographic work in order to study how citizens feel the impacts of geopolitics distinctly from how states enact them. Scholars using the embodied experiences approach demonstrate how the city becomes segmented and ordered through negotiations of power by connecting what is happening on the ground in
lived experiences to larger state processes.

Therefore, citizens’ discourses, which envision wealthy enclaves of consumerism as liberating geographic imaginations, are connected to global processes of neoliberalism via state discourses (Al Rabady, 2015; Daher, 2008, 2013). Geographers seek to explicitly connect these local experiences to the global systems instead of allowing them to remain disconnected, in order to demonstrate the power that global systems exert on individual lives. Instead of viewing the power which created and sustains the global social order as a benign power which simply exists, scholars view it through multiple lenses to understand the why and how that power is intentionally constructed. By examining the parties who benefit from the established world order, and those with a vested interest in fixing the global power system, scholars are able to investigate the intention behind the system. They couple this exploration with an understanding of the means for continued ‘othering’ to create a holistic view that clearly identifies the application of global power, and its eventual impact on the individual.

Another non-Western nuance which could be overlooked by using only traditional geopolitical framings is highlighted by Oudat’s critical examination of the importance of tribal allegiances in Jordan. He argues there is a misalignment between official statements made in the “Jordan First” program and actual local understandings of said program (Oudat, 2010, 65). Although his scholarship starts with a state-centric approach, he also focuses more deeply to understand how the official doctrine and program is based not on identity or defense or the nation, but instead on loyalty to the regime and tribal identities. He is able to reach this conclusion because his extensive study explores the discursive themes in historical references to support his scholarship of contemporary
popular literature which includes newspapers, opinion pieces, and published tribal statements from *jurgas* (Oudat, 2010).

Studies of popular discourses illuminate the rich layers of geopolitical power circulating in the lived experiences and imaginations of citizens, which are overlooked when looking only at state power. One such case study looks at the comic book hero *Captain America*’s transition from an idealized American hero who defensively uses a shield when defending American ideals from Nazism, to an aggressor as a contemporary icon who in a post-9/11 world morphs to fight the evils of Islamic Terrorism (Dittmer, 2004). Similar critical methodologies explore how local actors are impacted by popular discourses. Likewise, Hughes deconstructs the popular discourses created and naturalized by the British icon, James Bond, as he evolves as a symbol of an idealized British nationalist masculine character (Hughes in Dodd, 2013). Both scholars illuminate naturalized power that would be overlooked by the limited perspective of classical geopolitics on official state policy and documents. Following in the footsteps of these scholars, I ask Ammani youth their perceptions about society’s representations of contemporary Middle Eastern youth in popular media, political discourses, nationalist ideas, and in the global context.

In addition to these examinations of popular discourses, scholars within this second turn in critical geopolitics also interrogate the local lived experiences in order to expand understandings of geopolitics beyond the scale of the state. They accomplish this by conducting extensive fieldwork including observations and interviews. It is through this turn towards local, lived experiences that feminist scholars were able to closely align with critical geopolitics (Peake in Dodds, 2013). The analysis of these scholars furthered
the social justice component of critical geopolitics. Indeed, radical critical geopolitical thinkers emerged in part by expanding on the work of feminist and queer theorists by seeking to propose “an alternate world view- a geopolitical imaginary that paid attention to questions of social justice” (Mercille in Dodds, 2013, 131).

An example of this new methodological approach is provided by Swedenberg whose collaboration highlights several case studies in the MENA (Swedenberg, 2007). These case studies use field work and research with local informants to produce a more accurate understanding of local issues than the misrepresented theoretical conclusions proposed by traditional geopolitical analytical with its reliance on official discourses. One such case study involves examining the political tensions between Iran and the West by directly interviewing young Iranians. This research challenges the one dimensional and fictionalized political versions of the youths typically presented by these opposing governmental powers and reveals young peoples’ thoughts and actions. Varzi’s interviews and observations do not align with the official rhetoric and instead show how young people negotiate their daily lives with depth and nuance. These findings reveal the importance of speaking directly to youth within the MENA to avoid conceptions which portray them as either very pious and vulnerable to radicalization, or conversely extremely open to westernization and ripe for increased democratization movements.

Of particular note is Varzi’s work in Iran which opens offers new understandings of youth in Tehran and their previously missing political perspectives (Swedenberg, 2007). Her ethnographic fieldwork reveals youth interactions with religion and the state which do not fit either the reification proposed by Iran or the version proposed by western commentators. As the UN positions Jordanian youth as leaders for their new
peace initiative and radical extremist groups target youth in the MENA for their terrorist movements, I am seeking to complicate this dichotomous political framing with nuances provided directly from Amman’s urban youth. Although both Oudat’s examinations of “Jordan First” and Frisch’s review of speeches by Jordanian Kings’ offer a starting place for moving beyond official state power to discourses of power, they do not engage directly with Jordanians to understand their lived experiences of these discourses.

The role of human geographers is to combine the historical and cultural contextualization provided by traditional area studies scholars with a critical spatial approach. Research can then be grounded to theory in specific regional locations in order to avoid conclusions which are either too universalistic or too particularistic. Geographers are also contributing by conducting ethnographic fieldwork combining backgrounds in scholarly literature with personal interviews. While youth in the Middle East are increasingly portrayed by nations as either objects of fear or the hope for the future, there has been little substantive ethnographic work to treat them as subjects. My research contributes to multiple emerging trends in social science research by combining elements of area studies, with social science approaches, in a place-based framing.

My research project in Amman follows this contemporary critical geopolitical approach by conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the neighborhoods of Amman in order to reveal how local lived experiences are coproduced within larger international systems. Instead of focusing on state level politics and international relations, I will be exploring how Ammani youth are impacted by global systems, which discourses they respond to and engage with, and how they find meaning in or use these discourses to explain their own sense of place in the city. While the terminology “third world” morphed into
“underdeveloped,” “emerging nations,” and currently the “Global South,” normalized political and academic discourses still imagine youth from the MENA as situated precariously in the contemporary global order. My goal is to denaturalize these discourses and provide a platform for youth to express how they actually situate themselves.

Urban scholars argue that cities are critical spaces within which national identities and feelings of personal belonging are created (Lefebvre, 1991). How ideas come to have power not through the state, but through popular ways of thinking about who we are is being explored through lenses including how citizens self-segregate based on socio-economic status, religion, and ethnicity (Deeb, 2006; Galonnier, 2015). By intentionally conducting my ethnographic work across all regions within the city, I am paying attention to the multiple experiences occurring within the city simultaneously (Fregonese, 2009).

Further, by exploring a region historically bounded by a complicated interplay between colonial power and tribalism, I seek to expand urban studies knowledge of post-colonial identity formation in cities to re-center our understandings of the power of cities (Roy, 2009). Urban scholars also make the case for linking the city to regional processes, for example as Fregonese does in her work on Beirut. She argues for examining local, national, and regional processes of “urbicide” engaging with local identities of Christians and Muslims while also connecting with regional Pan-Arab ideologies and nationalist Palestinian agendas (2009, 310). Given my emphasis on youth as the subjects of my critical geopolitical study, it is imperative that I have an understanding of how geographers have approached youth in the past and how they approach them now. Bringing the focus of geopolitics to the feminist framing allows me to investigate youth
actions at a scale which they expressed themselves to me in Amman.

FEMINIST GEOPOLITICS

Starting in the 1990s, conversations between feminist geography and critical geopolitics began increasing and the merger of these two strains of geography has been aimed to fill silences directed towards an explicitly feminist geopolitics. Staeheli, Kofman and Peake’s well cited book in 2004 synthesizes many of the scholarship seeking to demonstrate the myriad of ways gender affects political processes including the politicization of space. After critiquing traditional geopolitical scholarship for its failure to incorporate feminist perspectives, theses scholars apply these perspectives to diverse settings. Then they apply feminist geopolitical framings to other topics typically studied by geopolitics including: nationalism, migration, development, international relations, elections, social movements, governance (2004).

Following this collaboration Hyndman seeks to revisit feminist geopolitics by examining the politics of body counts “us” (Americans) versus “them” (Iraqis) as a feminist framing of seeing makes the connection between the intimate and the global apparent (2008). Her work illuminates how certain bodies are made invisible by typical geopolitical scholarship while also shifting the scale of these geographies to the individual level. This scaling down of a major conflict to the individual level moves the conversation forward to enable Dixon’s focus on micro-acts of politics (2016). Using four complex objects of analysis, namely flesh, bone, abhorrence, and touch- which represent her case studies of bodies crossing borders, the “afterlife” of corporeal bodies, things which are globally deemed “wrong,” and earth with an emphasis on the monstrous, she not only challenges traditional and critical geopolitics, but she seeks to highlight
entirely new individual scales and geographies from a feminist perspective.

2.4 CONCLUSION: SHIFTING YOUTH IDENTITIES OF URBAN CITIZENSHIP

Middle Eastern urban youth are understudied and frequently misunderstood. Individual theories have largely failed to grasp the complexity of their changing and interconnected lives. Further, too few scholars reach out to meet youth in their spaces of daily life. A greater understanding of this generation cannot be obtained unless we reach out to hear their perspectives directly. Only with those perspectives can we theorize about their political futures in more holistic ways.

While research that views youth as a central object of analysis offers some needed insight into the lives of Jordanian youth, I argue that using an urban citizenship framing and applying a feminist critical geopolitical lens offers a more nuanced understanding of the lives and hopes of Ammani youth through their own voices. Interrogating their understandings of how they fit into local, state, regional and global social, economic, and political systems also extends my work beyond the typical regional studies lens. It allows me to analyze Cole’s optimistic theory that youth in the region are no more susceptible to the pressures of the “youth bulge,” which features a population which is both relatively educated as well as underemployed, than their peers out of the region. The complex phenomenon of youth in the MENA triggering political changes across the region in the Arab Spring, as well as the proliferation of youth from around the world joining terror groups based in the region, demonstrates that traditional approaches to understanding political motivations and actions of youth in the region need to be equally complex. Therefore, my study is intended to build upon the work of critical geopolitics by situating my research in the emerging field of youth critical geopolitics in a region that is currently
the quintessential focus of youth political actors.

Therefore, I operate under the assumption that Ammani youth are engaged and informed about local and regional social movements. I also consider them to be aware of their positioning within the city and have an interest in understanding how both the built environment and contemporary social movements frame their daily lives and potential futures. When living in Tunisia, just after the Arab Spring, it seemed as though politics and the future were the only conversations people were having (other than football). This was a reaction to having overthrown a dictator and to being allowed to speak freely for the first time about these issues. In Amman I was to have similar in-depth conversations with Jordanian youth through my volunteer work and the personal relationships I built in Amman.

Thinking about this complex group, whose situated citizenship further compounds their already precarious state (due to being located in the center of regional instability), requires an extension of critical citizenship theories and a focus on youth as critical geopolitical actors. Throughout my ethnographic study in Amman I situated my study in the emerging field of what I label critical youth geopolitics, working to unsettle the classical geopolitical focus on how states reinforce their power, by instead examining how different youth in the city experience multiple discourses and daily encounters with urban citizenship. Situated citizenship thus presents a provocative framework with which to expand critical approaches to geographic research on youth.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

While my research is based on a qualitative study of Jordanian youth living in the capital city of Amman, it also includes a series of interviews with older generations of Ammanis and other key informants which situate this generation’s responses. During the two and a half years I spent in the field, I conducted continual participant observation, participated in neighboring activities, and built multiple friendships which furthered my understanding of both the city and the youth. I also learned a lot from my daily interactions which allowed me to notice and understand Jordan more deeply. I added complexity to these observations with longer semi-structured interviews based on snowball sampling and guidance from local academic mentors.

When research trends, current events, and new questions needing further investigation arose I selected a sample of respondents from diverse backgrounds to immediately check on their perspectives. Staying engaged with my interviewees throughout my time in Amman was a tremendous advantage as numerous youths began to send me unsolicited information in the weeks and months after we completed our initial interview. My contacts with young people began through my volunteering.

As a volunteer with Hamzet Wasel (meaning link) I participated in youth events including city clean ups, making music using garbage, skateboard lessons, and urban
scavenger hunts. Rami Daher,\textsuperscript{12} who joined the committee and met with me on a regular basis during the two and half years of the study, and Raghda Buttros the founder of \textit{Hamzet Wasel}\textsuperscript{13} were both instrumental in my insertion into the field. In addition to volunteering with Raghda, I supplemented my volunteerism by serving as a speaker for the US Embassy Speakers Corps giving presentations about soft skills at Jordanian University, German Jordanian University, and youth-centered NGOs.\textsuperscript{14} The presentations most requested during this time were on volunteerism, interviewing skills, and scholarship opportunities.

This outreach facilitated access to the Princess Basma Youth Centers where I conducted multiple focus panels. These focus panels were located in lower income areas of East Amman allowing access to a population with whom it would otherwise be difficult to meet. Additionally, I volunteered as an English teacher which further allowed me to build my network of interviewees. My English teaching was facilitated through relationships I developed at local coffee shops. After becoming something of a regular at two neighborhood coffee shops I was given permission to post a notice advertising free English lessons. Several interviews developed from my English tutoring. These activities allowed me to both make contacts with young people and to help my community. My neighboring and friendship activities, including the local book club I joined, also

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12} Dr. Rami Daher is a practicing architect and the head of the firm TURATH which designed several prominent public spaces in Amman and emphasizes public space as a form of social justice. He is also an associate professor of Architecture at German Jordanian University in Amman.
\textsuperscript{13} Hamset Wasel is a youth focused NGO which works to connect youth from diverse backgrounds by using Amman as the site of their interactions. I volunteered in one of their primary activities- a scavenger hunt program for youth in Amman to show them other areas of the city and to introduce them to new youth.
\textsuperscript{14} Mojadadedun Youth Center was the youth center I spoke at most frequently and they were instrumental in introducing me to youth in East Amman specifically.
\end{flushleft}
provided significant access to young people. This book club provided access to educated women mainly from the upper classes of Amman. During these meetings I was brought into an intimate circle of women, many of whom became friends. Since I was the only non-Jordanian in the group, I felt particularly privileged to be exposed to their discussions about life in Amman. My contacts within this group lead to key informants doing research on economic issues and on entrepreneurism.

To add additional context to my observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus panels, I also reviewed a series of local newspapers daily. I began reading multiple Jordanian news sources daily a year before I began the study and continued this practice throughout my research including during the time I was writing my results. These include: *Jordan Times*, which is often supportive of the Hashemite Regime, *Roya News* which has a strong online presence skewing towards social media and contemporary events, and *Al Ghad*, a privately-owned newspaper which originated 15 years ago in Amman. Reading these three sources daily allowed me to view multiple perspectives of single events as well as gather information about events not provided in every source.

This chapter begins by outlining the preliminary research I conducted prior to travelling to Amman. Next in my research design section I talk about what sources of data I intended to collect. After I explain the research design, I lay out my data collection methods. I then explain how I analyzed my data. Finally, I end by exploring my researcher subjectivity and positionality.

### 3.2 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The inspiration for my research project came when I was living in Tunisia from June 2011-June 2012. My time in Tunis was just after the Arab Spring and the air was
charged with unknown and potential outcomes of their recent revolution. It was the Tunisian revolution which sparked other regional protests against authoritarians and underemployment that spread throughout the region. Young Tunisians in particular spoke about feeling empowered by their actions but also anxious about what would happen next. The mix of excitement and fear permeated and divided Tunisians. It was when I lived in Tunisia that I first traveled to Jordan. The contrast between how young people in Jordan spoke about the Arab Spring and how Tunisians spoke of it intrigued me. Jordanians I spoke with during this visit talked about admiring that Tunisians were able to overthrow their dictator, Bin Ali, but also immediately declared that Jordan did not want to undergo similar chaos. Instead they universally spoke about wanting slow and steady reforms instead of dramatic changes. This cautious perspective ignited my interest and inspired me to want to further understand how this disposition developed. Further discussions hinted that Jordan’s precarious geography in the middle of regional instability (due to on-going conflicts in Syria and Iraq as well as tensions in Palestine and Israel) and as the recipient of multiple waves of refugees from these issues were major contributing roots of this response to the Arab Spring. After beginning my graduate studies, the people of Jordan and their response to instability continued to stay with me. Once I began my doctoral program, I immediately proposed that my dissertation be focused on Ammani youth.

My preliminary research began in May 2015 when I arrived in Amman. I began more formally conducting research that August. This is when I completed an independent directed history course on the people of Amman and concentrated my urban geography seminar project in the fall of 2015 on researching Amman’s modern rebirth. The majority
of my semi-structured interviews and focus panels were conducted between August 2016 and August 2017. From August 2017-December 2017 I conducted supplemental interviews with older generations of Ammanis to provide historical context to the perspectives this generation of young Ammanis presented to me.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Amman presents a unique case to investigate, based not only on its centrality, but also based on the circumstances of its modern rebirth. As I outlined in my introduction, when Amman was reborn in the early 1920s it was repopulated primarily with migrants, meaning that urban belonging in Amman tests theoretical questions of place-making. In this section, I present my two central research questions as I originally proposed them, before outlining how direction from my committee steered me to add additional literature with which to contextualize my study. The original research questions for this project were as follows:

1. In the context of an expanding and increasingly heterogeneous population, how do youth in Amman, Jordan perceive the role of the city (how space is defined and allocated) on their identities and goals for the future?

2. In what ways do (post-Arab Spring and ISIS/DAESH) Ammani youth perceive recent contemporary social movements in the region impacting their positionality in local, regional and global social hierarchies?

After my proposal defense, I began revising the research design to include a focus on critical citizenship literature. This led to the inclusion of Harvey’s “Rights to the City” and to the concept of “othering” within smaller social scales. Of note, the complex interplay between Jordanians of different paternal lineages was more easily understood from a critical citizenship lens than from viewing the city through a bi-furcated geographic lens which framed youth as being from either East or West Amman, as I had
originally proposed it. Once I was in the field however, it became clear that although there are universal generalizations about these distinct parts of the city, the use of critical citizenship literature offered a more robust way to examine my data. Thus, my two basic research questions continue to drive my research, but with additional literature and focus on citizenship.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

My fieldwork for this project was conducted over the course of roughly two and a half years from May 2016 until December 2018. My longer-term participant observations and longer relationships with Ammani youth were bolstered by more formal semi-structured interviews and focus panels. The primary drive of my research was to gain the first-hand perspectives of Amman’s young people- how they not only experience their daily lives, but also how they talk about pressing issues including social and economic opportunities as well as the impacts of regional instability with one another (Pryke, 2003). The goal of hearing how youth talk about these issues with one another is two-fold. First, to limit my outsider status by being more of an observer of their interactions instead of an authority figure in one on one interviews and secondarily to see how young people present their perspectives to peers.

In total, I conducted 60 semi-structured initial interviews which were split almost evenly among male and female respondents. I also conducted five focus panels with youth from August 2016-September 2017. Two of these focus panels were exclusively male, two were exclusively female, and one was mixed gender. After the phase of formal interviewing, I returned multiple times to my respondents during the analysis and writing phases of my project. In order to contextualize my findings, I completed 12 interviews
and 1 focus panel with older Ammanis from September 2017-January 2018. From September 2017-January 2018 while I was conducting my interviews with older generations I also moved into the analytical phase of my research. Starting in January 2018 I began the process of writing my results. Although some of the interviews were conducted in English, when the informant was fluent and expressed a preference or explicit confidence in our discussion being in English, the majority of interviews were conducted in Arabic. All focus panels were conducted in Arabic.

In addition to conducting interviews, I also studied public discourses circulating in various texts, a locally made film, a local television show, and some social media reactions to understand both official and unofficial rhetoric. My discourse analysis serves to highlight generational differences I have identified as well as to explicate how others frame Ammani youth. While I analyzed multiple discourses from newspapers, I also reviewed government speeches, and discourses circulating in the media that inform the ways in to determine how youth are impacted by navigating in their daily lives numerous “figured worlds” (Gee, 2014, 29).15

Per university regulations, any research involving human subjects requires an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. To become IRB certified I completed training on interviewing human subjects, submitted a copy my research proposal, and sample as part of my certification. This training provided me with the tools to make my interviewees feel secure while also securing my research notes. Due to the sensitivity of

15 Gee’s “figured worlds” is a tool of inquiry used in discourse analysis to examine the social rules and conventions of a specific environment which would not be appropriate in other situations. In my analysis I explore two “figured worlds” of behavior deemed normal and acceptable surrounding soccer fans and at the University of Jordan. Both instances reveal behavior which would be unacceptable in other spaces of Amman.
some of my research I gave respondents pseudonyms and my notes are labeled with the pseudonyms (except for adult key informants, who gave explicit permission to use their real names).

Throughout my interviews and focus panels I took extensive notes. The majority of interactions were also recorded. A few informants declined to be recorded but did allow hand written notes. For interviews and focus panels which were conducted exclusively in Arabic, I used a research assistant in addition to taking notes and/or recording the sessions. During the course of my project I used three different research assistants as dictated by both the circumstances of the interviewees. If female participants preferred female translators, then I followed their preferences.

Both the semi-structured interview process and my use of local research assistants strengthened my data collection. Although Dr. Daher and I created a list of questions with which I began my interviews, I was able to react and pursue additional themes which emerged during the semi-structured interviews as I had the freedom to follow the conversation and to instantly check and expand on places and words in local Ammani dialect that I couldn’t follow on my own. Individual interviews ranged from one hour to four hours and a half each. Two hours was the average interview length. Focus panels averaged three hours, with approximately ten participants per panel. I made use of focus panels when I wanted to ascertain how young people talked about their responses to my research questions amongst themselves, instead of simply one on one with me as the outside researcher. I conducted interviews primarily in locations which participants selected, including: Jordanian University, coffee shops, private homes, and youth centers. A few interviews were conducted in my home, since I had developed longer lasting
relationships with these youth through my work as their volunteer English teacher.

One disappointing development which limited my sample arose from my failed collaboration with a youth NGO based in East Amman. Although I had obtained written confirmation of my volunteer status before arriving, and even had a very promising meeting with the NGO director upon arrival, in the end this relationship did not actually materialize. The population in East Amman was the most difficult to access and if this relationship had worked out as planned, I believe it would have enhanced my data. In Chapter 4 on the cultural geography of Amman, I go into more depth as to why this population was the hardest to reach: this community is a relatively closed community. However, the NGO director was evasive and despite numerous attempts to begin my volunteering schedule at the center, I was never able to actually serve there. This was partially due to my outsider status, but also the result of the center having just secured a substantial grant which they prioritized.

My first interviews began as a result of my own social connections. This was the basis of my initial snowball sampling and produced slow and steady interviews one at a time (Patton, 2002). The pace of my interviews picked up significantly after I gave a few talks at the University of Jordan and the German Jordanian University. This produced a larger group of interviews who were self-selected instead of referred by my contacts. Despite originally wanting to focus on interviewing an equal number of youth from East and West Amman, I concluded my interviews once I hit a general saturation point in which I was no longer receiving unique answers, but simply variations of answers previously collected. My work is thus not based on a quantitative representation of young people from specific geographic areas. Amman is a large metropolis with a diversity of
youth experiences, and I was able to speak with groups and individuals both I and my key informants identified. Thus, although my total sample size is less than the 100 youth I had initially hoped to interview, the data from this sample did reach saturation and does provide a representative sample of the population of Amman. While the entire population of young people cannot be reduced to the answers given by my informants, the diversity of the responses I received present a broad sample with multiple identities, perspectives, and socio-economic experiences being represented.

My study focused explicitly on youth born and having spent their childhoods in Amman. However, it became clear during my ethnographic work that multiple additional groups of young people could and should be interviewed for future projects. Those include Jordanian youth in rural areas and immigrants who arrived in the city as adults.

3.5 ANALYSIS

Per ethnographic best practices, I transcribed my recordings and typed my interview notes concurrently with my fieldwork (Maxwell, 2012). Additionally, I typed my observations and field notes immediately after my interviews. I printed all of this data and assigned numbers and corresponding pseudonyms to each informant. I then printed all of the transcripts and organized them into a binder. Once the transcripts were in the binder, I color coded key phrases and ideas. While my questions were fluid, I began each interview with the same basic questions presented in appendix A to try and get to the heart of my central research question on how Ammani youth are envisioning their futures based on their sense of belonging in the city and their perceived ability to reach their goals in Amman. However, I allowed the interviews to deviate to accommodate the flow of the conversation and to react to new concepts.
To code these diverse types of data I developed and grouped relevant data points into key themes. I identified key themes based on recurrent issues which arose. Once these were coded themes were aggregated, I transferred them to a large board to better be able to visualize smaller subthemes, which also enabled me to use smaller and more specific codes. Once the coded themes were posted on the board, I was able to identify the four major findings which became the basis for each of my findings chapters: Situated citizenship, Fight or Flight, Creating Young Neoliberal Citizens and Redefining Ammaniness.

3.6 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

Since my primary research focus as a qualitative researcher is to “understand and describe social phenomena from perspectives of participants” it is essential to acknowledge and recognize my own positionality (Glesne, 2011, 17). It is important to recognize that my outsider status informed and co-produced my results. Particularly, as an American, a mother, wife, and as a member of an elder generation, as defined by Arab culture I am aware that power dynamics surrounding respect are a large cultural influence on my interactions with young Ammanis. In addition, as a first-time researcher, a non-native Arabic speaker, and a non-Jordanian, my research is imbued with outsider perspectives which I actively worked to mitigate as I sought to get as close to "native truths" as possible. I was mindful of and continued to reflect on my own subjectivity and positionality throughout my research.

Upon arrival in Amman I enrolled in local dialect courses and immersed in the community as much as possible to improve my ability to connect with my informants. This period of entering the field also included weekly meetings with my local committee
member, Dr. Daher. We reviewed the design, implementation, and analysis phases of my research greatly facilitating my insertion into the field and lessened the impact of being a first-time researcher. Still, I continued to be aware of my outsider status as I experimented with putting the theoretical elements of my methods training into practice. Despite working to position myself as close to local youth as possible, by building longer term relationships, the knowledge that I would leave at the end of my study contributed to my remaining an outsider.

My affiliations as a volunteer and a longer-term researcher in Amman provided great advantages. As previously mentioned, being in the field for over two years enabled me to develop deeper relationships with my interviewees, allowing me to gain increased levels of trust and prolonged access to the same youth over and over. In addition to being able to triangulate my results, check on new events, and to clarify comments by member checking while I was still on location, these deeper relationships increased my respondents’ levels of comfort with both my project and with me as a researcher. Although longer term relationships didn’t nullify my outsider status entirely, they did decrease it.
CHAPTER 4

MAPPING THE CITY: EMBLEMATIC CULTURAL SPACES

This chapter provides the reader with a cultural mapping of Amman based on my informants' descriptions of various parts of the city. This map should constitute a spatial reference point for understanding the urban circumstances of young people living in this much maligned but understudied space. While the boundaries of these spaces are not fixed physically, and they often overlap and blur (notably, one of the spaces hasn't even been built yet), this baseline is necessary for the reader to understand the ways young people talk about living in, moving through, and using these spaces in later chapters. The spatial categories describe relative cultural differences and similarities instead of precise geographic locations. However, the descriptions of these spaces are part of Jordanians' shared mental mapping of the city and its place within the wider country.

Thus, this chapter maps the city’s three current primary regions as various dimensions of how youth discuss Ammani identity: East Amman, West Amman, Wast al Balad (downtown) - in addition to a recently announced planned space. My selection of these emblematic areas of the city is a reflection of the areas most referenced by young people. They did not spend much time speaking about the cultural significance of the more ordinary areas of the city unless we were speaking about their specific neighborhoods. By understanding their interactions with and framings of spaces within the city it is possible to interrogate how they are attempting to craft their own urban and
cultural belonging in a city being deeply impacted by surrounding and destabilizing geopolitical events.

Although my informants universally speak about Amman using these cultural and spatial divides, and the intense wealth disparity between these sections of the city is highly visible, maps of Amman that demarcate these regions are not widely circulated. Parker and Ababsa created the only map reflecting the cultural division between East and West Amman that I have been able to find. 16 I use their original map here but have made two minor color additions to emphasize elements of the map that emerged as prominent during my interviews. First, I added red circles around the traffic circles since youth referred to their spaces frequently by describing locations based on these circles. Likewise, I have added white and blue coloring to Wast al Balad to draw attention to this region since it is one of the three regions I am outlining in this chapter.

The dotted line on the map below shows the rough cultural boundaries between East and West Amman. As depicted on the map, Wast al Balad anchors the imagined border between the eastern and western portions of the city. This border area is a key space where people from across Amman’s socioeconomic spectrum freely mix both in the Roman amphitheater and in the souq (market) area. Also portrayed on the map are West Amman’s highend developments, exclusive shopping malls (including Abdali), and the US Embassy, all of which inform the cultural placement of West Amman as elite and modern. Notably, East Amman is instead portrayed with two transportation terminals and one of its two large Palestinian refugee camps. These features of East Amman also

16 The map is based on Parker’s long-term project on Neoliberalism Assemblages and Ababasa’s long-term work on how public policy impacts urban development. They used on Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) documents as well as on ethnographic interviews with Ammanis to draw the line between East and West Amman.
contribute to it being imagined as more conservative and less wealthy.

Also, on the map are the numbered *dawaar* (traffic circles) starting downtown and radiating out towards Airport Road. These circles are cultural reference points in addition to serving as physical references. Youth talk about living near a particular circle and also describe places where they feel included or excluded based upon these descriptive concepts. Directions in Amman are rarely given by street names or cardinal directions. Instead they typically start out by identifying the nearest traffic circle and then proceed by a list of left or right turns based on landmarks. Zahran Street is the spine along which the numbered traffic circles run.\textsuperscript{17} The traffic circles, or rings, start at first circle near

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Cultural Map of Amman adapted from Ababasa and Parker, (2009).}
\end{figure}
downtown and then increase until reaching eighth circle in West Amman’s suburbs.

Mohammed, 20 describes the reaction he gets when he says he lives near seventh circle, “People expect my house to be big and think that we have money. It is known that my sister can wear shorts because of our neighborhood.”

Several key neighborhoods also have geographic titles which are used for communicating about the space. To locate spaces which aren’t very near ring road or one of the primary numbered circles directions are instead based on the *jabal* (hill) which dominates the particular neighborhood. One example would be how I was given directions to find the best baguette in Amman: "go to Jabal al Weibdeh when you are at Dawar Pari (Paris Circle), look for the French Language Institute on the corner, and buy your baguette from the bakery inside the institute". In this way both the hill and the minor circle are used to guide people through the city. In addition to creating distinctive neighborhoods the valleys between Amman’s hills also define Amman’s uneven topography.

Untangling the cultural mapping of the city is complicated by the overlapping and irregular layout of the city. Therefore, before discussing the cultural framework of the city, I will provide further imagery of Amman’s physical layout. Below is a map which locates Amman’s neighborhoods based on their proximity to the numbered traffic circles and hills of Amman. The majority of youth I interviewed had difficulty placing their neighborhoods on maps similar to the one below. However, once they told me the name of a hill or circle, we were able to work together to approximate where they live since these are the culturally significant landmarks. The cultural or land features are much

---

17 Known by expats as Ring Road, which refers to the traffic “rings” instead of a road which creates a ring around the city.
more significant than street names to Ammani youth.

Although the government has been trying to make the city more legible by naming streets and creating uniform numbers for houses, these changes have not been adopted as primary cultural ways of navigating or discussing the city. When I first moved to Amman in June 2016 my street was unnamed and my apartment building didn’t have a number. Yet locals could easily find my apartment based on the verbal instructions I gave. In 2017 my street got a name, but by the time I moved in December 2018 it remained more confusing to use the name which Jordanians didn’t recognize than to use the traditional verbal directions. My building still didn’t have a number when I moved, but that was less of an obstacle than if I tried to give directions using the new street name.

The neighborhood map below lists both systems used locally to identity areas of Amman: by the traffic circle and by the jibaal (hills). Jabal al Weibdeh which I referenced above is shown between Jabal al Hussein and Jabal Amman. Each of these distinctive middle-class neighborhoods were originally built on a hill and now spread along valleys connecting the different neighborhoods of the city. Moving away from Wast al Balad west towards Airport Road are the more elite neighborhoods of Abdoun, Sweifeh, and Der Ghbar which are all south of ring road. The traffic circles become more dominant cultural markers moving west away from the hills which are used to discuss the areas closer to East Amman.

Before exploring Amman’s most prominent social spaces, I first explain how the bifurcation between East and West Amman came into being. Then I outline Wast al Balad (downtown), East Amman, and West Amman. After exploring these three primary contemporary spaces, I discuss the Government of Jordan’s recently announced plans to
build a ‘new city’ to alleviate Amman’s problems. Finally, I end by illuminating the potential impacts the ‘new city’ which is being proposed could have on those young Ammanis gaining pride and starting to actively embrace being from the city.

Figure 4.2 Neighborhood Map of Amman
www.orangesmile.com/common/img_city_maps/amman-map-0.jpg accessed 06/1/2017

4.1 BIFURCATED AMMAN: HOW THE DIVIDE DEVELOPED

Drilling down from Jordan’s history, which I discussed in Chapter 1, to examine the history of Amman’s specific regions allows us to understand youths’ local perspectives of place. Unlike other Arab cities including Tunis, Algiers, and Aleppo, Amman’s bifurcation was not caused by the colonial presence of the either British or the French. During the mandate periods both of these powers created a modern European quarter while the preserving the old quarter for locals throughout the region (Home, 2013). In Amman, in contrast, the spatial-cultural divisions occurred as multiple layers of
residents arrived to repopulate the city. Although the British controlled the Transjordanian Emirate as a mandate from 1921, when the modern state was founded, until 1946, the “Transjordanians had no significant urban tradition.” Thus, the land that would become Amman was only sparsely developed and was under the authority of nomadic tribes (Maffi, 2009). Amman was sufficiently dormant in the early 1900s to warrant Maffi’s claim of a low level of urbanity in the area.\(^{18}\)

The extraterritorial framing of Amman which created its’ residents situated citizenship\(^ {19}\) was cemented when the capital city was reborn during the British Mandate period. Instead of Amman being an already established part of the Jordanian landscape and within the tribal hierarchy, it became a place for “others” who arrived in the nascent land of Jordan. Essentially, when the British and Emir Abdullah moved the capital from the natural and established social capital of Salt to Amman, they were able to plan the city from the ground up (Hannoyer, 1996). Other than the Roman amphitheater and a smattering of commercial buildings nearby, the city was a transit point and not heavily populated by native peoples. Although Amman is clearly the dominant city in Jordan, the city required a rebirth and repopulation with migrants to become Jordan’s capital city. Since the city did not have a highly populated historic core, colonial officers didn’t have to establish a more modern and European inspired section of the city. Instead, Amman was constructed based on conditions during the Mandate period. Thus, East Amman is

\(^{18}\) While Maffi’s conclusion might be contested in Salt or Irbid, which had relatively more settled populations during this time-period, Amman was little more than an outpost prior to the Mandate Period.

\(^{19}\) In Chapter 4 I define how being Ammani situates a person as both Jordanian and not fully Jordanian based on social obligations to retain geographic connections to tribal centers or other nations outside of the city which situate Ammanis citizenship lower on the scale of Jordanian-ness.
not the typical native and historic section of the city found in other formerly colonial capitals. Likewise, West Amman was not built for the comfort of colonial officers.

The novelty of this bifurcation is that it is based largely on Amman being built rapidly by a series of migrations – many triggered by regional wars – leading to it becoming “a city of many hats” with a rapid succession of multiple beginnings instead of a one-time planned division to separate locals from colonial citizens (Daher, 2011). According to Shami, Amman’s unique history of being built by layer after layer of trauma contributes to divergent urban imaginaries inspiring her to ask if Amman is, in fact, a city at all (2007). In addition to the unplanned attributes of the city, she also points to the lack of institutionalized nationhood in the city as underlying causes of the amorphous lack of traditional city-ness in Amman (Shami, 2007).

Specifically, the waves of immigrants who arrived in the city and settled on particular hills drove this bifurcation as noted by Ababsa:

“social disparities within the city continue to grow stronger between West Amman and East Amman. These disparities tie in with morphological differences between informal housing communities developed near the Palestinian camps of Wahdat and Jabal Hussein, with their self-built buildings; and West Amman neighbourhoods with family-owned four storey buildings, interspersed with villas and office blocks” (2010, 207).

The informal buildings which initially spread out from the Palestinian camps on cheap land meant that this area of town was labeled as the lower economic area nearly from the beginning of Amman’s reemergence. So, when new arrivals with money settle in Amman, they flock to West Amman due to its much higher property values and potential for higher-end developments. Schwedler posits that a person who is absent from the city for years will still instantly recognize East Amman, but “Western Amman, by comparison, is barely recognizable from year to year” (2012, 263). This conclusion is due
to the constant building in West Amman as it drives towards more elite and modern spaces.

The generalizations about the East Amman half of the dichotomy largely characterize it as more traditional, religious, closed, and poor. But as with all generalizations, this belies the reality that non-religious, and even quite wealthy people live in East Amman (as described in Chapter 1). Still, East Amman has relatively more traditional neighborhoods, almost exclusively Arabic signage, denser population, increased poverty, neighbors who tend to know one another, and more conservative dress. Meanwhile, the West Amman half of the bifurcation is typically spoken about as being more modern, open, and wealthier. It is more common in West Amman to see English signage, a less dense population, larger villas, gated communities, neighbors who tend not to know each other well, and more liberal dress. Multiple informants described these differences with language that resembles the description given by Sadiq, a Circassian Jordanian who referred to these parts of the city as “feeling like two different cities or even two different countries” instead of one cohesive space or culture. Thus, while living in East or West Amman does not define your Jordanian-ness, the experiences of young people within these spaces can be felt in vastly different ways.

Regardless of whether East Amman or West Amman is being discussed, Daher argues the entirety of Amman has been framed as an “extraterritorial space” to minimize Ammanis of diverse origins for regime self-preservation (2008). He further makes the

---

20 Since the regions of East Amman and West Amman are based on cultural norms, they do not align with Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) districts. The Department of Statistics does not have official population densities for these cultural parameters. Calculating these numbers is an area of future potential research, but beyond the scope of this project.
call for scholars to examine the intricacies of this often overlooked but rich urban setting. I respond to this call by examining three regions of the city which I selected based on their being an illustrative region which instantly calls to mind particular socio-cultural generalizations in Jordan. Of course the reality is much more nuanced and does not follow strict borders, and to be clear, each of these regions has a myriad of exceptions which do not follow the general concepts that I am about to describe. However, it is still worth exploring these regions to get a basic framework for how Ammanis and other Jordanians conceive of neighborhoods and spaces within the city.

4.2 WAST AL BALAD: THE SPACE OF CULTURAL INCLUSION

Although Amman is branded by many Jordanians as "less authentically Jordanian" than tribal areas of Jordan, one district within the city is generally accepted as "truly Jordanian." Indeed, marketing material for the city states: “To get to the heart of Amman it is imperative to explore al-Balad, the historic downtown” (GAM, 2017). This paradox of Wast al Balad\textsuperscript{21} (downtown) being a site of true Jordanian Heritage, while the larger city of Amman and her residents are framed as less Jordanian, provides an appropriate starting point for our tour of the city. This also offers a visual landscape for understanding how little impact the nation-state has on Ammani youths’ sense of self.

The shop selling both a Jordanian Red and White checkered head scarf and a Palestinian Black and White checkered head scarf highlight how Jordanians from all origins freely mix downtown area. Below that photo are two photos showing work being done outside of a shop and a humble self-built stall offering lower cost goods. These

\textsuperscript{21} Or Al-Balad/Balad as the downtown is colloquially known in English marketing material and among expats.
Figure 4.3 A shop display in *Wast al Balad* selling both Jordanian and Palestinian head scarfs. Author’s photo.

Figure 4.4 Tradesmen working outside in Balad. Author’s photo

Figure 4.5 Market stalls in Balad. Author’s photo

stalls welcome customers from all socioeconomic backgrounds as opposed to elite shopping centers with exclusionary prices more common in West Amman.

While *Wast al Balad* abuts both East and West Amman, in the popular cultural
map of Amman it is slightly more East Ammani. Balad spreads out from the wadi (valley) itself and climbs the slopes of the surrounding jibaal (hills). Although the souq (market) portion of Wast al Balad is less labyrinth-like than those in the Maghreb, the heart of Wast al Balad is unmistakably a Middle Eastern souq (Abu-Lughod, 1987, 2014). The crammd stalls with vibrantly colored goods hanging from the windows and spilling into the streets are the backdrop for vendors calling out prices to passersby. Rising from the wadiaan (valleys) to the jibaal around Wast al Balad are multiple staircases which connect the residents of the city, like the stairway in the example below.

Figure 4.6 Stairway connecting an upper and lower jabal. Author’s photo
Figure 4.7 Decorated road way in Balad. Author’s photo

Tucked into alleyways are traditional a variety of Arabic stalls and restaurants featuring local cuisines. These range from the small kanafeh (regional cheese-based dessert) stand, Habiba, which is reputed to be the best in the city (and which the constant line attests to) to the ubiquitous smoke filled sheesha shops crowded by rooms of either women or men. Wast al Balad is anchored by the Roman Amphitheater which is both a
key tourist site for the city and a public space used by locals for concerts and other large functions. When I first visited Amman in 2011, I was struck by the development of modern city seemingly germinating from the very base of this ancient site. This undeniably long-standing site thus combines ancient history with contemporary Arab culture and offers not just a physical anchor for Amman, but also a mental one which minimizes the impact of the Ottoman Empire on the landscape by connecting the modern Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to ancient roots.

