

# Bureaucratizing the City: Moderated Tribalism, Regime Security, and Urban Transformation in Amman, Jordan

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Throughout his reign, King Hussein worked diligently to ensure both the autonomy of Jordan and the security of the Hashemite monarchy. To accomplish this, the Jordanian state attempted to dismantle established systems of tribalism, redirecting allegiance toward the monarchy and its modernization efforts. While presented as progress, modernization reinforced Hussein's authoritarian regime through the mechanism of royal patronage, creating a neopatrimonial system that thrived off the allegiance of a co-opted, pro-monarchy tribal elite. Key to this effort were bureaucratic systems, such as the Greater Amman Municipality, which limited the reach of the tribes and their elite by dismantling the village councils that had previously controlled development in and around the city. Additionally, the 1988 Master Plan for Amman proposed a new satellite city as the prototype for a modern way of life outside the network of tribal communalism. Though ultimately short-lived, this period of modernist planning had an important impact on the territory of the city, and on traditional forms of development authority that persist today.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed an aggressive attempt by the Jordanian state to modernize its capital city Amman through the institution of policy controls governing urban growth and development. As part of this modernization effort, the state expanded its bureaucratic systems and established the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM, hereafter). The GAM effectively dismantled established village councils, redirecting governance authority to the state in an effort to limit the reach of East Bank tribes and their elite.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after, to better manage urban expansion, the state proposed adoption of the 1988 Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan (GACDP, hereafter). Among

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its provisions, the GACDP proposed a new satellite city, Abu Nuseir, as the prototype for a modern way of life. This project, in form and community composition, also worked to dismantle longstanding systems of kinship and tribalism, directing allegiance and political reach away from tribal communities, toward the state.

This article examines these efforts to use modern planning to reign in traditional forms of territorial control. The effort, cut short by the fiscal crisis of 1989, was at once political and economic, intended to use urban transformation to promote regime security. Ultimately, it failed in its effort to diminish the power of the tribal elite. It did, however, influence the future form of the city and insert the legitimacy of the monarchy into a transformed system of tribal communalism.

#### THE GREATER AMMAN MUNICIPALITY REPLACES TRIBAL COUNCILS

During the 1970s and 80s, the main aim of the Jordanian state with regard to the development of lands in and around Amman was to undo a history of municipal governance that had, since its inception under the British in 1921, been infiltrated by systems of communalism and parochialism. These systems related directly to the influence of local tribes and the impact of a tribal elite and their village councils on the governance and development of the city. Since the inception of an independent Jordanian state in 1946, its Hashemite monarchs had both gained and lost the allegiance of these groups. When the groups were in its favor, however — specifically during the reign of King Hussein — the state sought to use this allegiance to introduce systems of social and urban governance aimed at moderating tribal influence.

The Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan was one of the most important of these efforts. Produced by a team of experts (the Joint Technical Team), in collaboration with the Greater Amman Municipality, it proposed addressing all aspects of Amman's urban condition — social, economic, transportation, infrastructural, etc. The all-encompassing scope of the effort, however, emerged directly from the planning bias that the Joint Technical Team brought to the work, and that it invoked to legitimize it. The Joint Team and the powers behind it further knew that the magnitude of intervention would not be questioned. The state had at the time purchased a high level of allegiance through a variety of welfare programs, and there was little opportunity for resistance within an entrenched system of incentivized obedience.

While the GACDP attempted to introduce planning regulation into Amman, it was also an attempt to alter basic structures of governance by invalidating the power held by tribal councils — and, in theory, redirecting political allegiances to the state. The desire to regulate growth in Amman was therefore both an urban and a political project. Not surprisingly, it was also an economic project: the state hoped

to compensate for its relative lack of land holdings through a new system of bureaucratic governance. In this way, the GACDP and the formation of the Greater Amman Municipality were the urban manifestations of a broader drive for regime security pursued by King Hussein throughout his reign (FIG. 1).

Ultimately, both the GAM and the GACDP were crippled by the Jordanian fiscal crisis of 1989. Faced with soaring budget deficits and an inability to borrow, Jordan sought aid from the International Monetary Fund — a move that disabled the internal welfare state and many associated mechanisms of governance. Soon after, the GAM, unable to fund the GACDP, reverted to an unregulated system of planning — one that was both familiar and, to that point, the only known method of directing the city's growth. In the years that followed, the GAM remained in existence as a regulating body. However, it was constantly undermined by the persistence of parochial and communal practices within tribal networks that, despite the state's modernization efforts, were little diminished.