Figure 4.8 Roman Amphitheater bordering Balad. Author’s photo.

While Wast al Balad is unique due to its Roman ruins and its sprawling markets, it is also a rare place in Amman where all the youth I interviewed feel welcome. From the colorful alleyways connecting hills to the decorated streets pictured above, downtown is a place which works to attract visitors. While West Ammani youths typically reported feeling they don’t have a reason to go to East Amman and that they feel excluded there, they also report feeling comfortable spending time in Wast al Balad. A few West Ammani female youths reported that they are forbidden to go to East Amman, but with an escort, they are permitted to visit Wast al Balad. Likewise, while East Ammanis report
that they can go to West Amman, they often lamented that they couldn’t afford to have a
good time there or that they feel be out of place there, so while not physically excluded,
socially they would feel like outsiders.

So, it is remarkable that Wast al Balad serves as a space of inclusion despite its
being culturally situated in East Amman, a space described as a “closed space.” In Wast
al Balad, socioeconomic status does not prevent the poorest and wealthiest from being
included and comfortable. Although I have heard expats and tourists talk about this space
through Orientalist eyes which label it with an edge of danger due to the narrow passages
and high energy crowds, Wast al Balad is not only open to tourists, it caters to them as
evidenced by the below reviews on the Western travel site, Tripadvisor. Reviews declare
the space as “the best place to recognize the culture of Amman” and where you “will see
the Jordanian culture.” Balad is also described as the place for tourists and locals to get a
bargain. While the message is a clear one of inclusion, by framing this space as
inherently traditional, representing “the Jordanian culture”, the authors of these reviews
(unwittingly perhaps) undermine the authenticity of modern spaces in Amman where
fixed prices and wider alleys are the cultural norm.

Understanding how Wast al Balad traverses the divide of being authentically
Jordanian within Amman, despite state attempts to exclude Amman from the national
identity, requires examination of the forces which situate and promote Wast al Balad as
Jordanian. Understanding these cultural forces provides a prism for understanding
Ammani youths’ dilemma of attempting to be authentically Jordanian living in the city.

Tourist literature proudly markets Wast al Balad’s ancient past by outlining its
occupants dating back 9000 years. These occupants were part of multiple civilizations
based in the Bilad al Sham. Yet, Shawash argues that this literature and tourist movements are largely US funded projects based on capitalist conceptualizations which attempt to create marketable heritage disconnected from native heritage (2011). She also frames Wast al Balad as a tool used by the Government of Jordan to combine pre-Islamic Ammonite history with the Hashemite reincarnation of Amman, since it contains both Roman ruins and Hashemite monuments (mosques, palaces, etc). Arguing that the Hashemite regime is invested in and uses state power for both self-preservation and to counter the threat of Israel by controlling the meaning of belonging in downtown, she
raises questions about the nature of belonging and authenticity in this space. While she correctly assesses that much of the marketing of this area is driven by neoliberalism and funded by USAID, I argue that does not negate the importance of *Wast al Balad* as an authentically Jordanian space in the heart of Amman to Ammanis.

Indeed, many Ammanis asserted that *Wast al Balad*, including the slopes of the residential hills fronting *Wast al Balad*, is authentically their downtown by aggressively rejecting the official discourse and marketing of the Al-Abdali mega project as the “new downtown” starting in 2000 (Al Huniti, 2016). The importance of *Wast al Balad* being the true downtown was voiced so strongly that Abdali’s developers began dropping the tagline of “new downtown” in 2015 and instead are now using the “New Abdali” tagline.

While the state continues to center Jordanian-ness in rural areas for political expediency, initial concessions promoting *Wast al Balad* as an authentic Jordanian space reverberate in the landscape of Amman and are felt through the city. The state’s attempt to facilitate the neoliberal branding of a “new downtown” in the Abdali project via significant state subsidies and the privatization of urban planning failed to resonate with Ammanis who rejected the concept of a new elite project as their downtown.

Ammanis rejecting the relocation of the downtown to a newer modern space, which they labeled as “foreign” reveals the impotency of the nation-state, developers, and global capital to completely control the will of the people or to force a new affiliation to the new identity of ascribed spaces (Daher, 2014). Instead Ammanis remain attached to *Wast al Balad* as the place which contains their lived memories of inclusion in Amman’s downtown. Downtown’s iconic arches, which are pictured above, cover the

---

22 The Solidere cooperation which is ubiquitous in Beirut is also the Abdali project developer.
souq and a street which is active both during the day and at night. Most Ammanis have fond memories of spending time beneath those arches and those memories couldn’t be erased by the development of a new downtown.

The power struggle ended with Wast al Balad - “the old downtown” - remaining the only downtown. Instead of the economically conditioned Al-Abdali becoming the “new downtown” and successfully rewriting the cultural map of the city, it is becoming a distinct modern district with gated high-rises. Although Al-Abdali dramatically changed Amman’s skyline, by adding new elite spaces, local resistance was strong enough to withstand the state’s attempt to force this new geopolitical framing of Abdali as Amman’s new downtown. As seen in the photos below, Balad’s humble street stalls and informally constructed structures are not undergoing a formal process of gentrification or reconstruction.

With the new investment shifting away from the historic market district, Wast al Balad has been left to age and isn’t currently experiencing gentrification typical of other downtowns. Instead, the city’s wealthy citizens have clustered in the less densely packed West Amman or moved to the new urban sprawl most notably along Airport Road. This

Figure 4.10 arches above shops in Balad. Author’s photo.
form of resistance to a project intended to modernize and redefine Amman’s skyline mirrors the aversion to and nuances of nationalistic attachments youth expressed in my interviews.

Figure 4.11 Bookseller in Balad. Author’s photo.  
Figure 4.12 Pavilion in Balad. Author’s photo.

Examining practices of making meaning in *Wast al Balad* exposes where the state led process of making spatial meaning initially co-opted an ancient space to imbue it with a newer and specifically Hashemite meaning. Yet it also reveals how this same space, once it was reoccupied, becomes a space of resistance in which cultural meanings are made and remade to allow for a fluid space of Jordanian authenticity. The artistic graffiti lining the alley connecting two hills in the photo below highlights the lived nature of Balad. Additionally, the rooftops visible above the stairway in the first picture and above the shop in the second picture reveal the more informal building style used downtown. With this understanding of the varying attempts to make and remake meaning in *Wast al Balad* as the background to our understanding of how the project of nationalism unfolded within the city, I will now turn to another emblematic space of Amman. However, this
space doesn’t enjoy Balad’s reputation of being more Jordanian than Ammani.

Figure 4.13 Arial view of stairway in Balad. Author’s photo.

Figure 4.14 Housing area above shops in Balad. Author’s photo.

4.3 EAST AMMAN: A SPACE ETERNALLY LOOKING BACK

At the end of our interview, 24-year-old Ahmad noted, “I hate myself for stereotyping, but I don’t know anyone from East Amman, they are too rough and unrefined. If anyone in Amman joins DAESH, it is them.” Ahmad is Palestinian-Jordanian and is middle class. His comment judges Ammanis based on his perception that lower class people live in East Amman and he believes they are not well mannered. While all social generalizations are problematic and Ahmad himself expressed regret at
reiterating this stereotype, it is part of a common dichotomy I heard from many other young people. The imagined cultural divide stereotypes people from East Amman as being from the "wrong side of the tracks," lacking refinement.

As noted previously in Chapter 1, several areas of East Amman were built as refugee camps following war in neighboring Palestine and Israel which led to the arrival of a multitude of Palestinians in Amman. While the buildings have been constructed to be more durable, the occupants have created a space which continually reminds the residents of their duty to seek their *haq al-awada* (right to return) to Palestine. Overcrowding due to the extremely dense population creates vibrant lively streets as residents (primarily male) spill out of small apartments onto the streets to socialize in the available spaces. Unlike *Wast al Balad* this portion of the mental map of East Amman was deemed by most of my informants to be a highly masculine and closed space. The cultural mapping of both camps places them firmly as part of East Amman.

Interviewees repeatedly described these spaces, which no longer visually resemble camps and instead blend into the fabric of the city (although they resemble low income slums more than elite gated villas), as places where women must cover to fit in and not be ostracized by their community. They were also described as neighborhoods where people would label you an outsider and where you would be made to feel unwelcome. The street stalls and spaces like those pictured above are more informal than those in Balad. Vendors here are from the neighborhood and tend to know one another.

---

24 Youth repeatedly described East Amman as a hostile space to women who are expected to stay off of the streets which are not meant for them to socialize. When I went to the camp, I quickly discovered gender restricted streets. Although the *souq* did have a ‘women only’ row for intimate clothing, men were not restricted from other places in the camp.
Figure 4.15 Street stalls in East Amman. Author’s photo.

This space is where it was most difficult to schedule interviews. Most youth proposed alternate sites for interviews, either in coffee shops, public spaces, or near the University instead of inviting me into their homes. Since having a Western researcher in their homes would be difficult, I met them at alternative locations. The skittishness of these youth belayed a sense of self-policing which made them hesitant to engage outsiders in their neighborhood. Likewise, people from East Amman proved the most likely to back out of the interview process altogether, as multiple youth rescheduled our meetings repeatedly before ultimately declining to participate.

The perception West Ammani youth shared with me is that they would be largely unwelcome and treated like outsiders in the “camps.” Another common refrain was that they simply have little reason to go to East Amman, unless they are looking for good price on an item that is priced higher in West Amman, as there are no social spaces for
outsiders to occupy in East Amman. In the picture above the informally built spaces include spaces which are used for hanging laundry and working on repairs; however, no one is out on the street socializing or selling goods. This would be a difficult place for youth from other areas of the city to come spend time in without a specific invitation. Female participants listed East Amman as the space of their greatest exclusion in the city, including East Ammani women who stated that when the evening call to prayer rings they are expected to go indoors. According to 22-year-old Ay’ay, “My neighborhood is closed. I have to be indoors before the evening prayer! People in West Amman don’t understand what that is like.”

Although West Amman has an overall higher distribution of wealth and is less densely populated, it is incorrect to envision everyone from East Amman as from the lowest economic status. While this is the common assumption youth from West Amman conveyed, their elders were more careful to add nuance by explaining that some very wealthy families stay in the camps for ideological and community reasons. Recent scholarship notes that this a regional phenomenon as Palestinians in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan gain legitimacy from maintaining their spaces within their host nations in austere
conditions which accentuate their status as displaced people who are suffering while waiting to return home (Feldman, 2015; Gabiam, 2012).

So it is that improving the camps too much would be a betrayal of their roles as the martyred, displaced people who deserve to be valorized for their commitment to the Palestinian cause. While the camps are objectively overcrowded and less modernized than West Amman, leading the Government of Jordan to be accused by some of neglecting them, this surface reading neglects the will of the residents to maintain this space as a temporary camp to preserve their cultural obligation to Palestine. While the colorful stairways from my above pictures in Wast al Balad are intended to invite people to come spend time, the extremely unadorned stairways below are merely utilitarian, reflecting a mentality of not improving the space which is meant to be temporary. In the second stairway, children are seen playing, but even this space is left unimproved or undecorated.

Indeed, although it is common to see flashy signs of the nouveau riche in Abdoun or in Dabuq (both areas which are known to be wealthy enclaves of West Amman), wealth is also present in East Amman. I observed this while conducting an interview at an orphanage in East Amman. During the interview, three different elite branded European cars drove past the orphanage. Another generalization I heard from youth about those in East Amman is that they lack sophistication and manners. Both men and women stated that once East Ammanis come to “their” social spots they “trash” them and catcall women. These actions make places like Wakalat, Rainbow Street, and the dragstrip between Abdoun Circle and Taj Mall, contested spaces which West Ammanis say that they abandoned once East Ammanis arrived.
This social layering divides the city between a society which claims they are open and more liberal and a society which is described as more conservative and closed. East Amman is a region which numerous people stated is neglected by the Government of Jordan which focuses its energies on keeping wealthy and influential people happy in West Amman. Yet, in these spaces, the sense of community is quite strong.

Meanwhile, West Ammanis spoke of not knowing their neighbors and wistfully describing childhoods which were spent playing in the street with other children. Now, children in West Amman are kept indoors to avoid unknown people and to be protected from the increase of traffic, which doesn’t respect children playing. Despite East Amman being generalized by youth in some derogatory ways for the way they perceive women to be treated, or for an overall close mindedness which was considered backwards by many informants, it was also admired for retaining a village feel where neighboring is the norm.
The densely packed housing shown below gives insight into how people in these neighborhoods retain the village feel to their community due to their close proximity.

Figure 4.19 Landscape view of East Amman. Author’s photo.

The identity which is prized and dominant in the Palestinian Camps of East Amman is not the one of national and tribal origins, but of Palestinian origins. When the importance of the camps was elevated by the PLO starting in the late 1960s al-Wehdat in Jordan and Shatila in Lebanon and other refugee camps became the symbolic core of “Palestinian nationalism” this politicization of remaining apart from the city of Amman stalled the process of integration which the Government of Jordan had been pursuing (Achilli, 2012). Achilli argues that the lack of participation in Jordan’s Arab Spring protests by most residents of al-Wehdat is driven by the desire to reach a state of adhi (normality) instead of being active political actors who are at risk of being double refugees.

Yet, as an urban geographer I argue that the underlying reasons to avoid attaching to the space of Amman means that clinging to an identity outside of the city is inherently a political act. These actions have the perhaps unintended consequences of leaving a capital city suffering from having a large part of its population seeking to emigrate and
essentially disengaging from exercising their “right to the city” (Harvey, 2003). Although Harvey’s seminal piece highlights those who live marginalized lives with little access to or ability to change the city, in the case of those living in the camps of Amman, they chose to only modestly improve their section of the city to at least partially to preserve their status as Palestinians. The doors below show splashes of faded color, but also reflect minimal improvements to personal homes. I explore this concept more in Chapter 6.

From the perspective of many people in the camps, Amman is framed as a transitory space with home being in Palestine. In the camps, being Palestinian affords a sense of belonging that often eludes West Bank youth in the rest of Jordan. Not all Ammanis *aslyn min* Palestine live in the camps, but the population of the camps is dominated by Palestinians. However, many Ammanis are in a similar situation by having multiple allegiances, many of which are to spaces outside of the city and their desire to return home have impacts upon the city. The resonance of the past is very present in East

**Figure 4.20** Doors of Wehdat. Author’s photo.
Amman. Although the pictures below show a bit of decoration near the mosque and above the shopping area in Wehdat, personal homes were very minimally decorated as seen in the stacked homes pictured in the middle of the three photos below. While this topic was not a subject in my semi-structured interviews it was a perception shared with me by Jordanian friends. Additional research would need to be done to ascertain if politics is the only reason for this lack of improvement, or to what level poverty may also be playing a role. Wehdat While East Amman is talked about and framed as a place which is looking backwards West Amman is considered to be a place which is looking towards modernity and the future.

![Figure 4.21 Mosque in East Amman. Author’s photo.](image1)
![Figure 4.22 Horizontal homes in East Amman. Author’s photo.](image2)
![Figure 4.23 Street in Wehdat. Author’s photo.](image3)

4.4 WEST AMMAN: A SPACE LOOKING FORWARD

When Jordanians talk about “two Ammans” they are referring to the stark differences between East Amman and West Amman. West Amman has been sarcastically called “Jordan’s Paris” as it is so different from the rest of Jordan that it might as well be
a foreign land. If Balad is a space of inclusion and authenticity and East Amman is a space stuck in time due to obligations of the past, then West Amman is a space racing to reach the future. The images of West Amman below show a stark difference between it and other parts of the city. From the modern high rises, to the glitzy décor, and neon these spaces focus on luxury and modernity as seen in the images below.

Although the west is demographically older than the east, the west has more services and a lower birth rate which is typical of regions with higher income levels

![Figure 4.24 Courtyard in Abdali shopping center. Author’s photo.](image)
![Figure 4.25 Water fountain décor at the Boulevard. Author’s photo.](image)
![Figure 4.26 Palm trees lit with neon in Abdoun. Author’s photo.](image)

(Ababsa 2010; Daher, 2013, 384). The relative availability of disposable income results in the development of an entertainment scene not seen elsewhere in Jordan. This includes many active nightclubs for drinking, dancing, and socializing. This nightlife is aimed at young Ammanis who are well acquainted with and may have been educated in the West. Modernity and liberalism are key markers of nightlife in West Amman.
This became abundantly clear when I went to a comedy competition with a young Jordanian friend in Abdoun. The cover charge included one alcoholic drink and admittance to the “Good Pub” after the show. In order to get to the comedy show on the second floor we passed through the dance floor and a jam-packed bar which was playing American rap music complete with explicit lyrics. Based on music, dress, dance style, and décor there was nothing to distinguish this scene from any nightclub in a big American city. Upstairs the vibe was similar; however, local comedians bounced back and forth between Arabic and English in their routines.

At the end of the night the winning comedian was awarded $5000 dollars in US cash. Given that the World Bank lists Jordan’s per capita GDP at $2900 for 2017, this winning is significantly higher than the average annual salary for most Jordanians (World Development Indicators, 2018). It is nearly impossible to imagine this scene being repeated anywhere else in the Kingdom other than in West Amman, due not only to the large sum of money at stake, but also to the very Western setting of mixed male and female company, alcoholic drinks, dancing, and overall extremely liberal activities. During our interview in her home in East Amman Ruba, 22 phrased it this way, “In West Amman they grow up detached from each other and our culture. I grew up playing on the streets with my friends and they grow up going to gyms, summer camps, and then go to night clubs when they are old enough. That is not our (Jordanian) culture.”

Indeed, West Amman is the epicenter of Jordan’s neoliberalism transformation. In the place of tightly packed dense apartments of older parts of Amman, in West Amman it is common to see spacious homes spread across leafy residential districts like the one above. This area also features exclusive malls, high-end art galleries, trendy cafés and
aforementioned pubs serving alcohol. Noticeably, the shopping center above features shops for elite consumption including ‘Laser hair removal,’ ‘Burger Makers,’ and ‘Pizza Lovers.’ These sorts of goods and services are quite common of shopping centers in West Amman but would be very out of place in East Amman.

Instead of traditionally and conservatively dressed clothing which dominates in East Amman, it is commonplace to find people in western style liberal clothing in neighborhoods from seventh circle and outward. Indeed, in Abdoun or Dubuq, women are frequently in short sleeves and short skirts are common as well. Although many Ammanis continue to dress conservatively in West Amman, young women still have more freedoms. The picture below features a group of conservatively dressed women in Abdoun; what marks this as a specifically West Ammani picture is that it is a group of young women out at night who are socializing and not with their families. Further, men and women can walk hand in hand on the street in West Amman- again a sight which
would not be possible in other parts of the city or indeed the country.

This second Amman reflects the concentration of relatively wealthy socio-economic groups who settled to the West of the old city on Jabal Amman (Razzaz, 1996; Hannoyer and Shami, 1996). Jabal Amman’s location to the immediate west of the downtown established the trend of wealthy families moving further west as the city outgrew its original spaces. Each time the city grew, the wealthy quarter has

Figure 4.29 Ladies night in Abdoun. Author’s photo.
Figure 4.30 Street in West Amman. Author’s photo.
Figure 4.31 A home in West Amman. Author’s photo.

extended further west resulting in higher land costs in West Amman than in the older portion of the city. The first time I saw Jabal Amman I was struck by the mix of older homes with high-end shops and restaurants. Compared to the newer sections of Amman, Jabal Amman feels quainter, but still much more developed than East Amman. As the older part of West Amman this neighborhood feels much more ordinary than the newer sections of the city which are being built.
Over a decade ago the commentary of four prominent urban planners notes, “residential lands occupy the entire western and northern parts of the city, reflecting larger residential plot sizes, more substantial buildings and higher overall levels of wealth and social status” (Potter, 2007, 15). This wealth disparity is on display above both in the picture of the tree lined residential street with the large single family home and the sports car parked outside, and in the picture with the elaborate home on the corner. However, since then the polarization has only increased due to newer migrations into the city, particularly as excess funds from oil wealth began to be invested in Amman. A key site of where this oil wealth was invested is the Abdali shopping center shown below. The image on the left features the English tagline, “It is always sunny at Abdali,” while the middle picture shows the clean, modern, high end shopping district named Abdali Boulevard. Finally, the Abdali image on the right includes the English, “I love Jo” advertisement on a wall above a shop with another English name.

The group of migrants shaping the city starting in the 1980s-1990s had markedly different socioeconomic standings than prior waves, as these new arrivals began coming from Iraq, mainly due to the Gulf War in 1991. During this period the “urban expansion is about 45 km2, which represents a growth of 43%” primarily in West Amman (Makhamreha, 2011, 261). Many of these migrants established themselves in Amman, particularly in the new developing area of West Amman since they frequently arrived with the resources to purchase larger plots of land or single-family dwellings (ibid, 2011). Daher’s framework based on discursive practices about these new neoliberal spaces is a useful way to explore West Amman. Particularly relevant is his categorization of the new developments as being marketed and discussed as both places of refuge and of
consumption (Daher, 2013). The gated spaces of Abdali, Jordan Gate, and other enclaves are discussed as places to escape the city and to dwell above the city and the masses below, as encapsulated by the billboard below which uses an image of sky rises being linked to opportunities.

This characterization is illustrative of the layering of the city which I heard from young people who talked about how various socioeconomic groups use the city differently. Distilled to the most basic terms, they reported that the poor use the street level, the middle class use cafés, and the upper class use private spaces. Dana, 19 reiterated this economic layering of the city by stating, “my group is middle class, we aren’t excluded anywhere in the city. But there is nothing for us to do in East Amman, my Dad just told me to stay away from there and to go to the malls in West Amman, but I could go there with a chaperon if there was something to do.” Despite emancipatory
rhetoric, Daher argues that these new elite spaces will only continue to polarize the city as economic disparity is further built into the landscape. Young peoples’ cartographies are where their political consciousness are formed and their acts of politically negotiating their citizenship play out.

More evidence of the cultural tensions inherent in limiting exclusive spaces to particular people can be seen in West Amman’s social rules which are applied in commercial spaces. Throughout the region, it is common to have specific times for young single men to visit shopping malls. Even in West Amman this is quite common as security screeners regulate the entrances to shopping malls. These rules are meant to keep different segments of the population separate.

A case study of how elite spaces resist being opened to mixed crowds can be seen with the struggle against the GAM regeneration project in the Wakalat commercial area of Sweifeh (Daher, 2008). This project was an effort to create inclusive public spaces.
by closing the road to vehicle traffic and creating a pedestrian zone to serve as a free public space for mingling. Benches, garbage cans, and new signage were all incorporated to create a new space which invited people to spend time outdoors together. The specific aim was to create an open “Anti-Mall Space” inclusively serving people from various destinations and economic backgrounds by being a welcoming and vivid urban space which could reclaim public life from the shopping malls and stimulated pedestrian life in Amman (Daher, 2010).

However, shop owners soon expressed that the pedestrian area brought the “wrong type of people,” instead of new clientele with proper etiquette arriving- they complained that young people who weren’t spending money and had poor manners began to occupy the space.25 Despite the project being based on the premise of creating social justice by creating free public spaces, the GAM allowed vehicle traffic to return to the area in 2013 in response to the complaints of the business owners (Aljafari, 2014). Thus, the attempt to open a public space in West Amman was rejected and the space was reclaimed by elites. This physical transformation of a space in the city was then largely undone because of social pressures.

In addition to the physical changes most noted in West Amman and in the shape of the skyline as a result of the “bigger is better” style of building characteristic of these new developments, cultural changes are also occurring. When youth talk about how they used to play on the street with friends growing up, they say it with a bittersweet note. In West Amman, the neighborhood feeling is absent. It is very uncommon to see children out in the street playing and often neighbors do not know one another. Although I lived in

25 Numerous youth indicated that they wrong type of people are those without “manners” who come from poverty.
Abdoun, a neighborhood in West Amman for two and a half years, I only had the opportunity to meet a few neighbors. Indeed, my building had six apartments and one shared elevator, but I only met one family in my building during my time in Amman.

Practices of neighboring are vastly different now than when Amman had a village feel. While older neighborhoods are portrayed as being stuck in the past, West Amman is portrayed as not being rooted in the past enough. The imagery isn’t of a neighborhood which lost the village feel, it is instead of a modern developed part of the city which was born as a city and skipped the village phase. Although there must surely be streets in West Amman where neighbors look out for one another, this is not the popular concept of this region. Instead this is framed as the place where the wealthy lock themselves away from their surroundings. The impression youth have of the upper class who stay in elite spaces is that they are detached from Amman and can leave by gating off spaces which are somehow less Jordanian. When claiming an identity that is specific to elite areas of West Amman, the implication is that the luxury afforded by these addresses is being used to portray someone as more global or affluent than typical Ammanis.

Further evidence of the changing culture visible in West Amman can be seen in the signage. Instead of Arabic-only signs which are most common in East Amman, or bilingual signs which are common in Balad, in West Amman status is sought by displaying signs only in English and linking commercial spots to Western neoliberal concepts (Hussein, 2015). Vying for customers are: toys shops with unlicensed images of American cartoons like Mickey Mouse, high-end foreign fashion labels, and dozens of American fast food chains including: McDonald’s, Dairy Queen, Popeye’s, and Pizza Hut. Consumption is equated with status as evidenced by coffee shops selling drinks at 5
JD ($7 in 2018) while coffee shops in other parts of the city charge less than 1 JD. For 23-year-old Shireen from East Amman, the prices are what exclude her from West Amman. “I work in Abdoun, but I couldn’t afford to spend any time there. I go to work and then go home; these prices are crazy!”

Despite West Amman being a space that is striving for modernity and rapidly transforming along neoliberal lines, the government recently announced plans to create a new city which is “smart, modern,” and planned in a way to avoid the problems so lamented in Amman. While the timeline or indeed feasibility of this new city is yet to be determined the possibility of a new city raises questions about how this potential new space would impact Ammanis. In the next section I conduct a critical discourse analysis on news articles announcing the new city.

4.5 TOO AMMANI TO BE JORDANIAN: THE NEW CITY

Although the planned new city is not currently included within the physical geography of Amman, it is an imagined emblematic space in that it is portrayed as a space to fix Amman’s systemic problems. To understand how the new city impacts the symbolism of Amman I traced the government’s shifting discourse about the new city through their successive announcements on whether the new city will replace Amman to become the new capital26 or how the city will fit into the imagined map of Jordan. Jordan’s plan to create a new capitalcity aligns trend within the Global South of creating ‘new cities’.27 Van Noorloos describes this trend as a:

26 Reports as to whether the new city will replace Amman as the capital of Jordan are contradictory and appear very preliminary. Governmental discourses shift on this issue.
27 The term ‘new cities’ is part of ongoing recent academic debates, which understand that the term ‘new cities’ is problematic as it erases what was in the space prior to the planned city and it also a marketing term used by their own promoters. Hence, a brief
particular urban form that is often assumed to emanate from such neoliberal urban strategies and inter-referencing: the new city. These can take the form of entirely new cities built up from scratch as comprehensively planned self-contained enclaves in the outskirts of existing cities...they are often iconic, themed cities, spectacular showcases in the global economy (2017, 1224).

The promotion of ‘new cities’ as the way to fix entrenched problems within existing cities is being done both from a North-South perspective and through a South-South sales pitch. Morocco has emerged as a lead advocate for establishing ‘smart’ planned cities which will attract populations from cities riddled with systematic problems driven by overpopulation and limited infrastructure. Of note Morocco is pursuing an aggressive form of urban entrepreneurship by positioning themselves as ‘new city’ experts based on two new projects: Zenata Eco-City and Benguerir Green City. However, Côté-Roy argues this leadership role is based on an imagined technical knowledge which is beyond Morocco’s actual built reality, since both cities are in the early stages of being built and it is unclear at this stage if their scopes will reach the vision of the urban planners (2018). Her skepticism of Morocco’s positioning itself as an expert on building new cities can be contextualized within the greater academic critiques of this trend.

The reality of building these ‘new cities’ has attracted other academic critics who have dubbed ‘new cities’ as ‘urban fantasies’ (Watson, 2013) and ‘speculative urbanism’ (Goldman, 2011). Further scholars critique not just the process of building new cities but the rationales which underlie these building paradigms. These ideologies have already

---

exploration of the term ‘new cities’ seems appropriate given recent debates on what constitutes a city or how to theorize about the urban (Brenner, 2013; Scott, 2015). New cities can be seen as part of increasingly complex geographies of urbanization which challenge the urban/rural divide while also stretching our understandings of urban mega-regions as they exist outside of the currently defined urban region but seek to bring the formerly rural region into the urban lifestyle (Sassen, 2018).
been subject to much criticism including the themes of: modernization with implicit notions of ‘slum-free’ utopias (Cirolia, 2014; Grant, 2015), master planning based on social hierarchies (Fawaz, 2014), displacement (Galonnier, 2015) and discourses of eco-cities (Caprotti, 2014) and smart cities (Kitchin, 2015). Ammanis’ reactions to the proposed new city have been also been highly skeptical, based on their own local experiences of the overpromised but under realized neoliberal transformation of Amman including the Abdail project. Abdali was initially billed as the “new downtown” but was not seen authentically Jordanian by locals and developers dropped the use of being a “new downtown” after much backlash. Further the promised public portions of the project failed to be built and it has become an elite playground exclusive to wealthy Ammanis and tourists, quite opposite of the mixed class clientele in the historic downtown of Wast al Balad.

This skepticism is well founded based on the large number of the nearly 100 new cities which “are still dreams in the heads of their planners, and for a number of them it is very uncertain if they will ever be built or if they will remain PowerPoint cities” (van Noorloos, 2017). Below I analyze several media announcements of this newer ‘new Jordanian city’ to reveal how the Jordanian government's discourses about the project shift. The first announcement of “new Amman city,” by the then Prime Minister billed the new city as the country’s new capital:

Gov’t completes preliminary design for new Amman city

The government has completed a preliminary comprehensive design for the establishment of a new Amman city, which is set to be the country's new capital. We found the solution to address several pressing issues in Amman; we will create a new Amman city. This project will be offered for implementation on the basis of Build, Operate and Transfer next year. The new city will not be attached to Amman.
The project will be constructed over five phases, new government buildings will also be available in the city.

Ghazal, 2017 *Jordan Times* 10/23/2017

In then-Prime Minister Mulki’s first comments on the ‘new city’ he states that the ‘new Amman city’ will be the country’s new capital and lauds it as a separate city which will solve several seemingly intractable problems in Amman. Despite this late October statement by the former Prime Minister announcing the new Jordanian capital, government discourses around the ‘new city’ change rapidly when the Mayor disputes that the new city will become Jordan’s capital city.

A second article in November is highlighted below:

**Jordan plans new city near Amman to ease overcrowding**

“Jordan has announced plans to build a new city east of the capital Amman to ease overcrowding and traffic congestion. Touted as "environmentally friendly, sustainable and smart,” the new city would be built on a major highway that links Jordan to Iraq and Saudi Arabia.”

*New Arab* on 11/06/2017

This article states the “new city” will be a utopia of development buzzwords but it is not called the new capital. The new city aims to provide "drastic solutions to rising population density and traffic congestion" in Amman and the north-eastern city of Zarqa and would invest in "clean and renewable sources of energy and water treatment" as well as provide affordable housing. This announcement carries several of the key development buzzwords critics of ‘new cities’ have already warned about including: eco-city, sustainable, and smart. Although the project is billed as a ‘drastic solution’ to Amman’s myriad of problems, it alleges a utopia with clean renewable energy and water which will be available in affordable housing. Based on the academic critiques of underlying rationale behind these buzzwords and the bold claims to be a modern drastic solution
which somehow provides affordable housing this news report is not being taken seriously by many Ammanis. Notably neither the term ‘new Amman’ nor any mention of this city becoming Jordan’s new capital are used in this article which comes just two weeks after the Prime Minister’s first statement about the city.

Comparisons to both the inauthenticity and lesser final built environment of the ‘new downtown’ Abdali project and to the government's failure to complete the bus rapid transit (BRT) project are rampant. The BRT project has been advertised for 10 years but has been beset by accusations of façade (corruption), little actual construction, and no operating buses. These very visible failures leave many Ammanis doubting that the new city will actually be built.

Another article in Roya News includes a large selection of Jordanian reactions to the proposed “New Amman” all of which express skepticism of the plan. I have excerpted seven of the tweets and public Facebook comments below the article.

**Jordanians’ best reactions to the “New Amman” project**

“Only their questions intensified on Saturday, after Spokesperson of the Jordanian government, Mohammad Momani, revealed that only five people, excluding him, have been trusted with the location of the planned city, which will not be attached to the original Amman.
While we continue to wait for more details to emerge, here are the best (skeptical) reactions to the upcoming project.”

*Excerpted social media reactions from the above article:*

1. “Five people in Jordan know the location of the New Amman city, while the rest of the nation knows that it’s all but one big performance.”- سعد الشهوان @SaadShahwan88
2. “Is Jordan really THAT big for the government to hide its location from us?”- انجد @EnjoodElayan
3. “Don’t let the New Amman project make you forget about the imminent increase of bread and other commodities’ prices.”- أبو سيرين @jordanian_voice
4. “It’s been 10 years since they said they were going to launch the Express Bus project... those alive today won’t live to see the day the New Amman is
This article highlights the popular sentiments among Ammanis that this announcement is unlikely to produce change in their daily lives, and that it is a distraction from more pressing issues, and the city would be a threat to Ammanis. Indeed, those who think there will be a new Amman state that it would be an Amman without Ammanis. They also argue that it should have a new name, as Amman belongs to them. These reactions included not only doubts about the speed and reality of the new city, but they also question the lack of transparency about the project and who the city will belong to if it is built. A fourth article published just over a month later includes the Jordanian government's attempts to address some of the public backlash to the new city:

High tech desert utopia rises from the sands: Jordan announces new mega-city built among the dunes to overcome overcrowding in its capital

“"A shiny new city is to arise from Jordan's desert over the next three decades, potentially rivaling the kingdom's capital of Amman, a rapidly growing and increasingly unwieldy metropolis of 4 million people. This week, Amman Mayor Yousef Shawarbeh defended the rocky rollout in a meeting with business people, diplomats and representatives of the energy and environmental sectors, many of whom seemed skeptical.

'The topic hasn't been fully studied yet,' the mayor said when pressed for details. 'When we conclude the studies, we will announce plans and have clear roles for government, citizens, investors, and so on.'

Shawarbeh insisted that Amman would not be neglected as Jordan, buckling under record public debt, shifts scarce resources to the new project. 'The new city is not a new
Amman,' he said. But it is needed, he argued, to relieve pressure on the capital."

Inge, *Mail Online* article published 12/08/2017

In this article we see Amman’s Mayor is attempting to deal with the public skepticism about the ‘new city.’ Although it was initially reputed to be a new capital and labelled a New Amman, in this piece Shawarbeh is stating that the new city won’t be a New Amman and is being built only to relieve the pressures and instability of the current capital, not as a replacement. While the article notes Jordan’s planned ‘new city’ fits within the larger trend I already identified, it also cites an urban geographer, Moser who warns that Jordan should proceed cautiously with these plans as many other ‘new cities’ are encountering significant challenges. Additionally, the author notes that “This perceived secrecy and 'top-down' approach has drawn widespread criticism.”

Few Jordanians have shown much enthusiasm, even among Amman residents who complain constantly of the city's traffic. Some suspect the new city is largely meant to benefit Jordan's powerful and their business cronies” (Inge, 2107). Given that the article is written by a British publisher instead of a local or regional newspaper the complete article takes the time to layout some of Amman’s history and also outlines contemporary urban problems which contextualize the rationale behind building a new city. Finally, a fifth article notes that the ‘new city’ will be offered to specific Jordanians before being opened up to all Jordanians.

**Plots nearby ‘new city’ to be distributed to civil servants, military retirees**

“The government is looking into a project to distribute plots of lands to civil servants and military retirees in areas adjacent to the new city that the government is planning to build in Amman, a government official said on Monday. The plots of lands, located close to the new city that scheduled to be built in Amman’s Al Madouna area, will “either be distributed for free or in exchange for nominal fees in line with specific conditions”, the official told The Jordan Times over the phone on Monday. “Our objective is to enhance the living conditions of citizens and provide them with a
chance to own appropriate houses... The idea is also to reduce the pressure on Amman,” the official said, noting that “the details of the plan to distribute lands will be announced this year”.

The new city is planned to be a “smart and sustainable city that will be equipped with all the needed infrastructure and services, adopting a long-term urban planning system with a vision that leaves the door open for further future development”, according to the government, which stressed that it will be financed and implemented in cooperation with the public and private sectors.”

*Jordan Times, 4/9/18.*

    Again, the key buzzwords of the ‘new city’ - “smart” and “sustainable” - are featured in this announcement by the government. However, a new twist on the trend emerges within the Jordanian context. Notably, members of the security forces are being given the opportunity to either receive free land or to buy land at low prices where the new city will be built. Since the public sector is occupied almost exclusively by East Bankers from the tribes, this policy will allow the prime supporters of the regime to benefit financially from the sale of the land on which the new city will be built. This is tying the financial standing of East Bankers to this ‘new city’ in ways which they are not necessarily tied to Amman.

    Amman was intentionally minimized during the process of creating the new nation of Jordan to elevate and secure the support of the local tribes. ³⁰ The formation of the idealized Bedouin elite results in Jordanians whose interests are served by not affiliating with the city of Amman. Additionally, many forced migrants are also continuing to affiliate with their sending nations. With the Government of Jordan working to maintain attachments to tribal areas through voting, and with *situated citizenship* being part of the national imagined mapping of belonging to Jordan, Ammanis are only recently beginning to claim their heritage of being Ammani, nearly 100 years

³⁰ Detailed more fully in Chapter 6.
after the rebirth of the city. It is yet to be seen how the growing population of young people now identifying as Ammanis would be impacted by the demotion of Amman to the status of a secondary city. While the history of Amman includes state actions to make it an extraterritorial space of exclusion, the intensification of geopolitical pressures on Jordan’s borders after the Arab Spring and the aging of refugee’s expectations to return ‘home’ are coalescing and potentially creating space for Amman and Ammanis to claim greater belonging to Jordan. Although rural areas are still seen as the most loyal to the regime, it is no longer in the best interest of the regime to foster an entire city of disaffected citizens as loyal Ammanis are much less threatening than any Jordanians supporting DAESH.

Echoing Jordan’s movement away from subjects and towards young entrepreneurial neoliberal citizens via a hodgepodge of actors including INGO’s, Royal NGO’s, Transnational Corporations, and a survival strategy of the Government of Jordan instead of a top down state led effort like in the Arab Gulf (Jones, 2017) the effort to create a ‘new city’ is also a being done in a decentralized manner. A similar potpourri of actors underlies the government's strategy to build a ‘new city’ instead of it being an organized state led effort specifically to delegitimize new Ammanis. Thus, my discourse analysis of recent newspaper articles about the proposed ‘new city’ is part of the potential future cultural mapping of Amman. However, in the context of young people claiming Ammaniness I am now raising the question of what happens to those with newly formed Ammani identities if Amman is replaced by a more advanced primary Jordanian city.

In particular, since plots of land are being sold to those working for the security

---

31 In Chapter 7, I argue that an emerging Ammani identity is a key generational difference which emerged in my interviews.
services, the hypothetical new city is being envisioned as another place where links to tribal roots outside of the new city will once again be beneficial. By creating the ‘new city’ as a place of belonging for native Jordanians before it is even built, Amman’s positioning as a place of situated citizenship is still being reinforced. This is occurring as young Ammanis contest the diminished place of Amman in the imagined social hierarchy of the country. If citizens of the ‘new city’ are able to identify with the ‘new city’ instead of needing to remain tied primarily to their tribal districts it is unclear how non-tribal Jordanians will also be able to belong to the new city.

4.6 DISCUSSION: AHLAN WA SAHLAN (WELCOME)

In this chapter I outlined key cultural spaces with the city as reference points for understanding how youth are impacted in the various spaces they live, work, and move through in their daily lives. Although these spaces are not geographically fixed, these areas do occupy particular cultural spaces within the imaginations of Ammanis. This cultural mapping of the city is necessary to contextualize the next four findings chapters and the interviews which those findings are based upon.

With our understanding from Chapter 1 of the historical reasons for the bifurcation between East and West Amman and why the cultural divide is increasing as Amman’s neoliberal transformation continues, it is easier to understand the generalizations and misconceptions young people have about one another. The waves of immigration which allowed the city to be rebuilt make it distinctive and serve as the backdrop to the aspirations and challenges youth discussed with me. In addition to highlighting this division, I also explored Wast al Balad’s unique place within the cultural imagination and social interactions within the city. After exploring these three
primary spaces I laid out the Jordanian government's shifting rhetoric around the recently announced plans to build a newer ‘new city’ to alleviate existing structural problems in Amman. This potential plan is problematic for many reasons, not the least of which is the impact it would have on Amman’s emblematic cultural spaces.

Young peoples’ experiences of these diverse parts of the city provide necessary context for my research questions about their perceptions of the role of the city on their identities and goals for the future. Knowing they must negotiate their urban citizenship differently across these particular spaces in their daily lives raises questions about how their ability to use the city impacts their desire to leave or remain.
CHAPTER 5

SITUATED CITIZENSHIP: HOW GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND SCALE QUALIFY AMMANI YOUTH IN JORDANIAN NATIONAL DISCOURSE

“I was born in Amman and my parents were also. But in my grandparents’ stories, Palestine is home. I have to wait for them to pass before I can claim my Jordanian-ness so I don’t upset them. For them I use the Palestinian accent, but I can “pass” as Jordanian by just changing my accent.”

Nayef, 24-year-old

Nayef’s quote above raises questions about how we study urban citizenship, as contemporary approaches fail to understand his seemingly contradictory sentiment. To better understand his statement this chapter explores the factors influencing the development of urban citizenship and belonging among young people. Inspired by urban citizenship scholarship that demonstrates how substantive access to rights hinge on various identities (and modes of political participation) which do not map directly onto the nation-state, I argue that we need to look at the scale of the urban/local/every day to understand how citizenship becomes a lived reality. Even as urban citizenship allows us to examine cultural hierarchies, the legal parameters of citizenship still fundamentally impact youth since Jordanian citizenship is legally defined by Jus sanguinis (by blood instead of birth) and is based solely on paternal lineage. Nonetheless, the critical turn in citizenship scholarship away from legal parameters of the nation state and the rights, obligations, and privileges attached to legal membership allows me to layer social forms of citizenship on top of this basic legal foundation to address how Amman is both
minimized in the national discourse while also impacting youth living in the city in important ways. These impacts are felt not just in the frequent conversations where youth must situate their belonging to somewhere other than Amman when introducing themselves, but also in the broader cultural and legal ways discussed in this chapter.

My work examines how the two components of citizenship- the legal and the cultural - play out as situated citizenship for young Ammanis who must navigate both of these spheres. By ‘situated’ I am referring to culturally mandated connections to other geographies culled from familial pasts which are impacting youth not only in their present, but which also have implications for their futures. The cultural obligation to belong to somewhere else is both imposed upon and employed by youth as ways to establish insider and outsider status. In this sphere youth strategically engage in ‘code switching’ as they move through various social circumstances in the city.32 This notion of citizenship captures both (1) the formal nation-state status, since it constrains where people vote, impacts University costs, and limits employment within the public sector; and (2) identity, which remains a strong component since belonging and exclusion run through the daily experiences of Ammani youth. In the citizenship sphere youth are ‘frontier actors’ exposed to cosmopolitan information motivating their behaviors and informing their desires for mobility which then plays out unevenly based on economics (Skrbis, 2014, 5).

While my work identifies social hierarchies navigated by youth in Amman,

32 Code switching typically refers to when people selectively switch between two versions of the same language based on their social circumstances, such as when Nayef speaks in a Palestinian dialect for his family, but in an Ammani dialect socially. However, it can be extrapolated beyond language to describe the intentional switching of other behaviors as a social practice of building rapport.
research on constations of citizenship (which produces new understandings of citizenship) includes: Brazilians’ ‘insurgent citizenship’, which highlights how marginalized citizens with limited access have been claiming rights through informal housing and by mobilizing in the face of land conflict (Holston, 2008); moments when regardless of status and affluence, people establish themselves as citizens through ‘acts of citizenship’ (Isin, 2008); the ‘logic of alterity’ employed by Kurdish women in Turkey as they experience being both the citizen and the stranger due to their positionality within society (Secor, 2004); the struggle for urban residents to enjoy ‘rights to the city’ which would allow them to not just live in the city but to shape the city in a way which benefits their lives (Harvey, 2008); and finally the ‘do it yourself (DIY) urbanism’ of people who build community gardens or construct other self-improvement projects as ways of expanding their access to the city (Iverson, 2013). Notably, in each of these instances the focus is on minorities’ resistance to inequitable social ordering enforced through citizenship. However, Amman is an ambiguous space within Jordan, simultaneously a site of exclusion and marginalization and also inclusion and belonging.

In Jordan the social group which would be traditionally considered second class citizens is the Palestinian-Jordanian group. This is despite West Bankers being numerically the majority group in the city. However, in spite of this they are not the only group whose citizenship is situated within the national discourse by living in Amman. Indeed, nation building processes (outlined in Chapter 1) in Jordan created the general phenomenon of situated citizenship that places Ammanis’ citizenship along a continuum of Jordanian-ness. Those in the city are still Jordanian, but they are located in a hierarchy underneath those who can claim authenticity by linking to tribes or tribal areas in the
imagined nation of Jordan. Due to the strong tribal system in Jordan, young people’s senses of belonging are informed more by geography, history and society than legal national status.\textsuperscript{33}

As noted in the introduction, this chapter explores four interconnected themes of the influences between historical geography and contemporary citizenship with regard to how young Ammanis imagine their identities in relationship to others, or their places in the worlds. The first theme focuses on youth having a sense of being Jordanian and yet not purely Jordanian as a result of Jordan’s strong tribal system\textsuperscript{v}which places everyone else lower on the scale of Jordanian-ness.\textsuperscript{34} Secondly, I explore how paternal lineage is a determinant of identity for Ammani young people. The third theme emerging from my research highlights the importance of migration on building Amman’s character. Finally, the fourth theme I explore in this chapter with regards to how young Ammanis discuss their identities in relation to others is the importance of multi-scalar belonging among Ammani youth.

I describe each of these themes in a separate section below. After interrogating each of my four major themes, I extend the historical narrative from the first chapter to connect these themes to contemporary events. I examine why Ammani youth are reacting to nationalist trends unfolding in the global north in ways which appear counterintuitive due to the geopolitical pressures on Jordan. These responses become more

\textsuperscript{33} The strength of Jordan’s government has been attributed to the creation of hybrid government which overlaid state systems onto existing tribal structures (Alon, 2007).

\textsuperscript{34} Jordan’s tribal system cuts across all socio-economic layers of the country. It is common to see contemporary modern tribal members living in expensive homes common in any major urban city and driving expensive cars. Likewise, tribal members who are the backbone of the public sector occupy a large percentage of the lower and middle class in Jordan. Tribal affiliation is a system of using last names to further a social hierarchy and does not determine modernity, education, or class.
understandable after examining how contemporary understandings of history condition contemporary citizenship. By understanding this historical conditioning, it is possible to better understand how young Ammanis understand belonging.

5.1 JORDANIAN IDENTITY AND TRIBAL ROOTS: DECENTERING THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM IN JORDAN

Cities are not passive spaces, they are an active space through which people create and contest identities, form community, and impose/reject social orders and hierarchies. Cities thus actively contribute to the formation of identities. An important dimension of urban identity is the relationship to national space. Jordan is often dismissed as a modern construct without natural borders that would not have become a nation without western interference. However, since the first King of Jordan rose to the throne, the government has sought to create a group identity of Jordanian people loyal to the Hashemites. Jordan is a complicated space in which to attempt to create a unified imagined community, as so many people have come to Jordan as refugees with their own pre-existing national imaginaries. My research delves into this complexity by examining the role of nationalism in belonging in Amman.

Indeed, my study of urban youth challenges western scholars who emphasize a primary role of the nation-state in determining how young people think of themselves in the context of their feeling of citizenship and belonging. Neither of the two leading schools of nationalist thought: (1) the primordial approach which views the nation as an unchangeable group of people based on shared linguistic, cultural, and historical legacies; nor the (2) modernist approach which focuses on the nation-state as a primary unifying source of identity with shared citizenship rights and responsibilities, effectively addresses how nationalism unfolded in the MENA. The abrupt disbanding of the Ottoman Empire
and the formation of heterogeneous nations into new nation-states designed by the European imperial powers simply require different perspectives than the concept of shared ancient roots which generate a bottom up formation of a national identity.

Likewise, the approach of modernists who envision a contract between the state and the nation which encompasses a negotiated identity is ill-suited to the imposed states and rulers who suffered challenges to their legitimacy. Colonial powers actively worked to implant national identities, which were only partially founded on history. They also created borders incongruent with linguistic or ethnic divisions. Anderson’s discursive analysis of the imagined community is rooted in South East Asia, and has less applicability with regard to nationalist movements of the MENA, which feature simultaneously layered and often contradictory identities. Another striking feature of nationalism elided by the focus on the culturally negotiated nature of national identity is the emergence of powerful dictators whose imprints on national personalities are difficult to comprehend fully with the scant attention that modernist theory pays to the role of the state. Several scholars who focus on the region identify weaknesses of traditional nationalism literature and propose alternative approaches.

I will briefly outline the leading theories of nationalism in Middle East Studies before returning to the urban citizenship approaches. In Jankowski’s anthology, the authors seek to frame Middle Eastern nationalism as more than simple reactions to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, or the diffusion of the global new order instead of looking at the internal drives to modernize and claim new identities and the psychological motivations of locals (Jankowski, 1997). The authors in this anthology argue that a grand theory of Middle Eastern Nationalism is elusive precisely because each nation reacted
differently to the process. They conclude the strength of “invented nations” can be traced to the historical roots of shared identities, and they argue that identities are still fluid and contested.

Khalidi’s anthology encapsulates both the diverse reasons for and reactions to nationalism in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. This collection moves away from the narrative of the Arab Awakening as a uniform event by studying Arab nationalism at local levels. Analysis of the political use of Arab nationalism in the Hijaz, where the Arab Revolt began, demonstrates that original reasons for revolt were more religious than nationalist. These authors argue that local motivations were based primarily on resistance to Ottoman secularization, a sentiment epitomized by a local newspaper slogan popular on the eve on the Arab Revolt, “love of country is part of faith” (Khalidi, 1991, 197). They also highlight a division between urban towns-people who were more content to be part of the Ottoman Empire and nomadic people who were focused on religious autonomy. In a bid to establish familial monarchies, the Hashemites entered into agreements with the colonial powers in political calculations which reflected nationalism as a tool and not the goal. Both of these anthologies call us to complicate Middle Eastern nationalism by examining multiple scales, motivations, and identities which provide better analysis than either classic approach for Middle Eastern nationalism. These more nuanced approaches to Middle Eastern nationalism align well with the critical approaches offered by the urban citizenship literature, to which I now return.

As discussed previously in the literature review, the critical geopolitical approach interrogates how cultural processes and state power combine to create meanings about place and belonging (Agnew 1994; Rose 2007). Contemporary state efforts to foster
national identity in Jordan are complicated by the extra-national status imposed upon most urban residents in Amman. Yet, critical citizenship scholars applying an urban framing allow us to understand how residents of a city experience their national and local identities. Holston’s work in Brazil illuminates how urban residents resist social hierarchies by constructing their homes as spaces of belonging within the city and the nation. In contrast, Ammanis claim belonging by situating their identities outside of the city (Holston, 2008). Thus, building physical structures and laying claim to urban infrastructure does not necessarily help Ammani youth to advance in the social layers of Jordanian society (or even of Amman itself). Holston’s notion of insurgent citizenship, in its focus on the oppressed urban citizen who must fight for equal legal rights, likewise does not apply directly to the case of Jordan.

Lacking a recent native population with greater intrinsic urban citizenship, the entire city is placed relatively low on a national hierarchy. Within the city a single oppressed minority group is harder to identify due to the multitude of migrants and diverse groups who live in the city. Access to the city and better developed infrastructure is instead determined by economics. Young people are ascribed with identities which inform how they think about themselves, with national identities often occupying a supporting role, while other affiliations are foregrounded. My ethnographic interviews with Ammani youth reveal nuanced attachments to people and places based on shared geographies, to identity concepts from a complex history of migrations, and to senses of belonging at a variety of scales which challenge the importance of nationally bonded identities.

Returning to Nayef’s quote at the beginning of the chapter, it is notable that this
applies not just to Nayef, but to the majority of Ammanis who are born in Amman and are both Jordanian, and yet not fully Jordanian at the same time. To understand this seeming contradiction which is lived by Ammani youth in hundreds of tiny ways throughout their daily lives, we need to understand how the entire city of Amman is situated along an imagined continuum of Jordanian-ness as less Jordanian than tribal areas. When I asked respondents to describe Amman many explained that Amman was not Jordanian or detailed how certain parts of Amman are not Jordanian. There answers were often in direct contradiction with one another, and which parts of the city are labeled as more or less Jordanian are based on individual perceptions and are not universally felt the same way. I expand upon this concept more fully in Chapter 8 as part of my discussion of how some youth are attempting to embrace their Ammani roots.

After asking about the city, I asked how they think of themselves in the city. Some of their answers reveal both the situated and sometimes paradoxical identity of Amman and the city’s residents. This is exemplified by 26-year-old Sanaa’ who stated, “Abdounis (a wealthy area of West Amman) are not Jordanian, they are mainly from the Gulf and they are joked about in the rest of Jordan since they are all about money and can’t do anything for themselves.” Sanaa’ works as an Arabic teacher for English speakers and spends most of her work day in West Amman. Yet, despite proposing that we conduct our interview in a coffee shop in Abdoun, she later shared that she is uncomfortable spending time there outside of work and looked forward to returning to her own neighborhood after we finished our interview. Coming from a tribe she has wasта (cultural connections which afford privileges) but prefers to limit her time in the wealthy parts of Amman which make her feel like an outsider.
Meanwhile, an upper-class woman I met at book club took virtually the opposite perspective as Sanaa. Sitting in a sushi restaurant decorated with elaborate origami swans hanging like chandeliers at the top of one of the city’s most expensive hotels 28-year-old Shereen shared, “Segregation by gender is not Jordanian- my people are Bedouin and we don’t do that. They do that in East Amman and that isn’t Jordanian.” During our interview Shereen lamented that life used to be simpler, that when her mother and grandmother were living in the village they were never segregated by gender. She expressed frustration that although she and her sister have relative financial freedom that they are constrained by social norms which didn’t exist for previous generations in her family who didn’t live in the city. Being in the city therefore both offers additional access to spaces like this exclusive sushi restaurant and also imposes limits due to her gender. While she can claim urban citizenship in places like the book club and high-end restaurants, further opportunities for such claims would be limited in other parts of the city.

Sitting in a humble home in East Amman, which served as my interview site for the entire neighborhood and was facilitated by my affiliation with Hamzet Wasel, I settled into a pristinely clean room adjacent to a small and basic kitchen. The doorway to the small home was decorated with twinkly lights and although the furniture was built of solid wood, the fabric was faded and worn. Treating the home as though it was her own, 22-year-old Ayat entered without knocking and when I asked her to tell me about herself, she also referenced arriving to the city from elsewhere by explaining, “I am part Ammani but not Jordanian, since I am mixed and part of me is Palestinian.”

Her response is evocative of the hybridity scholarship which is often considered
as a way of understanding feelings of belonging to two cultures. Bhabha proposes hybridity is an empowering way people being colonized adopt elements of the colonizers, particularly language, to subvert their complete “othering” (Bhabha, 1994). Critics of Bhabha’s hybridity have argued that it does not consider how the violence perpetrated by colonizers motivates these acts (Acheraiou, 2011). Despite the criticism of hybridity, it is still being discussed by scholars as a way of understanding the impacts of cultural globalization on identity formation (Kraidy, 2005). Given the close proximity and mutual linguistic and cultural norms shared between Palestinians and Jordanians applying hybridity in Bhabha’s empowering post-colonial approach doesn’t offer much analytical benefit. Likewise, hybridity as an impact of globalization on these two identities fails to offer valuable insights since the cultural bonds in the Levant are of a regional nature and not a global nature. Still, the feeling of being partially from two cultures was raised again in multiple interviews and understanding the broader concept of hybridity, despite the criticisms of it enhances my application of situated citizenship which allows Ammanis to identify themselves and to be identified by multiple cultures simultaneously within the scale of the city. I explore this more in chapter 6 when discussing the term “Urdastini.”

This sentiment was shared again in the same home about an hour later when an aspiring pastry chef and I were sharing tea and sweets he baked and brought to the interview in the same modest home. 19-year-old Sa’eed described himself by saying, “I have a Jordanian heart whose beats are Palestinian.” Sa’eed explained that since he has never been to Palestine his heart is Jordanian, but that he has learned about his homeland from his family and lives feeling this connection to this homeland he hopes to someday see. Later, Sa’eed called me to share the happy news that he had been hired as an
apprentice in a pastry shop. When I went to the shop to visit him, he was delighted to show off his chef’s hat and told me that he was planning to open a bakery in his neighborhood after he learned and saved enough from his current job.

After Sa’eed left, another young woman, 20-year-old Rafara, entered and gave the woman I had begun to think of as the neighborhood mom an update on her day before sitting down for our interview. Compellingly she described explained herself as, “Not Jordanian enough to work for the Government of Jordan.” Just like Ayat and Sa’eed Rafara was born in Jordan but has Palestinian roots and she is expressing that her lack of Jordanian wasta and her heritage would prevent her from working for the public sector. Although she said she dreams of being a policewoman, she feels excluded from pursuing this dream since she is Jordanian, but not ‘Jordanian’ enough since her paternal roots are not Jordanian-Jordanian. Her situated citizenship limits her career goals due to social practices.

Yazan, a 31-year-old became a key respondent almost immediately after our initial interview. Before leaving our first interview Yazan opened his contact list and sent five texts to his closest friends asking them to consider meeting with me since it would be a rare opportunity to have someone listen to them. He went further and said that I am non-threatening and funny so they would enjoy their time with me. His texts led to four additional interviews, exposure to the LGBTQ activist community in Amman, and an elder generation interview with his parents in his own home once my youth interviews were complete. Additionally, when his artwork was being debuted at an exhibit shortly before I left, I was honored to receive an invitation and to go support his work at opening night. Yazan tied his own identity directly to what he sees as Amman’s struggle with
identity by saying, “The older generation doesn’t think Amman is Jordanian, but this generation thinks parts of it are Jordanian.”

Since his paternal roots are Jordanian, he doesn’t personally feel the impacts of being considered not Jordanian enough like Rafara. However, he explained that he has many friends who his parents and grandparents don’t consider Jordanian, and indeed his Mother is Palestinian-Jordanian, and it bothers him that she is not considered Jordanian. The generational movement is not monolithic however as some young people including 23-year-old Shireen differ from Yazan when stating, “Amman is not Jordanian.”

Shireen and I met near the University of Jordan where she explained that although Jordan’s top universities are in the city and that she lives in the city, she is Jordanian, and Amman is not Jordanian. For Shireen, Jordan’s best houses of education can be situated in Amman but simply being in Amman excludes them from belonging to Jordan’s true national character. Moussa, 32 compared himself to his mother by stating, “My Mom considers herself more Jordanian than Ammani, but I am more Ammani than Jordanian.” I met Moussa through an interview connection I made through Yazan. As an activist with the LGBTQ community in Amman, Moussa explained that he couldn’t be himself or do the work that he does in other parts of the country. We met at a café on Rainbow Street which prominently displays that is it a safe zone for people of all sexual preferences on a sign near the front door. While his mother supports him and his lifestyle, he feels that other Jordanians outside of the city would dismiss him as too Ammani and he prefers that label over being too Jordanian. For Moussa being too Jordanian represents conservative values which would not welcome him. But he is able to leverage the city to claim belonging among people who are framed as minorities.
Critically this case study diverges from the rest of the critical citizenship literature since Palestinian-Jordanians comprise the majority of Ammani residents and therefore are not the primary minorities who are the central focus of most critical citizenship scholarship. Instead of focusing on just Palestinian-Jordanians, this study examines how Ammanis must define themselves by other locations to be situated in the national discourse of belonging.

Since belonging to the city situates one’s citizenship as less Jordanian than if one is from the rural areas, the social hierarchy privileges group belonging beginning with tribal Jordanians followed by other classifications of social and economic capital. Therefore, a wealthy Iraqi can belong to Amman since their wealth situates them as non-threatening to the delicate balance in the national population. Likewise, educated Lebanese can belong to Amman as their social capital situates them as having something to offer without challenging the status quos. Thus, Nayef’s seeming contradiction reveals the larger dilemma which inspires so many Jordanians like Ghaida, 24 to declare, “No one is from Amman- we are all from somewhere else.”

By the time I entered my third-year in Amman my dialect was improving to the point that when people asked me where I was from, I felt comfortable using my knowledge of situated citizenship in Amman to make a statement ensured to start a deeper conversation than if I simply answered that I am American. My go-to conversation starter was, I am originally from Salt and I cook mansef\textsuperscript{35} better than your Mom!” This statement showed that I not only understood the importance of belonging to somewhere other than Amman, but that I could identify important tribal centers and could

\textsuperscript{35} Jordan’s national dish made of lamb soaked a sour yogurt sauce called \textit{jamid}.
prepare Jordanian food. Invariably this statement negated some of my outsider status as it demonstrated more nuanced understanding of unwritten social rules. This line was the beginning of many rich conversations as well as bringing down prices when I was bargaining in the *souk*. Usually however I would clarify by confessing that I am an American living in Amman. While I used my knowledge of this social practice to try and achieve greater belonging in Jordan, in Chapter 8, I explore exceptions to the rule and how young people are beginning to reject Amman’s *situated citizenship*. In this chapter I decenter the role of nationalism before illuminating the importance of geography, history, and scale on young people’s senses of self.

Although Amman is a single geographically bound entity the experiences of belonging within the city are diverse as multiple cultures are sprinkled across the *jibaal* (hills) and *wadiyaa* (valleys) over which the city spreads. As I explained in Chapter 4, the largest cultural division is visible in the bifurcation between East and West Amman. However, I approach the city not as having one culture or two subcultures, but by treating the multiple cultures within the city as distinct personalities which combine to make one collection of communities. The entire collection is situated as “others” whose claims of Jordanian-ness rely on external factors.

Traditional citizenship literature often approaches research by examining which residents have fewer rights to the city based largely on who has lower legal status. In contrast, in Amman, the majority of the residents have equal legal status. However, the city itself is situated as a marker of less Jordanian-ness than the tribal areas. Accordingly, even the term Ammani takes on multiple meanings within Jordan. Specifically, to be Ammani often denotes that you are not of Jordanian heritage. I explore this contradiction
throughout my dissertation, but Chapter 8 highlights how some of today’s youth are
begining to challenge the idea that being Ammani means you are less Jordanian than a
tribal or rural youth who is *aslyn min* (originally from) a tribal area.

Yet, the cultural juxtaposition between the visibly more globalized West Amman-
with its proliferation of American restaurants, dominance of signage in English, spacious
homes, and liberally dressed residents versus East Amman’s tighter quarters, Arabic
signage, and conservatively dressed residents illuminates how generalizations which
define East Ammanis or West Ammanis as more or less Jordanian gained traction within
society. My interviews with young people revealed many misconceptions between the
two groups; some expressed a tourist-like desire to visit the “other” within Amman, to
explore life on the other side of the city.

Amman is excluded from the national identity building process by the
Government of Jordan and situated politically as an extraterritorial space specifically to
privilege the increasingly minority population of “Jordanian-Jordanians” from the tribal
areas (Daher, 2008). To support the privileging of rural areas, Amman’s urban heritage is
marginalized in state practices, tourism promotion, and orientalist discourses (Daher
2006). Daher argues this exertion of state power minimizes Ammanis of diverse origins
for regime self-preservation. Yet, contrary to the framing of Amman as an extraterritorial
space, the city contains one region which is framed as authentically Jordanian. As
outlined in Chapter 4’s cultural mapping of the city, *Wast al Balad* traverses the tricky
path of being both part of Amman and authentically Jordanian, a task which challenges
many young people in the city.
5.2 THE ROLE OF GEOGRAPHY: A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

In Amman two primary identities are ascribed based on paternal lineage which is traced to geographies outside of the city. These primary geographic identities refer to where one’s paternal ancestors lived; more specifically, did they come from the East Bank or the West Bank? This literally refers to the physical sides of the Jordan River and defines a person with roots in Palestine as being from the West Bank, and a person whose roots are in Jordan as being from the East Bank. With the shifting of the border between these modern nation states complex new allegiances and national identities arose. This results in people who are born in Jordan, and indeed whose parents were also born in Jordan, being labelled as West Bankers. As an outside researcher, I found myself in a myriad of uncomfortable conversations when people spoke about themselves and others as either “pure” Jordanian which they also describe as Jordanian/Jordanian or as Palestinian/Jordanian- which is implied to be “impure” Jordanian.

The role of geography on these ascribed identities is felt in intimate ways which are often highly emotional and frequently reinforce attachment to people who are similarly labeled based on geographic locations- including tribal areas within Jordan. Youth reported over and over that they have only fleeting attachment to or indeed may have never personally been to the location that plays such an important role in how they are defined. Stereotypes are rife, and opportunities are influenced by familial (specifically paternal) roots to specific geographic locations which do not align with nationally bounded places of birth.

Jordanians who come from places beyond the borders of the Jordan River are quite familiar with these geographic factors and are also asked to define themselves based
on paternal familial roots. Someone born in Jordan, with a father and perhaps even a
grandfather born in Jordan but unable to answer the question, “where are you from” with
a tribal location in Jordan or a city in Palestine will be expected to answer with the
country of their great-grandfather’s origin. As I mentioned previously my rapport
building response to show that I understand is to say, “I am a Saltiyya (from Salt).” This
response invariably drew a laugh and allowed me to affectionately place myself into the
social system.

As I previously mentioned the geographic identity of a child is determined sole by
their paternal side, negating the lineage of the maternal side completely. Therefore, a
child of an East Bank father married to a West Bank mother is an East Banker, but the
child of a West Bank father married to an East Bank mother loses his/her “pureness” and
is deemed a West Banker. This is common regionally and is being contested by children
of Jordanian mothers married to non-Jordanian fathers in court (Al Hindi, 2017). Despite
being born in Jordan they are subject to higher fees at Jordanian Universities as they fall
under the foreign student designation with the associated higher costs. In this instance the
impacts of their situated citizenship places financial burdens on those who are unable to
claim full privileges of being Jordanian and therefore the lowest tuition costs.

Historically the peoples across the banks of the river could be from the same tribe
and intermarriage was quite common. Divisions between Palestinians and Jordanians thus
are often so minor that they are only represented by a small star on the flag or a color
difference in a tribal keffiyeh (checkered headscarf). Yet, these distinctions only gained
traction after the borders of Jordan were drawn and are not distinctions with longer
historical roots since Jordan’s flag was designed by the British as part of their national
branding process during the mandate period. The red and white checkered headscarf now quickly identifies Jordanian-ness and the white and black pattern signifies Palestinian-ness. My respondents were nearly universally unaware of when or why this color coding emerged. This specific act of identification has been traced to the British Colonial Officer Glubb whose autobiography explicitly and painstakingly details his motivation to create a visible way to mark locals during the mandate period (Massad, 2001). As an Arabist who is described as an admirer of Bedouin culture, he assigned the different colored “Arab kerchiefs” which have since become accepted markers of Palestinian and Jordanian nationalism (Massad, 121, 2001). These minor differences are alternatively reinforced and erased based on social contexts.

As noted by Massad, “the urban youth’s donning of the red and white hatta (shmagh) was, in fact following in King Husayn’s footsteps, as he had begun to wear it as a head-gear much more frequently after 1970…” (Massad, 2011, 250). Following the Civil War marking Jordanian-ness or Palestinian-ness even changed local speech patterns. Dialects which used to vary based on rural/urban divisions took on more significance in distinguishing between Palestinian men who used the softer accent and Jordanian men who increased their pronunciation of a hard G to signify a masculine connection to tribes and the security forces. This practice continues today; however, it is less rigid as one speaker might use the softer pronunciation to signify urbanity and education and then the same speaker might switch to the more guttural sounds to signal affiliations to tribal Jordan. Yet, while one speaker may choose to “pass” as being originally Jordanian or Palestinian by shifting their pronunciation depending on the social

---

36 Explored more in-depth in chapter 7.
situation, this is a highly charged practice, as noted by Nayef at the beginning of the chapter.

My respondents shared both painful experiences of feeling these geographic differences and also expressed frustrations at the absurdity of this division. Some even stated that these differences didn’t matter before the Sykes Picot agreement which divided the Ottoman Empire into British and French controlled mandate zones. While West Bankers are now widely unofficially acknowledged to be the majority of the Jordanian population, they typically fill positions in the private sector and are underrepresented in the Jordanian government and in the Jordanian Air Force. This explains Rafara’s comment about not being Jordanian enough for government work.37 This is despite her being born and raised in an old neighborhood in East Amman. The label East Banker offers some additional cachet as it ascribes a “pure” Jordanian identity which is linked to an idealized Bedouin past. However, the geographic identity of an East Banker is treated with even more specificity.

Jordan’s society was explained by multiple respondents as “highly tribal” and based on last names which locate your identity based on a communally imagined map.38 Therefore, if your last name is Abbadi, the shared cultural map locates you from Salt, a city north of Amman where the Abad tribes settled. The significance of this tribally based connection became abundantly clear during my focus panel in a Mufraq, a tribal area in the north near the Syrian border. The panel of twelve young men had proudly welcomed

---

37 Rafara is expressing her experience of being constrained by her lack of wasṭa or privilege to work in the public sector since her roots are Palestinian-Jordanian and she faces an uphill climb to be employed in the Government of Jordan.
38 Despite youth describing Jordan as highly tribal, chapter 7 highlights an emerging Ammani urban identity which complicates the existing dichotomy portraying a tribal versus urban identity.
me into their community center stating that they are “pure” Jordanians and that it was

![Jordanian and Palestinian flags](image)

**Figure 5.1** Flag on the left is the Jordanian flag based on the Great Arab Revolt and with the Hashemite Star. The flag on the right is the Palestinian flag which is missing the star per Sykes original design. The minimal difference between these markers can be highlighted or downplayed depending on the circumstance.

![King Hussein and Yasser Arafat](image)

**Figure 5.2** King Hussein pictured on the left in the red and white Jordanian *shemagh* and **Figure 5.3** Arafat pictured on the right in the Palestinian Black and White *keffiyeh*

good I wasn’t only talking to young people in Amman.

However, when I asked how their lives are impacted by Syrian refugees living in their community, the response caused me to pause and double check my Arabic
translation. In fact, the village of Mufraq is located so close to the Syrian border that the small population is arguably the most impacted Jordanian community since the crisis in Syria began. Still, I was surprised when the panel answered my question by revealing that three of them are actually Syrians, seemingly contradicting their initial claims at being pure Jordanians. My follow up question probing why they initially reported that they are all “pure” Jordanian received a blunt response: “we are all Beni Hassan.”

Beni Hassan is a tribe which spans both Northern Jordan and Southern Syria. The border between Syria and Jordan had little impact on this group of young men who identified more strongly with their tribal geography than the official borders defining national lines. For these youths, there is no contradiction in allowing Syrians from the Beni Hassan tribe to retain their tribal connections within Jordan and indeed their tribal connections afforded them a measure of status within the group.

However, Palestinians who live in Jordan are firmly disconnected from their tribal spaces and tribal identities. It is as though the Jordan River absorbs their tribalism and leaves them disconnected from their tribal roots. Amman’s increasingly cosmopolitan nature also works to decrease tribal connections inspiring many tribal Jordanians to commute into Amman from tribal suburbs to retain the full benefits of being tribal. Tribes have not established regions within the city. Unlike famous places like “Little Italy or Little China” found in other large cities, you can’t find “Little Karak,” or “Little Madaba” with associated tribal enclaves in Amman. Although there are areas which are known to be highly populated by ethnic minorities like the Circassians in Naour, the Chechens in Sweileh, or the Christians in Fuheis, these areas are not exclusive, and these minority groups do not stay entirely within these areas.
Instead tribal power continues by attaching people to their tribal locations in the


mental mapping of Jordan. One of my interviewees, who requested that his name not be used due to his position working for the Royal Court, explained that although he would like to vote in Amman, his father collects all of his family’s voter cards and drives them together to the voting station in their tribal village. This is the only time he visits the village and he looks forward to switching his registration to Amman, which he will do “as soon as he sees a unicorn walk across the River Jordan.” This colorful sentiment

39 Chapter 7 explores how the tribal nature of Jordan’s society is being challenged by the testing of the original social contract which favored tribal connections.
highlights the constraints even a well-connected tribal youth (who was classmates with and is a friend of the Crown Prince) faces when trying to reconcile living in Amman with being forced to situate his identity based on a geography outside of the city in order to retain his family’s tribal roots. Although he can both call on his *wasta* and enjoy the modernity of the city, his urban *citizenship* is still *situated* due to cultural enforcement of national practices such as voting, which require him to leave Amman, to be part of the body politic.

So, while some tribal identities that cross national borders can supersede national identities within rural areas of Jordan, other Jordanian tribal identities explicitly work to minimize the role of Amman in Jordan. For the last two generations this minimization has discouraged the creation of an Amman identity. Further, as previously mentioned, Palestinians in Jordan are labelled as non-tribal and their affiliations are bound to geographic locations that they may have never even been allowed to travel to. Clearly the power of geography on how young people think of themselves and how others think of them goes beyond national identity formation and is rooted in Jordan’s tribal system. This urban process of multiple geographies being imposed on identity formation is missing from the current literature but occurs in the other former Ottoman cities as well. Illuminating the role of geographic identities plays in situated urban youth identities in Amman expands our understanding of urban citizenship in the global south by highlighting the role of multiple situated identities on residents of cities with large migratory populations. Another powerful force which informs how young Ammanis define themselves and are defined is the role of historical migration in the region.

5.3 MIGRATORY HISTORY: INCLUSION AND THE VALUE OF HOSPITALITY
The continual waves of immigration and how this impacts not only Amman but Ammanis are overshadowed by the politics of the Palestinian issue, leaving the larger ongoing processes of continued migration underexplored. This gap in the literature hampers our understanding of how Ammani youth are impacted by the history of these migrations. Multiple scholars examine how refugees and other migrants’ first generational attachment to their home country reveal a Janus-faced loyalty between the sending and receiving nations. Further, they study how these attachments to home shifts more towards the receiving nation as subsequent generations assimilate into their new cultures.

Yet, Amman is underrepresented in urban and migration studies literature, leaving a city built by and largely occupied by generations of migrants little understood. Although Palestinian Diasporas have been studied throughout the MENA region, in Amman, Palestinians are simply one wave of many waves of migrants who have transformed Amman and made the city their home. Observing the collective practices of engaging with migration in Amman reveals the importance the historical movement of peoples into the city plays on the production of urban youth identities.

To understand how the history of migrations to the city influences not only the increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan nature of the city, but how youth living in the city conceive of themselves, I will briefly outline the major migrations to modern Amman. The migratory tribes who traversed the sands and lands of the Hejaz and the South of Bilad al Sham were a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 until the Great Arab Revolt in 1918. The role of Jordan’s ruling family in the liberation from the Ottomans is a Hashemite narrative continually reinforced to solidify the legitimacy of their rule of Jordan. As I previously mentioned, these native tribes had little attachment to Amman. It
wasn’t until the first Circassian refugees began arriving in 1878, after escaping Russian persecution, that the ancient city of Philadelphia began to remerge as modern-day Amman. Circassians thus were at the forefront of building modern Amman and continue to hold a privileged official role in the city through their designation as the King’s Royal Guards.

The overthrow of the Ottomans and the arrival of Circassians are both narratives which are represented in the official discourse as fundamental and admirable facets of Ammani culture. These historical events were the catalysts which established Amman as a city built largely by refugees. Notably in 1927 the Public Health Department was already describing the situation in Amman by stating “the town is very much overcrowded with its present population and several hundred refugees from Syria” (Hacker, 27, 1960). Remarkably, this description fails to classify the Circassians as refugees, even in the context of highlighting the stress refugees were putting on the nascent city. Despite eliding Circassian’s refugee status, this statement reveals the contributions of the numerous migrants who not only found refuge in Amman, but also reciprocated by welcoming newer arrivals seeking safety or a better life.

The complex history of modern Amman being founded by refugees and offering refuge to a myriad of different people has created a city and people with cultural norms to absorb new arrivals. The two distinctive waves of Palestinians arriving in Amman, first in 1948 and then again in 1968 has been examined more in-depth than the other waves of migrations to Amman. However, I argue that the broader impacts from continual and subsequent waves of migration are effectively being obscured by the politics of the Palestinian migration issue. Instead these migrations should be explicitly studied as a
distinct ongoing urban process impacting how Ammanis perceive themselves and others.

Indeed, following the Circassian, Chechenian, and Palestinian arrivals the city absorbed a wave of Lebanese migrants escaping their own civil war in 1975-1991. This group of arrivals preceded the next group who began arriving in 1991- when Jordanians (many with Palestinian roots) arrived as returnees during the Kuwait War. This mass movement was followed by the arrival of more Iraqis in 2003 and a significant population of Syrians starting in 2011 which continues to this day. During my interviews with Amman youth I sought to tease out how being part of a rapidly transforming city (not only physically, but also socially) is impacting them.

Both during interviews and in personal conversations when I asked young people about the impact of refugees and migrant Ammanis from other backgrounds, they espoused the need to help others based on concepts which they initially attributed to their religion, politics, or being the last hope for refugees- “because no one else is helping.” Many youths like Lina, 28, fondly recounted driving to Syria as children for a lunch outing or wanting to visit family living in Palestine. When I pressed them on why other countries in the region who share their faith but have more resources (specifically Gulf countries) didn’t accept refugees, they paused and offered a variety of vague responses. 40

However, no clear pattern emerged from this line of questioning. Instead they talked about how different waves of migrants impact them. Many mentioned how Iraqis brought money to the city, which many noted has a negative impact due to inflation, or a consumerist nouveaux riche culture which didn’t align with Jordan’s more humble

40 Although this question was not part of my initial set of questions, it became relevant after numerous respondents mentioned the importance as a Jordanian of accepting refugees. I sought to explore this further within a regional context to place how distinct of a marker of Jordanian-ness youth feel this is.
culture. Or they spoke about how the city’s cuisine has improved since the Syrians arrived. While some people lamented that most waiters are now Syrian instead of Jordanian, this was usually followed up with commentary that Syrian deserts, jams, and breads are all delicious. They shared how their daily lives had changed because of these new people. But even the most vulnerable among them, when discussing how these hardships directly impacted their lives, expressed that they must help those seeking safety.

Due to the ambiguity of their responses, this question is one that I followed up with in my interviews with Ammani elders by asking: “What role do the waves of immigrants to Jordan play in your life and how the society defines itself?” Their answers were enlightening and include frequent responses such as: “since we are made of refugees, we were taught to help others and it is in our blood to help.” When I asked who or what taught them to help, the answers always included both family and King Hussein.

Nabilia, a 55-year-old Palestinian Jordanian, became visibly emotional recounting to me that she sees King Hussein’s face when she wakes up in the morning; he welcomed her family when they were in crisis and taught them to welcome others as well. Likewise, when I sat with two couples in Jabal Amman, an older neighborhood near East Amman, they proudly explained that they had been neighbors for 80 years. This despite being younger than 60, because they began counting the time since their parents were also neighbors in the same family homes. They self-sorted and defined themselves

---

41 This discussion of Syrian deserts became a topic of debate when a new Syrian knafeh (cheese-based desert) store began to become more popular. Jordanian friends began to ask me if I thought Habiba (the Jordanian store) still had the best knafeh in Jordan or if the new stand was better. This question was difficult to answer tactfully as lots of national pride was wrapped up into the loaded question.
to me as one man being Jordanian-Jordanian and the other three being Palestinian-Jordanian. However, they resisted the idea that these distinctions matter to them since they are all part of the same adopted family from the block that was home to all of them.

Yet, they consider themselves to be neighbors from a time before they were born and the fact that three quarters of them have roots as refugees to Jordan is declared to be immaterial to them.

Although most of the youth in my interviews did not explicitly pinpoint why Ammanis (regardless of origins) have a fairly homogenous acceptance of migrants, after talking with their parents it became clearer. This trait is one that is taught generationally in this space and is a value which binds people across socioeconomic levels and from different origins. The elders described intentionally teaching their own children that hospitality is part of “our way.” They recounted to me telling their children stories about the need to share the only bread a family has with those who have none. A few elders mentioned that the importance of hospitality in Bedouin culture. Stating that even if they do not come from Bedouin tribes themselves that this value underlies their collective responses since these values are imbued into the culture. Most revealed a pride that they have been raised and socialized to accept others who need help. Among the elders I interviewed, the common message can be summarized with the words, "all we have is safety, but we are willing to share this with those who don’t even have safety."

The cultural narrative in Amman is based on historical movement of people and reinforces the acceptance of people in need as a primary character of group identity. As a geographer, I locate the social and cultural narrative created from the constant streams of migrants in the place of Amman by grounding it in the theoretical cultural geography
literature on the co-construction processes between place and identity. While my cross generational interviews illuminate the cultural value of accepting refugees in Amman, I applied a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to statements made by the Jordanian government to determine how the state’s messaging resonates with Ammanis (Gee, 2014).

One year prior to moving to Amman to begin my ethnographic project I began reading the Jordan Times newspaper daily. I continued that practice throughout the two and a half years I lived in Jordan. The regime friendly newspaper often ran articles with quotes from government officials or editorial pieces which support the role of Amman as a place of refuge. The following extract is typical of these pieces and exposes the role of the state in ingraining the co-production of the historic role of urban people and the city both providing refuge:

“Because of the wars Jordan fought, and the waves of refugees the country has hosted, the senator said that this has entitled the Kingdom to take on the role of a peacebuilder. “Peace is what Jordanians practice and live every day,” said Majali. She told The Jordan Times on the sideline of the conference that society’s different sectors should build on Jordan’s experience to create a culture of peacebuilding, put it into practice, and start helping those in need.

“We in Jordan are very lucky to have stability; we have to make sure to maintain it and help our neighboring countries,” she added.”