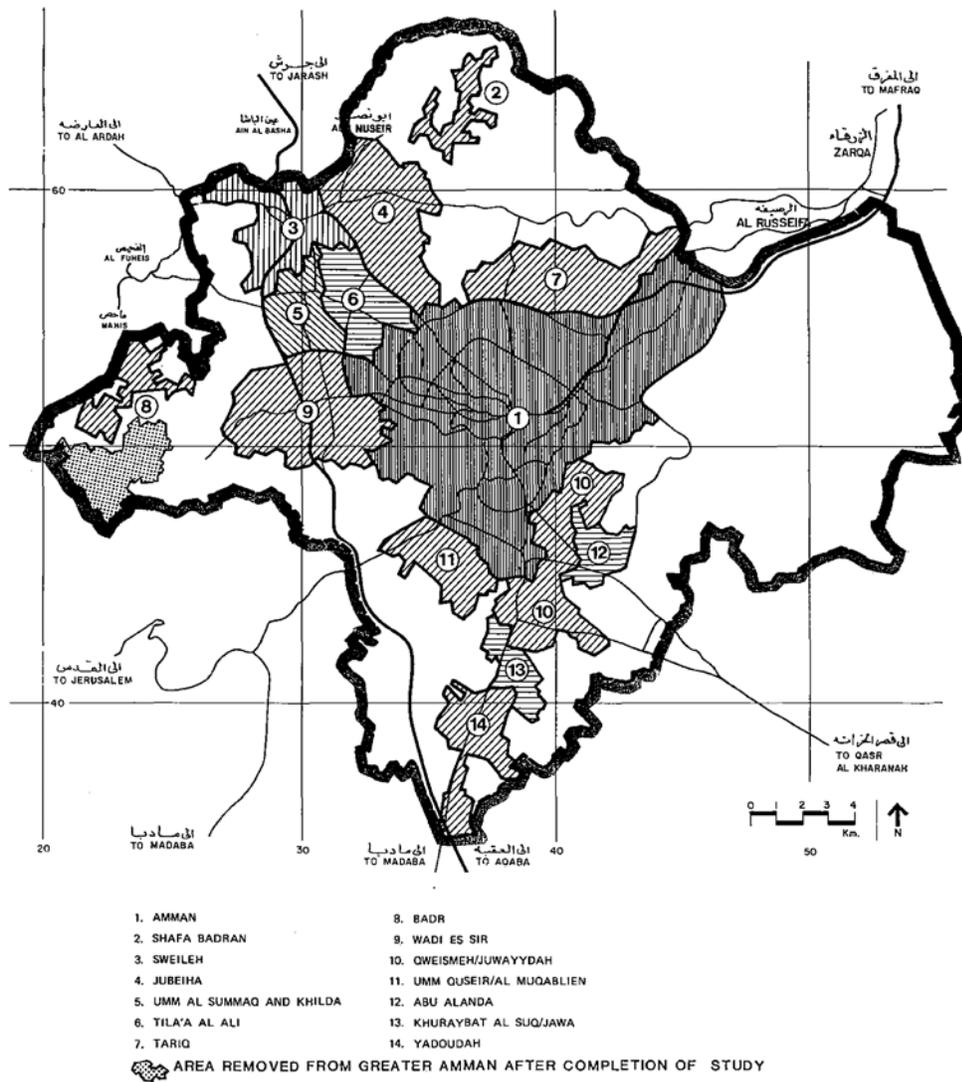
The two most problematic factors of unregulated planning in Amman have long been nepotism and the *wasta*, or favor system. Together, these allow individuals with social and political power to pursue their personal interests, regardless of the illogic or inappropriateness of their proposals. This system of unregulated planning is so entrenched that, since the 1980s, it has endured as the dominant mode of development in the city.

Meanwhile, to overcome the impact of the 1989 crisis, Hussein established a new tradition of patronage among the tribal and wealthy elite. This operated through a system of bureaucracy devised, first, to undermine their political and developmental clout, and second, to co-opt their wealth. Hussein's neo-authoritarian regime was subsequently able to thrive off this new network of personal patronage.

Ultimately, the shifting political economy of the modernization era that followed relied on market-driven logic facilitated through various institutional frameworks of patronage. In this way, the state was able to “co-opt elites and even ‘create’ them.”<sup>2</sup> The “king's men,” or tribal elite, emerged as a carefully co-opted set of individuals who were pro-monarchy and nationalist. Their primary objective was to liaise, as was necessary, to ensure their tribes' approval of the king's decision-making — and, in turn, guarantee the security of the Hashemite regime.

#### JORDAN'S RENTIER ECONOMY AND THE PURCHASE OF CIVIL OBEDIENCE

For decades, from its inception through the late 1980s, the Jordanian state enjoyed relative autonomy in its political decision-making because it steadily dispensed rentier capital to its citizens. Through the generous distribution of these



**FIGURE 1.** Map of original municipalities, prior to being consolidated into the Greater Amman Municipality. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 2.4.

funds, the state, in a sense, purchased the obedience of the population as if it were a commodity. An ever-rising standard of living neutralized the potential and demand for political expression. Meanwhile, the abundance of social-welfare programs, employment, etc., gave citizens a sense of economic entitlement, one they dared not risk. Citizenship, in the sense of economic stability, became the most important commodity an individual might possess.<sup>3</sup>

The onset of the first Gulf War of 1990, however, exacerbated the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Jordan had received between \$550 million and \$1.3 billion in direct fund transfers from neighboring Gulf states; but that figure declined to \$393 million in 1990, and \$164 million in 1991. In addition to a decrease in financial remittances from Jordanians abroad — long a source of national earnings — the decline rendered the state incapable of addressing its persisting debts.<sup>5</sup> The state thus turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for support.<sup>6</sup> The

international agency subsequently provided \$275 million in standby credit and help devising a new schedule of debt repayments.<sup>7</sup> Citizens were, however, less concerned with the need to repay the national debt than with the lapse in state spending and the effect of required austerity measures.

The structural-adjustment programs tied to IMF loans at the time embodied a neoliberal view of development that stressed the need for participating countries to, in one manner or another, modernize their politics, infrastructures and economies. An underlying discourse promoted the notion of linear advancement based on the assumed ability of developing countries to transition from traditional to highly developed societies. Walter Rostow, for example, theorized five stages to development: from a traditional economy, to the preconditions for take-off, to the take-off stage, to the drive for maturity, to a final state of mass consumption.<sup>8</sup> Developing nations that relied on the IMF, such as Jordan, therefore, were required to make efforts to modernize their economies in order to qualify for IMF loans.

## MODERNIZING THE POLITICS OF INHERITED TRADITION AND CULTURAL PRACTICE

In Jordan, modernization was a disruptive endeavor that interrupted well-established tribal traditions and cultural practices that fully informed the politics of place. In Amman, tribal awareness not only existed within the various village councils but was the principal method by which people identified themselves and related to others. Tribal affiliation, in other words, informed social and political hierarchies, and there was great significance to the tribe with which an individual identified.

Ghazi Bin Muhammad has noted there are more than fifty tribes with origins in the East Bank, and that each offers a shared identity based on common beliefs and principles. Individuals within a tribe “think the same way; believe in the same principles; assimilate the same values and ethos; act according to the same unique rules and laws. . . . In short, it is the consciousness of belonging to that tribe and behaving accordingly.”<sup>9</sup> Tribal affiliation thus was — and remains — the primary construct through which Jordanians define themselves, relate to other members of their tribe, and structure their relations with members of other tribes.

Following the creation of Jordan in 1946, the depth of these practices came to be perceived as an impediment to the reach of the state — particularly the Hashemite monarchy, which hoped to shore up its position by fostering a sense of nationalism and unified identity. To redirect allegiances, the state thus sought to disrupt existing tribal traditions and cultural practices. However, such practices were more connected to a network of tribal, political and ethnic allegiances than they were to the places within which they took shape. Thus, as Edward Shils has noted, tradition — “that which is handed down . . . all that a society of a given time possesses . . . which is not solely the product of physical processes” — is the true source of political concern for the state.<sup>10</sup>

Tradition, social inheritance, and culture in Amman are synonymous in that they imply a learned practice, one that is socially transmitted and shapes less *what* things are than *how* they come to be.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the urban interventions of King Hussein in the later decades of the twentieth century, and of King Abdullah in the twenty-first, have sought to extend beyond simply restructuring or redeveloping traditional dwellings and settlements for the sake of material advancement. Indeed, the planning and development efforts of the Jordanian state have targeted specific social practices that the monarchy has hoped to curb or eliminate as a threat to its autonomy.

During his reign, Hussein thus devised a neopatrimonial system of governance that deliberately encouraged a departure from traditional political systems. The country’s move toward the modern thus meant a transition from tribalism to nationalism. And to that end, Hussein sought to co-opt the allegiance of the tribal elites to insert his influence into otherwise self-contained social and political networks.

## BREAKING TRIBAL TRADITIONS TO CREATE SUBJECTS OF THE STATE

While Hussein sought to tie tribal elites to the state, he also concentrated significant effort on building Jordan’s military capabilities. As Rex Brynen observed, the military was “a primary vehicle of Jordanian state-building, bringing the Bedouin population of the East Bank under state control.”<sup>12</sup> As paid military personnel, East Bank Bedouins became both agents of and a source of support for the state. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the state likewise continued to employ a substantial number of civil servants and dispense large amounts of money to its citizens through social-welfare programs. The state was thus able to underwrite an ever-increasing standard of living, purchase obedience from its citizens, and enjoy autonomy in terms of policy and decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the spread of these welfare provisions, personal subjectivity and the notion of citizenship had been tied to tribal traditions. Strategically, the state sought less to undo this well-established social web than to craft a role for itself within it. It was in this regard that Hussein’s planning regime — particularly the conception and execution of the GACDP and the related effort to dismantle the Amman area’s village councils — was intended to detach power to regulate urban development from the tribes and turn it over to the state. Interestingly, Hussein never looked to summarily eliminate the power of tribes; rather, he sought to mute it where he could and harness it where he could not. While there were tribal voices that challenged the monarchy, there were also many, with established East Bank origins, who looked to support the king and maintain the legitimacy of the nation-state. These were the key actors that Hussein both promoted and relied upon to maintain his regime’s security.

Such tribal leaders, the “king’s men,” played a critical role in mediating between their tribes and the king’s political interests. Their primary objective was to liaise, as was necessary, to ensure their tribes’ approval of the king’s decision-making. The tribal leader, or *shaykh*, subsequently became a crucial component of the king’s regime security. Positioned in the middle, he benefitted from his relationship to the king, but also ensured and was responsible for the allocation of earned awards (subsidies and various welfare rewards) within his home area. In this way, according to Brynen, Hussein’s governance became a “neo-patrimonial extension of the traditional practice of subsidizing allied tribal elites [that] served to reinforce the bases of a shaykh’s social power at home whilst rendering him increasingly dependent on state resources.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the state devised methods of representation that ensured the continued election of this chosen elite. The king’s men, alongside well-placed members of the business elite and Hussein’s own extended family, constituted a network of neopatrimonial allegiance that operated through informal political structures.<sup>15</sup>

These political structures were what ultimately enabled Hussein to limit the power of the tribes. He could never

denounce the significance of tribal organizations, because to do so would be to compromise the very legitimacy of the monarchy and his right to govern. As a member of the Hashemite tribe, Hussein could claim to be a direct descendent of the Prophet Mohammad. This lineage had been what had given his grandfather, Abdullah I, legitimacy to govern over Transjordan in the 1920s. And Hussein knew that the duty to preserve traditional social structures was just as relevant to his kingship.

Thus, modernization was a very muddled affair for Hussein. Surely, he sought to create a modern city, but he could not do so if he dismissed all lingering assemblages of tradition. Rather, as his very legitimacy to govern relied upon traditional social structures, he tried, through a variety of methods, to tame tribalism and traditionalism, and to rule despite their persistence. In this sense, Hussein was caught between tradition and modernity. The state's drive for modernity was confined by a traditional refrain.