-Excerpt from Jordan Times Interview with Senator Sawsan Majali (Jordan’s history as refugee host entitles it to be peacemaker, senator says. Rula Samain - Dec 01, 2016)

By linking maintenance of stability with making sure to “help our neighbouring countries” the senator reinforces the message of a Jordanian culture of accepting refugees. This sentiment is very typical of Jordanian government representatives who have, particularly since the Arab Spring, cautioned that reforms cannot come at the expense of stability and so they extol the virtue of stability over reform. This reaction is
one many of my informants reiterated, stating they realize they are lucky to have safety and that it is their duty to help other Arabs, Muslims, or Levantine neighbors. This portion of the governmental message fits with the reporting of youth who almost universally express that it is their duty to help others who need refuge. Nearly two thirds simultaneously express that safety isn’t enough for them to stay in Jordan, so they want to leave Jordan. Both the “Stability First” messaging and the “it's our historic duty to provide refuge” messages resonate with youth. These are unifying Ammani ideologies which are taught both at home and through the spaces of communal acceptance of “others” throughout the city. I will explore the Stability First messaging more in Chapter 7 as part of understanding youth reactions to on-going geopolitical pressures.

However, the youth diverge with the governmental claim that Jordanian youth are entitled or obligated to be peacemakers. Providing refuge and creating peace are distinct goals. While most youth supported and defined themselves by the need to remain hospitable, they also expressed that the instability in the region is bigger than them and that their personal goals were much more immediate. For youth like Ahmed, 32, growing up in the shadow of the “biggest regional instability” (in Palestine) it has become ingrained that peace was not just the role of their government, but of other bigger actors who are “pulling the strings.” While many of my respondents were almost apologetic in naming America as one of the bigger political actors pulling the strings in deference to my being American, they had no similar compunction about naming Israel, Iran, and Russia as among the bigger actors.

Indeed, after tensions flared between Israel and Jordan in July 2017, based on perceived increased Israeli control to enter the Al- Aqsa Mosque and the deaths of two
Jordanians in Amman at a home of an Israeli diplomat, the youth I interviewed were despondent. Ahmad, 19, reported that he participated in two street protests, but that it was merely a symbolic social gesture which he and his friends knew wouldn’t change anything. Instead their focus was on starting their lives in fulfilling ways not centered on being peacemakers. By decentering the importance of nationalism and instead illuminating the roles of geography and the constant history of migrations into the city, I am showing ways in which the areas and residents of Amman are perceived locally. Before discussing the impacts of these alternate ways of belonging I will explore the final factor of identity formation which arose from my research with youth. Thus, it is to the issue of scale(s) that I now turn.

5.4 MULTISCALAR ASABIYYA: BEYOND NATIONHOOD

Ibn Khaldun, a respected Arab political theorist, is widely credited as the father of sociology and wrote about the concept known in Arabic as asabiyya (translated in English as “group feelings”) in 1377. Using a new approach to historiography he sought to understand the rise and fall of civilizations long before the establishment of nation-states (Rosenthal, 1967). Central to his analysis is the interplay between nomadic rural tribes and urban dwellers. Critically Ibn Khaldun classified nomads as possessing the purest form of asabiyya due to their connection with nature, their reliance on the tribe to overcome harsh conditions, and their lack of luxuries.

According to his theory, civilizations contain within themselves the seed of their own demise as they invariably undergo a process of urbanization which decreases their asabiyya as urban populations embrace luxuries and lose their connections to smaller tight knit communities. After three generations, he states that civilizations begin to soften
making them ripe for groups with stronger *asabiyya* to overthrow them. At the time of Khaldun’s writing, the tribe was the primary basis for analysis. However, in more modern western analysis the nation state has become the primary basis to measure social cohesion. Since Amman is currently in its third generation since its modern rebirth, according to Khaldun’s theory, the settled city dwellers are due for to be overthrown by rural Jordanians who are still connected through stronger *asabiyya*! However, in Jordan the project of nationalism positioned urban dwellers of Amman as “others” who in the public imagination belong to places outside of the urban borders. Thus, for many young Ammanis social cohesion is not primarily tied to Jordanian-ness. My interviewees defied western perceptions of the primary role the nation has in personal or group identities. Instead youth described themselves as belonging to a plethora of overlapping groups that do not map onto the scale of the nation of Jordan.

The roots of this multi-scalar *asabiyyah* phenomenon can be traced to the founding of Transjordan when the nation’s borders were imagined by the new ruler as essentially placeholders. Further, the concept of the *al-waṭan al-'arabi* (Arab Homeland) as a place of belonging transcends national borders and creates a regional sense of belonging (Culcasi, 2011). Even the name of the Jordanian military reinforces belonging to a regional Arab community. The *Jeesh al Arabi* (Arab Army) is bound to defend “Jordan First,” but also theoretically obligated to come to the aid of other Arab nations who request aid. In this section, I will explore scales of social cohesion among young Ammanis to expose how ideas of belonging which both predate the nation and those that are still be developed transcend the scales of belonging beyond nationalism. As discussed

42 In Chapter 7 I explore how urban youth are beginning to challenge this conception.
in the previous sections being Ammani and Jordanian are often conceived of paradoxically with Ammanis and spaces within the city being identified as less Jordanian than those outside of the city.

Thus, the city itself plays a role in the layering of identities as “more or less” Jordanian resulting in nearly half of the population (roughly 4 out of 9 million) having a diminished place in the communal popular imagination. Beyond the newness of Amman, Jordan is a relatively new nation-state and the concept of the nation-state itself is a much newer creation than other group affiliations which still hold sway in the region. Fifteen years ago, Frisch analyzed public speeches given by all of Jordan’s Kings and labeled the discourse as an intentional political “fuzziness” which runs counter to the academic models of a national identity formation (Frisch, 2002). The original intent of this political fuzziness was the ambition of King Abdullah I to incorporate Syria into his nascent kingdom and to facilitate a post-Ottoman independent Pan-Arab state controlled by the Hashemites (Salabi, 2006).

Subsequently, King Hussein continued the project of building a national identity as an ambiguous Jordanian identity which fostered fluid borders both politically and culturally between Jordan and Palestine. However, the “ambitions of the Jordanian monarch were clearly expressed in the school books of the 1950s where the entire territory of the British Palestine was described as Jordanian” (Maffi in Ababsa, 146, 2011). While the dream of a Jordan that includes Syria and all of Palestine has long since passed, the reality that Jordan has a high population of both Palestinians and Syrians is nonetheless an issue that the current monarch, King Abdullah II faces.

During King Abdullah II’s reign, the Government of Jordan introduced national
branding campaigns including “Jordan First” and then “We are all Jordan” meant to lessen divisions between the multiplicity of Jordanians both aslyn min Jordan and alsyn min other places. These movements did little to quell the rising nationalist anger from tribes in the South of Jordan who openly challenged the King to remove this fuzziness. They agitated for the Government of Jordan to constitutionalize the distinction between themselves as “pure” Jordanians and “guests” in the wake of the Arab Spring, and for the first time directly attacked Queen Rania as a Palestinian who was corrupt in an open letter signed by 36 Bedouin tribal leaders to the King on February 05, 2011 (Habib, 2011). The fluidity of how the modern nation of Transjordan has been conceived invited multiple scales of belonging and exclusion from the beginning of the nation state.

The concept of nationalism in Amman is felt quite differently from everywhere else in Jordan. Here the typical urban processes of modernization, globalization, and cosmopolitanism are at their zenith due to the geographic and historic path dependencies I previously outlined. Since the city of Amman was created by refugees and continues to offer refuge the above-mentioned paradox of a Jordanian city full of “others” who are frequently deemed less Jordanian than those living in the villages is exacerbated. Yet, these same Jordanians living in Amman have access to better educational opportunities, more modern infrastructure, and neighbors from around the globe despite being minimized in the collective imagination of Jordan. This effectively leaves these cosmopolitan youths searching for their own communities of belonging.

The myriad of ways they affiliate through their “imagined communities” are reflected not by the nationalist project of being Jordanian or the borders which outline the nation state, but instead through macro and micro socio-cultural affiliations which
converge and diverge with their national sense of belonging (Anderson, 2006). Many of
the respondents noted that their parents and grandparents were defined along a binary of
either being Palestinian or Jordanian, but for their generation the options were much more
diverse. The scales of belonging described by Ammani youth include both larger
identities such as tribal or quasi-Pan-Arab identities as well as smaller niche identities
such as interest-based identities.

Pan-Arabism

Some youth identified primarily by social affiliations including a Pan-Arab (or
quasi-Pan-Arab) affiliation this is at a larger scale than the geographic bounding of the
nation-state of Jordan. The concept of Pan-Arabism has shifted during Jordan’s history. It
was at its strongest after the Great Arab Revolt when the Hashemites were central to
overthrowing the Ottoman Empire. In this time Pan-Arabism was considered a positive
and powerful affiliation.

However, Pan-Arabism became a threat to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
during the height of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s popularity, when erasing borders meant
uniting the Arab World under Nasser’s regime. The threat of Pan-Arabism reached
critical mass in 1971 when violence broke out in Jordan and the regime expelled fighters
supported by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Pan-Arabism for the
grandparents of my respondents therefore had a positive connotation which would
expand Jordanian influence and territory. For their children (the parents of my
respondents) Pan-Arabism had a negative connotation which would have contracted
Jordan geographically and thus rejecting Pan-Arabism was about preserving the nascent
state of Jordan.
For this generation Pan-Arabism represents a global community which can gather via social media and doesn’t need to physically be part of one nation-state or Arab Empire. Online communities like Maktoob offer locations for these ‘New Arabs’ to gather and to create belonging in ways which were unavailable to their elders (Cole, 2014). Their understandings of the scale of Pan-Arabism is more detached from spatial bounds and is a Quasi-Pan-Arabism linking them via a common identity more than a common location. For Ammani youth, the attachments to both tribe and to the Levant are scales of belonging reminiscent of Pan-Arabism and can be understood by the following perspectives shared by my respondents. For example, when Sally, 25, and I spoke in West Amman near the hotel she works in, she stated, “We are tribal and modern, we are less individualistic which I like. I really feel being part of something bigger like the Levant that is a special thing.” For her being part of a larger social group is positive and offers her a political identity.

However, when Basher, 22, shared his perspectives about being part of a larger tribe while we were sitting in café in West Amman he nervously glanced around before confirming that his name wouldn’t before sharing, “I am stuck by being tribal, I try to dissociate from this and to be modern, but then I would insult my family and lose our tribe’s wasṭa.” For Basher the balance between tribal privilege and wanting to be modern are in tension, a tension that, if broken, would insult his family. Wanting to focus on meritocracy instead of familial advantages created anxiety for him and he continued to glance around the café until our conversation moved to less sensitive topics.

Meanwhile, Omnia, 30, scaled up her sense of community beyond the tribe or the Levant to the whole Arab community. Still, sitting in her private library in her home, she
notes that belonging as an Arab is complicated by her appearance which she describes differing from the how the majority of Arabs look, “I am a blonde Arab, I am full of contradictions since I am a minority here. People think I am Circassian, but we aren’t - my dad is Jordanian. My loyalty is to all Arabs.” Omnia has brown hair, however her complexion is fair and her eyes are light, similar to my own appearance. As my Jordanian dialect improved people started referring to me as blonde as well. I learned that this way of categorizing someone is based on skin and eye color and not hair color, as noted by Omnia the connotation is that you are not Arab if you are blonde. Despite her feelings of being contradictory, she feels a strong allegiance to the Arab community and married an Arab so her children would be Arabs. This offers her membership in the body polity of Arabs.

It is clear to see that these affiliations and the sense of belonging to tribes, to the greater geographic region of Bilad al Sham, or to a Quasi-Pan-Arabism do not map onto the physical borders of the modern nation state of Jordan and represent different scales of identity which are more important to these youths than the nationalist sense of self. It is also clear that the concept of a Pan-Arab asabiyyah has shifted through the three generations since modern Amman was founded. Others perceived themselves along a more globalized scale which also decenters the importance of belonging to a nation-state and expands the scale of belonging via generational or interest-based connections. These cultural senses of belonging connect youth via technology or through shifting norms like those expressed by Sadiq and Muath below who connect through typical modern youth interests.

Sitting in the dining room of my home in Abdoun, Sadiq, 31, expressed his
his modernity by saying “I am Circassian, so I am expected to marry a Circassian, but my parents don’t know I date, drink, go to pubs. As the first born I have to make my own way, but I am part of the global culture, we don’t see anything shameful in being young and having fun.” He then told me the name of his favorite pub and said that despite being Muslim he enjoys the vibe there and that I should check it out to see more Ammanis like him and to have a good time. Likewise, Muath, 18 identified himself by his modern pursuits when sitting at the English language center in our interview at the University of Jordan: “I am a gamer, I am into online communities and I play sports. I don’t care about politics or nationalities.” Both of these activities offer communities which he identifies with more readily than potentially politically charged groups.

Other youth embraced political groups and identified first by global scales based on their ideological stances or their roles as activists like Ibrahim and Yazan. A young man I met through my volunteering with the American Embassy Speaker’s Bureau Ibrahim, 29, invited me to his home along Airport Road. Walking into the home he apologized that the garden wasn’t finished but explained that his father had left his family and so his brother, mother, and he had recently moved in. The home was just finished being built and we walked into a western style great room with an open kitchen with his Mom standing at the stove creating amazing smells. Before I could even ask what was for dinner, she offered us chocolates and tea.

Later, after I had enjoyed the tea and met his brother we began the interview, with me asking Ibrahim to tell me about himself. He paused before saying, “I am a pacifist, a human first, a good son to my mother, and then a Muslim, an Arab, and finally a Palestinian-Jordanian.” Later during my elder interviews, I would return to interview
Umm Ibrahim, and we developed a relationship allowing me to call both of them to ask follow-up questions.43

Another interviewee who invited me into his family home in East Amman assured me when giving me directions that I would be safe. He said that the neighborhood is known for drugs and “all bad things” but said that despite this reputation safety would not be an issue. Umm Yazan also came from out of the kitchen when we sat in the parlor and offered me homemade Arabic sweets and tea or coffee. After thanking her for her generosity and complimenting her on the delicious treats, Yazan, 32, and I began the interview. The home was decorated in dark reds and velvet fabrics and felt very traditional, so it was a bit surprising when Yazan replied to my question asking me to tell me about himself with this reply, “I am a bird, I float above these imaginary lines in the sand, I am a feminist who fights for the LGBT community. My family is from one of the biggest Jordanian Christian tribes, but I HATE wasta.” His description of himself as activist who eschews wasta and identifies by his causes instead of nationality demonstrates his way of claiming and trying to extend urban citizenship and belonging to groups who he feels are marginalized in Amman- women, LGBTQ members, and Christians.

For others, religion (or lack of) was more important than national identity as expressed by Sami and Mussab. Sami, 24 in an interview in West Amman coffee shop declared, “I am agnostic, I went to Uni(versity) in the West and had roommates from around the world. My generation is frustrated and wants fast-paced results.” Sami

---

43 Placing Umm or Ab before the name of a first-born son is an informal naming practice which identifies a person as a mother or father. I am Umm Cameron which can be used interchangeably with my name.
embraced his agnosticism and was not worried who might overhear in the coffee shop. He shared that his parents are also agnostic, but that they don’t tell anyone. His desire to want fast-paced results was apparent when we waited for the bill for our lattes and he impatiently tapped his foot under the table. Since our interview as over, I commented on the décor in the Canadian branded coffee shop since it features Polar Bears and Moose. After chuckling about these animals not knowing what to do now that they live in the desert, he called a Careem on his smart phone and we quickly said our goodbyes since his driving Captain arrived almost instantly.

My experience with Mussab, 24, in a traditional coffee shop in East Amman had a more somber tone. The shop was sparsely decorated and had just a few simple plastic chairs. I was aware that I was the only woman not accompanied by my family, but I followed Mussab’s lead since he chose the location. His response to my opening question asking that he tell me about himself set the tone for the rest of our interview. He started with his religion immediately and said, “Above all I am Muslim. Then I am Arab, we must help those around us, from the unsafe countries, we are all Muslim.” Identifying himself faith, ethnicity, and then the need to help others, he asserted belonging to multiple groups which cross national boundaries.

Since the original scale of the Jordanian national identity was fuzzy by intent to include a larger territory and the city of Amman and its inhabitants have held a likewise fuzzy place in the national imagination of Jordanian-ness, it is unsurprising that urban youth are seeking new sources of belonging. The examples above culled from my ethnographic encounters reveal a variety of scales of belonging which are more important to youth than their national belonging and include scales both larger and smaller than the
territorial bounding of Jordan. In the final section of this chapter I will explore how this foundation of fuzziness and multi-scalar asabiyyah results in young urban political actors whose choices and voices run counter to those being expressed in the Global North.

5.5 DISCUSSION: YOUTH GEOPOLITICS BEYOND NATIONALISM

One might expect the upsurge of nationalism in the Global North, seen with the Brexit vote and the 2016 US Presidential election and the “Making America Great Again” slogan, to be reflected among the youth of Amman. However, even the most vulnerable of my interviewees-as we were discussing how their livelihoods and futures are being negatively impacted by the high percentage of refugees in the country-insisted that they need to keep their doors open and to protect refugees. While they spoke of having very little to offer other than safety, they were adamant that they should share that safety with those in need. This doesn’t mean they accept their fates and are willing to sit idly by or that they are somehow completely altruistic. Many youths complained that they would like more opportunities provided by the government or by larger countries in order to meet their dreams, but they also expressed a willingness (some reluctantly) to leave Jordan to meet their own goals instead of rejecting newer migrants.

Indeed, roughly two thirds of my sixty respondents stated they would leave Jordan either short-term or long-term to reach their own goals. I must acknowledge that as an American researcher it is possible that some youth respondents overstated their noble intentions towards refugees. However, I attempted to mitigate this element of human nature by conducting focus panels in which I asked the youth to discuss these topics together instead of in a one on one interview format. The responses were consistent with those reported during my semi-structured interviews. By exposing how
the cultural dimensions of nationalism in Jordan have situated the city of Amman as a lesser part of the nationalist identity. I argue that Ammani youth thus make meanings and belongings which are counter to the nationalistic sentiments occurring in wealthier parts of the world (as in Istanbul: see Mills, 2017). Although this project defines situated citizenship another research project would be necessary to study how this situated citizenship impacts young Ammanis lack of a similar nationalist response that is occurring in some western countries.

This chapter sought to add nuance to and build upon critical citizenship literature focused on the global south by highlighting the case of Amman, Jordan. I began first by decentering nationalism based on historic processes in Jordan. Then I laid out how Amman was reborn as a city which situates citizenship in the Jordanian national discourse through semi-structured interviews with youth, focus panels, cross-generational interviews, and CDA. This data illuminated how young urban people feel this situated citizenship differently based on socio-economic class. With this background established I laid out the importance of paternal lineage based on geographies outside of the Amman, how the history of continual migrations, and newer scales of group belonging are more determinant in young people’s identity formation within Amman than nationalism. These factors motivate the political responses of young Ammanis who are willing to leave Jordan for opportunities in defiance to Global North nationalist trends.

Looking at the making of the meaning and belonging among young people, I have shown how the city, the culture, and the state work to deemphasize spaces and people in Amman. Yet, just as the state was unable to reorder Amman’s downtown by simply replacing Wast al Balad with Al-Abdali, some youth are also unwilling to be labelled
along a continuum of Jordanian-ness which the nationalist project designed to privilege rural youth. Instead they are seeking belonging through micro-political acts of making other non-nationalistic forms of belonging. Although the Hashemites have been successful in co-opting the structures of a pre-existing tribal structure and producing a new hybrid state fitting the colonial goals of the British, this third generation of Ammani youth, the first who have witnessed the Arab Spring, are experiencing the fallout of continual regional instability and are beginning to question their places in the original national identity (Rogan, 1994; Salibi 1998; Alon, 2009). While their formal national citizenship is difficult to contest, they are expanding and claiming belonging to other cultural citizenship groups.

Instead, as I show more clearly in Chapter 6, youth are resisting this hierarchy and asserting their identities and attachments based on cultural geographies, a still unfolding history of migrations, and more nuanced scales of place than nationally bonded identities. Indeed, this chapter worked to decenter the “territorial trap” which prioritizes the role of nationalism by showing how young Ammanis think about their own meanings and belongings and identities. In the next chapter, I interrogate the ways contemporary geopolitical changes are impacting local urban experiences and practices among the current youth population of Amman.
CHAPTER 6

FIGHT OR FLIGHT: JUXTAPOSING RIGHTS TO THE CITY WITH ASPIRATIONS OF ELSEWHERE

“My brother and I may fight, but we will fight together against our cousin, and all three of us will fight against the enemy.”

– Arabic saying, repeated by multiple informants

In Chapter 5 I argued that urban citizenship in Amman is a situated citizenship that involves leveraging or concealing attachments and relationships to places beyond the city itself. Urban residents identify themselves and others on a spectrum of “Jordanian” and “Ammani” belonging in ways that continue to link people to their families’ places of origin, whether this place of origin is in other parts of contemporary Jordan or in surrounding countries, and whether migration was a recent experience or occurred in generations past (Daher, 2011). In this chapter I interrogate how these strong attachments to elsewhere combine with new geopolitical pressures to discourage young people from claiming their rights to the city or investing in any future in Amman. The realities of these urban youth challenge the explanatory ability of contemporary urban scholarship which needs to be expanded to incorporate the complexities of being a young Ammani who struggles to claim a full Jordanian identity. Ongoing debates in urban scholarship, including the need to examine the impacts of: gender, ethnicity, and class on cities and their residents have challenged urban scholars to critically examine their approaches and lenses into the “urban question” (Storper, 2016). Scholars critiquing the limits of theories
formulated largely in the Global North have also called for more focus on cities in the Global South to expand the post-colonial turn in urban literature (Robinson, 2011; Roy, 2011). The emergence of Actor Network Theory (ANT\(^{44}\)) and work on assemblages by a myriad of urban scholars seeks to preserve the importance of the city as a determinate factor of identity formation, while also incorporating the urban question into other scales (Storper, 2016).\(^{45}\) This academic shift allows us to think about the case of Amman and studying ‘rights to the city’ in a related and interdependent way that holds the city and its inhabitants as part of urban as well as regional and global systems.

However, even within these critical turns, contemporary urban literature presupposes that claiming belonging to the city and belonging to the nation are interchangeable concepts. Yet in Jordan, claiming Ammaniness often situates you as a lesser part of the nation. Thus, claiming rights to the city can work against your claim of belonging to the “authentic” nation. Instead, claiming rights to the Levant, the “Arab Homeland,” or the global community may provide greater acceptance (Culcasi, 2011).

Henri Lefebvre’s seminal “Right to the City” theory and its subsequent elaboration by David Harvey (and others) treat belonging to the city and inclusion in the making of urban space as a matter of social justice, viewing the disenfranchisement of minorities as an urban issue (Lefebvre, 1996, Harvey, 2003). Harvey elevates the ‘right to the city’ to the status of a human right stating, “the freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected

\(^{44}\) Popularized by Latour, ANT is a framework which attempts to “localize the global” by focusing on following the “sociology of association” instead of predetermined theories to determine what is actually important in a given location (Latour, 2005).

\(^{45}\) Applied by many post-structural scholars as a way of examining collections between heterogeneous items. The work of Deleuze and Guattari from 1998 is the most proximately cited assemblage work.
of our human rights” (Harvey, 2003, p. 1). For Harvey the ‘Right to the City’ is inherently worth fighting for since he defines this right as being able to collectively circumscribe both spatial and personal versions of society to work better for personal goals.

This presupposes an attachment to a particular urban space. The city itself is taken as a given in the urban geography literature as a force which informs and shapes personal and political identities and creates commitments among residents which compel them to fight for their rights to this space. Studies of urban struggles over the right to urban space have focused on planning (Tanja, 2005, Fawaz, 2014, Shatkin, 2015), gentrification (Ley, 2014, Janoschka, 2014), neoliberalism (Daher, 2008, Marcińczak, 2014), and informality (Bayat, 2004, McFarlane, 2012, Johnson, 2014).

In Amman, however, basic problems of urban inequality combined with historically situated citizenships and new regional pressures are the main forces producing such struggles. Thus, in Amman, the long-standing urban justice question—“Who has the right to the city?” --is complicated by another question: “What happens when those with rights to the city, or who might seek rights to the city, abandon the city because they are more attached to locations beyond it or to pursue other opportunities?”

This chapter explores these new questions by examining how changing regional pressures and new kinds of political instability since the Arab Spring impact socioeconomically diverse Ammani youth in their daily lives: neoteric (newer versions based on the same system) challenges are layered upon old divisions. I also explore how the regional context46 which is deteriorating in new ways, puts Jordanian youth in the

---

46 Jordan is not only in the middle geographically of regional instability with conflicts in Iraq and Syria, but also works to position itself as a nation which practices a moderate
middle of instability posing new challenges, which are exacerbated by existing historical challenges that were already pushing young people to leave the city. As increasing numbers of Ammani youth look elsewhere to reach their dreams, fewer young people form attachments to the city. Some youth are forfeiting their right to the city and giving up on struggles for the city as the struggles over urban space are no longer the key symptom of inequalities and marginalization.

Amman remains a place of refuge founded largely by and for migrants and refugees. Only around 30 percent of Ammanis claim Jordanian heritage and it is in their personal interest to maintain a strong sense of belonging in the place of their tribal heritage. While the Balqa tribe increased their wealth by selling much of the land that is today modern-day Amman to Palestinians and Circassians, many tribesmen wishing to retain the full authority of their names remain in tribal suburbs to do so (Shyrock, 1997). In addition to voting in their tribal centers, their imagined community is in rural locations which allow them greater access to governmental jobs and a premier position in the society as native sons. The remaining approximately 70% of Ammanis come from an assortment of other places having settled in Amman by necessity or for better potentials than home. Therefore the portion of Ammanis without secondary attachments to other locations is quite low (Shyrock, 1997, 40). Regardless of origins, nearly two thirds of my respondents report being willing to leave either in the long or short term to reach their dreams.

version of Islam allowing it to serve as a mediator between the East and the West religiously.

47 Due to the sensitive nature of the division between Palestinian-Jordanian and Jordanian-Jordanian populations the Government of Jordan does not publish data which distinguishes between these populations.
Many Ammanis have split attachments to other locations and experience globalization and regional pressures in ways that push them from the relative security of Amman to potential opportunities abroad. Thus, instead of a deeply rooted urban population fighting for their rights to make the city, many Ammanis remain ambivalent about the transformations of the city along neoliberal lines (Maffi and Daher, 2014, Daher, 2016; Harvey, 2003). With the government struggling to absorb additional refugees in any sort of organized fashion, neoliberal ideals underlie the rapid expansion of the city based on consumerist goals instead of community and belonging. The exodus of youth from the city is such a constant topic of debate that it was broached directly by the new Prime Minister within days of his appointment when a young Ammani tweeted at Razzaz saying:

“I can’t take it here, the economy is terrible. I plan to emigrate.”

and Razzaz tweeting back:

“Take initiative, help us rebuild the country. Don’t emigrate!”

-Prime Minister’s Twitter Feed, May, 2018.

This exchange illuminates one of the key tensions this group of youth is feeling in Amman. However, it is not the only tension they are navigating, I begin this chapter by providing supporting data from my ethnographic interviews to demonstrate how this generation is managing the widest social rift from previous generations - that between East Bankers and West Bankers. I interrogate the two primary spaces within Amman which youth cite as fostering lingering tensions from the last generation: The University of Jordan, and the soccer fields, which are characterized by strong rivalry between the “Jordanian” and “Palestinian” Ammani teams. Then, I highlight how many younger Ammanis, despite these spaces of tension, feel that the tensions between these two types
of Jordanians are fading as time, class, gender, and career divisions increase due to regional and global patterns of inequality and instability. In opposition to the main social justice argument fore-fronting ‘Rights to the City’ as a vastly underexplored human right, I outline which issues youth from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds cite as their biggest challenge in Amman. These vary based on financial concerns to cultural issues which are increasingly important as Ammani youth encounter peers from other regions through globalization. None involve fighting for the right to urban space. Finally, I enumerate the various dreams that youth shared with me and explain how they feel their goals are impacted by on-going local, regional, and global processes, all of which inform their thought about migration.

6.1 ECHOES FROM THE LAST GENERATION’S PRIMARY CHALLENGES: PALESTINIAN ➔ PALESTINIAN JORDANIAN ➔ URDASTINI

The first time I heard the proverb “My brother and I may fight, but we will fight together against our cousin, and all three of us will fight against the enemy” was during my very first semi-structured interview. When I heard it a second time about five interviews later I paused to ask about the significance of the saying and was told it is used regionally but takes on new meaning in the Jordanian context. Numerous youth quoted the proverb during our interviews- each portraying the Jordanians and Palestinians as brothers, with Syrians being their cousin and DAESH being their enemy. While this Arab proverb is used throughout the region to discuss familial bonds, in the Jordanian case it encapsulates shifting attitudes between Jordanian-Palestinians and Jordanian-Jordanians due to newer threats from DAESH and the economic fallout from the Arab Spring.

48 Arabic version: anna wa akhoi A’laa iben A’mmi, wa anna wa iben A’mmii A’laa el-ghareeb.
30-year-old Farrah explained it this way: “Jordanian and Palestinians in Amman, we were fighting over pebbles until we saw a spaceship fly overhead.” According to her analogy, Ammani brothers witnessed a “spaceship flying overhead” in the form of facing new waves of Syrian immigrants, an anemic economy, the rise of DAESH with economy, the rise of DAESH with regional terrorism attacks, and the threat of further instability on multiple borders. She explained that one of the Ammani brothers is “pure” Jordanian and one is Palestinian-Jordanian, but they have temporarily put aside their “fight over pebbles” (which Farrah characterized as the tensions between Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians) and are now working together against other larger threats.49

Thus, although during my interviews I occasionally heard simmering animosity between East Bankers and West Bankers, the response I heard from two thirds of my respondents is that the tensions between these two “brothers” is decreasing in significance as newer more pressing issues take precedence. Later in the chapter I will focus on which issues this generation perceives as most important in limiting their ability to reach their dreams. These new issues are influencing this generation more than the East Bank/West Bank tensions, which were the main urban conflict of their parents’ generation. While the East Bank/West Bank division isn’t resolved, it is an issue that is aging and being superseded by this generation’s neoteric geopolitical pressures.

Thus, in the city this division was felt through employment differentiation and through both blatant and subtle racism (Brand, 1995). However, these informally learned hierarchical layers of society, based on the paternal lineages to geographies outside of Amman which I examined in Chapter 5, are not the only factors which

49 Although the term “pure” Jordanian is problematic from genetic and academic perspectives, it is one that was frequently used by my interlocutors.
fragment Ammani society and are fading as more pressing issues subsume these old divisions. Yet the secrecy behind this East Bank/West Bank division adds misunderstandings to the very divisions between Ammanis that the Jordanian regime seeks to eliminate, and which many youths report that they would like to see disappear altogether. Despite the consensus that these tensions are less important now that Jordan has been thrust into what Ibrahim, 32, called “survival mode,” the divisions still linger.

During the course of my semi-structured interviews I did not ask my interviewees about the what their religious affiliation. Most however, volunteered that information during the time we spent together. Likewise, I intentionally didn’t ask about their familial origins, yet nearly every respondent volunteered this information (as social convention dictates). After this information was provided, I asked my informants to explain the moment when they first understood that there are different types of Jordanians. Often these stories were traumatic with many explaining that they were harshly exposed to the idea of different categories of Jordanians at school.

Yet, to the person, none of the sixty youth I interviewed learned about the Jordanian Civil War (known as Black September) from teachers at school. The official narrative is thus overtaken by local narratives. Fructer-Ronen’s examination of Jordanian textbooks explores this erasure of history, stating, “It is interesting to note that the events of 1970–71 are not mentioned in the school textbooks of that period, and not even two decades later. The authors preferred to ignore them” (2013). She further notes that when this issue appears in textbooks beginning in the late 1990s it is treated tersely, with a brief comment that a difficult period of three years ended with security being returned to the state. Yet, despite the inclusion of this brief mention in the textbook, all of the youth I
interviewed reported this issue was not addressed by teachers in the classroom. Instead, issue is learned from the community, from family, and from whispers among friends. Only a tiny minority proudly expressed that these divisions are significant for them and that they personally held disdain for other types of Jordanians, indeed only a handful of respondents stated that they wish “Palestinians would go home” or that without “Palestinians civilizing Jordan it would be nothing.” While this layering based on family origin remains, family place of origin was not the dominant marker of difference which arose in my conversations. Socioeconomic class was instead mentioned more frequently.

Although I will outline two spaces where theses tensions remain at the forefront by discussing the Wehdat/Faisaly soccer rivalry (which serves as a proxy for the tension between West Bankers and East Bankers) and the tensions I witnessed at the University of Jordan, it is worth reiterating that two thirds of my respondents felt strongly that the East Bank/West Bank divide was more problematic for their parents than it is for their generation. Yet the conversation I had during a cross-generational interview with Zain, 38, who is married with two teenage children offers additional insights to an expression I heard from a few respondents attending the University of Jordan. While sitting in her office at an International Refugee Organization, Zain explained that Palestinians of her generation must have two identities: they must be both Jordanian and Palestinian. However, she can be just Jordanian because she has tribal roots and is pure Jordanian. For her generation this is often encapsulated by referring to people as either Jordanian-Palestinian or Palestinian-Jordanian. Still Zain’s parents and the parents of her friends

---

50 Scholars observe the same erasure of contentious historical tensions in Lebanon (Abouchedid, 2002).
51 Zain represents the generation prior to this generation of youth as a married woman no longer living with her parents.
had only one identity- they were either Palestinian or Jordanian.

Yet some of the youth I spoke with are beginning resist the assignment of two
distinct identities through their adoption of a new hybrid identity: “Urdastini”
(Jordastini).  
Notably, it was in one of the keys spaces of heightened tension where I
first heard this new identity. I began my interview with a young female student while
sitting in a café near the University of Jordan by asking her to tell me about herself. She
shared that she feels a mix of two identities and doesn’t feel more Palestinian or more
Jordanian since she is equal parts of both. Further she explained that she and some of her
friends call themselves “Urdastini” to avoid being hyphenated. For her and her friends,
the three-generation movement from one identity to a dual identity and then back to one
identity for Palestinians in Amman is: Grandparents: PALESTINIAN → Parents:
PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN → Youth: URDASTINI. This term identifies them as
belonging to both cultures simultaneously and shows an attempt to return to a designated
form of identification that defies national boundaries. This movement towards a unified
identity comes from the third generation of youth to experience this social process
allowing them to transition from being Palestinian, to Palestinian-Jordanian, to the newly
coined "Urdastini”

A transition happening in an urban setting, where exposure to people from other
cultures is quite common. Meanwhile, in a speech to Parliament, King Abdullah

---

52 *Urdastini* is the new local slang term in Arabic that was used to mean half Jordanian
and half Palestinian. In Arabic the “i” ending denotes an adjective. In translating this new
slang term to English the “i” remains and the term becomes “Urdastini.” Elder
generation interviews were unfamiliar with this youth term.
53 In the rural areas further analysis and ethnographic work would need to be conducted
to confirm or deny a similar generational transition. However, I have not heard reports of
this term being similarly adopted in second cities or in rural areas and suspect that in
outlined the challenges currently faced regarding the Palestinian cause and Jerusalem. He stated that there would be no breakthrough solution without a US push for the peace process. Further, he stressed that without Hashemite support for Jerusalemites and custodianship of Jerusalem’s holy places the shrines "would have been lost years ago." Declaring the future of the Palestinian cause at stake as solutions are becoming more difficult to secure, he also spoke with MPs about the assault against a police patrol in Ma’an, In the speech he called violence against security agencies a “a red-line” that should not be crossed. Additionally, he states that the Rule of Law needs to apply indiscriminately to all and that “all have to look at Jordan as one tribe; Jordan is my tribe” (Law, 2016).

Indeed, the public rhetoric from King Abdullah uses the Palestinian cause as a rallying cry to unite all Jordanians under the Hashemite rule. In a speech to parliament on August 05, 2017 King Abdullah states that the rule of law must apply to all indiscriminately, that “All have to look at Jordan as one tribe; Jordan is my tribe” to further unite all Jordanians. He explicitly cautions those in the tribal region of Ma’an, which has proven to be restive area prone to protests, to follow the law which shall be applied to all citizens evenly. By calling all Jordanians his tribe, he is challenging the tribal Jordanians’ claim to greater Jordanian-ness and bestowing tribal-ness to Palestinian-Jordanians as a continuation of older Jordanian discourses on Jordanian nationalism (Culcasi, 2016).

This statement highlights the official Jordanian discourse which publicly seeks to decrease tensions between Palestinian-Jordanians and Jordanian-Jordanians. During this tribal areas the allegiance to being Jordanian would continue to be the primary identity, while in Amman the high percentage of immigrants fosters new hybrid identities.
time of regional instability, the King is calling for Jordanians to become tribal brothers who are loyal to him and to not allow them to be divided or to challenge the tenuous stability Jordan maintains. The Jordanian response to President Trump’s announcement that the US formally recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in December 2017 provided another unifying source for Jordanians who peacefully protested this action with sit-ins and calls for legislation against this action. Despite predictions of violence, the reaction to the news was met by young people whose resistance was relatively calm.

Some of these same youth also talk about the diminishment of the East Bank vs West Bank tension. In particular they note how common intermarriage is for them, but that marrying across this divide caused great tension for their parents’ generation. They also mentioned that while West Bankers are still largely underrepresented in the government, that since the salary for most of the governmental jobs are not keeping pace with private sector jobs that this is not much of a hardship. Notably the third who feel this issue is worse for them struggled to pinpoint how they feel this discrimination. Instead they mentioned the hot spots I outline below or talked about blatant racism that may have simmered during their parents’ generations but that was now exposed openly on social media. When I pressed them to describe to me how they feel this racism in ways that are greater than the pressures their parents felt, they couldn’t cite concrete or systemic examples and instead told personal stories of people they thought were friends whose Facebook feed or subtle actions betrayed them. One young respondent in particular explained that she unfriended half of her high school classmates after they posted what she feels were racist comments after a particularly heated soccer match which her team won.
In another example, 22-year-old Rami shared a story of coming home on the school bus crying in second grade because he didn’t know if he was Palestinian or Jordanian. So he ran into the house and asked his Mom which one he is and her answer left him even more confused. Rami told me he is slightly lighter in color than his three older siblings and his mother leaned down close to him and told him, these three are Jordanian, but you are Palestinian- just don’t tell your father! It was clear that this was a family joke which has been retold many times since then, but at the time Rami was genuinely confused and upset when trying to understand what the different types of Jordanians look or feel like.

Another highly emotional story was told to me by 32-year-old Nour who works in a prominent telecommunications office. She had a small ring which she wore and described as an inexpensive bauble. It is a Jordanian flag which has the Hashemite star. This marked her as a proud Jordanian of Jordanian heritage. She explained that several years ago she left this ring on her desk in her cubicle and when she returned the star was scratched off, with a note saying that the anonymous colleague had improved her ring, the implication being that being Palestinian was better than being Jordanian since with the star removed it now looked like a Palestinian flag.

As I outlined in Chapter 5, the distinction between national markers such as the Palestinian or Jordanian flag and the two types of headscarves are minimal, but important ways of identifying yourself quickly as belonging to one group instead of another. While the cost of the ring was quite low, the impact of knowing someone she works with and

---

54 At the time this happened Rami was too young to understand that his Mom was teasing him by hinting that his father was not his real father. Later, when he understood her joke this story became a way to tease his own father. Skin tone was not addressed by another other respondents as a marker of heritage.
trusted had violated her personal identity in this way made a strong impression on her. Although she still works at the same office and has risen to management, she remains suspicious of her colleagues and wonders how many of them feel the same way— that being Palestinian is an improvement over being Jordanian. This makes her insecure but also angers her as she points out that Jordan is not only her home, it is also the home of whoever treated her this way.

Despite their seemingly memorable stories respondents couldn’t explicitly place these experiences on a time continuum of improvement or worsening tensions since their parents’ generations, reporting instead these stories as formative ones which hurt. So, while old divisions do matter to some extent, the extent to which they matter is becoming less meaningful. As I probed about the sorts of discrimination their parents and grandparents would have faced, none of the youth talked about Black September or the government's Jordanization of the military and government positions as a result of the conflict. The choice to leave teaching this sensitive topic to the community instead of providing a controlled narrative result in a disconnect where many young people feel some vague sort of discrimination without the historical understanding of why the Government of Jordan initially adopted restrictions on employment or how they are systematically changing these restrictions.

Based on historical migrations, war, and government policies, perhaps the Palestinian-Jordanians could fit into the ‘Rights to the City’ framing at the national scale, but in Amman Palestinian-Jordanian are the majority of the urban population. Further, for the majority of youth, this tension between brothers has by necessity become less important because it is now largely a cold war fading into the background, while the hot
wars in Syria and Iraq on Jordan’s northern border move to the forefront of concern in
Amman. These issues which are causing loss of life and the inability of their peers to lead
normal lives have unsettled the lives of young Jordanians by creating newer pressures
and challenges.