#### THE GREATER AMMAN COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF 1988

Integral to the state's establishment of developmental control was the Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan. As mentioned earlier, this effort was largely the work of a team of experts called the Joint Technical Team (Joint Team, hereafter). This was composed of employees of a private international firm, Dar al-Handasah Consultants, and personnel supplied by the municipality.<sup>16</sup> From the outset, the Joint Team asserted that the consolidation of the village councils was necessary to solve a preexisting technical problem.<sup>17</sup> And throughout its work on the plan, it continued to assert the preeminence of its authority, claiming technical knowledge only it could offer.

The team established a position of unassailable authority by first dismissing any plan previously proposed for Amman as inadequate, and then assessing the current condition of the city as inherently flawed. This was done by introducing a framework of judgment based on presuppositions and conventions they considered ideal. Once aspects of the city were assessed as at odds with the desired ideal, the team could present its proposals for what Amman *could be* in a way that rendered what the city *was* entirely lacking and in need of technical solution.

According to Robert A. Beauregard and Andrea Marpillero-Colomina, the primary and overarching goal of the 1988 Master Plan was thus "to strengthen government control over all development."<sup>18</sup> Toward this end, the GACDP presented findings on land ownership and existing development, concluding that the lack of state presence in the planning of Amman was due to its minimal land holdings.<sup>19</sup> The government owned only 28,580 dunums (approximately 285,000 square meters), or 5 percent of total land within the municipi-

pal boundaries. The remaining 95 percent was privately owned, and its development relied on planning decisions made by village councils and their market-driven logic. Given these circumstances, the master plan concluded that the government was helpless to properly direct development and the trajectory of urban growth in Amman.<sup>20</sup>

The report further cited the problematic nature of the "loose framework of existing planning controls" within municipal villages and their lack of external perspective.<sup>21</sup> This system relied on local request-for-use applications that gave the tribal-based village councils an overly significant role in the direction of urban development. Furthermore, since these request-for-use applications were market driven, only the most lucrative projects were pursued. And the most lucrative choice for the development of a particular site were often "Type A and B" housing — single-family detached villas and multifamily units at very low densities.

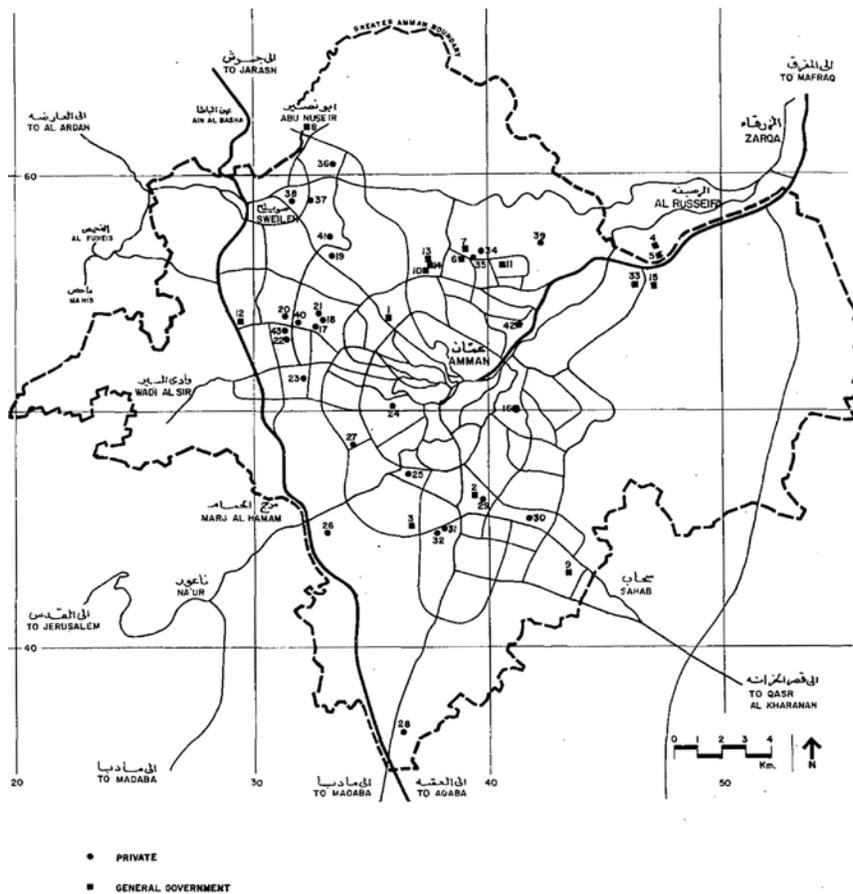
In other words, the GACDP labeled the existing planning methods "loose," and defined ongoing development projects as insufficient and misaligned with the city's larger needs. It thus presented itself as a moral compass for Amman's ongoing development, one that could, and would, with sufficient bureaucratic reach, provide for a better future (FIG. 2).

#### THE POLICIES OF VILLAGE COUNCILS DEEMED PROBLEMATIC

Section six of the GACDP outlined "existing legislation and planning practice, the form and content of existing urban and rural development, and the commitments of approved plans and projects."<sup>22</sup> And, within it, subsection 6.2.1 specifically detailed the system of land designations that predated the GACDP and the existing planning controls derived from the Law of Municipal Councils No.29 of 1955 and No.79 of 1966.<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that both these laws were conceived and implemented by all fourteen of the municipalities that made up the city prior to the GAM. Each municipality was led by an independent village council that, pursuant to the laws, had adopted a master plan for its respective area. However, the GACDP dismissed these proposed and approved master plans as meeting only the specific needs of each council. As such, they were problematic, inefficient, and in need of revision.