Before turning to the pressures resonating most with this generation, I will
illuminate three dynamics still dividing the city. First, I will explore the two spaces
within the city which continue to foster the tension between East Bank and West Bank
Ammanis: The University of Jordan and the Ammani soccer rivalry. Then I will highlight
how class dynamics and gender impact youth in the city. In addition to these spaces
which perpetuate the tensions between Ammanis and socioeconomic divisions, I will also
highlight how career choices are often based upon paternal lineage from outside of the
city, reinforcing the differences between Jordanian and Palestinian Ammani youth.
Despite my arguing that these differences are decreasing, they are still felt by Ammanis,
and in some places more than others. It is to these spaces which reinforce differences
which I now turn.

6.2 A CITY DIVIDED: LINGERING SPACES OF URBAN TENSION, INCREASING
CLASS DYNAMICS AND GENDER DIVISIONS ON DICTATED PATHS

Spaces of Lingering Division:

Existing divisions within the city prevent a cohesive attachment to Amman as
home. In other globalized urban cosmopolitan centers like New York, Istanbul, and
France, these divisions do not necessarily prevent attachment to the city and minority
groups do often mobilize to try asserting their ‘Rights to the City.’ Yet in Amman the old
divisions which I outlined in Chapter 5 and situate national citizenship work against the
kinds of solidarities that would allow broad struggles over urban space and rights.
Though these old divisions are fading, the struggle for ‘Rights to the City’ remain secondary as the city itself situates citizenship in problematic ways. These issues are being further exacerbated by new divisions which are fostering a low level of attachment to the city. I sought to better understand how youth feel and experience these divisions and low level of attachment to Amman by asking Ammani youth about their spaces of inclusion or exclusion in the city. I also asked what their biggest challenges were as young people in Amman. While the majority of respondents said the economy was their biggest concern, many also reported that “if my dad was here I would have to say Israel/Palestine, but since he isn’t here, I can say what really affects me most which is…”

Although concerns were split across socioeconomic layers, all classes reported two primary spaces serve to keep the focus on dividing Jordanians between Jordanian-Jordanian versus Palestinian-Jordanian lines: The University of Jordan and the soccer games between al Faisali (the East Bank team) and al Wehdat (the West Bank team). Within these relatively controllable settings, the politics of language have been constructed to allow the expression of concepts that have been deemed unacceptable in other more “polite” portions of the city. In this way Jordanians have two acceptable outlets if they want to express dissatisfaction with the “other” in ways which don’t challenge the overall goals of the Jordanian government to unite the country by erasing these divisions.

First, I will interrogate the social impacts Jordan’s largest (over 30,000 students) and most renowned public university, the University of Jordan (UJ), exerts upon youth. My interviewees described it as a space that perpetuates the most violence and that keeps simmering internal tensions alive. Several young people pointed out the segregated
admissions offices with tribes having distinct offices for admissions and counselling,
while “others” are lumped into a category which they felt marginalized them. Indeed, as
Cantini’s recent analysis of the University of Jordan concludes, “the university
contributes to the creation of differences between groups of citizens which are integral to
the regime’s survival strategy” (Cantini, 2016, 13).

To gain access to UJ’s secure campus I initially volunteered as a speaking partner
for the Language Department. As a volunteer my name was listed with the security staff
and I was given access to campus. My first experience entering UJ felt I felt quite
restricted despite the campus stretching across 300 acres and abutting a heavily trafficked
road. Each time I returned to this bustling urban campus the confining feeling still
permeated. Prior to each visit, I had to arrange access through contacts I built as a speaker
for the US Embassy Speakers bureau, through my being a language partner, or through
scheduled appointments, and I couldn’t simply enter the campus. To facilitate less
restricted access to students I arranged to meet them at a small local coffee shop across
from campus. It was here in this small coffee shop where I first encountered the term
Urdastini and Jordanians like Nadar below who expressed that UJ is a rare place in
Amman because people from different socio-economic backgrounds mix with each other
easily.

For 23-year-old Nadar, “attending UJ brought me out of my bubble, I went to
private schools my whole life, I graduated with the Crown Prince from King’s Academy
and thought all Jordanians had similar lives. I was so ignorant of the racism and struggle,
but I couldn’t ignore it at UJ.” If there hadn’t been a health issue within his family, Nadar
would have attended an Ivy League college in the US. However, Nadar told me that he is
grateful to have his bubble burst, because now he feels the discrimination and the poverty and says that for the first time knows the “real” Jordan. As a public university, UJ has students from a variety of economic classes. Therefore, while it serves as location which reinforces tribal differences, it also serves as a place where Jordanians from different classes can interact. While attending prestigious private schools and living in gated communities, Nadar only interacted with upper class peers. He states that he wouldn’t have been exposed to people from other classes who are struggling with poverty if he continues in his sheltered life unless he went to UJ and mixed with middle and lower-class Jordanians.

Indeed, when I asked a University of Jordan professor from the Nursing School during a cross-generational interview how students experience the differences between Jordanians while on campus, her blunt answer startled me. Without compunction she stated, “We teachers discriminate, we give lower grades to Palestinians, you can tell from their names where they are from.” As a Jordanian-Jordanian she felt within her rights to make sure Jordanian-Jordanian students received the highest grades. In her perspective Palestinian-Jordanians deserve lower grades and this practice is one she attributed to other Jordanian-Jordanian teachers at the university. As I explained earlier it is routine practice for Jordanians to place each other on their shared mental mapping of Jordanian-ness by asking for a full name so they can associate the person with a particular tribal area or with a city in Palestine, allowing teachers like this one the ability to categorize her students. In special circumstances when a name is known to come from both a town in Palestine and from a tribal area of Jordan, it is common for the person to pointedly ask for more details by saying, “are you the Qubains from Salt (in Jordan) or from Nazareth
“(in Palestine)?” This method of identifying someone new upon meeting them is how teachers would initially use students’ names to place them on a scale of Jordanian-ness.

The professor went on to explain that as a Jordanian she isn’t allowing her son, who just won a Fulbright, to travel to the US and to enroll in the university because he would face discrimination there and would lose his commitment to Jordan. She believes he has very little of commitment to Jordan already and expressed that this hurts her deeply. By positioning her son as an outsider in the US who would be expected to face outright discrimination, she is justifying her discrimination of those she feels are “others” in Jordan. She is also making a claim that if her son- a “pure” Jordanian leaves Jordan that he will not want to return as he would lose his commitment to this space. Thus, for her it is a sacrifice to stay in Jordan, but one that her son should make since he is a native. Beyond the segregated admissions offices, her disclosure reveals another way which students at UJ experience the disciplining of the institution: through some teachers’ biased grading techniques.

In addition to tribally segregated admissions offices, career tracking, and grading biases, students at UJ also witness, experience, and at least some participate in annual bursts of violence surrounding the election of their student body.\footnote{Career tracking” refers to the way East Bankers are more easily able to enter the public sector, while West Bankers have great difficulty working for the government and typically enter the private sector. I explored this in Chapter 4.} This parallels the problematic allocation of seats in Jordan’s parliament, which are disproportionally allocated to sons of the tribes who run on tribal platforms. The day the results are of the UJ elections are announced invariably brings violence and celebratory gunfire as security forces tightly monitor the reactions but allow a controlled amount of fist fighting between
the tribes (Cantini, 2016).

Aside from the physical violence other students witness after elections, the allocation of seats on the student council ensures that only select youth from tribes loyal to the regime are given voices to raise select student concerns. Echoing the positioning of Amman in the legislature, the majority of the student body is largely silenced, leaving only the privileged tribal minority the controlled ability to speak. Since only roughly 50% of students pass the *tawjihi* (national high school exam), admission to public universities is highly competitive.56

Typically, in Jordan the sons and daughters of people with privilege study in the United States and Europe, while the sons and daughters of tribal Sheikhs study at Jordan’s public universities, and Palestine children often study at private universities (Cantini, 2016). Yet for those who are admitted to a Jordanian University by scoring well enough on the *tawjihi* (national exam), being given admission based on ‘privileges of the King’ (*makrumat al-malakiyya*) due to their parents’ military service, or who pay for admission through the higher cost parallel system, the path after admissions continues to be wrought with daily reminders of the differences among Jordanians. Students reported that their perceptions of social difference and inequality among university students at UJ was in sharp contrast to their perceptions prior to coming to the university. At the university Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians are brothers who are fighting each other without having this tension diluted by the more pressing arrival of their Syrian cousin or their enemy- DAESH. Instead they are in competition with one another in their

56 Although the *tawjihi exam* impacts academic placement for those relying on free admissions to public universities, those able to pay for entrance through the parallel program or able to gain admission by ‘privileges of the King’ are free to choose their academic paths.
courses, for the student body, and with academic rankings in a relatively isolated setting.

The other “hot spot” which reinforces tensions between the brothers of Jordan and fosters a low level of ownership of the city is the rivalry between Amman’s soccer teams. Al Wehdat is the Palestinian-Jordanian team which was founded in the New Amman refugee camp in 1956 and has a large fan base in East Amman, while Faisly is the tribal or Jordanian-Jordanian Ammani team which was founded in 1933 and has large tribal, suburban, and disparate support throughout the city. This rivalry is so intense that the Jordanian Football Association ruled that games between the two teams would be played to empty stadiums to prevent further escalation of violence. Based on a review of fan chants and signage the Association ruled that fans were stoking aggressive ethnic divisions instead of simply supporting their preferred team and that disciplinary action including monetary fines was necessary.

According to MacClancy, “Sports… help to define moral and political community. They are vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others” (1996; 2). This is particularly true in the post-colonial Global South where national teams are tied to imported sports teams, but is complicated in Amman where the city has teams which represent Ammanis with ties to two different nationalities. The spatial element of sport is amorphous as it extends beyond the stadium and follows fans around the city, yet Hague argues, soccer “plays an important role in the development of local identity, culture, and shared “social memory” of living a place (Hague, 1998).

Wearing your team’s jersey identifies you as belonging to a particular group wherever you travel. Al Wehdat’s red and green soccer jersey is commonly worn by their
fans who would be identified as Palestinian-Jordanian, while wearing the distinctive light blue jersey to support the Blue Eagles Faisly team would typically identify you as being Jordanian-Jordanian. However, this issue come to ground in Amman as in and out groups are marked by sports allegiance in physical spaces including the Palestinian refugee camps of East Amman who support Al Wehdat (the team based team in the Al Wehdat refugee camp) and in the tribal suburbs which support Faisly. Using Paul Gee’s “figured worlds” (a framing for discourse analysis), I interpret this sports rivalry as one which travels throughout multiple locations in the city as fans occupy new spaces during their days where they must confront, conform, and perform their roles as both Jordanians and fans of a particular soccer team within the city (Gee, 2014)

I was first made aware of this highly charged rivalry by Mohammed, a ten-year-old Jordanian-Jordanian boy with strong tribal connections from Salt to whom I taught English. Nearly six months into volunteering with Mohammed the subject came up unexpectedly when we were sitting at an outdoor café reviewing his lesson. As a car drove past with the radio on Mohammed’s whole demeanor shifted and he became visibly agitated, shaking his fist at the car and yelling. When I asked him if he was ok, he replied, “yes but that was Wehdat’s team song and I hate them so much!” While I wanted to explore this more deeply with him, specifically to ask him why a boy of his age would have so much hate for Palestinian-Jordanians simply for supporting Wehdat, due to his age I instead started to incorporate questions about this tension into my semi-structured interviews and doing additional research.

While academic scholarship on the rivalry was not available, it did draw the attention of the US Government, who wrote a classified diplomatic cable in 2009 (which
was later released by Wikileaks) about the political meaning of this intense sporting rivalry inspiring violence and increasing local tensions. The sporting periodical, World Soccer, also listed this pairing one of the sport’s greatest rivalries due to the “symbolism of what both teams represent to their respective communities that gives the game its huge political significance in Jordan and beyond” (Montague, 2015). Noting that no real Jordanians could support Wehdat, Suleiman, an Oxford professor, also observes in the World Soccer article that despite very personal cheers asking King Abdullah to divorce his Palestinian wife, the regime allows the venting of tensions between these two groups of East Bank and West Bank fans as it is a controllable and predictable way to let off political steam. While violence is regular at these sporting events, fans of both teams often support the national team which combines players from both clubs for matches against other nations. 57 This echoes the sentiment from the beginning of the chapter, simply replacing the Faisali and Wehdat teams which represent the Jordanian and Palestinian brothers who when they play one another are enemies, but when they face an outside challenger are simply brothers.

My conversation with Mohammed suggests that children as young as ten years of age also experience these tensions between these “brothers.” Indeed, it would not be the last time Mohammed and I would experience this issue together. Nearly a year later while sitting at another café, Mohammed made a hand gesture to the waiter by hooking his finger over his nose, a gesture of support for Faisly which went viral as a way to taunt Al-Wahdat. This inflamed the waiter who began chanting and soon Mohammed was

57 State attempts to foster national identity in the global south through sports coverage was analyzed in Istanbul following a strong World Cup performance (Kösebalaban, 2004).
outnumbered by a café full of Wahdat fans cheering and mocking him. Since he was the only Faisly fan and a youth under my charge, I had to step in and remind the room that he is a young boy and that the issue would be decided on the pitch that night.

However, just as this tension enflames and polarizes by exposing the social divisions and marks of social difference within Jordanian society it also mixes them with the fervor and aggression of sport. Conversely, this also fosters a sense of belonging as a supporter of one club or another. For fans of Wahdat, it is easy to claim rights to their Palestinian refugee camps in East Amman by superficially decorating these spaces with fan memorabilia and filling the air with chants to support their team. However, it is harder for Palestinian-Jordanians who live in the urban refugee camps to claim deeper rights to the city since their spaces are explicitly places for “others” who maintain them as places of martyrdom which must be understood as temporary homes until the occupants return home to Palestine.

I myself participated in creating a sense of belonging as a supporter of the Faisly soccer team when I was conducting a focus panel in a largely tribally connected and poorer suburb of Amman and I heard the young men discussing the upcoming game. Knowing the room, I hooked my finger on my nose and won a cheer of support which allowed the focus panel to begin with rapport having been instantly established. This simple act of showing support for one soccer team allowed me to become more of an insider than if I was unaware of this rivalry: most importantly for my study, the formation of social and political boundaries of belonging or exclusion based on affiliation with sports teams shows the fluidity of identities within the city.

In both these hot spots of urban tension, the speakers and audiences are
Figure 6.1 Hooked nose- “pure Jordanian” support for al Faisly Soccer Team while wearing the Red Shmaagh instead of the Black and White Palestinian head covering. http://kalemanews.com/Article.aspx?id=23260&c=2&nt=1#.WdX0qmiCxPY

participating in conversations as part of a specific “figured world” where public expressions of the animosity between Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians are possible, while in the rest of the city it would be unacceptable to blatantly act the same way (Gee, 2014). Fan signs, fistfights, and harsh language which would be entirely inappropriate in other locations in the city have become accepted forms of discourse as long as they remain within the set boundaries of UJ and the soccer rivalry and do not extend to political action beyond the university or the soccer pitch. While these spaces allow political steam to be vented, these spaces of urban tension primarily impact the daily lives of youth as they are the most likely to frequent both the university and to participate in this soccer rivalry. The inescapable layering of the society which emerged time and time again during my research was related to class. Indeed, class distinction greatly influences how young people from different economic classes use (and imagine) the city.

Increasing Divisions: Class Dynamics and Gender

With an estimated 50% of Ammanis attending private schools, class divisions
crystallize early. Economics also have a large role in how gender is felt by young people—particularly women who felt extremely constrained by the need to represent their family’s names based on social expectations among their economic peers. Bassel, a 24-year-old architect, was the first to paint the socio-economic layers of the city for me. He described the city as consisting of a large lower class, a shrinking (or non-existent) middle class, and a tiny upper class that use spaces in the city along layered physical dimensions starting from the ground upwards. Bassel appeared to be part of the upper class since his father is a doctor, he graduated from German Jordanian University (a prestigious private university) and drives his own car—yet he self-identified as being from the disappearing middle class. Thus, the relative deprivation among young people in Amman reflects the larger trend of increasing income inequality felt not just regionally, but globally in the last several decades. Subsequent interviews also confirmed the class elements of spatial use in Amman, an issue already being explored by other urban scholars working in the global south who are looking at enclaves in India (Galonnier, 2015), in Bucharest during economic transition (Marcińczak, 2014), and in Gating in Malaysia (Tedong, 2015).

As I discussed briefly in an earlier part of this chapter, in addition to the insecurity brought by the Arab Spring and the social constraints, youth are affected by economic inequalities: like political and social tensions, economic inequality in Amman is also much more than a local issue, dependent on regional and global contexts. Jordan has been largely dependent on foreign aid since its modern founding, first from British patrons and now from American donors. Lacking natural resources, the Government of Jordan has tried to market their human resources and moderating role in the region as their biggest assets.
Yet with youth employment in Jordan at 11% for young women and 47% for young men and a foreign work force of 1.5 million, the issue is not straightforward (ILO Study, 2014). As I alluded to earlier, the social coding of jobs follows a strict cultural hierarchy. Jordanians are often discouraged from taking work in the home (despite higher pay) leaving many domestic jobs filled by Filipinos and Egyptians. Likewise, many service jobs are looked down upon and often filled by Syrians (Wickham, 2008). Further, an unemployed man brings greater shame to the family, so they are often given preferential status over women in hiring.

Numerous youth spoke about the mismatch between the degree they had to pursue for family honor (the most prestigious are engineers and doctors) and the limited number of available jobs in those sectors. The typical time from degree completion to employment is 36 months for men while Jordanian women have among the highest unemployment rate in the region and may wait close to 10 years to find employment (Abuqudairi, 2016). In addition to these new pressures based on regional instability, cultural norms, and economics many youth expressed that their dreams (which I explore in section 6.3) are either not possible in Amman or not supported by their families or culture.

Although the government defines poverty levels based on the minimum wage salary of 2.1 JD per hour ($2.96 in October 2017), I asked the youth themselves for their perceptions of the defining characteristics of the lower/middle/upper classes and had them identify themselves using their own definitions. Those who self-identified as being from the lower economic class talk about using the city at the street level, where they played growing up and where they spend time hanging out with friends now. A coffee
and cigarettes that cost less than 1 dinar (about $1.40, in October 2017) are the extent of their discretionary spending, although they can be found window shopping in wealthier areas of the city. Middle class youth talked about frequenting restaurants, coffee shops and malls (with their segregated hours for single men and ubiquitous security screenings) where they could spend from 5JD-25JD per evening ($7-$35, in October 2017) (Schwedler, 2017). The upper class spoke of being in the pubs where they could access alcohol or spending times at each other’s homes in order to have privacy; discretionary spending appeared to be of little consequence for this group who implied they could purchase what they wanted without worrying about the cost.

Answers to questions like “What is the largest problem facing young people in the city today?” predictably re-inscribed class lines. Those who identified themselves as lower class spoke of needing jobs, wanting to save enough money to start a family, rising inflation, and the competition from lower salaries or dowries accepted by Syrians, an economic reality reverberating and increasing throughout the region since the Arab Spring (Ceritoglu, 2017). The middle class spoke of educational opportunities and the mismatch of their degrees to the available jobs in the market in Amman. The upper class talked about cultural challenges including LGBT discrimination, lack of artistic and personal fulfillment, and the struggles of not being heard by elders in their society.

Likewise, those from the lower to middle classes spoke of wanting to leave Jordan for locations to the East and the frustration of the Gulf being essentially closed for Jordanian workers since the economic downturn of 2008, leaving nowhere to turn for jobs. The middle to upper classes looked more to the West for education and high paying jobs, places that are still open but not guaranteed due to Brexit and Trumpian efforts to
restrict immigration. In 2016, 11 of 13 top Jordanian students went to the US for higher education. In 2017 after the election of President Trump only 1 top Jordanian student even applied to the US (US Embassy speech by the Public Affairs Office, 2017). This shift primarily impacts the middle and upper classes who can afford to travel abroad. However, even as their families felt the students might still be welcome in the US, they didn’t want to risk not being able to visit their children if US travel policies and rumored Muslim bans were extended to them and therefore directed their children to apply to schools in the region or in Europe.

While class issues permeate how young people experience Amman, this division is felt differently by men and women. Each face unique challenges based on religious, cultural, and social norms. Compared to other nations in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, Jordanian women face relatively fewer legal restrictions on their social and physical mobility. Thus, it can be surprising that even as Jordan seeks to politically position itself both as a moderate nation whose role as the guardian of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem allows it moral standing within the Islamic world, and as Western leaning, Jordanian women have the lowest rate of employment in the region at 11% (ILO Study, 2014). This tradition of being a mediating force between the East and the West serves Jordan well as it retains favor from both its de facto sponsor (the US) as the recipient of the largest per capita aid money from the US without the same concerns about gender inequality being continual sources of international discussion (Sharp, 2017).

Yet Jordanian women are faced with what Fida Adely, in her examination of women’s education in Jordan, calls a paradox. This paradox is that despite an increasing number of young Jordanian women receiving higher education, their participation in the
work force remains doggedly low (Adely, 2012.) While the pressures on young men to be breadwinners who establish a home and a way to provide have long informed their paths, the path for urban Ammani women has been changing recently. To be considered a good “catch” Jordanian women must be educated and willing to work to help provide, yet culturally they are also seen as competition to men who are already facing low employment rates and high competition from other job seekers.

Bassel, a 24-year-old architect who first described the socio-economic layered use of the city to me, struggled to explain this paradox I asked him “what makes a good Ammani woman?” His quick response was that she would need to be educated and willing to work to help him provide income for their family. When I probed and asked what type of job she should have, he hesitated and grew flustered. He explained that his Dad retired from the Army after 30 years as a doctor (marking him as Jordanian-Jordanian) and that his mother is quite educated but never worked. He elaborated that his uncle who owns a big business hates to hire women because he invests money into their training and then when they marry or have children they leave. He was not able to determine which jobs women should have based on his family but felt that with newer economic realities in Amman his ideal wife should work somewhere.

This paradox has been explored further lately in both popular literature and film. The Bride of Amman incited controversy in 2015 when the author brought to the forefront the pressures young Ammani women face to marry in his realistic fictional novel (Zaghmout, 2015). This book, written by a Jordanian man also exposed the cultural taboos surrounding courtship including: cross marriage between a Christian and a

---

58 I also asked respondents “what makes a good Ammani man?”
Muslim, incest, a young woman being married to a gay man, and the shame being a spinster brings to families. In addition to illuminating the taboos against dating, Zaghmout focused on the lengths young Ammani women must go to in order to be marriageable, with discussions between the protagonists about education, careers, and whether or not to wear the veil in order to be most marriageable.

This same issue was brought to ground again in the Jordanian film, When Monaliza Smiled, based on a fictional young East Ammani woman who was the subject to a litany of familial requirements for education, work, and marriage that left her with little opportunity for choice before she makes a radical decision to defy social norms by pursuing a relationship with an Egyptian man (Hadad, 2012). Although the film ends on a seemingly happy note, it left me with many unanswered questions. In the real world, this young couple would face not just social stigmas, but the male suitor could not gain legal citizenship in Jordan through his wife, and their children would not be legally Jordanian since he is Egyptian.

Yet, the dream and power of this Jordanian-made film is that it shows a worn-down and quite poor woman from East Amman fighting back against a system which suppressed her. While this focus on how poor Ammani women’s lives are scripted for them is particularly poignant since they are the most vulnerable population, it also came through clearly in my interviews and is something that resonated across classes. While a feminist approach to the rights to the city literature could conceive of Ammani women as an oppressed group struggling for their collective rights to shape Amman, such a group did not emerge during my interviews with youth, or indeed during my time living in Amman and conducting observations. Other pre-existing and new more recent divisions
discourage women from bonding together to claim access to making the city.

Prescribed paths

Not being able to choose their own career futures was a top concern listed amongst all socioeconomic levels of youth.\(^{59}\) One clear cause of these dictated paths can be traced to the East Bank/West Bank division which funnels “pure” Jordanians to the public sector and Palestinian-Jordanians towards the private sector. As I described in Chapter 5, Palestinians in Jordan are separated from their tribal identities, and ascribed identities based on the locations of their ancestral homes in Palestine: their social and political identities in Amman are thus indelibly linked to geographies outside of the city.

However, this is not viewed as an entirely negative process of identification by Palestinians themselves, as many urban Palestinians frame tribalism as backwards and profess that when their early ancestors arrived in Jordan they civilized the land by bringing technologies the nomads of the region didn’t possess (Shryock, 1997). The place of origin of their ancestors thus provides an opportunity for them to assert a position of potential superiority in Jordan’s private sector as they are not obligated to serve in lower paying public-sector positions.

Again, this highlights the need to expand the “rights to the city” framework since status in Amman’s private sector is most easily attained by “others” who are neither obligated nor able to claim tribal Jordanian heritage. These obligations allow rights to the city but steer native Jordanians towards the lower paying public sector, which they argue excludes them from being able to advance their economic class. Even as intermarriage

\(^{59}\) Although the *tawjihi I exam* impacts academic placement for those relying on free admissions to public universities, those able to pay for entrance through the parallel program or able to gain admission by ’privileges of the King’ are free to choose their academic paths.
between Palestinian-Jordanians and Jordanian-Jordanians becomes more common, local generalizations often reinforce the imagery of tribal Jordanians content to lazily work for the Government of Jordan (particularly in the security forces) while commercially oriented Palestinian-Jordanians work hard to make more money in the private sector. Although these generalizations erase hard working Jordanians and ignore Palestinians working in the government, they are rooted in divisions which began as a result of the Black September Civil War and the subsequent Jordanization of the government.

This labor division is perpetuated by the institutions of higher education which witnessed a proliferation of new private for-profit universities following the unexpected return of Palestinian-Jordanian workers from the Gulf during the first Gulf War. Now 11 of 13 private universities in Amman are owned by Palestinians (Cantini, 2016 p 32). Although Jordanian students connected to the Jordanian government through their parents’ employment have the advantage of legacy admission in the form of reserved seats at state universities, new private universities allow more admissions for degree tracks aimed at the private sector (Cantini, 2016).

In addition to the systematic funneling of youth into the private or public sector based on familial lineage, the transformation of the higher education sector also informs the career paths for many youths. These social factors highlight the depth of hopelessness Rafra feels when she lamented in Chapter 5 that as a Palestinian-Jordanian she would face too many obstacles attempting to be a policewoman. While Rafra is from a poor family in East Amman, and attended public schools, even from elite youth I heard over and over that their path was dictated for them by the need to follow the path that would bring the most prestige or honor to their families. Omar from an upper-class family in
West Amman decried how his soul was being killed every day working for the Royal Court, but to leave and pursue his dream of revolutionizing Arabic poetry would shame his family who are so proud of his engineering degree. Wealth and connections may afford more prestige, but do not buy freedom of education and career choices.

Throughout the city, youth are pursuing career goals and degrees which are in line with their lineage as either bound for the public or private sector based on their East or West Bank status. Yet, these dreams rarely seem to align with the globalized visions the youth have for themselves. The *thaqafat al eib* (culture of shame) permeates and informs which dreams youth are able to pursue. The aspiring Jordanian-Jordanian Arab poet who graduated from a prestigious American university and the elite King’s Academy High School, before taking a position at the Royal Court in a “soul-sucking” job said he was a victim of Jordan’s *thaqafat al eib* since he needs to stay in a job he hates to bring honor to his family. Equally, the young Palestinian-Jordanian woman who lamented she couldn’t lower her dowry to compete with Syrian brides stated she is subject to *thaqafat al eib* since her family expects her to bring in a certain price for her marriage. All across the spectrum youth are subject to cultural expectations which apply pressure to their life choices.

Of course, East Bank and West Bank are not the only ethnicities of young people living in Amman. I also spent time with Syrian, Saudi, Libyan and Iraqi young people, many of whom have “guest” status preventing them from participating in legal employment. While education is open for foreigners willing and able to pay the price, once they graduate many of these guests in Jordan are unable to work. As Omnia, 22, from Iraq stated, “I have nothing invested in fixing the problems in Jordan, they don’t
want me here, just my family’s money. I can’t work here so I will try to go to Europe where I can work.”

Returning to East Amman, the second of the four regions of the city I described in Chapter 4, demonstrates how parts of the city encourage young people to feel strong attachments to places outside the city. My discussion of East Amman began by illuminating the prominence of Palestinian refugee camps in that part of the city. These spaces within the city work to evoke belonging to another place: in the cases of the al-Wehdat and Jabal Hussein camps, the place of primary belonging is imagined to be in Palestine (Feldman, 2015, and Khalili, 2005). While the majority of youth I interviewed agree that the tensions between East Bankers and West Bankers are becoming less significant, and the government has long campaigned on the need to unify Jordanians, there still remain spaces within the city which reinforce this divide. The social meanings of these spaces dictate allegiance to homelands the youth are marked as being aslyn min (originally from), in their present-day realities each time they are asked for their last names or which neighborhood they live in, allowing other Jordanians to place them on a map situating them as belonging primarily to Palestine instead of Jordan.

These spaces also impact youths’ futures by dividing their allegiances and dictating their potential career paths for the future. If your home in East Amman is maintained as a space which is connected to the right to return to Palestine and you are excluded both by the state and from your own social obligation from participating too deeply in the government, this ties your future to the cause of a nation you don’t live in.

---

60 These perspectives illuminate how non-citizen youth attach to the land and location of Amman. However, they are beyond the scope of this project which focuses on Jordanians with full citizenship rights and looks at how citizens attach to the city.
The youth are continually instructed to retain these extra-urban attachments to areas outside of the city or even beyond Jordan’s national boundaries through soccer matches, enrollment at the University, through class and gender issues, and through prescribed career paths. Before delving into the dreams the youth I interviewed shared with me, I will highlight the more pressing geopolitical pressures which are impacting young Ammanis more than the older East/West Bank divide.

6.3 DREAMS FROM AMMAN: BEYOND AL A’MAN

While the bulk of this chapter explained how old divisions and economic inequality combine in the pressures of daily life, this last part of the chapter explores how youth envision their futures, given these constraints. It struck me when I asked, “What are your dreams?” that numerous youth responded they don’t get asked this question often. Yet one of the key tenants of the UN Global Convention on Youth held in Amman in 2015 states that it is critical “to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels” (The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, 2015).

Compellingly, academics writing in New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North, a recent special issue on Being Young and Muslim, argue that western scholars who previously failed to predict the transformative youth movements which were drivers of the Arab Spring are now doing a disservice to Arab Youth whom they have only recently identified as political actors by framing them through old dichotomies instead of talking to them directly for nuanced understandings of their lives (Herrera, 2017). The collection also critiques policy makers and development workers for lapsing into easy tropes about youth as either: potential destabilizers who need policy and development
programming to prevent them from radicalization; or peaceful entrepreneurs who simply need empowered to solve their own economic and social problems (Sukarieh, 2017). In this section I honor this scholarly critique of an Orientalist gaze by instead bringing the voices of this group of young people to the forefront.

As discussed previously, external factors which heavily influence which dreams youth have and pursue include socio-economic class, familial lineage, and the national education system. Similarly, when asked the young people they think Amman means to the Middle East as a region, “safety” was their most frequent response, but again they were emphatic that this is something they had spent little time considering and is another was a question many said they have never been asked before. Although Amman is a safe haven for many in the region, the youth don’t regularly deliberate on Amman’s regional role; instead, Amman as a place of safety is a given since they are taught from youth to be hospitable.

Although native Arabic speakers would not confuse the two words, the Arabic word al-a’man⁶¹ (security) bore so much similarity to the word “Amman,” that I was struck each time I heard it. As part of my journey of studying Arabic, the link between the Arabic words for safety and the word Amman was inescapable. Despite this merely being a linguistic coincidence, it resonated with me since several youths stated that all they have in Amman is al-a’man (safety). Many of the same people who said that Amman represents safety to the region also stated that they don’t take this safety for granted, and that security is not enough for them. Their dreams are bigger than simple survival and they want the opportunity to reach these dreams.

⁶¹ The pronunciation is distinct in Arabic as the city (a:’mman) is pronounced using a guttural “a” sound and has a hard stress on the m.
This sentiment was reiterated during a key interview when the Dean of a prestigious private university told me with a heavy heart, “this is not a place to fulfill dreams.” Although he has undertaken a study to combat brain drain, the Dean admitted that his students don’t want traditional jobs working in the public sector for the Jordanian government, but want sophisticated jobs which pay better than salaries in Jordan. He even sheepishly confessed that his wife and kids had been increasingly pressuring him to accept an opportunity to leave Jordan. Although his university does not keep statistics of how many graduates leave Jordan immediately after graduation, he estimated that only 5-10% stay since they are in high demand in Europe.

Another factor relating to education also sends youth abroad, at least for short-term goal fulfillment. Upon arriving in Amman in the summer of 2016 I observed an ongoing battle about the education system in Jordan. The royal family, particularly Queen Rania, has been a vocal advocate pushing to reform the national curriculum. According to Dr. Omar Razzaz, (who was the Education Minister at the time, but became Prime Minister in May 2018) the goals of the education reform movement are to increase critical thinking and to decrease reliance on rote memorization, as well as to increase the percentage of Jordanians who pass the tawjihi (national high school exam).62 This reform movement has been met with fierce opposition by religious elements that oppose these changes and charge that the reforms are actually seeking to decrease the influence of religion in the school system. It is within this environment that the city’s most globalized generation, many of who will eventually fill jobs which were not created when the national curriculum was drafted, are dreaming of their future education and career paths.

---

As the curriculum battle continues, a high percentage of the upper class goes abroad for higher education. This only exacerbates the existing cultural tensions among socioeconomic groups as youth exposed to Western liberal universities return to traditional spaces and attempt to “make the city” alongside middle and lower-class Jordanians who have remained at home and who cite much different issues as their most urgent daily challenges.

Throughout the Arab World degrees in the hard sciences and more particularly in engineering and medicine are most desirable. In Jordan this is also true, although there is some increased acceptance of work amongst the upper classes in the social sciences, due to the Royal family’s embrace of International Affairs degrees. These types of work (engineering, medicine, law) have historically been the most prestigious private sector work while work in the government has been prized for the benefits and honor it brings. I will explore the shift away from these highly sought-after jobs in Chapter 7 in more detail. What I want to bring from that topic to this chapter on how young people living in Amman stake their claims to the city through their connections to places outside it, is that the government jobs are typically thought of as most proper for people outside of Amman who retain their tribal connections. In Amman itself, private sector jobs are often more prized. Despite the regional preference for hard science careers, these types of jobs only ranked third in the list I created from the various kinds of dreams youth described in our interviews.

The most popularly mentioned “dream jobs” collectively fall into an “activist63”

63 The high percentage of NGO’s and International Organizations working in Jordan as a regional platform has increased the number of jobs available in this line of work. These jobs are now much more present than previously.
category and run the gamut from women’s empowerment to refugee and LGBT jobs. The second most popular dream was to work in languages, which is seen as a way out of the region. English, Japanese, Chinese, and Spanish were all languages that my informants are studying so they may open new opportunities to leave Amman. After engineering and medicine, young people mention self-employment, indicating they want to work on-line, with start-ups, or on developing new uses for technology. Outside of these larger categories a variety of service-oriented dreams were mentioned including being a baker, a make-up artist, and a wedding planner.

Still others mentioned personal dreams that do not relate directly to career goals. These include: climbing Mount Everest, being openly atheist, and breaking free from the pressure to be a shoekh (plural for sheik- with an implicit obligation to be a tribal/government leader). These personal aspirations are impacted by Amman’s position in the middle of regional instability and further highlight how youth are not only tackling existing divisions and limitations, but also attempting to overcome newer stresses in order to reach their globalized dreams. When I asked if their personal or professional dreams are attainable in Amman, the resounding response was “No!” Although some from the lower and middle classes felt the upper classes would be able to reach their dreams in Jordan, the universal response was that young people do not get to direct their own paths which makes reaching their goals in Amman very unlikely.

Although some dreams are quite bold, others are notably humble. 24-year-old Said who lives in East Amman and takes public transport 2 hours each way to UJ (a trip which by car would be less than 30 minutes) dreams to finish his degree and become a professor. In Jordan, a career in academia is not among the most desired paths since it is
not as esteemed as a career in the hard sciences, and although scholars do enjoy the status of the title "Doctor", they are not among the economic elite. He described himself as hungry and said, “the wolf climbing the mountain is always hungrier than the wolf on top of the mountain.” Yet despite this hunger, Said was uncertain if he would be able to complete his degree and to teach due to the financial pressure to stop school and work full time.

Shaden’s dream was humble as well. She told me with great frustration, “I never knew that a 4JD ($5.65 in October 2017) cupcake existed until I went to Abdali, but now it is just another thing that I can only dream about but never have.” The new elite spaces of consumerism are tantalizingly close, but financially very far away for this 20-year-old from East Amman, whose dreams now include an expensive sweet which she didn’t realize existed before the neoliberal transformation of the city (Daher, 2008).

Finally, a teary 19-year-old Rima shared her dream with me, “Syrian women have sweet tongues and ask for a lower mahr (dowry). My dream was to get married and have children, but even now that dream is not possible- what am I gonna do? - Lower my dowry to 10JD when it is already low at 3000JD for my neighborhood?” Rima’s daily life is being impacted by the on-going geopolitical issues which brought additional (and cheaper) competition to the marriage market. This is affecting her both in the short-term, but she fears it will also impact her long-term chance of getting married. Dreams large and small are getting harder to reach in Amman as the geopolitical situation impacts the youth and they are simultaneously exposed to new possibilities via social media and the internet. Their relative deprivation has reached higher levels now through globalization,

---

64 Sweet tongues were explained as being deferential to men and to being more girly.
making the basics no longer quite enough.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS: ONE TRIBE - BUT WHO IS MAKING THE CITY?

Dr. Al Alhoui of German Jordanian University lamented during our interview that students arrive to his school missing any attachment to their home place and that they simply don’t feel any ownership here. Thus, he trains them, and they leave Jordan for Germany or other prime offers in Europe “without looking back at Jordan.” However, he expressed sympathy with his students who are not taught that it is possible to reach their dreams here; instead they are taught that staying in Jordan is a sacrifice which creates a “Jordan-phobia.” He faults the system for teaching them to look for other places to reach their dreams instead of providing them opportunities and showing them local success stories.

During another key informant interview at TAG Education Services, Ab-Osbeh bluntly stated, “the coming generations can’t live in Jordan” due to low wages and insecurity. He followed up by saying that when he graduated only 5-10% left Jordan and they did so with the intent to make money and then to return home to establish their lives. However, this generation is wise to leave and not return- something he framed as a big but understandable mindset change. I argue that an anemic economy is not the only cause for this change in mindset, but that having situated citizenship which limites prospects also encourages young people to seek their futures elsewhere.

Low levels of attachment to the urban setting could also be an underlying cause of Amman’s endemic littering situation which is prevalent even in the wealthiest of neighborhoods. The lack of community in my neighborhood also created a feeling of isolation which worked against attaching to the space. Living in Abdoun, in West
Amman, I didn’t know many of my neighbors. The village feel of East Amman is entirely absent as people escape into their gated residences. However, I was introduced to several neighbors roughly six months after moving into our flat when I shepherded my husband and children outside to gather litter from the road to clean our street. Neighbors I had not seen prior, nor after, scattered out telling us to stop collecting the garbage. They assured us this was not work meant for us; instead they urged us to call the government office that has the responsibility to clean up. While speaking at UJ, I mentioned this example and asked the students for their opinions, the results were mixed. Most agreed with my neighbors that it wasn’t my responsibility to collect other people’s garbage, however a few mentioned that I had the right to improve my neighborhood as long as I wasn’t interfering with others. None of them had considered doing a similar neighborhood clean-up, despite all of them agreeing that garbage is an issue in the city.

In this chapter I sought to expose how the urban justice question, “who has the rights to the city?” fails to fully capture the key urban issues in Amman. This chapter demonstrates how situated citizenship is complicated by both existing divisions (although the East/West Bank divide is lessening) including hot spots which work to keep these divisions alive, and neoteric issues following the Arab Spring, all of which combine to create low levels of attachment to Amman. With two thirds of my respondents reporting that they would like to leave Amman, it raises questions about levels of commitment to remaining in the city. Thus, both young Ammanis and the city suffer not from exclusionary conditions limiting who has the right to make the city, but from residents in survival mode who not only claim and are labelled as belonging to elsewhere, but many of whom feel they must look elsewhere to make their dreams.
While situated citizenship in Amman amplifies the specific complications of young Ammanis who face the choice between fighting for their ‘rights to the city’ or taking flight to places with greater opportunities, these complications are not entirely unique. Herrara applies Guy Standing’s term the “precariat,” which combines precarious and proletariat, to all youth in the MENA region (Herrara, 2017). She argues we should look at this region’s generation of youth as part of a neoliberal “precariat” whose primary struggle is to find a way to secure their own economic stability in a globalized economy which prefers precarious employees. She asserts that although this term was coined based on Eurocentric scholarship, that this pressure is strongest on youth in the Global South as they are the most likely to need to leave their homelands to seek opportunity.

Another unifying feature of this region’s generation which El-Sharnouby highlights is that the young Arabs who participated in the Arab Spring differ from prior revolutionaries who had clear and specific goals to topple colonial leadership and to replace it with native leaders from their own ranks. Instead, he notes, this generation of post-colonial revolutionaries did not attempt to seize power for themselves, instead they continue to occasionally take to the street to express their desire for “bread, freedom, and social justice” (El-Sharnouby, 2017, 85). By recognizing that this generation is not seeking to grab power in their specific locations, he argues that they understand how interconnected the problems they face are with the global system.

This reveals a generation of new neoliberal political actors who are globally connected and may be less rooted to the concept of fighting for their ‘right to the city’ than to their rights for economic opportunities in a globalizing labor market (Schwedler, 2012). The case of young Ammanis aligns with other examples of youth who are
connected globally. This illuminates how this once localized social justice approach needs to be expanded beyond the urban scale to reflect a newer generation who are more concerned with access to the global market than fighting to change their local urban space, particularly as their city fails to provide them with the identities and opportunities they seek.

Yet, despite the desire of the majority of my respondents to pursue their dreams elsewhere, a small number of urban activists including Turath, Hamzet Wasel, and Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) are working in Amman to foster a sense of neighborhood and civic participation with the minority of passionate residents who are invested and interested in creating Amman. In Chapter 8 I explore how this generations’ attempt to claim Ammaniness offers the best hope for these activists to succeed in their mission of fostering an informed group of urban citizens, who would benefit from a greater sense of citizenship and could become committed to the development of the city. Before we turn to that discussion however, I will delve further into how globalization is testing Jordan’s social contract within the city in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7

BEYOND JORDAN’S SOCIAL CONTRACT: MESSAGES TO CREATE YOUNG NEOLIBERAL CITIZENS

“I am pro-Hashemites but recognize they created a structural problem when they paid off the tribes for our loyalty. Now the public sector is built on inequality because as non-Jordanians they needed to create a rentier base, but one without natural resources.”

Ghaida, 28

In Chapter 6 I highlighted how neoteric geopolitical pressures collide with Amman’s situated citizenship (from Chapter 5) to discourage young Ammanis from claiming their ‘Rights to the City.’ These unfolding urban processes mean that “for many Amman is also a city which suffers from a lack of urban identity and a place to which some residents have a weak sense of belonging” (Daher, 2008, 39). However, this lack of urban identity and low attachment to place is occurring due to local historical events and on-going regional and global pressures and transformations. One major cause of this alienation is the structure of the original social contract.65

This chapter tells the story of how Jordan’s original social contract built an economic and political hierarchy based on a newly created tribal elite who gained privileges, including employment within the Jordanian government, in exchange for their support of the Hashemite regime. This story is unfolding as I write, and I explain how

65 Starting from the 17th century with Thomas Hobbes philosophers including John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau have each written about a ‘social contract’ as the unwritten agreement made during the formation of a state between those to be governed and the government. This contract is an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits as they become citizens subject to the rules of the land.
contemporary population changes and neoliberal reforms are testing the original social contract in the broader context of social and physical changes across the region. The fading of this social contract results in an uncertain economic and political hierarchy and contributes to young people wanting to leave Jordan as their futures are no longer guaranteed to proceed along a single clear path. I end the story by interrogating what messages are filling the void created by the fraying of the social contract and how young people are instead transitioning from purely royal subjects into neoliberal citizens.

In the first section I outline the making of Jordan’s original social contract. As I explained in Chapter 1, when modern Transjordan was being built, Emir Abdullah needed to win over the support of the local tribes he hoped to rule. This practice of nation building through a social contract exchanging tribal support for governmental privilege continued throughout the mandate period, so by the end of the mandate in 1946 the tribes were fully integrated into the state and played an integral role in it (Alon, 2007, 146).

In addition to the pressures from large influxes of new Jordanians who don’t belong to the native tribal hierarchy, globalization is also adding stress. These stresses include local desires to become a global city which is coalescing with new requirements from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to enact neoliberal reforms. I illuminate how the neoliberal shift which began under King Hussein took on new urgency once King Abdullah II ascended to the throne. Jordan’s transition to a neoliberal economy during King Abdullah’s reign allowed Amman to participate in a global oil boom, but also exposed it to the subsequent global economic bust in 2008. This boom and bust period dramatically affected not only the city but also the social contract, which no longer offers enough for many Ammanis, who are instead left searching for
newer opportunities. It is in this context of a fading social contract and increased interconnectedness that I interrogate pacification messages meant to and contain youth who no longer have the same level of access to employment within the Government of Jordan due to regional and global pressures.

In the conclusion I explore the uncertainty and contradictions which are filling the void created by the contraction of state employment. Instead of a clear-cut social contract that provides state employment in exchange for tribal support, there are now multiple narratives focusing on redirecting young people’s futures. As Peck and Tickell (2002) illuminate, neoliberal reforms which “rollback” state services are often simultaneously accompanied with messaging that citizens should be responsible for activities formerly provided by the government.

Thus, while messages directed towards Ammani youth allege to empower them as they include encouragement for: youth activism, youth as peacekeepers, and entrepreneurship; these messages create a paradox for youth who are perhaps unwittingly reinforcing the status quo through their participation as neoliberal global citizens. Indeed, Ammani youth may be paradoxically extending the status quos through their activities, leaving their generation without adequate employment or a replacement social contract which addresses their fundamental needs. Unlike in other regional monarchies, the messages in Jordan to create global neoliberal citizens are being pushed as a survival strategy by a combination of public, private, and aid organizations instead of being simply a state-led social engineering effort.66 These include redirecting youth energies

---

66 As in Jones's investigation into what he argues is “an ambitious state-led social engineering campaign in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where leaders aimed to
towards: Stability First, Activism, Youth Peacemakers, and the Entrepreneurialism in line
with neoliberal ideologies. To understand how young Ammanis became the objects of
these transformative messages, I will begin the story of today’s political and economic
paradoxes at the founding of modern Transjordan.

7.1 BUILDING A SOCIAL CONTRACT: FROM MANDATE TO INDEPENDENCE

As modern Transjordan was being founded during the British Mandate the
question of which local leader would lead the nascent nation-state demanded an answer.
During the mandate period British field officers preferred the nomads of Jordan who they
saw as noble, to the settled tribes of Palestine, who they saw as “mixed race tribes”
(Alon, 2007). Despite not being from a tribe native to the newly bounded lands, Abdullah
I was a “true Bedouin” and he was able to quickly build personal relationships with
important sheiks from powerful tribes using two discursive tools: his claim to be directly
descended from the Prophet Mohammed which afforded him legitimate religious
authority, and his family’s leadership role in the Arab Revolt which freed the Levant
from the control of the Ottoman Empire engendering gratitude from a newly liberated
people (Khalidi, 1991).

Notably, during the 1916-1917 Arab Revolt the Hashemites led a tribal
confederacy similar to the kind of decentralized governments which ruled the region for
centuries. This confederacy of tribes was not cheap to maintain, as “they paid them large
sums of money expecting them, in return, to pledge their allegiance to the Arab alliance,
join it and on occasion even fight for it” (Alon, 2007, 16). Yet, Ghaida, the daughter of a
prominent tribe, whose quote began the chapter, makes a direct link between the

encourage more entrepreneurial, market-friendly, patriotic, and civic-minded citizens,
who were still loyal to the regime” (Jones, 2017).

216
Hashemites not being *aslyn min* a Jordanian tribe and an unstable social contract which was needed to “buy tribal support.”

As a researcher on the economy and the employment sector at a local NGO, Ghaida is acutely and uncommonly aware of the economic challenges in Jordan. While Bayloumy notes that “Prior to its economic reforms in 1989, a social contract in Jordan, similar to most in the Middle East, provided economic goods in return for political quiescence,” Ghaida adds more specificity to Jordan’s contract (Bayloumy, 2008). She states that the Hashemite regime’s need to secure the loyalty of the native tribes, by exchanging governmental privileges including employment, underlies contemporary inequalities which make the Jordanian social contract unstable.

Understanding the current social contract requires returning to the modern founding of Transjordan. During the mandate period, Jordan’s national identity was linked to an idealized image of the Bedouin by “Pasha” Glubb, a British colonial officer (Alon, 2007). Glubb was instrumental in creating Jordanian traditions which associated this new national identity with both the Hashemites and the migratory desert tribes (Hobsbawm, 2012). The tribes themselves participated in the Bedouinization of the national identity (Alon, 2007; Massad, 2001). This process was facilitated through the adoption of a Transjordanian flag (with the Hashemite star), the valorization of *mansef* as the national dish, and the invention of the Jordanian military uniform all of which evoke Bedouin imagery. Later in 1949 when a local currency was introduced to

---

67 I met Ghaida at the local book club I attended monthly while living in Amman.  
68 Lamb or beef cooked in sour yogurt and mounded over rice which is shared communally and traditionally eaten by hand. This dish was not eaten by Bedouin in this manner, as they didn’t serve rice until the British arrived. Instead, the dry *jamid* ball (dehydrated sour yogurt) and hard meat were eaten.  

217
distinguish from the Palestine Pound, the Jordanian Dinar (JD) adopted pictures of Jordan's New Kings wearing native Bedouin dress. By linking the Hashemites to an imagined Jordanian community, which actually consisted of disparate Bedouin tribes, the social symbols of Jordan reinforce the role of the tribes in the government.

Figure 7.1 A Jordanian Dinar (JD) 50 banknote displaying King Abdullah II in Bedouin dress. Author’s photo.

To turn Transjordan from a tribal outpost into a modern nation, a functioning bureaucracy needed to be established. As in most developing countries, the government was a primary driver of the economy. While many scholars have argued that Jordan’s current political stability stems from the hybrid government which Emir Abdullah created by layering the British style central government over top of the existing tribal system, Fathi instead argues Jordanian exceptional stability is more complex than simply co-opting the tribal system. Instead he highlights how Emir Abdullah and Glubb created the new tribal elite and entered into a symbiotic relationship with these new elites. These same new elites then became the Government of Jordan's base, continually imbued with powers and privileges in order to maintain both the authority of the regime and the tribes (Fathi, 1994). This symbiosis changed both participants as it created a “Hijazi” form of a
colonial government. It required the nomads to locate where the new state services were available so they could attain upward mobility from the patronage they received through the social contract and added tribal logic to the new government (Fathi, 1994).

In Jordan, before the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was initiated, approximately 75% of East Bankers were employed by the state (Bayloumey, 2008). While *wasta* is ubiquitous and well documented throughout the region (Loewe, 2007; Al-Ramahi, 2008), in Jordan, the systemic use of *wasta* guided the very foundation of the state. When the sheiks of powerful tribes participated in supporting King Abdullah I’s ascension to the throne, their sons were granted *wasta* and became *mustawazirun* (destined to be ministers). Abdullah needed the legitimacy of the tribes to rule, but he lacked the resources to continue to buy their support on his own. Thus, Jordan’s rentier economy and the East Bank dependency on external aid started from the beginning—although it was initially tied to British financial support (Knowles, 2005).

Electoral representation in the Parliament was gerrymandered to skew to the countryside. Ababsa and Daher argue that cities contributed little to nation building in Jordan since allegiance to the King trumped all and Jordan’s cities are a mix of people from within and beyond Jordan’s borders whose allegiance to the regime “is most suspicious” (Ababsa, 2011, 45). Thus, the “political identity and expression of urban dwellers is therefore highly controlled and under-represented” (ibid.). This political control gets to the heart of why Ammani identity can be both important as a source of exclusion in the process of nation building in Jordan and why it has historically less important in the formation of personal identities. These scholars highlight how the army comes from the countryside, as does national identity which harkens back to the tribal
support for the King. From the currency used, the food that is eaten, the flag that is saluted, to the national anthem- the link between the Hashemites to the Bedouin culture reaffirms the original social contract between the tribes and the Hashemite rulers.

Bringing this forward to a contemporary moment, as my informant noted in Chapter 5, he is socially obligated to keep his voter registration in the tribal area despite spending virtually no time there. Yet, this must be done to maintain the strength of tribal representation within the elected body. Elections are determined along tribal lines instead of party or issue based platforms. This is one method of maintaining the original social contract which assured tribes a place of privilege in the state. By maintaining voting links to spaces beyond Amman, youth who have family ties to the countryside are participating in the work to exclude Jordanians without links to prestigious tribes (imagined to be pure Jordanian) from equal participation in the government.

Returning to the creation of the social contract, Emir Abdullah was under pressure from the French in Syria, and raiding parties from the South in modern day Saudi Arabia, both of whom made attempts to expand into Transjordan (Massad, 2001). He needed the allegiance of strong tribes to keep the country safe and together. Since he didn’t have deep pockets to pay large bribes, he “lavished other privileges on the most important leaders” cars, tax cuts, public recognition, state trips, official positions in the government, etc… (Alon, 2007, 42). Throughout the 1930s the British ran the Transjordanian Mandate with only 20 British officers in the country which both enabled and required Abdullah to rely on Sheiks to help indirectly rule the population. Of particular importance is the formation of the Arab Legion (predecessor of the JAF) and the formation of the central government in Amman.
Both bodies were filled by prominent sons of the tribes who benefited from the relatively lucrative salary and their new prestige. Colonel Glubb further enabled Abdullah to continue to use customary law and to bring the tribal sons into the state government by the establishment of the “Desert Patrol” (Alon, 2007, 99). This juridical-military foundation laid by the British colonizers was both repressive and productive (Massad, 2001). While key military positions were appointed through *wasta* to members of the: “Bani Sakhr, Huwaytat, Sirhan and the Shammar” tribes when the armed forces were being formed in the 1930s, it not only meant the exclusion of those without tribal *wasta*, but it also produced the role of the Hashemites as leaders of the tribes who were the primary defenders of Jordan (Massad 2001, 218). Throughout the mandate period the newly created tribal elite continued to be interwoven with the state.

The period just before formal independence produced rapid social change in Transjordan. While the orientalist image of the noble Bedouin had been adopted as the national image of a Jordanian, most of the tribes had begun to limit their nomadic ways and began to settle. Despite this more settled life, trade in Jordan was still was looked down upon as a profession. Other Levantine nations including Syria and Palestine already had a long history of trading by the time of the Second World War, but commerce in Jordan remained stigmatized (Rogan, 1994). This changed rapidly when the sheiks closest to Abdullah gained licenses for trading and emerged as the elites who took advantage of WWII as the “decisive factor in the development of the merchant class in Transjordan (Rogan, 1994, 175). Extending the patronage of the King to the creation of a

---

69 It is important to note that women were excluded from this process. Tribal connections were entirely gendered during this process, so in addition to urban residents, Palestinians, and Ottomans, women were kept out of the armed forces during the mandate period.
merchant class allowed nomadic tribes to expand their control of the formation of the country. As land was privatized, it was the tribal leaders who had monetary resources to purchase large tracts of land. While the tribes continued to retain their importance in the Jordanian government and by serving in the security forces, new revenue streams in the form of trade and property ownership also became available as a result of their continued social contract with the King.

Just as Jordan was preparing to expel the British in 1942, the Muslim Brotherhood arrived in Jordan (Bondokji, 2015). The timing of the emergence of the Brotherhood in Jordan, when the regime was beginning to agitate for independence, set the tone for the relationship between the state and the Brotherhood. Like the tribes, the relationship between the Government of Jordan and the Brotherhood was founded on a symbiotic arrangement: “the Jordanian state established its relationship with the Brotherhood and allowed it to work to achieve a set of goals that the state and society find necessary and important for building social cohesion to support state policies and positions” (Gharaybeh, 2014).

In 1946 when Jordan gained independence from the British, who were weakened from fighting in WWII, the cost of employing the majority of Jordanians through employment in the government required new support. Internal support came in the form of “loans” from the patrons to the Amir who covered his personal shortfalls when British allowances were not enough or subsided, these were effectively grants and not loans, as it was known they wouldn’t be repaid (Rogan, 1994). External support which had previously been provided by the British now came from a variety of donors including the United States, international organizations founded during the postwar moment, and
countries from the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC). However, a major shift from British sponsorship to American sponsorship was complete by 1951, when the Eisenhower doctrine went into effect and the US began giving Jordan $1.4 million dollars of aid annually. In addition to securing new financial support from outside sponsors, breaking from Britain also required an anti-colonial identity. Massad argues that this new anti-colonial identity was ready-made in the exclusionary new version of Bedouinism which occupied the military, and which become the “true national identity” (Massad, 2001, 164).

7.2 TESTING THE CONTRACT: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO GLOBALIZATION

The East Bank/West Bank population divide and globalization are the two major forces testing Jordan’s social contract. Both the current population divide and the processes of globalization have origins in earlier historical developments. In 1948 the massive number of Palestinian refugees threatened to overwhelm the resources and culture of the native population of approximately 750,000 (Alon, 2007). Since the Transjordanian national identity was based on the newly produced Bedouin elite and a social contract which favored the tribes, the task of assimilating the Palestinians presented multiple challenges. As previously mentioned, given the sensitivity of the population balance, it remains the practice of the state to not publicly acknowledge population ratios which distinguish between East Bankers and West Bankers. However, in contemporary Jordan it is an open secret that native Jordanians are the minority population. The shift to Jordan being peopled by more Palestinian-Jordanians than Transjordanians began almost immediately after independence and resulted in a social contract which only works effectively for less than half of the population.
When a second large wave of approximately 300,000 of Palestinians arrived in Jordan in 1967, following the Arab loss in the Six Day War, many Palestinians had already begun to develop the private sector (Alon, 2007). While Palestinians with formal Jordanian citizenship can serve in the JAF, they hit a glass ceiling which prevents them from receiving further training or promotion opportunities. Likewise, Palestinians with full citizenship rights could also work for the government but were constrained by their lack of tribal *wasta* and would struggle to reach higher ranking positions.

The post-civil war program of Jordanization returned clarity to a social contract which always favored the tribes. However, from 1948-1971 the Jordanian Government was attempting to balance the social contract of favoring the tribes, with assimilating Palestinians in to the nation. This occurred while simultaneously expanding Jordan’s borders as the West Bank formally became part of Jordan. Following the Civil War, the survival of the Hashemite regime was again dependent on receiving the full support from the tribes. Once again, the tribes supported the King, and were rewarded with a strengthening of their privileges. Two forms of *wasta* developed: as the public sector required tribal *wasta* which worked to exclude Palestinians by virtue of making them non-competitive, while the private sector developed its own form of *wasta* based on personal connections.

Starting in 1980, members of the JAF became even more privileged when the government began: offering children of the military reserved seats in and scholarships in Jordanian Universities; creating special duty-free shops for the military; and ensuring lifetime healthcare benefits for both parents and children of service members (Massad, 2001, 219). This military patronage continues to ensure the primary role of military
economic interest in supporting the regime. While government wages were not necessarily commensurate with those in the private sector, the prestige, sense of duty, and other associated monetary privileges still compelled many tribal sons to pursue employment in the Government of Jordan.

In 1987, this exclusion became formalized with the passing of the first law distinguishing between native and naturalized Jordanians. This law prohibited naturalized Jordanians from holding “political and diplomatic positions and positioned established by the parliament unless 10 years has passed since his acquisition of Jordanian nationality” (Massad, 2001, 44). With the formalization of the exclusion of many Palestinian-Jordanians from the public sector, West Bankers essentially occupied a parallel economic and the secondary wasṭa based system emerged in the private sector.

Tensions remain among West Bankers who felt underrepresented and excluded from the government. However, the social contract held as Ammanis (many of whom are aslyn min Palestine) sought to expand the private sector. With the East Bank/West Bank divide already straining the original social contract, globalization also started exerting additional pressure. Palestinians unable to secure work in Amman travelled to the Gulf for work and started sending remittances home to Amman. When the ability to climb social economic classes had been previously achieved primarily through governmental work, which was primarily controlled by East Bankers, now Palestinians were also able to advance via the private sector (Jureidini, 1984). New sources of income including remittances and new sectors of commerce allowed West Bankers to move beyond the monopolies created through patronage in the private sector during WWII. They brought new capital into the city and the new economic mobility fostered the creation of a nascent
middle class.

If the first King Abdullah created a new tribal elite and entered into a social contract with them in exchange for their support, the second King Abdullah’s policies created a new elite class of economic advisors who speak the language of neoliberalism, while still being very loyal to the Hashemites. The balancing act between these two groups of elites reflects the balancing act within the broader Jordanian population. The strength of the new elites who gained both prestige and wealth as Jordan sought to modernize by embracing globalization presents another genuine test to the original social contract, as evidenced by the shifts within the public sector (section 7.3 I outline some of the discourses the Jordanian government utilizes to maintain this balance).

First, I will identify a major shift in public sector employment which was occurring simultaneous to the West Bank actions bolstering the private sector. Youth hoping to work for the government feel this shift as jobs which once seemed plentiful now according to my interviews take years “waiting on the roll” hoping that you name will be chosen. The only youth who confidently told me they would be working for the government were those who were going into the military following family tradition and with the ability to employ *wasta*. Bayloumy argues that when the regional economic depression in the mid-80s (caused by the oil bust) compelled the Jordanian government to reach out to the IMF for help, that it resulted in the imposition of the SAP and ultimately an increase in “military welfare” to stabilize the economy (2008). SAP hit Jordan hard when governmental oil subsides were removed as the nation has little in the way of natural energy sources.

70 When King Hussein died of cancer in 1999 his son Abdullah II ascended to the throne. He remains King.
The restive area of Ma’an ardently protested this removal of the oil subsidies since they are a transport hub without many other drivers in their economy. As I noted previously, prior to SAP the state employed approximately 75% of Jordan’s work force. The expansion of Washington Consensus free market ideology through international financial institutions meant imposing economic policies throughout the developing world in the early 1990s, which required governments to “tighten their belts” and to reduce general population welfare (Stiglitz, 2002). Although globalization was introduced as way to diversify and drive the economy, it also imposed restrictions. As Jordan’s new primary financial external supporter, the US encouraged military welfare instead of general governmental employment. The shift towards a more robust military required the rest of the state budget to decrease.

Indeed, the military increased three-fold from 1961 to 1975. In 1975 one-fourth of the domestic labor force was in the security services (Bayloumy, 2008, 62). Such guaranteed employment and preferential treatment did not make the rural Jordanian population economically better off, but provided them with a guaranteed, steady income. Of particular note was that, “domestically, the lion’s share of jobs was in the civil service and army” (Piro, 1998, 40). With nearly half of the economy driven by government employment in the JAF or civil services, and 1/3 of GDP coming from remittances, only 16% of the economy was from the private sector.

“The military and security services were the only sector growing in structural adjustment. Instead of subsidizing Jordanians or East Bankers in general, the state began to target its social largesse to a sub-group of East Bankers — the military” (Bayloumy, 2008, 301). A separate economic system, via the “dual income structure,” blossomed as
West Bankers received remittances and private sector salaries, without subsidies (Bayloumy, 2008, 281). Palestinian-Jordanians didn’t overtly protest the dual structure as they were making more money than many Jordanians who held more privileged social standing. A period of high inflation due to an influx of oil money from the Gulf meant the government increased public sector subsidies for state employees. Inflation spiked further during the great “Return Period” when remittance workers “Jordanians” of Palestinian descent who barely knew Jordan returned in droves during the first Gulf War. However, the returnees brought cash with them. $1 billion USD flowed into Jordan and small businesses were born overnight (Bayloumy, 2008).

The return of excess highly educated labor, unable to be absorbed into the state sector and intentionally excluded from the security services, set off a period of high-income polarization. This tension was partially abated through the large influx of US aid, an economic measure which bolsters the military element of the regime’s base. US military aid to Jordan increased significantly in the 1990s, and jumped even more after 2003 following the first Iraq War. During the 30 years prior to 2001, the US provided Jordan a total of $4.5 billion. Since 2003 the average has been over $750 million per year. In 2003, to negate the effects on Jordan from the Iraq war, the amount of aid from the US increased to $1.5 billion. From 2004 going forward the amount Jordan received from US hovered around half a billion dollars (Bayloumy, 2008, 160).

Approximately half of all US aid71 was designated for military expenditures,

---

71 In a speech attended by author on February 14, 2018 Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced a $1.25 billion annual aid package per annum to Jordan lasting for five years. The speech was held at the US Embassy in Amman as part of the Secretary’s regional tour. He greeted the embassy community and American Boy and Girl Scouts were requested to attend. The author took her Girl Scout.
including: military equipment, policing, training, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, and border control. Jordan is also one of the five largest USAID recipients worldwide (Sharp, 2018).

Jordan’s small size does not indicate that it should receive such a preferred status for US funding. However, the regime’s willingness to invest in and use its military’s Special Forces units to support international efforts against terrorism has made it a key coalition partner. The significant American investment in Jordan’s military can also be explained by Jordan’s geographic location and the regime’s willingness to be a western leaning interlocutor with other Arab nations. To create support and funnel welfare to the populace, the government turned to reliance on the military. This welfare is largely received by East Bankers who serve in the security forces.

Thus, the Government of Jordan was shrinking due to SAP pressures in all areas except the military, which was growing through financial support from the US. Meanwhile, a budding middle class had started to develop throughout the region as economic changes driven by petrodollars brought rapid physical changes to urban centers. The authors of the anthology The evolving Arab city: tradition, modernity and urban development illuminate how Arab cities across the region began changing during the 1990s as a result of excess capital from the Gulf, which was seeking a place for investment (Elsheshtawy, 2008). While Amman is often left out of literature on Middle Eastern cities, this collection is divided into two types of Arab cities: struggling and emerging cities.

---

72 Prior to his unexpected ascension to the throne, King Abdullah II was in Jordan’s Special Forces units and anticipated remaining a soldier as his uncle was the Crown Prince. Thus- his nickname… the Warrior King.
All of the scholars in the anthology are from the MENA region and attempt to situate the changes within their cities from a subaltern perspective instead of from the perspective of western scholars. This effort slightly predates Roy’s heavily cited call to extend urban theory beyond theories being created in the Global North to capture occurrences not accounted for in the Global South by producing theories in the Global South73 (Roy, 2009b). Notably, Malkawi highlights how the ‘global cities’ concept erases the regional and historic significance of Arab cities as it is framed exclusively on a city’s economic impacts on a global scale (2008). This new framing ignores other cultural and historic framings. Amman’s importance as a center of refuge, Mecca’s religious impact, and Fez’s cultural significance disappear if the only measure becomes global economic contribution. Yet in each of the region’s struggling cities, it was local residents themselves who strove to place their city on the ‘global cities’ map.

Amman is identified as a struggling city since it is the recipient of investment dollars from the Gulf. The emerging cities are those which are generating the oil wealth. Amman became one of several cities which actively sought to attract investments to make it competitive as a suitable Global City where these funds could be invested (Daher, 2008). Thus, elite Jordanians entered into competition with other regional cities including Beirut, to remake Amman a city ripe for investment.

In the case of Amman, public discourse suggests that the Jordanian government is a passive participant in the neoliberal transformation of the city. However, when King

73 Numerous scholars either worked in parallel to the Elsheshtawy anthology or responded to Roy’s call to produce urban theory in the Global South. Some of the most prominent theories include the Comparative Gesture (Robinson, 2011), Regional Urbanism (Ren, 2015), Postcolonial Urbanism (Hentschel, 2015) and Globalization in the Global South (Weinstein, 2008; Bayat, 2004).
Hussein died in 1999, it ushered in a new era of development in Jordan. Again, it is important to recognize the regional trends which were unfolding in the late 1990s. During this time, Bahrain, Morocco, Syria, and Jordan all experienced the changing of their heads of state. This new crop of rulers was all younger than their predecessors and each embarked on a program of modernization within their countries.

In Jordan that meant that the western educated King Abdullah II began the move away from a large public sector towards public/private partnerships. He placed a premium on economic advisers who were dubbed the “New King’s Men” (Perthes, 2004). Those around the King embraced the one-sided discourse to advance the city through technology and modern development based on investing capital through building projects. Globalization didn't invade Amman: the red carpet was laid out for it to enter.

Although King Abdullah II included a plethora of young economic advisors, many of whom were educated in the West like himself, in his inner circle, they did not entirely displace the “influence of older and more security-oriented segments” (Bank, 2004, 35).74 While these New King’s men were critical to the King’s vision of economic expansion and moving Amman into strong competition for investment dollars as a ‘Global City,’ the King was keenly aware of needing to honor both the security needs of Jordan and the social contract which essentially means that the “security-oriented segments” are the East Bankers. Thus, as long as the prestige of being within the King’s inner circle and being respected as the mukhabarat (security services) was not decreased by the inclusion of the new Economic Consultative Council (ECC), whose focus was to modernize and drive the private sector, the social contract continued to work for the

74 Like Abdullah, these men were between the ages of 35-45.
While King Hussein had been primarily occupied with stability and navigating the politics between Jordan and Israel, by the end of his reign he had begun to include the cause of economic reform into his rhetoric. King Abdullah announced at the start of his reign that reforming the economy was a top priority (Bank, 2008). Many of the envisioned reforms were aimed to allow Jordan to participate in international economic organizations. The race towards a neoliberal transformation in Jordan began in earnest with the launching of the \textit{al-Urduun al-jadid} campaign (The New Jordan) which was ubiquitous throughout the country (Bank, 2008). As part of these reforms a Young Entrepreneurs Association (YEA) was formed, public works were partially privatized, Jordan become the fourth country to enter into a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, and several Special Economic Zones (SEZ’s) which complied with International Monetary Funds (IMF) regulations were established (Bank, 2008, 43).\footnote{Despite the Washington Consensus advocating for total privatization in Jordan, “Large scale privatization would endanger if not entail a total breech of the implicit social contract that has been the base of regime stability for decades” (Bank, 2008, 51). Thus, privatization was only partially accomplished.}

Social contract tensions between Jordan’s population of East Bankers and West Bankers reached a climax during the Civil War but were lessened as US military aid allowed the government to bolster the minority population of Jordanians through the security forces (Bayloumy, 2008). In 2002, Massad declared, “Jordanian armed forces [were] a privileged sector of Jordanian society” (Massad, 2001, 221). However, the value of this privilege has been decreasing due to the development of a secondary economic system in the private sector, which has been aided by globalization. While globalization created possibilities for being prosperous in the private sector, it also exposed Jordan to
pressures from the shrinking of the state and the introduction of new taxes which are required by the IMF. Compellingly, most Jordanians profess to be pro-Hashemites and compartmentalize the new taxes as being the fault of the corrupt parliament. Schenker argues that this generation of youth is more likely to protest the imposition of new taxes which were rumored to be placed on popular cell phone apps than to protest Israeli/Palestinian issues (2017).

When I asked my respondents about attending protests, many said they do attend protests. However, the lack of fervor they shared with me about their attendance seems to support Schenker’s argument. Many informants echoed Tala’s comment: when I asked about the recent protests against an Israeli Diplomat embroiled in an investigation of the murder of a Jordanian, Tala said, “I went to the street to participate in the party atmosphere- we know we aren’t going to change anything so we brought music and managed to get out of the house for a night.” Another youth sent me a Whatsapp message while protesting the American policy, “I know you live near the Embassy, we have lots of food here and I could bring some sweets over for your family if you are home.” Although I thanked her for her thoughtfulness and explained that I wasn’t home, the impression she gave of the protests was much less political than social.

However, rumors about new taxes shook the society in 2017 when popular items including cigarettes, alcohol, bread, rice, meat, and jamid were all allegedly going to be targeted for new taxes. Protest movements including boycotts and demonstrations caused the government to take out a full-page ad in local papers with pictures listing protected items (Schenker, 2017). Historically, only 3-5% of Jordanians pay annual taxes, but when the 16% General Sales Tax (GST) was introduced it affected the whole population, many
of whom live near the poverty line.

Even though the Parliament is typically targeted as the boogieman for any decrease in services or increases in taxes, the Government of Jordan reluctantly takes these steps to appease requirements from the IMF. Under pressure “to balance the budget and meet its International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic reform commitments, the kingdom needs

Figure 7.2 This Jordanian government advertisement tries to quell the fear of rumored new taxes by delineating which products are excluded from taxes. Petra News published in April 2017. http://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/Main.jsp?lang=ar, Accessed April 28, 2017.

to curtail subsidies and raise nearly $2 billion in revenues (Schenker, 2017). As noted in an opinion piece published in the Jordan Times, most Jordanians don’t have an accurate understanding of the goals of the IMF program and therefore, “there is not serious popular resistance to the programme” (Fanek, 2017).

This implies that if more Jordanians understood that decreased services and
increased taxes are being motivated by agreements with international organizations, then, they would be more likely to resist. In late May of 2018, Prime Minister Mulqi was forced to step down due to anti-austerity protests. While some social media commentators accused him of being an IMF puppet, most simply said the government was inept and shouldn’t be introducing new taxes on people who were already hurting. Again, the local government was blamed for the tax increases and the IMF delayed Jordan’ second performance evaluation in order to give the new Prime Minister, Omar Razzaz time to study the tax situation.

Although East Bankers working for the state have begun to complain publicly that their salaries are not keeping pace with the cost of living in Jordan, thus far they have not blamed international organizations for their experiences transitioning from privileged to underpaid public servants. One focus panel I conducted addressed this topic when I asked about people's dreams. After the first young man said he is expected to work for the Government of Jordan since his fathers and grandfather worked for the government, several others nodded their heads in agreement. After asking for a raise of hands for who felt the same way, I asked who was looking forward to this path. No hands were raised in response to this question. Instead youth spoke with one another about not necessarily wanting to follow their fathers into the public sector. These young men spoke about wanting more for their lives than “boring careers” with little opportunity to use the skills they learned at university.

Bayloumy supports their sentiment by focusing on the financial impacts:

“What was initially a reward is fast becoming a curse under the new economic arrangements. For the regime, the downside, apparent in economic liberalization, was the lack of a Jordanian private sector with which to ally. Because the private sector was, and remains, predominantly Palestinian, a significant Jordanian or East Bank bourgeoisie did
not exist. The class was simply not large enough. Nor was there a substantial Jordanian middle class separate from state employ” (Bayloumy, 2008, 281).

The tensions straining the Jordanian social contract are continuing to increase, particularly in Amman, as population challenges and the effects of globalization are most obvious in Jordan’s most developed city. As I discussed in Chapter 6 now even some East Bank children feel they must leave Amman to reach their dreams. This signifies a larger failure of the original social contract than previously anticipated. If the pressures to the social contract essential nullify the contract, even for the minority group it was built for, then it is critical to examine what is being said about the potential paths forward en lieu of the original social contract.

Specifically, in Amman, which is largely made of residents whom the contract was not intended to support, Ababasa states, “challenges to Jordan’s social contract are made worse by the “constantly building” nature of the city” (Ababsa, 2011, 40). The constant building is motivated both by population fluxes and neoliberalism. Certainly, the government works hard to prevent widespread protests and instability, by employing narratives about stability, anti-terrorist activism, and entrepreneurship to maintain the status quo in the face of an outdated social contract.

7.3 BEYOND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: MESSAGES TO CONTAIN YOUTH

The stresses to Jordan’s original social contract were the backdrop to the new messages Ammani youth began hearing during the Arab Spring. However, the radical messages of regime overthrow which spread through the region did not gain salience in Jordan. Instead, other messages targeting Jordan’s youth began to be propagated by the medley of actors who pursuing a neoliberal path. These narratives are a large part of the societal response to Jordan’s challenges which seek to encourage youth to maintain the
status quo and to find their own solutions to challenges instead of relying on the
government for employment. While some narratives are produced by the government,
others arise from a multiplicity of factors including the entrenchment of the neoliberal
ideology. These discourses serve to constrain and contain a large youth bulge whose
employment needs and energies are unable to be met by the current system. These
messages include: Stability First, Youth as Peace Activists, and Entrepreneurship.

Previously, I outlined how Jordanian youth are funneled towards career paths in
either the public or private sector based on their paternal lineages. Thus, Jordanian-
Jordanian youths whose positions in the public sector are failing to keep pace with the
cost of living in Amman are facing a new form of vulnerability that their parents didn’t
face during their employment with the state. Given the high percentage of youth aslyn
min Palestine in Amman, only the minority of youth are guided toward public sector
work. Throughout my field work in Amman and in my meetings with key informants it
was repeatedly stressed that youth outside of the city may feel more connected to Jordan
and are more likely to stay in Jordan. The assumptions relayed to me are based on the
popular generalization that smaller urban zones and villages have higher percentages of
native Jordanians, who subsequently would have stronger wasta in the public sector,
enabling them to work for the Jordanian government and to subvert high youth
unemployment rates.

While the scope of my study remains the city of Amman, early in my study I
conducted a focus panel in Murfuq, a rural area near the Syrian border, to compare how
youth outside of the city perceive Jordan’s and their own current geopolitical situations.
Contrary to the expectations of many Ammanis, during this interview with 12 young
men, 11 reported that they would like to leave Jordan, despite having *wasta* and access to work in the government.\(^76\) Their answers disrupted the narrative I heard in Amman and exposed just how strained Jordan’s social contract is among youth. I returned to Amman with these unexpected responses and began asking young people about their ambitions.

As I outlined in Chapter 6, it was striking that despite my sample being mixed East Bankers and West Bankers, very few youth reported that their dream job was to work for the state. Instead, “activist” jobs (NGO’s, refugee work, gender empowerment, and LGBTQ work) and self-employment were the most desirable.\(^77\) I met with key informants at local universities, training centers, prominent businesses and activists to identify the narratives that arose most frequently during my interviews and were thus most influential in developing youths’ new perspectives.

The first and most dominant discourse which I heard during my interviews in Amman can be summarized as ‘Stability First.’ This narrative is closely associated with the Hashemites who use discursive measures to link Jordan’s stability to the Great Arab Revolt by highlighting how the Hashemites’ ancestors led local tribes to liberation from the Ottomans. In May-June 2016 Amman was decorated with banners and pageantry celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the Arab Revolt. The centennial was billed as the nation’s largest festival and included a military display complete with Royal Jordanian Air Force air shows, a camel parade, and fireworks. Notably, this celebration links the Hashemite involvement in Jordan’s stability to a time before modern Transjordan existed.

\(^76\) More fieldwork would need to be conducted both in the north and in the south to draw more reliable conclusions. My one focus panel simply provided more questions and a focus for my work in Amman.

\(^77\) Since the Arab Spring Amman’s role as a regional hub for international actors working with refugees and focusing on activism exposes youth to these jobs more frequently.
while also reinforcing the Hashemites’ narrative of military enforced strength.

While this message has been used for generations to calm internal tensions, it became even more firmly rooted during the Arab Spring as the Jordanian government and many members of the community were determined to prevent the instability occurring in surrounding nations from spreading to Jordan. Democratic reforms had begun prior to the Arab Spring. The King notoriously gave an interview shortly after the Arab Spring began, professing that he would prefer his son to simply be a beloved monarch in the vein of Queen Elizabeth, instead of having to shoulder the responsibility of being a monarch in the same all-consuming manner that his position entails (Goldberg, 2013).

Figure 7.3 “The Centennial of the Great Arab Revolution and the Renaissance.” Al Quds, 06 2016, http://www.alquds.com/articles/1464933210738957700/ Accessed 03-06-2016 A Jordanian military parade for the 100-year anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt
However, these purported reforms to lessen the power of the monarch failed to emerge after the Arab Spring. Instead, a population intimately aware of the struggles refugees face was quickly subdued by reminders that the Hashemites have brought stability to Jordan and “at least we are safe, God willing” (Tobin, 2012; Ghafour, 2013). In Jordan, the Arab Spring protesters motivated the King to take away weapons from the security forces who were instead sent to the street with water and juice to placate the crowds and to reinforce that the Hashemites in Jordan are different than other authoritarian regimes in the region (Goldberg, 2013).

I first travelled to Amman in 2011 when I was living in Tunisia and my Arabic had a noticeable Tunisian accent. Friendly, but suspicious, Jordanians told me that although they were impressed that Tunisians had managed to overthrow a dictator that in Jordan, they wanted to slowly approach reforms so as not to cause chaos. Although ‘Stability First’ was not a formal advertisement campaign (unlike “We are all Jordan,” and “Jordan First”), it emerged as the key lesson young people learned from the Arab Spring.
According to Shereen it is important that they, “Don’t rock the boat!” Ayat echoed a similar message by saying “Stability and safety are more important than democracy. At least we have safety. We are caught in the middle of the FIRES!” For Arwa, the message of Stability First was reinforced by actions she saw around her: “Arabs didn’t appreciate stability in their own countries; those nations brought suffering upon themselves. Instability worries me.” Similarly, Ruba condemns the Arab Spring by stating, “It was negative and made me appreciate the stability of Jordan.” Finally, Farah expresses her initial interest in the Arab Spring when she says, “I was cheering for it, but then the street got “too noisy” and dangerous!” For each of these young women the Arab Spring reinforced their beliefs that Jordan should prioritize the relative safety they enjoy without upsetting the status quos.

Other youth talked about their leadership as a way of embracing the Stability First messaging. Tellingly, Shireen a member of a prominent tribe declared, “Who would control the tribes without the King? We need him to make them balanced.” Her comment is based on the commonly held belief that since the King is not a member of a Jordanian tribe, due to his family being Aslyn min an area outside of Jordan’s tribal regions that he is uniquely able to balance tribal politics. Sally, who is also from a prominent tribe offered a very similar sentiment, “We are so tribal, if a revolution happened we wouldn’t become a democracy we would just have unbalanced tribes- that is why we need the King for balance.”

Instead of explaining the perceived value of the King in maintaining harmony among Jordanian tribes, Ibrahim compared the King favorably to other leaders when he told me, “Democracy is not worth dying for, our King is a good man, but Trump was
chosen by democracy and he is not a good man.” Ibrahim shared this sentiment with a heavy heart while we were sitting in a Starbucks in a mall in West Amman. He used to dream of moving to America and spent one of his high school year’s studying in the United States. However, he was adamant that his dream was shattered with the election of an American President who he deems to be “not a good man.” Mohammed also spoke about King Abdullah in a positive manner as a way of affirming the need to prioritize Stability First when he said, “People here said, 'we are hungry, but we love the King' - we don’t want a revolution, just reform and help to fight corruption.”