The GACDP found several other significantly problematic issues with the previous system of development established by the village/tribal councils. First was the impact of speculation and competition among the councils for new development. Second, the GACDP claimed that these speculative projects were undertaken on a case-by-case basis, lacked any sort of interregional cohesion, and resulted in an overallocation of land for development — more than the population at large needed. Third, it found that these independent plans





**FIGURE 3.** Public versus private housing plans, as assessed in 1985 by the Joint Team. Note the majority of housing projects are privately developed. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 16.13.

a privilege of state citizenship. In this way, the state sought to redefine citizenship and craft a sense of Jordanian identity bound to the nation rather than to individual tribes. Toward this end, the new public housing communities and satellite cities were planned with the primary goal of managing, or normalizing, society.<sup>28</sup> None of the proposed districts or projects was based on historical or social factors. Rather, they were based on a “middling modernism,” planning reliant on notions of efficiency, science and progress.<sup>29</sup>

Using these methods, the state dehistoricized and depersonalized the social norms by which it categorized communities, reducing them to a scientific database for grouping residents. Timothy Mitchell has critiqued just such a rationale of technical expertise as a guide for planning triumph in his *Rule of Experts*. For Mitchell, the approach embodies a process based on an inherent disconnection, in which the image/object of study and the solution exist as separate categories without significant interaction.<sup>30</sup> Much like people and history, the image/object (or the real) exists apart from the technical evaluation and expert solution. Quite simply, the modernist discourse of the era did not allow the real image/object to directly inform the course of development for the country under study, or the people within it. Rather, the real was replaced by a foundational reality, one that legitimized, even cried out for, a tech-

nical hand. Similarly to Mitchell, Paul Rabinow has argued that French modern planners viewed the city less as a socio-political space than as a socio-technical environment in which they, as techno-experts, were uniquely qualified to operate.<sup>31</sup>

In Amman the outcome of this bias was that district lines were drawn with a scientific hand, one concerned more with efficiency than the social implications of the “communities” so designated. Thus, the plan called for the consolidation of eight environmental districts into five, two of which were entirely new.<sup>32</sup> But these new communities were a technical planning solution and method to organize society; they were not organized with any binding feature in mind, such as kinship or tribal affiliation.<sup>33</sup> The new communities instead promoted a modern society, one more easily governed under the newly established municipal system.

#### TRADITIONAL HOUSING REPLACED BY MODERN, UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The case of Abu Nuseir, a satellite city proposed in the GACDP, best exemplifies the plan’s overly abstract approach to community development and public housing.<sup>34</sup> Following the recommendations of the plan, Abu Nuseir was con-



FIGURE 4. View of the Abu Nuseir Public Housing Project. Photo by Saad Khrais.

structed by the National Housing Corporation and consisted of 3,667 dwellings, a combination of apartment blocks and single-family homes. The purpose of this new urban district was to provide housing for middle-income government employees. In 1999 it was reported that 22,000 people lived in the residential development, with an average household size of six people (FIG. 4).<sup>35</sup>

Upon completion, the majority of homes in Abu Nuseir were occupied by nuclear families, the vast majority of which contained both male and female household heads.<sup>36</sup> The demographic makeup of the district was nearly uniform: the majority of residents were married, had finished high school, were employed full time, and owned their homes.<sup>37</sup> Most had moved to Abu Nuseir upon its completion, and few had any inclination to move away. The desire to stay, however, had less to do with overall satisfaction with their homes, and more to do with affordability. A home in Amman was difficult to find at a reasonable price. Thus, the government-subsidized units at Abu Nuseir incentivized residents to separate from their previous communities to afford a home of their own in the city.

In terms of form, the buildings of Abu Nuseir were arguably modern. As an assemblage, they created small to large open spaces surrounded by walkways, stairs and breezeways. Their minimalist design was, in fact, reminiscent of CIAM's ideal of simple, rational, standardized architecture.<sup>38</sup> Embedded within this modern logic, of course, was a set of socialist ideals: above all, the form and organization of CIAM's architecture presented a template for social transformation. As Jim Holston has written, CIAM envisioned "modern architecture and planning [as] the means to create new forms of collective association, personal habit, and daily life."<sup>39</sup> By creating a satellite city based on the principles of modern design, the GAM was likewise seeking to establish a new social norm through planning — one no longer based on communalism, kinship, or the traditional household.

Interestingly, Abu Nuseir's design also had little to do with the GACDP's mandate that new housing utilize local materials, emulate indigenous architectural styles, and employ local expertise (FIG. 5). Historically, the dominant middle-income house type in Amman had been the *bayt* (plural: *buyut*).<sup>40</sup> Its basic principles were a simple cubic form, window bays along the front elevation, and always a central hall.<sup>41</sup> As a simple, one-story courtyard house, it also allowed for possible additions to accommodate a growing, extended family.

The modern three-bay Ammani villa represents how the domestic architecture of the 1920s built on this tradition of simple, one-story construction. While there were other forms of new construction, the urban terrain eventually came to be stippled with these villas.<sup>42</sup> At the time, areas such as Al Mahata, a major Ottoman hub within Transjordan, were expanding rapidly (and would continue to grow, especially after the influx of Palestinian refugees in 1948). But it was in Jabal Amman, in the city center, that these villas became most synonymous with the city's emerging architectural character.

Located on the now famous Rainbow Street in Jabal Amman is a prototypical example. Today known as the Arwa Bint Al-Hareth School, the Rustom Rasheed Hashem



FIGURE 5. Abu Nuseir Public Housing Project. Source: [http://archnet.org/sites/980/media\\_contents/16339](http://archnet.org/sites/980/media_contents/16339).