Other young people focused on the negative impacts which they attribute to the Arab Spring as reasons why they are focusing on Stability First. Hadeel spoke of the protests this way, “The Arab Spring freaked us out. Protests are common here, we have them like we have coffee, but these were different. They taught us we are “lucky” to have stability.” The difference in these protests according to Hadeel can be seen in the prolonged violence in surrounding countries. However, for Diana the Arab Spring protests were negative because they resulted in additional constraints, “It held countries back-it turned too violent, now our speech is even more limited and we are afraid to speak up because we will be censored.” Also focusing on pragmatism was Bashar who explained that his lesson learned from the Arab Spring is to value, “Stability over reform. Democracy is too abstract and safety is concrete.”

Although a few people admitted that they initially participated in protests or hoped for reforms as a result of regional protests, the overwhelming response was that once Jordanians saw the turmoil the protests unleashed in Syria, that the reforms they want are not worth potentially destabilizing their own society. While the Arab Spring
protests in Jordan were anti-climactic and passed fairly quickly, a byproduct of the Arab
Spring was introduced to Jordanian society via DAESH, which served to inform and
constrain youth protests.

Sharp notes that Jordanian fighters supporting DAESH increased each year until
2017 when Jordan became the second highest exporter of foreign fighters to DAESH
(Sharp, 2018). Jordanian support for DAESH rattled the Kingdom particularly hard in
April of 2014 when a group of Jordanian DAESH fighters in Iraq posted a YouTube
video burning and shredding their Jordanians passports and personally vow to slaughter
King Abdullah as a “worshipper of English” (Schenker, 2014). Evidence of how little
was able to be done to control the increasing internal threat of extremist groups was seen
in the town of Ma’an. 78 In August 2014, the al-Qa’ida flag flew in Ma’an’s central
square, which was reported through multiple outlets, but not removed for at least a
month.

Although support for DAESH appeared to be increasing and the fear that
that accompanies terrorism was palpable at times, support for radicalism was by no
means the dominant Jordanian perspective. Several key moments prompted the silent
majority to actively and loudly begin disavowing Jordanian support for DAESH: the first
was when DAESH burned the Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasasbeh alive in January 2015.
This moment unified an outraged population to begin loudly condemning DAESH and
extolling their youth to turn away from terrorist groups. Multiple campaigns encouraging
people to report suspicious activity online and changes in people they knew emerged. The
government also began the most robust anti-terrorism campaign in its history as they

---

78 On page 117, I mentioned Ma’an’s restive nature when outlining the town’s
participation in protests during the first Iraq War.
enlisted teachers, clerics, and local influencers to join the ideological fight against extremism (Reed, 2014). When nine Jordanian professed supporters of DAESH attacked tourists in Karak Castle in December of 2016, civilians assisted the security forces in regaining control in another strong key moment of robust anti-DAESH public sentiment.

In Jordan the culture of being a place of refuge and the reality that they are geographically surrounded by instability reinforces the notion that the community itself must be active participants in their own national security. Thus, the “trapdoor of community” which shifts the burden of state activities to citizens without shifting the necessary training, resources, or authority required to perform these tasks is strong in Jordan (Herbert, 2005). By 2016 when the Karak attack occurred, many Jordanians had not only been exposed to generations of the Stability First message, but they had also seen the gradual rollback of state functions. Additionally, many young people had received anti-terrorism messages at the Mosque and at school. “Stability First” places all other youth desires like reforming the social contract, democratization, and greater participation in society on the back burner. The message that the youth are responsible for ensuring Jordan’s stability is the first discourse that young people relayed to me. The second message young people shared with me were their beliefs that they had new opportunities to improve their situations or those of others by becoming activists.

Indeed, by turning Jordanians into reporters who assist the *mukhabarat* in identifying and preventing the spread of terrorism to maintain stability within Jordan, the Jordanian government invited a form of citizenship activity which they traditionally suppress: youth as political activists. Jordan has a low level of civic participation and activism is highly controlled. Activists who participate under the umbrella of Royal
NGOs, through international NGOs sponsored by donors important to the regime, or through professional organizations which stay within prescribed limitations constitute the vast majority of activists (Larzillière, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 6, the University of Jordan and soccer matches offer limited spaces for youth political activism. Within certain boundaries, young peoples’ protests are permitted as a way to blow off steam. This echoes Skelton’s conclusion that governments around the world draw boundaries around youth’s actual and potential political agency with activism and citizenship (Skelton, 2013).

During our interview, noted activist Raghda Butros described activism in Jordan as existing in a “playpen.” Sitting at a café with a medley of appetizers in front of us, she shifted the plates around and pointed at them. These things: Palestine (*mutabuhl*) and Israel (*haloumi*) these are the things my generation was allowed to get into the playpen to yell and scream about. This generation feels like they have a bigger playpen- they can now work on women’s empowerment (french fries), LGBTQ rights (*kubeh*), and neighborhood projects (falafel) but none of this actually changes the table: we are still stuck with the same macro-level issues. We have been co-opted into reinforcing the neoliberal framework. While we might make one neighborhood or persons’ lives better we have accepted the rules of the game and have become ‘social entrepreneurs’"

For Raghda this was made crystal clear in Jordanian young peoples’ responses to the American decision to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This controversial decision legitimizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was met with peaceful protests (in which she participated) reminiscent of Tobin’s analysis of Arab Spring Protests in Amman, as they were like “yelling against the wind” since many
Ammanis felt they had already lost (Tobin, 2012, 100). They went because they felt they couldn’t be silent, but they knew that their actions would not produce any changes. The table would remain just as it was before their protests and the status quos would be maintained. Thus, in 2016 when the University of Jordan saw an increase of protests, focused primarily on tuition prices being raised, these protests were tolerated as they remained in the playpen (Goussous, 2016).

While Youth Activism was not an official state discourse rolled out with a formal ad campaign, the message of Youth as Peace Builders has been actively and publicly disseminated. In August 2015 Jordan hosted the first Global Youth Forum under the auspices of the United Nations. The convention produced the “Amman Youth Declaration” which was billed as a recipe for global youth to become active in “countering violent extremism and promoting peace. Youth have made their voices loud and clear, and it is the responsibility of all actors to recognize the vital role that young people can – and must – play in peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism,” said Ahmad Alhendawi, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth.

Despite the Amman Youth Convention being touted in the West, of the sixty youth I interviewed, less than ten had heard of the convention. When I explained that the convention was advertised in the local newspaper as open for all young Jordanians to participate in, the majority expressed skepticism that the event was actually open to them. The vast majority of my interviewees also reported that they don’t trust the newspapers and get their news from social media instead. This aligns with global trends of young people interacting with news sources primarily online (Loader, 2007).

None of the sixty participated, but the few who were aware of it described it as a
proud moment in which the Crown Prince’s debut on the international stage was well received. Despite opinions that this event was exclusionary, when I followed up and asked how they felt about Amman’s young people being encouraged to take an active role in peace building the responses were skeptical and included: we don’t have jobs, people don’t listen to us, how do we possibly scale this up and make an actual difference? The message of Ammani youth having an obligation to be peacemakers is also often disseminated through public speeches and interviews from Crown Prince Hussein, whose portfolio within the royal family includes youth issues in Jordan.

So far I have outlined two major messages youth have been hearing as a result of a fraying social contract and they are that they must: maintain the nation’s stability by “not rocking the boat,” and that they have an obligation to use their time for building peace or other “pre-approved” activist activities that stay in the playpen. The final message young Ammanis shared with me was that they should also actively solve their own unemployment problems by being self-employed or becoming entrepreneurs. As stated earlier, in Jordan the message of creating global neoliberal citizens is promoted as a survival strategy by an amalgamation of public, private, and aid organizations instead of being simply a state-led social transformation like those occurring in other regional monarchies (Jones, 2017).

Due to Jordan’s high dependence on foreign aid, messages coming from donors and development agencies are often highly prioritized. Indeed, Robehmed’s conclusion that young entrepreneurs are often unwittingly participating in and supporting the existing development model in Jordan by accepting their role in the global hierarchy as “underdeveloped” echoes Raghda’s comments on youth activists, who are likewise
passionate about making a difference, but also unwitting participants in supporting the status quos (Robehmed, 2015, 6). Although there is an Arabic term - *reyadii al amal* - for entrepreneurship, none of the young people or key informants spoke to me using the Arabic phrase. Instead they used the borrowed English term "entrepreneur". Development agencies have been hyping this word since the late 1990s and the buzz around it has ensured that young people who are interested in working for themselves are well acquainted with and comfortable using the buzzword instead of the Arabic term.

Just as the contraction of the state shifts responsibilities to the community for maintaining Stability First, it also leaves a shortage of available jobs for young people. This, again, follows the neoliberal logic that the community should be responsible for creating jobs lost during privatization. While talking with Sally in a Bohemian café near an eclectic shopping area, she had a difficult time staying focused on the interview. As the Personal Relations Executive for a prominent hotel, she needed to respond to her phone at least five times during our hour-long interview. I met Sally via a snowball referral from an interview at the University of Jordan. The initial respondent referred me to her cousin Sally when we started talking about entrepreneurial opportunities for youth in Amman.

Returning to the table after our third work related interruption, Sally said she wants to create a start-up and to become her own boss. She acknowledges that she is lucky to have such a good job in the private sector and that because of her family connections she could work in the public sector, but that she wants something different, to have more control of her own life. This sentiment reflects how some youth are taking responsibility for jobs previously provided by the state. Global messages such as “a rising
tide lifts all boats” reached Jordan just as King Abdullah II was focusing on how to improve Jordan’s economy. Despite guaranteed salaries and associated perks from working for the state, many youth recognize they will have limited buying power due to lower salaries in the government, and thus many are embracing the ideology that they can become wealthier if they create their own careers.

Innovative Jordan “is a nationwide campaign celebrating the achievements of Jordan’s innovators, entrepreneurs, and creative youth which was officially launched in May 2017 by Oasis500, the leading seed investment company and business accelerator anchored by the King Abdullah II Fund for Development (KAFD).” However, Robehmed traces the roots of Innovative Jordan back to a USAID funded trip which featured King Abdullah and a hand selected group of young potential entrepreneurs travelled to Silicon Valley in 2015. Declaring in the opening speech of the meeting that two simple words drive Jordan’s commitment to supporting entrepreneurship, King Abdullah explicitly cited “public interest” as the motivation behind attempting to turn Amman into “Silicon Wadi, [explaining that] Amman has become the regional capital for startups, and the tenth best place to start a technology company in the world” (King Abdullah’s speech quoted in Robehmed, 2015).

The official acknowledgement that starts ups and young entrepreneurs are essential to the “public interest” followed Jordan’s information and communications technology (ICT) “breakthrough [which] came in 2009 when Maktoob, a Jordanian internet portal, was sold to Yahoo for $175m” (Economist, 2013, 2). Currently, while 75% of the Arabic content online is created in Jordan, the breakout success of Maktoob

79 https://innovative.jo
Waugaman optimistically declares that a youth inspired revolution has been unfolding in Jordan as “a culture of entrepreneurship, fueled by a boom in the ICT sector, is quietly transforming the country by creating new businesses and jobs” (2012, ii). Other journalists have declared a “Startup Spring” has emerged in the region, following the more famous Arab Spring (Schroeder 2013; Economist 2013, MacBride 2013). However, when discussing why youth are pursuing entrepreneurship during a meeting with two key informants: Rasha (Endeavor Youth Initiative) and Shereen (an independent economic analyst), their perspectives were not as optimistic as the media narrative. Likewise, despite declaring that:

“ICT startup entrepreneurs are central figures in development narratives in Jordan, embodying ideals of private sector growth, neoliberal individualism, and the knowledge society, in an economic context of high youth unemployment and a diminished public sector following structural adjustment policies”

Robehmed concludes that Ammani start-ups should not look to turn Silicon Valley as a model due to the unique challenges Jordan’s entrepreneurs face (iii, 2015). In her role at Endeavor, Rasha works with youth who enter trade careers instead of attending university and Endeavor typically attempts to place Jordanian youth within the private sector. She argued that youth are pursuing entrepreneurship out of necessity, not out of self-motivation to reform Jordan’s failing social contract. She elaborated that East Bank youth have fewer options to work for the public sector since registering on the civil service roster is ubiquitous, but an actual job offer can take years to receive. While Rasha observed that the Government of Jordan is not hiring at the same pace or level they once did, other sources say state employment “dropped precipitously” due to economic liberalization starting in the late 1980s (Assaad 2014, 34).
The job market looks bleak for young Ammanis: government hiring is drying up, options to work in the Gulf are extremely limited, and the private sector (according to Rasha) doesn’t want to hire Jordanian youth due to what they see is a larger “skills gap.” The “skills gap” is the term frequently used in the private sector when they complain that most Jordanian youth are unprepared for even the most basic positions. Shereen pushed back at this alleged “skills gap” and instead cited the answers from nearly 200 youth she had surveyed for a recent economic report. In their answers they eschewed work in basic positions like: the garment sector, agriculture and other factory work because they have what she termed an “expectation gap.”

Defining the ‘expectation gap’ she listed the youths’ stated top requirements for accepting a job: #1 Take-home salary - many listed a take-home salary of 260JD ($367 in 2018) per month, which is near the poverty line, as their reserved take-home salary. This reflects their calculation for out of pocket expenses including transportation, meals while at work, and cigarettes. #2 Career development path - which will allow them to advance #3 Personal fulfilment - via positions with some form of personal knowledge acquisition instead of repetitive work which doesn’t engage them. #4 Work-life balance - which allows them time after hours to engage in personal pursuits instead of commuting or working at home after hours. Dismissing the ‘skills gap’ rhetoric of the private sector, Shereen said “on the job training in these industries only takes days or weeks.” Instead she argues that employing foreigners is common because the social coding of menial jobs

---

80 Although she stated that she had already completed the report, it was not publicly available yet.
81 Shereen noted that although many economists would not include the cigarettes as a mandatory cost of living deduction, the majority of youth included this expense in their calculations of take-home pay.
means Jordanians are not interested in that work and the private sector has the ability to pay lower wages to foreigners.

When I asked both key informants if they think interest in entrepreneurship or self-employment has changed from their generation to this generation, they both gave a resoundingly affirmative answer. Calling it a “paradigm shift” based on the lack of available prestigious and rewarding employment with the state, they both stated this generation is attempting to fill the gap. Since the social contract is no longer viable for the majority of Ammani youth, they are left to try and create their own opportunities. Despite this not being a formal national policy, they both agreed the shift of responsibility from the state providing jobs to the youth, to the youth themselves needing to create jobs, is a change which benefits the regime.

While Waugman calls youth entrepreneurship in Jordan a revolution driven by the youth, in a regional study of Entrepreneurship Education in the Arab States the analysis concludes Jordanian policymakers have created and are promoting a variety of initiatives to promote entrepreneurship; including the 2003 Educational Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) initiative (Masri, 2010). Masri argues that spurring innovation in the absence of natural resources and a shrinking public sector has led educators and policymakers to promote entrepreneurship as a form of modernization.

Describing the current entrepreneurial environment in Jordan, as a result of these efforts, Dr. Munther Masri, Former Minister of Education in Jordan, wrote that although “the policy framework for EPE [entrepreneurial education] is well developed, there is a need for improvement at the implementation level, regarding skills-oriented teaching and learning” (Masri, 2010, 5). Dr. Masri’s conclusion that the framework for teaching
entrepreneurial education is in place, but that the implementation needs improvement sheds light onto the debate between Rasha who serves as a proxy for the private sector and Shereen who was representing the perspective of young potential employees. In Chapter 6 I illuminated the on-going debate in Jordan over reforming the education sector from rote memorization towards more analytical skill building. By pushing young people towards entrepreneurship without providing enough analytical tools, society is addressing a failure of the social contract; however, the results may produce both ‘skills’ and ‘expectation’ gaps.

Regardless of the potential pitfalls, public support for entrepreneurship filters through initiatives such as the Annual Queen Rania Al-Abdullah Award for Outstanding Teachers which was initiated in 2006 with the “objective of enhancing the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by spreading awareness about excellent performance concepts and providing incentives for outstanding teachers” (Masri, 2010, 25). In addition to public support for teaching entrepreneurs, Royal NGOs, including the Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship which supports university level entrepreneurial education and an incubator iPark which supports startups have blossomed since the early 2000s. Governmental Organizations and international organizations such as INJAZ\(^\text{82}\) and the Arab Centre for Human Resources Development (ACHRD) also contribute to spreading positive messages about entrepreneurship. Both initiatives include courses or training in entrepreneurship. INJAZ started as a USAID funded project in 1999 with the sponsorship of Queen Rania. The youth focused organization states its mission statement is “to inspire and prepare youth to become productive members of their society and

---

\(^{82}\text{Injaz (achievement) http://injaz.org.jo/Pages/viewpage.aspx?pageID=113.}\)
accelerate the development of the national economy,” with entrepreneurship being listed as one of INJAZ’s areas.

While youth self-employment in the informal or “grey sector” does not meet the development use of the word in Jordan which focuses so heavily on the ITC sector, it is critical to recognize that many young people see work in the informal sector as being entrepreneurs. According to recent IMF reporting the informal sector represents 26% of the Jordanian economy, but Shereen places it at closer to 40% of the economy. Highlighting the inherent risks of participating in “what is sometimes called the “grey market” [which] promotes low levels of labor force contribution to government social security programs and exposes participants to higher legal risks and lower access to capital” reveals the long-term costs of informal employment (Adely, 2004). Yet, the informal economy allows young people to take ‘off the books’ jobs including: driving for Uber or Careem, being street vendors, or working in service sectors. While precise figures are difficult to obtain due to the illegal nature of these positions, work in many of these paths can meet the short-term expectations of youth whose options are limited by an eroding social contract.

7.4 CONCLUSIONS: CONTAINING AMMANI YOUTH BY MOLDING THEM INTO NEOLIBERAL CITIZENS

Young people are “often imagined as both the solution to societies’ ills and the greatest threat to the social order. As such, considerable effort is devoted to cultivating citizens who will engage in behaviours seen as ‘legitimate’ or appropriate” (Staeheli, 2021).

---

84 Both Careem and Uber were still illegal when I completed the research phase of my project. Therefore, I did not conduct interviews with drivers. However, since this work has been gaining legal status, this could open additional avenues to reach young people in the future.
2013, 3). Indeed, youth in Amman are also often imagined to be both the solution to and the problem with Jordanian society. At the same time that they are stretching the applicability of Jordan’s aging social contract and being deemed risks for joining radical movements, they are also envisioned to be peacemakers who put stability first, improve their communities through activism and create their own jobs through entrepreneurship.

Yet, just as Staeheli noted with regard to youth protesting increased university fees in the United Kingdom, in Jordan only certain acts of citizenship or behaviors are deemed legitimate or appropriate. After examining how students are taught to be responsible citizens in South Africa Staehli states “neoliberalism is supported by a set of ideas regarding the optimal relationship between citizens and the state, whereby citizens take responsibility for themselves and each other through actions in civil society” (Staeheli 2013, 6). By highlighting how the Jordanian government has encouraged youth to participate in specific social and entrepreneurial programs as the social contract became less desirable, I also illuminate how they are creating young neoliberal citizens.

According to Cole, “the New Arab” is one who has seen the possibility of major political change through their experience in the Arab Spring (Cole, 2014). Yet in Jordan, the Arab Spring was never envisioned as a revolution, instead the requests from the street were for modest reforms. In this chapter I illuminated how the Arab Spring molded the way young Ammanis request reforms. In Amman the chaos that was unleashed by the fallout of the Arab Spring taught youth to reinforce the status quos out of fear of instability. Although the message of Stability First predates the Arab Spring, it took on new nuances as neighboring Syria descended into and continues to experience a brutal civil war. The new salience of this message hit home in Amman even as the original
Social contract is facing additional pressures making it less applicable or desirable for the vast majority of the city’s youth. This includes both Palestinian-Jordanians funneled towards the private sector and Jordanian-Jordanians who recognize that the value of working for the state has not kept pace with their expenses or expectations.

Instead of being empowered by messages encouraging them to become activists, peacekeepers, and entrepreneurs young people are perhaps inadvertently fortifying the status quo as they become neoliberal global citizens. Instead of offering new long-term solutions to the “bulge” of young highly educated people who cannot rely on the same system of employment that their elders relied on, an assortment of NGOs, international donors, and the government are encouraging youth to embrace ideologies of entrepreneurship and civic engagement as replacements for the state providing employment. Yet as Raghda wondered about social entrepreneurs, these activities may simply keep young people busy and feeling like they are making a difference without actually addressing the structural problems. Indeed, Ammani youth may be paradoxically leaving this generation without adequate employment or a system which addresses their fundamental goals through their actions which are extending the status quo.

While Jordan’s original social contract worked to intertwine the fortunes of the tribes with those of the Hashemites during the formation of a new state with citizens willing to be governed by someone outside of the local tribal hierarchy, this unwritten agreement is no longer as applicable. The contract accomplished the goals of creating loyal Jordanian citizens who accept the Hashemite regime as the legitimate leaders of the state; however, since the state lacks the resources to continue to support this arrangement without external support, it has to comply with the requirements of its outside
benefactors. These include lowering levels of state spending, increasing free market activity, and increasing state revenue through taxation. All of these requirements negatively impact an already precarious group of young people who are part of Generation C. The very connectedness of this generation of digital natives is being used to define them in the same vein that The Greatest Generation was defined by World War II.

Indeed, in this chapter I argued that connectedness through globalization increased pressures as King Abdullah II’s leadership team embraced making Amman a global city and Ammanis global citizens. As the Government of Jordan stepped back from providing traditional services and embraced neoliberal building projects, Amman’s path to becoming a global city has left it with the “rotting corpses” of mega-projects which were unable to be completed after the 2008 market crash (Daher, 2016). While less visible, the project of creating global Ammani citizens has also been occurring. Becoming a global citizen necessitates participating in the world along neoliberal terms.

In Jordan, like most governments, “there are many efforts to shape youth as citizens, giving them opportunities, skills, and rewards for engaging in particular kinds of political acts” (Staeheli, 2013, 22). As neoliberal but loyal citizens, Ammani youth are left with very limited options to participate in the previous social contract and instead are being paradoxically empowered and constrained by new narratives which encourage them to solve issues which used to be the responsibility of the state. Roy argues that many modern cities, particularly in the Global South, create paradoxes of civic

85 Generation C is the moniker which has been applied to the generation of people who have been born as part of the Connected world of social media, smart phones, and the internet.
governmentality which reproduce inequalities within their current social hierarchies (Roy, 2009). Amman youth fall within this trend of reproducing inequalities through their inclusion in civic governmentality via their efforts towards: Stability First, Activism, Peacekeeping, and Entrepreneurship. In the next chapter I illuminate how some of Amman’s youth are resisting being constrained by narratives that constrain them from embracing their Ammani identity.
CHAPTER 8

REDEFINING AMMANINESS: HOW YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CONTESTING AND CLAIMING BELONGING TO THE CITY

“Amman is not Jordanian, it is Middle Eastern. I am not Ammani, I don’t even know what that is—no one would even be clear what that would mean. Amman was built by Circassians, no one is from here.”

Hatem 22

As I outlined in Chapter 5, the modern rebirth of Amman was predicated on situating the citizenship of Ammanis lower along the scale of authentically being Jordanian. Recall that this process incorporated non-native Jordanians moving to Amman from places to which they still held strong attachments. Based on the people in Amman’s situated citizenship in the national imagined mapping of authentic belonging, the designation “Ammani” has historically been deemed less authentic than the designations of any other Jordanian city. Therefore, being an Ammani is not exalted like being a Saltiyya (from Salt) or Irbidi (from Irbid): claiming Ammaniness is thus an inherently political action.

However, Amman’s increasingly cosmopolitan and heterogenous nature is beginning to disrupt the traditional uniformity of needing to always be aslyn min elsewhere as associations with different parts of the city have different meanings. Those with tribal privileges may still benefit from retaining their links to locations outside of the city in particular cultural situations, however they may also be asserting some claims to
Ammaniness in circumstances where education, modernity, or private sector employment are valued. Likewise, while there may be cultural pressure and self-motivation to retain linkages to other locations outside of the city including to Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Circassia, in particular cultural situations members of these groups may also selectively employ their Ammani identities. But being Ammani is not just an identity: it is an act of urban citizenship used strategically to open economic, professional, social, and political opportunities. However, this strategy must be selectively employed through changing accents, clothing, and employment techniques in order to honor links to external heritage sites and to fit particular cultural situations.

Since Jordanian-Jordanians benefit from maintaining their links to tribal centers and large populations of forced migrants also have vested interests in maintaining their focus on ‘returning home,’ claiming full-time Ammaniness would be detrimental to the dominant groups living in Amman. The loss of “home” is a unifying factor for people from Circassia, Chechnya, and Palestine, all of whom set about building their new city while maintaining dreams of returning home. Claiming Ammaniness for these groups could mean giving up on their pre-determined dreams of home. Likewise, for Transjordanians coming from rural areas, forsaking their privilege by claiming primary Ammaniness would be harmful to their inherent privilege and use of wasta.

Despite these external and internally driven obstacles, a nascent sense of belonging to Amman is building across groups of young Jordanians. As the hope of returning “home” fades and the difference between development in Amman and rural or secondary cities crystalizes, more youth are embracing the strategy of being from Amman. Indeed, with parents and potentially grandparents who have grown up in
Amman, this is the only true home many young people in the city know. Returning to somewhere else is an illusion which betrays young peoples’ sense of belonging to the urban space of Amman. Thus, despite the social incentives not to exert claims of Ammaniness one third (20 out of 60) of the young people I interviewed made exactly this claim: that they are Ammani.

This chapter explores how the narrative of what an Ammani is has different meanings to different Jordanians, reflecting diverse opinions and perceptions of what Amman represents. While some youth state that Amman is Jordanian, others declare that only parts of Amman are authentically Jordanian (compellingly there is disagreement as to which parts of the city are actually Jordanian), yet others conclude that Amman is not Jordanian at all. I explain how young “native” Jordanians I interviewed define, perform, and claim their Ammaniness in the city, including illuminating how these claims were seldom not exclusive as young people often mediated their identities based on how severe the repercussions would be or how they can best leverage multiple and alternative identities. I also detail the similarities and differences in how “others” including Palestinian-Jordanians and other migrants also create and claim this title.

8.1 WHAT IS AN AMMANI?

Depending on who is asking this question and who is answering, the response to this question will be quite different. When Jordanians greet each other there is invariably a familiar dance which unfolds. It begins with each person using their full names to identify themselves. Then if the last name is immediately identifiable as belonging to a prominent Jordanian tribe, statements such as “ah you are Obeidat- you are from Irbid” follow. If the last name has clear links to cities in Palestine, then the conversation makes
note of that mapping. Those with names not immediately recognizable by being linked to
tribal locations or cities in Palestine typically hear a follow up question asking where they
come from. The answer of, “I am from Amman” would rarely be accepted in the context
of Jordanians who are meeting each other for the first time. However, as an outsider, I
hear “I am from Amman” frequently. Just as Jordanians do, I could probe further to place
someone without offending them, however most outsiders would hear the simpler
answer, “I am from Amman,” without the full dance playing out. For outsiders an
“Ammani” can be a person born or who moved to the city and now lives there. For
insiders, “Ammani” is the start of more questions.

As the population of Jordan grows and more people from outside of the borders of
Jordan are incorporated into the social fabric, they learn this mental mapping of
belonging. However, it is becoming more complicated, and, according to some of the
youth I interviewed, tedious to keep track of everyone. As Amman blossomed from a
rural outpost to a bustling urban center with 4 million people, these labels are beginning
to become more onerous. Yet, these labels do serve a purpose in identifying who has the
right to claim being “pure” Jordanian. By dismissing Amman as a city of outsiders or a
place where East Bankers simply live or do business (but not where they come from) a
social hierarchy is maintained.

Indeed, to understand the significance of the word Ammani, it is helpful to
understand what Amman means to young people. During my interviews I asked a series
of questions including: ‘What does Amman mean to you?’ ‘What does Amman mean to
Jordanians?’ and ‘What does Amman mean to the region?’ Some of these answers
directly contradict one another. Many of the young people I interviewed contextualized
Amman in relation to their perception of its Jordanian-ness. For Mohammed, a 23-year-old from an East Bank family:

“Amman is not Jordanian. People here are selfish; they are not humble and are too busy. Growing up I played marbles in the street but in the city they are the YOLO\textsuperscript{86} generation who is inside on their iPads. \textbf{I am Ammani, but my parents are not Ammani.} My Dad is from Tafeleh and my Mom is from Iraq.”

While Mohammed is identified as being “pure” Jordanian due to his father’s lineage as an East Banker and he could have a vested interest in making the statement that Amman is not Jordanian to preserve his claim to being more Jordanian than those without links to tribal places like Tafeleh, he instead embraces his Ammaniness. While he simultaneously denigrates the city as lacking the characteristics typically associated with native Jordanians including being “humble” and “having time for one another,” he also identifies as Ammani. By distinguishing himself from his parents, who he declares are not Ammani, he accepts the stereotypes about the city as part of his identity but disassociates those characteristics from his parents. For Mohammad, Amman is not Jordanian and while he is Jordanian, he can also be Ammani.

Despite Mohammed saying Amman is not Jordanian, another East Banker, Ahmad, 25, said:

“Amman is Jordanian. Real Jordanians, you know- Bedouins, live in East Amman with Palestinians, but the majority of West Amman is Iraqi. People in East Amman count on themselves only, while people in West Amman rely on their fathers’ money- they are soft like girls. \textbf{I am Ammani and my parents are as well.”}

Although both men may have a vested interest in limiting the role of Amman in the scope of Jordanianness, since they both have tribal roots, and both state they are

\textsuperscript{86} YOLO stands for “You only live once” and is used by young people to indicate that they shouldn’t waste time and should pursue what they want. This expression is often used to explain behaviors that could be considered reckless.
Ammani, Ahmad directly contradicts Mohammed’s sentiment that Amman is not Jordanian. By distinguishing between self-sufficient people who are not “soft like girls” he is dismissing the majority of West Amman as outsiders from Iraq. Instead he is highlighting that both Palestinians, who are his neighbors, and Bedouin people who he affiliates with, are insiders and thus the city and his family can be both Ammani and Jordanian. Instead it is the characteristic of those who are fafi (slang for “pretty boys” who don’t like to get dirty and can’t do basic things) that prevents them from belonging.

Duaa, 27, likewise believes some parts of Amman are more Jordanian than other parts of the city:

“**Abdoun is not Jordanian**- I don’t even like to go there. I stayed in my small neighborhood as a kid and everyone knew each other. The city is so segregated, and it wasn’t that way when my grandparents arrived in Fuyhes. My parents moved to Swehleh and now they don’t even recognize the city. But they got here before the crowds. **So, they are Ammani and I am Ammani.**”

Just as with Ahmed, she thinks West Amman is not Jordanian. Duaa dismisses it as a foreign place where people don’t know each other. After highlighting that her grandparents moved to Fuyhes, she commented that this area is currently populated by many Christians. She then waved at the hijab she is wearing and said she now lives in Sweileh. For her, the distinguishing feature of being Ammani does not have to do with religion or being from the tribes- instead it has to do with when people arrived in Amman. Since West Amman was settled the most recently, her family is more Ammani and more Jordanian than those living in West Amman. They got here and after settling on the outskirts, moved further inside of Amman. Abdoun in particular for her represents a place where she doesn’t feel a sense of belonging.

---

87 Fuyhes is on the outskirts of West Amman.
88 Swehleleh is socially identified as East Amman.
This characteristic of Abdounis being “soft like girls” or not belonging is explored in popular culture. The television comedy sketch show “The Rania Show” features several characters in rotation, including Madam Ghalia (Mrs. Rich/Expensive). Madam Ghalia perpetually makes social faux pas as she comes from the nouveau riche and can’t quite seem to fit in. In episode after episode she is portrayed speaking like an Abdouni with a high-pitched affect and a nasally voice as she mixes Arabic and English. Her sporadic use of English is a marker of wealth and education, but her daughter is portrayed as barely speaking Arabic. Each episode features Madam Ghalia’s catchphrase “FaDeeHa” (expose) which has her attempting to expose someone as not being classy but results in her being exposed as a fake.

In this way, Madam Ghalia portrays the stereotypes about those from West Amman, and Abdoun in particular. Ghalia is performing her social class in ways that isolate her from other Ammanis including Duaa and Ahmad. Yet, compellingly economic class did not impact the response from Haya who comes from one of the wealthiest families in Jordan and declared:

“Tribal values are underestimated in West Amman, but this country is tribal to its ROOTS. I don’t think of myself as Ammani, because I am nothing like people in West Amman or Abdounis, I am Jordanian but not Ammani.”

For Haya, being Ammani was incompatible with being Jordanian. Yet when I walked into her rather luxurious home in Jabal al Weibdeh, it was abundantly clear that she could mix with the elites in West Amman if she chose to. Her financial means were obvious from the minute I stepped beyond her gate and onto the driveway where several European luxury cars were lined up. From her front reception room, I observed a baby grand piano sitting underneath a two-story chandelier. We moved past the reception room
to her sitting room which contained numerous signs of wealth, including very plush rugs and works of art which gave the room the feeling of a museum. Although we drank tea in the reception room, we conducted our interview in her library which featured more casual seating and a gas fireplace. When Haya offered me additional tea two hours into our interview, she did so by ringing a bell for someone to bring the tea to us from the kitchen downstairs. Based on her socio-economic standing it is a distinct choice to identify herself by tribal heritage which is not only missing in West Amman, but also makes her not want to not identify with the city itself as she is nothing like ‘those people.’

While these perspectives reflect the idea that West Amman is less Jordanian than other parts of the city, I also heard from Yazan 31, who takes the reverse opinion:

“Amman is the ‘last untouched’ Arab city. It is my hometown, but I know other Arab countries are less tribal. We really have two cultures in Amman. In West Amman (where he lives) it feels like people conduct themselves and have living conditions with respect and openness. In East Amman, they have a closed society full of judgement and taboos. There is some truth in how East Amman looks at us but not all. They see our
women without hijabs and they think we have lost faith but hijab doesn’t mean faith. **East Amman is not part of Amman** really- it is a part of a whole different country. I get lost there. **West Amman is Jordanian.** The older generation thinks Amman is not Jordanian, but this generation thinks it is…. Jordanians outside of Amman stay here and don’t leave, but Ammanis could and do leave.”

The idea of open and closed mindedness surfaces in these comments. Yazan feels judged by people in East Amman based on his perception that he and “his women” would be considered less faithful based on their clothing choices. While he acknowledges that there is some truth in being seen as different than those who live in East Amman, he disputes that he is less faithful. Instead, he labels East Amman as part of a whole different country; the implication is that a strict conservative interpretation of Islam doesn’t align with what he considers the more Jordanian “more moderate interpretation of Islam.” Amman for him represents connections to the outside and is a door through which Jordanians can leave. His statement that older generations do not think Amman is Jordanian is one that I will explore further in section 8.3 when outlining the generational trends of performing Ammaniness.

Each of the above scenarios portrays Amman (or parts of Amman) in relation to a perceived level of Jordanian-ness. However, unlike how paternal lineage defines Jordanian-ness in people, the city is defined as more or less Jordanian based on perceived values. When some young people focus on the bifurcation between East and West Amman, they highlight the tensions between values including: authenticity/modernity, humbleness/arrogance, and open/closed mindedness.

Yet others added more nuance by stating that Amman is made of many cultures and values and that this cosmopolitanism is the character they attribute to the city and part of what they want to claim with stating they are Ammani. Thus, the difficulty for
some who are hesitant or resist entirely the concept of being labeled or claiming
Ammaniness can be better understood by tracing the multiple cultures and
understandings of the city itself. Ayat, 22, explores how she feels partially Ammani, but
struggles to embrace that identity fully based on both her loyalty to Palestine and her
feelings that she has different values than many people who live in Amman. For our
interview Ayat was wearing hijab and dressed conservatively, but in fashionable maroon
and gold rich colors in tighter fitting fabrics:

“In West Amman they ignore culture and are disconnected from tradition. In East Amman youth here don’t feel free; we are constrained by tradition and culture. Money gives you exposure and education. Rural people say Amman is not Jordanian, the culture is different in the rural areas, because there are no services or infrastructure. Living in Amman but having “connected” more traditional values and ideas is what I try to do with my life. Jordanian values are good, but being modern is good also. Abdounis wear shorts, etc…. the “horny” repressed men are full of hormones and that is a bad mix. I don’t feel like a full Ammani- I am mixed, because part of me is Palestinian.

Ayat’s statement reveals the same tensions between modern versus traditional
values and her judgement that Abdounis have non-Jordanian values makes it hard for her
to associate with that part of an Ammani identity. However, she feels at least partly
Ammani and doesn’t think being modern negates her Jordanian-ness. Instead, it is loyalty
to the Palestinian part of her heritage which she cites as the factor which prevents her
from claiming full Ammaniness.

Riham 28, also discusses cosmopolitanism in her struggle to clearly define
whether someone or something is Amanni:

Amman is its own mix, it is not Jordanian. East Amman is more Jordanian
than West Amman. East Amman is like Jordan, we are a small country, but West
Amman is like our outer shell that we can’t keep up with, it is growing too fast.

By stating that West Amman is growing too fast and that they can’t keep up with
it, she is focusing on the changes and growth occurring in the city. Her statement calls to
mind the comparison I have heard about Jordan itself, which imagines it as a local “Mom and Pop” type shop which is being converted into a large impersonal chain store. To be Jordanian is to be more like the personal and unique Mom and Pop store, while Amman is growing too fast to stay that way for long. For Talal, 40, the rapid growth of the city also impacts his perception of Ammani culture:

“I am not Ammani, because there is not one Ammani culture. We are the last regional melting pot, full of sub-cultures who don’t identity with one another. I am an outsider.”

Despite being born in Jordan, Talal spent much of his youth in Saudi Arabia and only recently returned to Jordan for University and to look for a Jordanian wife to marry. Although he had fond memories of Amman growing up, he felt shocked by the amount of change the city of his childhood had undergone. For him, the new sub-cultures which swirl into the melting pot make it difficult to identify one Ammani culture and his time away prevents him from identifying with this changing place of mixed cultures. Sam, 24, also uses the English term ‘melting pot’ to describe Amman:

“Amman is Jordanian but those in West Amman (where he lives) need to look out the palace window to see the slums of East Amman. No one is from Amman, but we are a “melting pot” now. My stepmom is active in trying to protect the Al Harra (neighborhood) which she says is disappearing in Amman. I have wasta because we are from Karak and I am from the Tarawneh tribe- but we are not a rustic tribe, so I can be both tribal and Ammani. My grandfather made me memorize 9 generations back to prove my Jordanian lineage to prepare for when the questions which started in elementary school about ‘where are you from?’ would begin, because he knew I couldn’t

89 Talal was part of my cross-generational interviews and represents the previous generation.
say I was from Amman.”

Once again, the English term ‘melting pot’ was used by Basher, 22:

“Amman is about nostalgia, but also a melting pot. It is like the “Great Gatsby.” West Amman is not very Jordanian since it is so Iraqis and full of Abdounis and the nouveau riche. This changed after the Iraq war. East Amman is lower class and more industrial, but that didn’t change. West Amman is more vibrant with “high-end” individuals. I am Ammani but my parents are Madabi (from Madaba).”

This is the first time that the term nostalgia came up in an interview, but Basher’s use of the term is evocative of how East Amman and wasat al balad (downtown) are portrayed as unchanging, while West Amman is spoken about as in flux and constantly changing. Noting that his parents still claim their identity from Madaba, while he is Ammani again indicates that some young people are adapting to the idea that it is possible for people to be from Amman. This seed of a changing mentality is difficult for most Jordanians to enforce due to the regimented social process of identifying by locations outside of the city. Yet, it is not just “outsiders” who are precluded from claiming to be “pure Jordanian” who are starting to nurture this seed of an Ammani identity. In the next section I explore further how the concept of an Ammani is being contested.

8.2 CONTESTED IDENTITIES: CLAIMING AN AMMANI IDENTITY DESPITE “NO-ONE BEING FROM AMMAN”

At the beginning of the chapter Hateem stated that no one is from Amman and that no one from here would even understand what that would mean:

“Amman is not Jordanian, it is Middle Eastern. I am not Ammani, I don’t even know what that is—no one would even be clear what that would mean. Amman was built by Circassians, no one is from here.”

Hatem 22

Indeed, the previous section illuminated the myriad of sometimes contradictory
definitions of Amman and Ammanis. Simply being born in or living in Amman was never cited as the definition of an Ammani, and Hateem is expressing the perspective that no one is from Amman since he has been raised with the Jordanian mental mapping which excludes the city and instead bases identity on patrilineal heritage. However, many respondents disagree with his conclusion that no one who is from here would even know what an Ammani would mean. First, I will present the perspectives of four East Bank Jordanians who make claims to being Ammani in a variety of ways- starting with Sally, 25:

“Amman is not Jordanian, it is a unique combo of cultures- it has a lot of “fake” people. East Amman is more Jordanian. There are no formal attempts to make an Ammani identity it is a confused place because there are so many types of Ammanis: 1. very open-minded 2. very closed minded 3. closed parents but open kids. My parents are proud of their heritage (both are from well-known tribes) but they are beginning to be proud of being Ammani. They have even changed their accents to Ammani. I am fully Ammani and identify as urban and only tribal by name.”