**FIGURE 6.** Arwa Bint Al-Hareth School, formerly the Rustom Rasheed Hashem villa. Photo by author.

villa was a simple, square, three-bay structure built of rough stone in the early 1920s. Today this structure still presents a simple cubic form, several bays of windows along the front facade, and a central hall.<sup>43</sup> Such villas represented Amman's first modernism, a graduated iteration of the local vernacular — the Circassian hut of the nineteenth century (FIG. 6).

The *bayt* of the twentieth century carried on this modernism; however, later manifestations varied depending on changes in political economy and architectural influences from surrounding areas of the Levant. Thus the *bayt* came to represent the growth of the region, expressing both traditional and Western-inspired elements. Western influence included a refined understanding of the simplicity of orthogonal design — the very forms first used by the Circassians in the nineteenth century. Where these original structures expressed their humble origins, however, these later iterations were informed by the expertise of architects primarily from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, who had studied in Europe, Turkey, Egypt, and the United States.<sup>44</sup> Traditional influences included the continued use of local stone blocks for exterior walls and decorative tiles from Palestine that conveyed the status of owners and impressed visitors. Further, the adoption of traditional Palestinian forms and ornamental materials signaled Amman's connection to the region by rail and the growing prosperity of the city. Social space and the social hall also remained an important feature of the *bayt*.<sup>45</sup>

The *bayt* was clearly a form of social currency in the political economy of its time. Its design and location spoke to the social standing of its occupants and informed a sense of community. Such houses were also often grouped into communities of twenty or more, with such clusters represented in political affairs by a *mukhtar*. Such a materialization presented a set of complexities, a conceptual language, and a mode of communication only known to their occupants. However, such assemblages, their design and proximity, deeply informed cultural practices. And in this regard the state was less concerned with the material particularities of place than with the ways they created and ordered experience.<sup>46</sup> Within such houses and neighborhoods, experience was largely insulated from the reach of the state. Each cluster was instead

dominated by communalism, kinship and allegiance, under the control of tribal leaders.

While Abu Nuseir also attempted to foster a sense of community through the grouping of homes and the provision of open spaces, this was not community built around kinship, as in the case of the *buyut* of previous generations.<sup>47</sup> Rather, Abu Nuseir presented a new, homogenous social composition, with new social habits and new familial constructs. The social structure of *buyut* had been based on the traditional extended family, in which married sons often lived with their parents — or, at the least, close to them.<sup>48</sup> The new homogenized housing system dismantled such social complexity. Moreover, Abu Nuseir dismantled the organizational structure that went along with it, in which a *mukhtar* would preside over and represent each neighborhood unit.<sup>49</sup>

The urban designer Fuad Malkawi interviewed a member of the Joint Team about the proposed organization of space and community in Abu Nuseir. The planner, Samir Subhi, acknowledged the unconventional, unfamiliar forms employed. But he stated that “people will learn to adopt it . . . they will learn about the use of the various amenities and the importance of open spaces by using them.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, the technical experts employed to design the new settlement believed that the new format for housing was most appropriate for its future residents, even if it was unconventional and unfamiliar.

Abu Nuseir was thus representative of the state's modernization effort in that it both attempted to regulate growth and, perhaps more importantly, regulate society. The physical construction of a modern way of life in Abu Nuseir was an attempt to untangle powerful tribal networks that, too often, stood in the way of state growth and planning control.

#### THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN FUTURITY

Through its technical gaze and assertive, agentless voice the GACDP produced an assessment of population distribution, traffic congestion, and housing shortages that redefined the dialogue of planning in Amman. It was also presented as a technically conclusive, and therefore appropriate, launching

pad for the city's future. The Joint Team essentially observed all the planning errors in the city, and in its final report, presented the view of Amman as a city of inadequacy and unrealized potential.

Critics have since observed that, in this era, the reality presented by technical experts was not actually informed by real conditions, but by a series of biases "shaped by forms of power, technology, expertise, and privilege."<sup>51</sup> Toward this end, inputs such as popular opinion and public participation were dismissed as irrelevant to the planning process. In the case of Amman, the public was regarded as too uninformed to be involved in making the city of the future. "People of the street," said the planner from the Joint Team interviewed by Malkawi, "do not know what is good for them."<sup>52</sup> Such dismissal of external views of course further cemented the Joint Team's authority to specify the technical interventions necessary to make Amman a modern, efficient, governable city.

One result of this blindness was that although the GACDP presented a new, hopeful reality for Amman, it did so in a highly conflicted way. On the one hand, it claimed to uphold the preservation and restoration of traditional features of the city; but on the other, it proposed projects that were often sterile variations of standard modern forms. The accompanying image exemplifies the conflicted recommendations with regard to urban heritage and historic conservation (FIG. 7). Typically, it heralds traditional motifs in need of

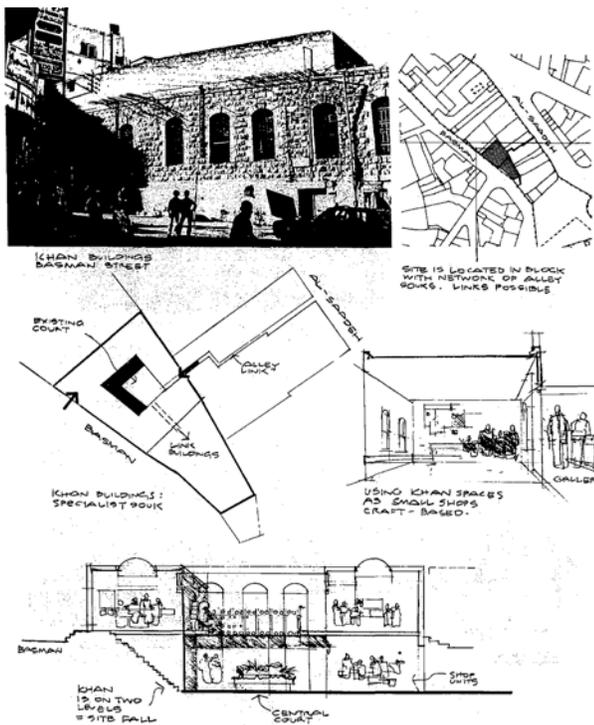


FIGURE 7. Historical building conservation designs. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 16.34.

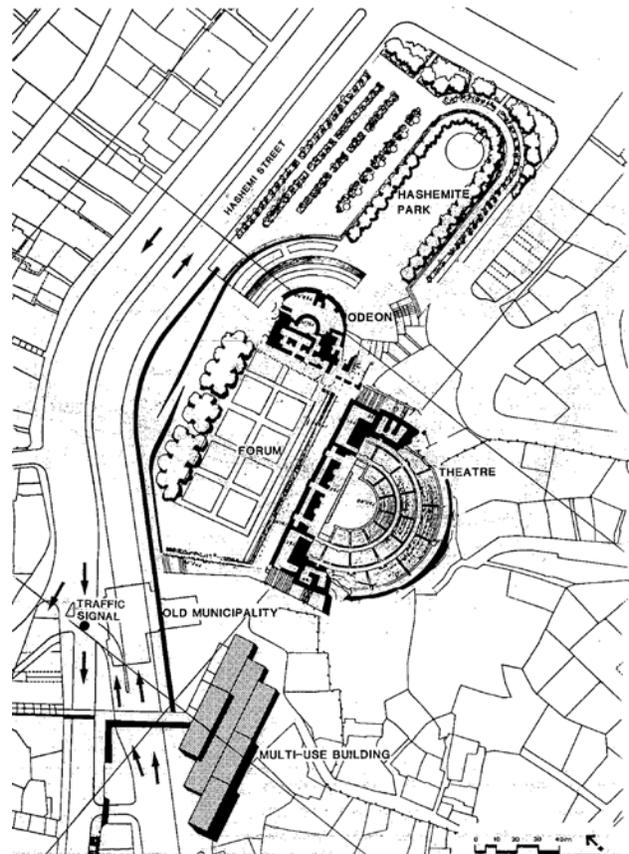
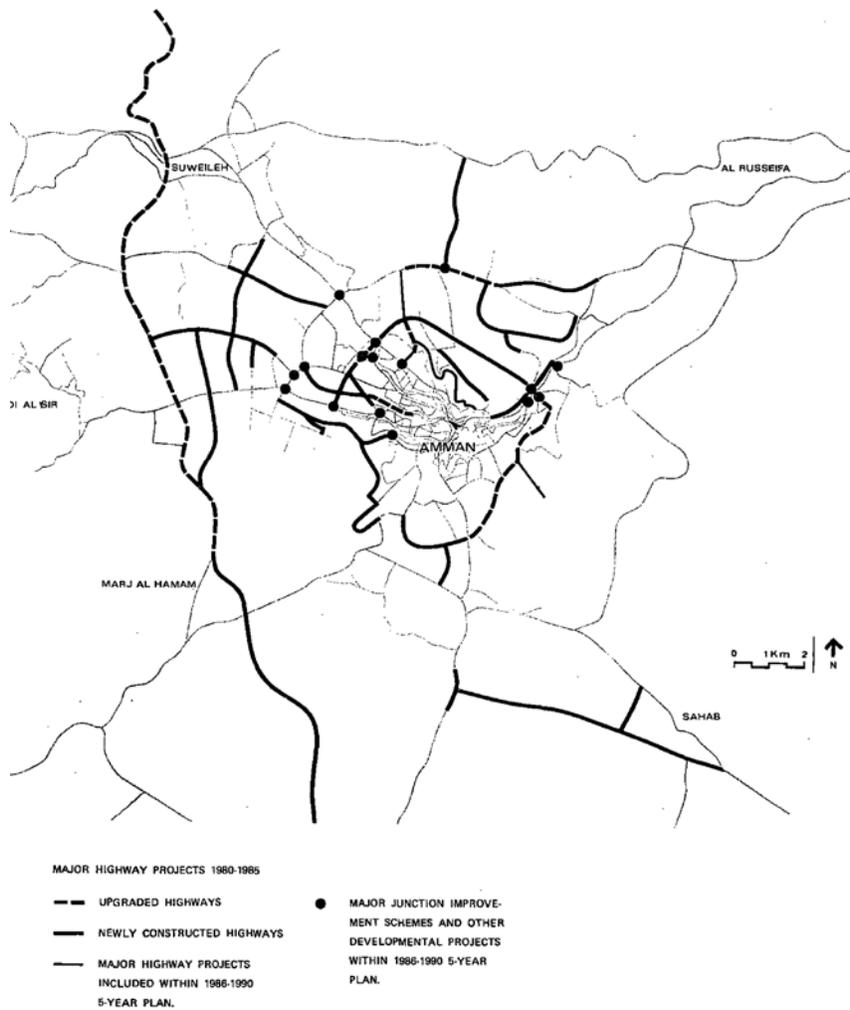


FIGURE 8. Approved improvements to the public plaza and park outside the Roman amphitheater. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 16.9.

preservation, but the aesthetic of proposed interventions is intentionally vague, composed of shadowed figures in axonometric perspective. Furthermore, while the plan presented a considerable number of examples on how best to conserve and rehabilitate the existing fabric of the townscape, it had little to say about the intention, or aesthetic, of the massive civic interventions it proposed (FIG. 8).<sup>53</sup>

As has been the case in many preservation projects (consider the Medina in Algiers, for example), traditional elements were regarded as frozen in time, to be confined and kept from adapting to evolving need. In this way, the GACDP was self-Orientalizing, ascribing meaning to motifs, such as ornate building facades or stonework, and reinterpreting the existing fabric. It is thus that East Amman has been, in the decades since, trapped in a liminal space of history and modernity. In other words, the goals espoused in the plan presented a futurity for the city, an ideal that looked at the current condition, labeled it as belonging to the past, and turned to present a modern future, one without point of reference or inspiration.