Coming from the minority group of native Jordanians who maintain social power via their status as ‘pure Jordanian” Sally acknowledges that there is no formal attempt to create an Ammani identity. Yet, despite this her parents appear to be straddling both a tribal identity and an urban identity. Sally identifies herself as fully urban, which she places on a dichotomy in opposition to being fully tribal. Although she has the privileges associated with belonging to prominent tribes, she prefers to embrace an urban sense of belonging. However, since Sally comes from the more powerful identity, she can embrace the lesser Ammani identity while still retaining the strength of her tribal name alternatively and based on specific circumstances. Conversely, Shireen talks about other tribal Jordanians using the Ammani identity as a form of social advantage:

“Amman is a masculine space and her more “modern” neighbors became urban “isolated” after the Iraqis came in 1993. The differences between Amman and Tefileh are
so severe that people from rural areas lie about where they come from to get a job. The accountant in her office said he was from Amman for years to get hired. She feels Ammani, she is open-minded and part of the “pot” of people where not everyone knows on another.

In this circumstance Shireen again talks about being Ammani as representing more open-mindedness. For her being part of the “pot” of mixed cultures and values is a positive attribute as evidenced by the accountant in her office who lied and claimed an Ammani identity in order to better position himself within the private sector. The derogatory term *walad/bint MoHafatha* (boy/girl from the governorates) would be applied to this accountant to imply that he is less well educated (lacking access to the parallel and more prestigious private schools found in Amman) and less classy than someone who was raised and educated in Amman. For this situation the reputation of being less educated and less refined since he is coming from the countryside would have been more harmful than his attempt to use his East Bank status for *wasta* to work in the private sector. Thus, a member of the more powerful social group (a Jordanian-Jordanian) hid his ties to his tribal roots in order to embrace a private sector career, which required a more educated and open-minded person than the stereotypes about people from tribal areas would imply. While this accountant pretended to be Ammani in order to further his career, Sanna, 26, also comes from Tefileh and talked about how her friends sarcastically assign each other and themselves as being from the city:

“We live in North Amman (which is socially more East Amman) and we make fun of Abdounis- if someone from Tefileh gets something new at all we joke:

“I am not from here I am an Abdouni!”

She associates those from West Amman with arrogance and doesn’t like to be provoked by *yastize* (arrogance).

“I don’t like to think of people from East Amman as being generalized and
labeled as having “poor manners” but I know that they are thought of that way. I am applying for my master’s degree in the United Kingdom and am being encouraged to list my Amman address in the scholarship competition.”

When Sanna and I met at the University of Jordan she almost immediately asked me if I recognized her accent. Unfortunately, I had to confess that I couldn’t place her dialect. She proudly said, “I am Tefileh!” Then she sheepishly explained that everyone loves her accent and that anyone from her town can be expected to be the butt of Jordanian jokes. They are portrayed as rural, backwards, but innocent and harmless. When she walks into class or a group of people, they gently greet her by saying, “There is Tefileh” in an affectionate but playful manner. Although she jokes about the perceived differences between someone from Tefileh and Abdoun, to become more competitive in her scholarship application she is considering claiming an association with Amman. Yet, in her mind claiming an Ammani identity would likely be to East Amman, where she says people are not arrogant, so she identifies with them more closely.

However, Ramzi, 25 comes from a wealthy area of West Amman and identifies with Amman more broadly:

“I have a STRONG Ammani identity which comes from our shared set of values and our Ammanni mindset.”

Despite his father serving as a doctor in the military for 30 years, Ramzi never considered military service himself. Instead he is pursuing his dream as an architect. When we meet at a café in Jabal al Webdeih he carried himself confidently and our interview was conducted in English. He had completed his education at the German Jordanian University and had spent his required year living in Germany. Although he was offered higher paying positions to stay in Germany upon graduation, he was anxious to return to Amman and to move into the home his father was building for him on the
family property. He stated that he knows this is quite unusual and that most young men have to build their own homes, he still strongly feels that Jordanians can make it in Amman if they are loyal to and committed to working to improve the city. Ramzi was perhaps the most optimistic young person I interviewed and from his perspective, it was not only possible to claim an Ammani identity, but a duty for him to pass up better paying positions abroad to return home and to build up what he stated are “shared Ammani values.”

In the four cases above it is clear that some youth who have the prestige associated with being among the minority of native Jordanians are experimenting with different ways of adding an Ammani identity to their repertoires. Being Ammani allows them to claim a sense of modernity and education which is exclusive to the city. Simultaneously, however they can still call upon the *wasta* associated with their tribal heritage when it is advantageous. However, some other young people do not have the option of claiming a Jordanian-Jordanian identity are also negotiating ways of using this same sense of belonging to the city.

The following four quotes come from West Bankers who have Jordanian citizenship and who not only were born in Amman, but their parents were also born in Amman. The first statement on embracing Amman was given by Fadiah, 18 who stated:

“Amman is like a second mother to me, I feel Ammani. I was raised here and have community here. I have never really left the city.”

Fadiah's identity as an Ammani is rooted in her neighborhood and the fact that she has very limited experiences outside of Amman. Yet, as a Jordanian who would be

---

90 Her neighborhood is a small area which is limited in size by its location adjacent to the Citadel. Jabal al Qala. This area is identified as East Amman culturally.
labeled aslyn min Palestine she does not self-identify primarily by her paternal roots. Particularly, her use of the imagery of Amman as a mother figure reveals a loving bond in which she feels taken care of in the city. Compellingly, Fadiah is using verbiage which has only recently been introduced by the Jordanian government in her description of her relationship with the city. I will explore the new Amman is Our Mother campaign further in the next section. However, this echoing of the government's statement does appear to show a connection between a new state discourse about the city and a changing youth perspective. Farrah, 30 describes a more complex and contentious relationship with the city:

“I feel like I am in a “bad relationship” with the city. I love it so much, but it doesn’t love me back. Amman is Jordan- part of the embroidery of the country. The spaces are masculine and tribal, I have to take what is left-over for me, but that is all I have- I am an Ammani, but not embraced as such.”

The relationship described by Farrah as a bad one, is based on her placement in the social hierarchy as a woman without claims to the tribal hierarchy. She is restricted in where and when she can go in the city. We met for our interview in an upscale coffee shop in West Amman since she is from West Amman. She drove to meet me and has her own car, but she stated that she could not have met me after dark and would not have been able to meet me in other areas of the city. While she loves the city and feels she belongs to it more than any other location, she does not feel that as a Palestinian-Jordanian woman that she is entitled to being loved back by the city, and instead she needs to be content with the “leftovers” available to her as an Ammani constrained by ethnicity and gender. Ruba, 25 also struggles with her placement in the national imagination of being Jordanian, while still identifying as Ammani:

“We Ammanis belittle other Jordanians and act higher than they are since we
are raised in Amman to have higher ambitions than other Jordanians from the governorates. My family came to Amman from Palestine and I am grateful to be in the most modern Jordanian city, but I don’t like how other Jordanians are talked about by Ammanis.”

Again, for Ruba the tension between being Ammani or Jordanian has to do with rural/urban tensions which portray those from rural areas as less ambitious than those from the city. While this generalization is pervasive, it did not match with the focus panel I conducted in Ma’fraaq in which virtually every participant had career ambitions beyond working for the state and most were willing to leave Jordan in order to pursue those ambitions. Yet, for Ruba, being Ammani is in direct opposition to being from a rural Jordanian spot instead of in a dichotomy with locations in Palestine, where her family is originally from. Despite the dance of introductions with which she is quite familiar, Ruba identifies herself as Ammani. Instead of comparing being an Ammani with being a Palestinian, she compares herself to rural Jordanians. Meanwhile, Nadar, 24, also identifies as Ammani, but he defines Amman as belonging to more than just Jordanians:

“Maybe Amman used to be Jordanian, but now is it the capitol of the Arabs who are lost. It is multi-national. My family is originally from Palestine, but I have friends who are originally from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya. None of us will be able to go “home” in our lifetimes. We have been raised here, Amman is our home. I am Ammani by default. My friends are also, who else could we be?”

This perspective is perhaps the most threatening one to East Bankers who may want to prevent an Ammani identity. The sheer volume of migrants in the city, who are unlikely to return to any other home, is such that if this massive population cohesively claimed an Ammani identity they could conceivably fulfil this “Amman used to be Jordanian” statement. Yet, Nadar’s conclusion that he and his friends are Ammani by default because they can’t go anywhere else is a logical conclusion.

While logically, Palestinian-Jordanians who are third generation in Jordan may
have less to lose as they are already often situated as less Jordanian than Jordanians who are *aslyn min* Jordan, they were not the only respondents who claimed an Ammani identity. Indeed, as I showed above other respondents who state they have *wasta* and belong to a tribe state they are Ammani. For them, being Ammani is more urban and modern than being from the rural areas and they want to be judged on their own merits instead of a system of *wasta*. Notably while some identified themselves as being Ammani, not all felt their parents would also feel Ammani. There is a generational component to embracing a positive Ammani identity.

8.3 YOUTH GEO-POLITICS: THE GENERATIONAL PERFORMANCES OF AMMANINESS

Embracing an Ammani identity reflects a growing youth perspective breaking from previous generations’ perspectives which kept identities tied firmly to their pre-Amman roots. While Ababsa and Daher write about an intentional extraterritoriality of Amman in the official nation-building process as a way of securing the tribal backbone of regime support (Ababsa, 2011), Kassy explores the personal motivations for not embracing an Ammani identity (2011). He links older memories of “being part of the crowd in the Ottoman Empire to…the second feature that lends to the city’s uniqueness is that, by and large, Amman is composed of people that view someplace else as ‘home’ as strong personal reasons why Amman’s residents do not think of themselves as Ammani” (Kassy, 2001, 259). With both internal and external motivations preventing an Ammani identity and given the social composition of the city, it is remarkable that a number of young people in my study are breaking from this mentality by identifying themselves as “Ammani.”

If the key lesson Ammani youth learned from the Arab Spring was fear of
instability and this potential instability appeared to the country like a spaceship which “made their fighting over pebbles”⁹¹ seem insignificant (Chapter 6), this period of uncertainty also created space for Amman to become part of the national identity. In 2013 at the height of fear about DAESH infiltrating Jordan, the Great Amman Municipality (GAM) introduced the “Ummana Amman” (Amman is our mother) slogan. Billboards began appearing in an effort to strengthen the bond between the residents of Amman with their city and to encourage positive attitudes towards the capital (Freij, 2016). An annual festival was also created to support the slogan which takes places in Wasat al Balad (downtown).

Although the electoral gerrymandering of the government continues unabated, as rural/tribal representation in the government continue to be disproportionate, this campaign represents the first official attempt to create positive associations and maternal connections with the city. Faced with a city of people with low levels of attachment to place and a terrorist organization on its doorstep actively recruiting disaffected people, the slogan and shift in the official discourse about the city is imminently logical. Fostering a sense of belonging without changing the structure of the government is clearly a less risky proposition than continuing to alienate a large population who could be considered ideal candidates for DAESH’s recruitment.

Several ways of creating and performing Ammaniness emerged during my research. These include distinct styles of Ammani: dialect, dress, and employment. Notably, these performances are enacted quite differently across gender lines. Just as King Abdullah is portrayed in the ubiquitous photos throughout the country in a variety

⁹¹ Referring to struggles between Palestinian Jordanians and Jordanian Jordanians.
of staged outfits including Western dress in Amman and in Traditional Dress in the suburbs and villages, residents of Amman also play particular roles dependent on their settings. I will begin with exploring the new Ammani dialect, before discussing Ammani style of dress and Ammani employment.

Figure 8.2 Translation- “Amman is our mother.” Grass sign at the Roman Amphitheater during the Amman is Our Mother Festival. Published in Al Ghad 29 March 2016

Ammani Dialect:

One auditory example of how Ammanis navigate social belonging became clear when one of the translators I used for a focus panel, Hamzeh, a highly educated young man with two brothers also educated in the United States, asked me which dialect I wanted him to use for our session. Since our focus panel was made up entirely of young women, we decided the softer Ammani accent would be most appropriate. He chuckled and said, since I am not Jordanian-Jordanian they expect the Ammani accent from me, but my older brother is big into sports and likes to drive our father crazy by using the Jordanian accent to play up his masculinity. As a woman and a “blonde” foreigner the expectation would almost always be for me to use the softer Ammani dialect, however when I conducted research with young men outside of the city the distinction was quite
clear, and I tried to mirror their pronunciation as a sign of respect.

One of the ways youth perform their Ammaniness is by creating an Ammani dialect. According to Al Wer’s linguistic study “in the modern history of Jordan, Amman is a new city. Strictly speaking it had no native population and no native dialect” (Al Wer, 2002, 63). Yet despite this lack of a native dialect, he outlines distinct pronunciations and vowelizations young people use that are not emulations of their parents or of other groups in the city. Instead, he states the youth have created new dialect specific to Amman based largely on contact between the Palestinian and Jordanian dialects. By embracing that they are natives to the city, and through affiliating themselves with Amman linguistically “these youngsters are giving Amman, for the first time in its modern history, a native population and a regional identity. The symbol of this new identity is represented in the youngsters’ linguistic divergence from the dialects spoken by their parents” (Al Wer, 2007, 1).

As I stated in Chapter 6, the majority of first generation of Ammanis referred to themselves as either Jordanian or Palestinian and they used their local dialects accordingly. The second generation referred to themselves in a hyphenated manner: Jordanian-Jordanian or Palestinian-Jordanian, and their speech still largely reflect their roots as being from either Jordanian or Palestinian roots. Yet, the new Ammani dialect being created by the third generation of Ammanis flattens these distinctions, erasing the audible traces of previously hyphenated lineages and replacing it with a new Ammani dialect with new social rules understood by Ammani youth.

While paternal lineage is erased by the new Ammani dialect a complex linguistic dance performed unevenly by both genders in a variety of circumstances has been created
instead. In many cases entirely new words have been created for the new Ammani
dialect, however in the context of this chapter a clearer way to trace Amman’s linguistic
transformation can be found in the gendered and rural/urban pronunciation differences
between the “G” and the hushed “A” sounds. In contemporary social settings
Jordanian men perform their native identity using a harsher “G” pronunciation while
women, and mainly Ammani men pronounce words by substituting a hushed “A” for the
“G.” Men working in the security forces almost exclusively use the “G” sound.

The use of dialect and pronunciation is complicated in particular social
circumstances to assert more: masculinity/Jordanian-ness, (based on situated citizenship
which imagines this as tribal/rural), or more modernity/urbanity. As previously outlined,
older generations of Palestinian-Jordanian men often use (A’) which is socially labeled as
“softer” as it comes from urban areas, while the harsher pronunciation comes from the
rural tribal areas and is labeled as more masculine. The Ammani dialect exists in a
dichotomy which on one side is derogatorily labeled feminine and on the other side is
elevated as a marker of higher education and modern urbanity. Both Palestinian-
Jordanian and Jordanian-Jordanian men who want to appear refined and more highly
educated will use the hushed “A” variation. Yet, when these men want to appear
masculine or to exert some claim to belonging to the national idealized Bedouin image of
a Jordanian-Jordanian they will often switch to the harder “G” sounds.

Tracing the Arabic word for coffee through a variety of settings gives insights
into how the new Ammani dialect is used:

92 The tribal pronunciation of the letter qaaf is pronounced as a G sound instead of a K
sound.
93 The hushed ‘A’ sound is created by transferring the sound of the G made at the back
of the mouth to the front of the mouth and replacing it with a hushed ‘a.’
- rural Jordanian men = \textit{Gahwa}
- Jordanian Women = \textit{A}²\textsuperscript{hweh}
- Amman men with women or with other Ammani men= \textit{A}²\textsuperscript{hweh}
- All men among mixed groups of men, with government officials, or when machismo is required = \textit{Gahwa}

Compellingly, men do not receive the most scorn for using the softer (A²) pronunciation, since the Ammani dialect is socially acceptable in many daily circumstances. Instead, as Al-Wer notes the most scorn is used against a “
tant\textsuperscript{94} [which] is not a boy who uses [A²], but one who does not, or cannot, make the situational switch to [g], i.e. one who is incapable of appropriating the full range of variations (Al Wer, 2007, 10).

The creation of an Ammani dialect means that a young man with tribal roots may speak in a Jordanian dialect with his family (\textit{Gahwa}) and then switch to the Ammani dialect (\textit{A}²\textsuperscript{hweh}) in situations which require more refinement or advanced social skills. Likewise, a young man who lives in the secondary city of Salt may use the Jordanian dialect (\textit{Gahwa}) when at home in Salt, but if he commutes to Amman for work, he will often switch to the Ammani dialect (\textit{A}²\textsuperscript{hweh}) while in the city. If he uses the softer pronunciation in Salt, he may be teased as being effeminate or asked why he is talking like an Ammani. Yet, in Amman the bigger social mistake would be if he fails to switch based on the setting and audience. In both of these circumstances native Jordanian men are transforming their behaviors to fit into Ammani culture.

For women, the distinction is less stark as they generally are expected to use the softer Ammani style as it is considered more feminine. However, in some tribal settings women may also use the harsher pronunciation to exert their native roots. Through the creation of an Ammani dialect, including a plethora of Ammani words and clear social

\textsuperscript{94} From the French for Aunt.
rules for pronunciation, Ammani youth claim and perform Ammaniness differently than their parents and grandparents. Indeed, this generation uses a shared urban judgement and implicit agreement concerning what is and what is not Ammani.

This generational difference is made even more obvious by Al Wer’s statement that, “the adult population of Amman, including many who were born in the city, continue to affiliate themselves with the towns and villages of their forefathers. The youngsters, on the other hand, call themselves 'Ammanis', by which they mean that they are native to the city” (Al-Wer, 2007, 1). He argues that although Jerusalemites, Irbidis, and Damascenes are well established terms to describe linguistic groups, the derivation *ammaniyyiin-* ‘Ammanis’ was only recently coined and is just now being used by linguistic scholars. While men are more affected by the social rules of using an Ammani dialect, women are more impacted by the social rules of identifying as Ammani through their clothing and makeup.

*Style of dress*

The majority of Ammanis dress in western styles and often have an affinity for name brands. However, some obvious distinctions exist between dress in East and West Amman. West Ammanis are often able to style themselves more liberally and may have access to more elite name brands. Particularly women in East Amman face social pressure to dress more conservatively. Upon arrival in Jordan I was given the advice to cover to my wrists and ankles when going to East Amman, but to feel free to wear shorts in West Amman. Although it never became necessary, I also included a scarf in my bag whenever going to East Amman in case it would be appropriate to cover my hair.

Virtually all women in East Amman are *hijabis* (wearers of *hijab* hair coverings) and
dress conservatively. Meanwhile, West Ammani’s makeup can include dramatic ‘cat eyes’ which would be judged in East Amman or in the governorates. As Rima who commutes from Salt explains:

“I put on my Ammani eyes at home, but rush to work in the city so that I won’t damage my brother or father’s reputations. I couldn’t wear this makeup in East Amman, but I work in West Amman and it is expected. I wear the hijab for them as well, but as soon as I return home to the ashura (tribe), I take off my Amman eye makeup.”

Figure 8.3 Advertisement for a makeup class in Amman. “Cat eyes” are very popular in Amman but are not as socially acceptable and could be judged in the rest of Jordan. https://www.sajilni.com/event/the-makeup-master-class-holder-marucci-5138.

For men the distinction is less noticeable as family reputations are not based on male clothing choices. Both traditional clothing and modern western style clothing is acceptable in Amman. However, the vast majority of young Ammani men dress virtually identically to American or European youth. Men wearing traditional clothing are often making an intentional statement about belonging to Jordan. A hybrid outfit of jeans, t-shirt, and shmag (red and white male head covering) is often worn during holidays or for celebrations.

Images of the Royal family provide clear examples of Ammani style clothing. As in other areas of the global south, the adaptation of clothing in Amman to a more globalized western style of dress was facilitated by access to lower cost western products and access to the internet- particularly social media. However, despite access to internet
throughout most of the Kingdom, social expectations outside of Amman dictate adherence to more traditional and conservative fashion- predominantly for women. The resulting Ammani style of dress mirrors the urban/rural distinction young Ammanis (particularly women) experience in the work force.

Figure 8.5 Casually dressed Royal family. Shared on Queen Rania’s Instagram account. The logos of branded clothing is visible as are jeans and t-shirts which are standard western wear for teenagers.

Work culture

The role of gender on employment in Jordan has been studied by several noted scholars (Adely, 2004; 2012; Hijab, 1998; Miles, 2002) however the nexus between
geography, particularly the urban/rural divide, and cultural implications for youth employment is less well studied. Yet, during my research young people reported a clear relationship between where they live or work, and the opportunities for the particular types of work they can pursue. Indeed, young people routinely express that their daily lives are impacted by the culture of being an Ammani at work. The primary differences young people describe between working in Amman and the rural areas are: the relative availability of transportation in Amman compared to rural areas, diversity of employment options in Amman, and the impact of the cosmopolitan culture on work culture. Being an Ammani opens opportunities for youth to work which are often closed to them outside of the city.

As a developing nation Jordan’s transportation infrastructure is limited. Mass transportation doesn’t exist and personal vehicles dominate. In Amman the solution to transportation issues including the lack of a public mass transportation system and burdensome traffic are elusive and seem intractable. Although a Rapid Transit Bus (RTB) system has been technically in the works for ten years it has been beset by delays and is more associated with fasade (corruption) than with a potential viable option for expanding youth opportunities to work.

While some buses already operate in the city they are privately owned and do not follow posted routes. The RTB system is being partially funded by the French Development Agency and is projected to be a fleet of 150 hybrid buses owned by the Government of Jordan which will follow posted routes (Oxford Business Group, 2015). In the meantime, both busses and taxis are notoriously difficult for young women who often complain of having to navigate inappropriate behavior by male drivers or other
passengers. Cultural expectations dictate that women sit in the back of taxis while male fares are expected to sit in the front passenger seat. During the course of my research I personally experienced harassment when in taxis and opted to switch to using the new ride hailing application Careem instead, Uber has also started operating in Amman, but neither option is widely available outside of the capital.

Although transportation options are problematic in Amman, being an Ammani can allow young people relatively better options to get to work than are available in rural areas. The comparative availability of transportation, however problematic it is, is more advanced than outside of the city. However, the transportation options in Amman still constrain the lower class and women. Poorer Ammanis are unable to afford ride hailing apps or taxis and thus they are dependent on buses which often fail to reach their desired destinations. Women face additional cultural restraints to using public transport. As Miles notes:

“Cultural proscriptions on female mobility, for example, are a significant constraint, a finding that has not been documented for Jordan before; a recent study that explicitly measured women's mobility constraints in Jordan failed to include leaving home for work/economic activities as a mobility indicator” (DoS & Fafo, 1998, 310).

In addition to women facing more challenges to mobility throughout the country, they are also much more limited by the types of work available to them. Prior to SAP in the 80s female employment in Jordan was on the rise. However, women’s work was

---

95 Drivers are virtually all male in Amman. 5 “pink taxis” being driven by women who would only pick up female fares were reported in the local news; however, I never personally saw one. Additionally, rumors of female Careem or Uber drivers excited many young female Ammanis on social media. Again, either they were so rare as not to be seen personally by the author, or they simply didn’t exist.
96 Careem and Uber created new opportunities for educated women to move around the city in more comfort. However, this service was objected to by taxi drivers who fought the competition.
largely in the public sector, which was hit the hardest by the contraction of the
government in the wake of the oil bust and Jordan’s agreements with the IMF and WB.
Thus, women were disproportionately exposed to obstacles to work when Jordanian men
returned from the Gulf no longer able to find work there which would allow them to send
remittances home to Jordan (Miles, 2002). Men were immediately given preference in
both the public and private sector as they are culturally deemed the primary
breadwinners. “Squeezed by a large external debt and high male unemployment, the
Jordanian government adopted an implicit policy of discouraging female employment;
the national policy-making body for women was placed back where it had been in 1977
and new labor legislation was stalled” (Hijab, 1988, 114).

Yet, are still earning educations despite their receding opportunities. These
conditions create Adely’s paradox (2012) in which young Jordanian women are educated
but unable to work. Indeed “according to the World Bank, Jordan, with the lowest female
labor force participation rates of 15.3%, has the fifth lowest female participation rate
among 185 countries and territories that report such data (World Development
Indicators). As the center of private sector employment, Amman offers more paid
employment opportunities for the small group of Jordanian women who continue to work
after marriage and having children than secondary cities or rural areas. As Shireen states:

“In Irbid I wouldn’t be able to talk with male colleagues without it bringing
shame to my family - in Amman I can just do my job.”

While she moved to Amman from a village in the governorate as a young girl, she
explained that her female cousins who stayed in the village are not achieving the same
level of career success that she is able to attain in Amman. Although they have been
educated at university they are constrained by limited opportunities and by social
conventions. However, being an Ammani allows her to “simply do her job.” Notably the percentage of women who stay in the workforce after marriage drops significantly.

Ammani men also have different options for work in Amman than outside of the city. Again, the private sector is larger in Amman than in other parts of the country, offering different types of jobs than available in other parts of the country. While Ammani women in the middle class have benefited from being able to use ride sharing apps in the city, young men are also benefiting from being able to work as drivers. Despite drivers’ work being precarious as they risk getting traffic tickets while the legal battle between the taxi drivers’ and new government regulations are being debated, thousands of new drivers have joined this workforce.

Being a Careem “captain” or an Uber driver is one new viable work option for educated Ammani men of this generation which wasn’t available to their parents or grandparents. Many drivers describe the position as allowing them to earn more than work as a starting engineer at 300JDs per month ($423 in 2018), allowing them to practice English skills, and to meet all sorts of new people. All of which are aspects of work which are primarily available to Ammani men in Jordan. This type of work fits within the description from youth in Chapter 7 who have “expectation gaps” with available employment in Jordan. Indeed, being Ammani allows youth access to a variety of new types of private sector work much less available outside of the city.

My focus panel in Murfraq dispelled the myth that young people outside of the city have lower ambitions than Ammanis. While conventional wisdom said that rural youth are content to work for the state as they have *wasta* perhaps it is more accurate to say that they are limited by their rural geography and that being an Ammani doesn’t
change young peoples’ dreams, just their access to them. If people coming from outside of Amman learn the rules of Ammani dialect and style of dress they can also access these Ammani work opportunities. However, like Shireen’s accountant these opportunities are made easier for those who claiming and performing Ammaniness. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, just as more young people are claiming Ammaniness, a ‘new city’ is being proposed which could further complicate the mental mapping of belonging in Jordan.

8.4 CONCLUSION:

In this chapter I showed how some of Amman’s youth are making claims to their new Ammani identities as they defy being limited by older labels. These young people are claiming a new primary Ammani identity in an interconnected cosmopolitan space which is rapidly transforming. However, they often still call upon other forms of identity as their social situation dictates. By looking at the processes of nation-building and the complicated and contested history of expressing an Ammani city identity I built upon Daher and Ababsa’s research into how Amman was an intentionally extraterritorial space by showing that the uncertainties of the Arab Spring and the aging of the factors which tie young people to external locations have allowed youth to assert their Ammaniness.

I have also highlighted the multiple and sometimes contradictory meaning of being an Ammani and explored how spaces within the city are defined as more or less Jordanian in a fluid manner based on who is defining the spaces. This fluidity allows Jordanians to alternatively assert themselves as being more authentically Jordanian in specific social settings or to claim Ammaniness when wanting to appear more modern or educated, in a dichotomy which places the rural and urban in contestation with one another. Likewise, citizens of Amman whose lineage comes from outside the borders of
Jordan are performing their belonging to the city through the newly created Ammani dialect, Ammani fashion, and work habits which the young people themselves are defining as distinctly Ammani.

Although the regime’s largest and most assured support base is still identified with rural locations outside of the city, and the Jordanian government remains gerrymandered to benefit these spaces, Amman is beginning to assert an independent identity which is less threatening to stability than geopolitical pressures surrounding Jordan. Despite this emerging authenticity of a non-threatening Ammani identity, the state has proposed a ‘new city’ in line with many other nations in the global south as a utopia which will allow for greater infrastructure development and wealth creation. Since many government services are envisioned as being moved to the new city, it is likely that should the city be built that Amman will become a secondary city and its nearly 4 million residents will be placed in the predicament of defining themselves in relation to the new city and not just to Amman or tribal spaces in Jordan.
CONCLUSIONS

The case of Amman exposes the ways in which young people are situated in the Jordan’s national discourse due to their urban citizenship. As a result of the historical processes (outlined in Chapter 1) that produced a strong tribal system and moved the capital city of Jordan from Salt to Amman, being "of" Amman situates a young person as Jordanian yet not quite as Jordanian, as people from other areas of the country. Analyzing the data, I gathered in my research demanded a conceptual shift away from established geographic approaches to political identity, particularly those grounded in the conventional framework of the nation-state. This research raised new questions about how to consider the role of urban environments in processes of political belonging that also depend upon relational links to places and geographic imaginaries beyond the city. The concept of situated citizenship accommodates this complexity.

My research with Ammani youth indicates several formative, spatial factors in their political identities, including the geographic dichotomy between Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians, the impact of Amman serving as a home of refuge for generations of migrants, and new multi-scalar modes of belonging. Throughout my research, these key markers surfaced repeatedly as youth situate themselves in ways that relate to national identity, but that national identity does not frame. While national identity is peripheral to young Ammanis’ core understandings of self and belonging, their elective and ascribed identities are inherently political. The implications of this
politicized geographic identity contribute to some Ammanis’ having a low sense of attachment to the city.

9.2 FIGHT OR FLIGHT: JUXTAPOSING RIGHTS TO THE CITY WITH ASPIRATIONS OF ELSEWHERE

Young Ammanis struggle as they weigh their own levels of attachment to the city. A primary finding reported by youth in my study is the lessening of the tensions between types of Jordanians. While not everyone in this generation agrees that this specific social tension is on the decline, the majority reported to me that other tensions are more relevant in their daily lives. Although they stated that their parents and/or grandparents likely will still list the Palestinian cause as their most immediate concern, young Ammanis in my research point to the passing of time and new pressing economic troubles, based on regional instability, as reasons that this is no longer the penultimate struggle of their generation. The political act of claiming Ammaniness or being *Urdustini* illuminates the shift within this generation. Instead of identifying as purely Palestinian /Jordanian like their grandparents might, or by a hyphenated sense of belonging Palestinian-Jordanian/Jordanian-Jordanian, which their parents might experience, this generation is pioneering new identity labels. Despite the fact that inter-Jordanian tensions emanating from the social hierarchy created between East Bankers and West Bankers are no longer the most pressing concerns among the young people I interviewed, there are still spaces within the city which perpetuate these tensions.

The concept of “figured worlds” reveals the spatial contingency of which behaviors are considered appropriate in which places: actions at the University of Jordan and when engaging with Amman’s soccer rivalry would not be acceptable in all parts of the city (Gee, 2014, 29). The university and the soccer spaces are key geographies
through which young people navigate belonging in Amman. Despite the fact that they experience tensions in space more than adults, most feel their lives are less influenced by issues of national identity than in the past. Instead they describe wanting to experience more than just the safety which draws so many migrants to Amman.

Young people want to achieve dreams generally not attainable in the city. While many talk about needing to leave the city to pursue economic goals, others point to cultural frustrations including the increasing period of waithood, not being listened to by elders, and careers which neither aligns with their education nor cost of living needs. Thus, Amman is a space in which (social, generational, gendered) tensions are simultaneously abating and exacerbating. Here, locale matters.

Due to the existence of both these realities - a low level of attachment based on many residents having split allegiances, and many young people feeling they must leave the city to reach their dreams - very few young people are fighting for their ‘right to make the city’ (Harvey, 2008). These factors (lack of commitment to the city and feeling obligated to leave Amman) have an important impact on Amman’s development. In addition to not having a strong group of youth actively seeking to make the city, Amman has also been undergoing a rapid transformation into a neoliberal city. This transformation is not only changing spaces within the city, it is also testing Jordan’s original social contract.

9.3 TESTING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Amman’s rapid transformation from a small village to a booming metropolitan center fundamentally shapes contemporary Ammani culture. In conjunction with these physical changes, Jordan’s social contract is also transforming. To understand the
fundamental nature of these shifts I began by outlining how the royal family, as outsiders to Jordan, established a social contract built on tribal allegiances being exchanged for patronage. I traced the efficacy of the contract from this foundational period through the mandate period and into independence.

While the intertwining of the newly created tribal elite with the fate of the Hashemite regime is acknowledged as one of the nation’s primary sources of stability, the growth of Jordan’s population and global neoliberal trends have made this system of patronage difficult and undesirable to maintain. With population shifts increasingly shrinking the number of Jordanians able to participate in Jordan’s original social contract, and the cost of living negating much of the benefit of public sector employment, I illuminate how the contract is being tested. Young people are facing a period of uncertainty without the same set of rights and privileges afforded to their elders.

I outlined within the context of this uncertainty how social messages are filling the void that the social contract used to occupy by directing youth along new acceptable paths. The message youth repeated most during our interviews was a version of the governmental rhetoric extolling, “Stability First.” While this discourse predates the Arab Spring, it has been amplified by contemporary regional instability. Young Ammanis overwhelmingly report that the main sentiment generated by the Arab Spring for them is fear and that Jordan should focus on remaining stable. Thus, stability is a more immediate issue for this generation, more immediate than the need to resolve the Palestinian issue which seems larger than they are able to resolve.

Additional attempts to guide youth, who can no longer rely on the security of public sector work, include those delivered by an assortment of neoliberal actors
including NGO’s and international organizations encouraging Ammanis to become entrepreneurs. While the government is not driving this effort alone, the King has repeatedly embraced entrepreneurship as a way for young people to solve their own lack of employment opportunities. This underscores a key rift in the social contract, where the welfare of the public was intrinsically tied to the success of the government. By instead pushing youth towards private sector employment, the presence of neoliberalism places the onus of survival/success on the individual, not the state. And thus, the individual feels less tied to the state, less vested in the state, and the Jordanian social contract continues to erode.

The final theme young people reported en lieu of the failing social contract centers around activism. However, as I highlighted, the extent of this social activism is restricted to approved topics. Ammani youth are themselves implicated by their participation in these actions since participation in: stability first, entrepreneurship, and social activism extend the failing social contract, while preventing them from taking radical political actions. They are effectively being contained by these alternative actions. While each of these activities is framed as empowering, they each paradoxically extend a system which is failing the majority of Amman’s youth. Their transformation from Royal Citizens (a citizen who, in Jordan, was able to rely on public sector patronage) into neoliberal citizens (who are expected to provide for themselves) is a key generational transformation I uncovered in my research.

9.4 GENERATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND CLAIMING AMMANINESS

Finally, my last findings chapter tackled the question, “What is an Ammani?” The answers to this question varied not only based on who was answering the question, but
also the social circumstances of the query. A budding trend of resisting their assigned citizenship also emerged amongst my study participants. Certain areas of the city, and particular social practices with positive connotations, are permitting some youth to embrace their Ammaniness.

While different regions within the city are viewed along a scale of Jordanianness, (which is not uniformly agreed upon), new Ammani identities that contest Amman’s subordination in Jordan’s shared mental mapping of the country are emerging. These include the new Ammani dialect, style of dress, work habits, and positive connections to cosmopolitanism. My research revealed a diverse cross section of Jordanians who selectively employ their Ammaniness for advantages, but who also take pride in being from, and thus a part of, Jordan’s most modern and advanced city. I argue that the ability to embrace an Ammani identity is being facilitated in part due to the arrival of new “others.” These new populations bring new social challenges, particularly the high number of Syrian refugees living in the city. The relative “brotherhood” of Jordanians who are aslyn min either Palestine or Jordan compared to their new “cousins” aslyin min Syria or Iraq has created space for an Ammani sense of belonging to emerge among some youth.

9.5 IMPLICATIONS

My research provides a window into the turbulent experiences of urban youth in the MENA region, youth who are currently facing unpredictable and unprecedented local, regional, and global pressures and transformations. While images of young people from the MENA region are often presented negatively in western outlets, my work uses a geographic lens to present their lives through their daily lived experiences. Bringing their
voices to the forefront can help policy makers and analysts (both from within and from outside of the region) who not only largely missed the Arab Spring, but who also still have little concept of the goals and dreams of this generation, to begin to understand them.

By locating my project in Amman, I have chosen a geography deeply impacted by regional instability, but thus far not contributing to additional instability. As a center of refuge for many of the regions’ migrants, Jordan’s stability is central to many nations and vested stakeholders. Should Jordan become unstable, it would have implications far beyond the region. Therefore, it is critical to understand not only Jordan’s current (and somewhat unique) stability, but how likely Jordanian youth feel this is to continue in their current lives and in the future. The stress on Jordan’s social contract requires immediate and further examination, so that it can be adated to current realities.

Area studies specialists can also apply the lessons learned from my research to expand their knowledge of the emerging field of critical youth geopolitics. While Ammani youth experience particular cultural norms based on the city’s history, their very middleness and interconnectedness ensures that their experiences impact youth elsewhere. Viewing youth through this multi-scalar sense of belonging allows stakeholders to not only better understand, but also critically analyze, the needs of young people. Most of the youth I spoke with do not feel that they are being heard: this a primary driving factor for their desire to leave the city. Giving voice to these young people is the first step of allowing young Ammanis to foster greater connections to Amman. Providing resources and opportunities is the larger challenge, but one that cannot be achieved without first knowing what young people feel.
9.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

At least three future directions could emerge from this research. Firstly, while this research focused on urban youth, it became clear during my research that youth in secondary cities and rural areas in Jordan are also impacted by new regional and global pressures. While Ammanis experience these through their daily lives in the city, how other Jordanian young people are experiencing these events is worth exploring.

Another future research project became apparent in my last weeks in Jordan as the border with Syria began to tentatively be reopened. At that point, very few refugees were crossing the border to return home, but commerce between the two nations was in the nascent stages of resuming. Jordanian officials optimistically view the opportunity to rebuild Syria’s infrastructure as an opportunity to export Jordanian labor. It is too early to tell if this will unfold as Jordanian officials hope, but the potential exodus of refugees and a regional outlet for Jordanian employment will certainly impact young Ammanis. Each of these areas of research would provide additional information on new and emerging youth perspectives as Jordan’s geopolitical situation changes.

A third direction is a larger variation seeking to gather information from youth in Palestine, who have connections to young people in Jordan. Throughout my interviews, tensions between Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians were readily apparent, but also somewhat flat. Many of the youth talk about a homeland which they have never seen, and some seem quite uncertain about “returning” to when all they have known in their lifetimes is Jordan. In a few interviews it became clear that this divide causes concerns even within families. To further understand the youth in this region I would like to pursue research with young people in Palestine who have families in Jordan.
Understanding their perspective would provide new insights into how cultural norms in Palestine are developing differently than they are developing for Palestinian-Jordanians in Jordan. It would also address the other side of the imagined home which many young Ammanis are required to claim belonging to while living in Amman.

While Jordan’s participation in the Arab Spring is often dismissed an anti-climactic, it nonetheless exposed how little is known about Jordanian youth. This group of young people are part of a generation forever marked as having witnessed dramatic social changes, which distinguishes them from their elders. The spirit of openness and generosity with which I was welcomed by young Ammanis made this research a project sustained by their willingness to share. However, it is my sincere hope that by writing some of their experiences and perspectives that I will be able to in a small way contribute to them finally being heard.
REFERENCES:


El-Sharnouby, Dina. "In absence of a Hero Figure and an Ideology: Understanding new political Imaginaries and Practices among revolutionary Youth in Egypt." *Middle East-Topics & Arguments* 9 (2017): 84-95.


Fathi, Schirin H. *Jordan-an Invented Nation?:Tribe State Dynamics and the


Football’s Greatest Rivalries: Al Faisaly v Al Wehdat.


*Gov’t Completes Preliminary Design for New Amman City.*


Herrera, Linda. “It’s Time to Talk about Youth in the Middle East as The Precariat.” *Middle East-Topics & Arguments*, no. 9, 2017, p. 35–42.


---.
Routledge, 2013.

Homepage:News : Jordan Plans New City near Amman to Ease Overcrowding
Accessed 1 May 2018.


*Plots Nearby ‘New City’ to Be Distributed to Civil Servants, Military Retirees Accessed 2 May 2018.*


Qudah, Nama’a Abdullah. “Urban Identity in the Age of Globalization Assessing the Abdali Project in Amman, Jordan.” *Transformation of the Urban Character of*
Arab Cities since the Late Last Century, vol. 63, 2015, p. 63.

Schroeder, Christopher M. *Startup Rising: The Entrepreneurial Revolution Remaking the Middle East*. St. Martin’s Press, 2013.


van Noorloos, Femke, and Marjan Kloosterboer. “Africa’s New Cities: The Contested
APPENDIX A:

APPENDIX OF STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe Amman?
2. If you are in a new setting, how do you talk with people your age about where you are from?
3. What words of phrases do you use to describe your neighborhood?
4. How do people from your neighborhood feel about being from that place?
5. What do you consider the advantages and disadvantages of being from your neighborhood?
6. What opportunities do you have which are particular for people from your neighborhood?
7. What opportunities would you have if you lived in another neighborhood?
8. How do you describe people from other parts of the city?
9. Are there places in the city you feel most at home or able to reach your potential?
10. Are there places in the city where you would feel unwelcome?