In theory, the plan celebrated the preservation of traditional elements, but in practice it proposed projects that were a sanitized counterpart to the existing urban fabric. And this



**FIGURE 9.** Major highway additions.  
 Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 7.3.

approach not only informed the tenor of development at the time of the plan, but continued to influence it as it expanded westward following a series of new and improved roadways (FIG. 9). East Amman was thus labeled as the traditional sector of the city, allowing West Amman to freely develop and grow, expanding concentrically (FIG. 10).

It is thus that traditional dwellings, or *buyut*, now dominate the landscape of East Amman, clustered around commercial and public spaces (FIG. 11). But in stark contrast, large villas, malls, and highrise developments occupy West Amman. Additionally, the international airport relocated by Hussein in 1983 from Marka, in East Amman, has promoted expansion on the southern edge of the city. Also to the south, the Five Year Plan called out the construction of a second satellite public housing community, in Marj Al-Hamam, near the new airport.<sup>54</sup>

The allocation of space to and construction of a new airport for the city was a benchmark of Hussein’s profligate spending in his quest to modernize the city. Its size and scale were originally based on a projected average growth rate of 11 percent — though, by 1986, it was servicing less than half the

projected number of flights.<sup>55</sup> The size of the new airport was likely determined less by necessity than by Hussein’s desire to demonstrate his wealth and satisfy his personal weakness, as a pilot himself, for aeronautics.<sup>56</sup>

THE EXPANSION OF URBAN DIVISIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GACDP

Beyond the airport and the two new satellite communities, the vision of modernization that produced the GACDP was halted by the fiscal crisis of 1989, leaving many of the planning goals unrealized (FIG. 12). This is not to say, however, that while short-lived, the implementation of the GACDP did not have a real impact on Amman (FIG. 13). For example, the design of Abu Nuseir redefined systems of communalism, while the expanded road network encouraged development westward, effectively preserving East Amman as a heritage site. In other words, the planning decisions made by the Joint Team in 1985 have had very real consequences for today’s Amman.

FIGURE 10. Preferred settlement pattern designated by the Joint Team. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 11.2.

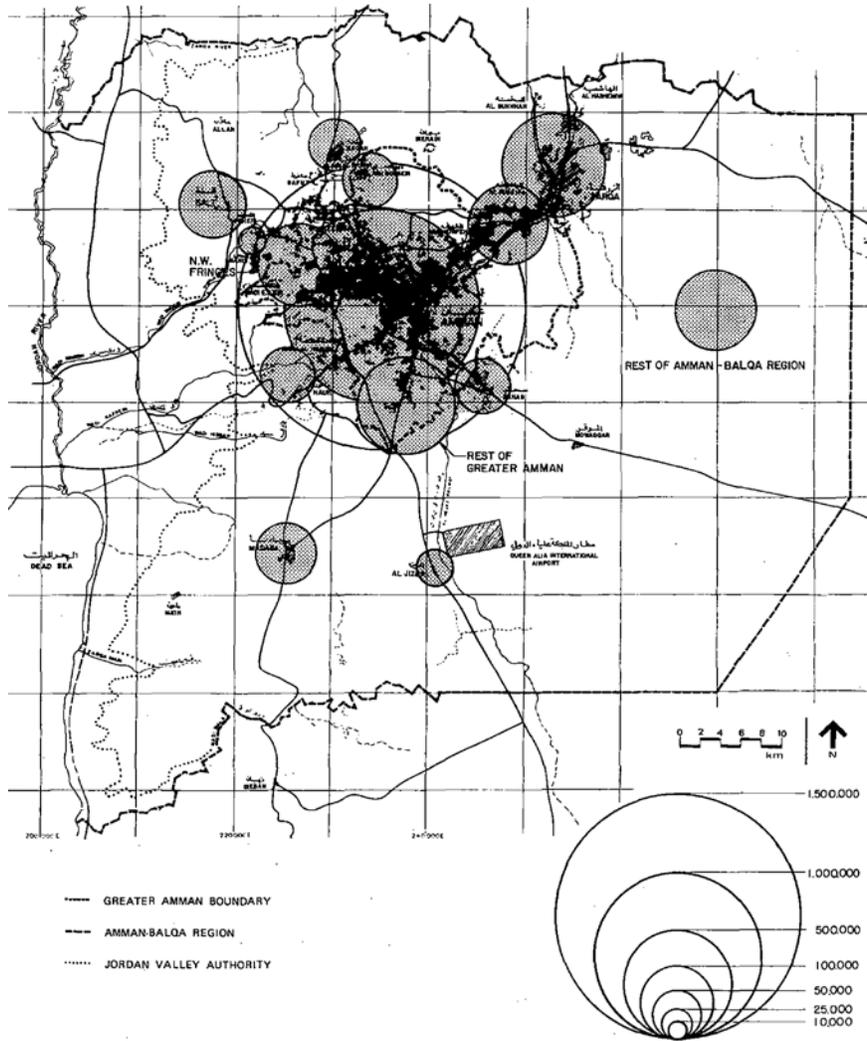


FIGURE 11. Typical vista of East Amman with the GAM plaza in foreground. Photo by author.

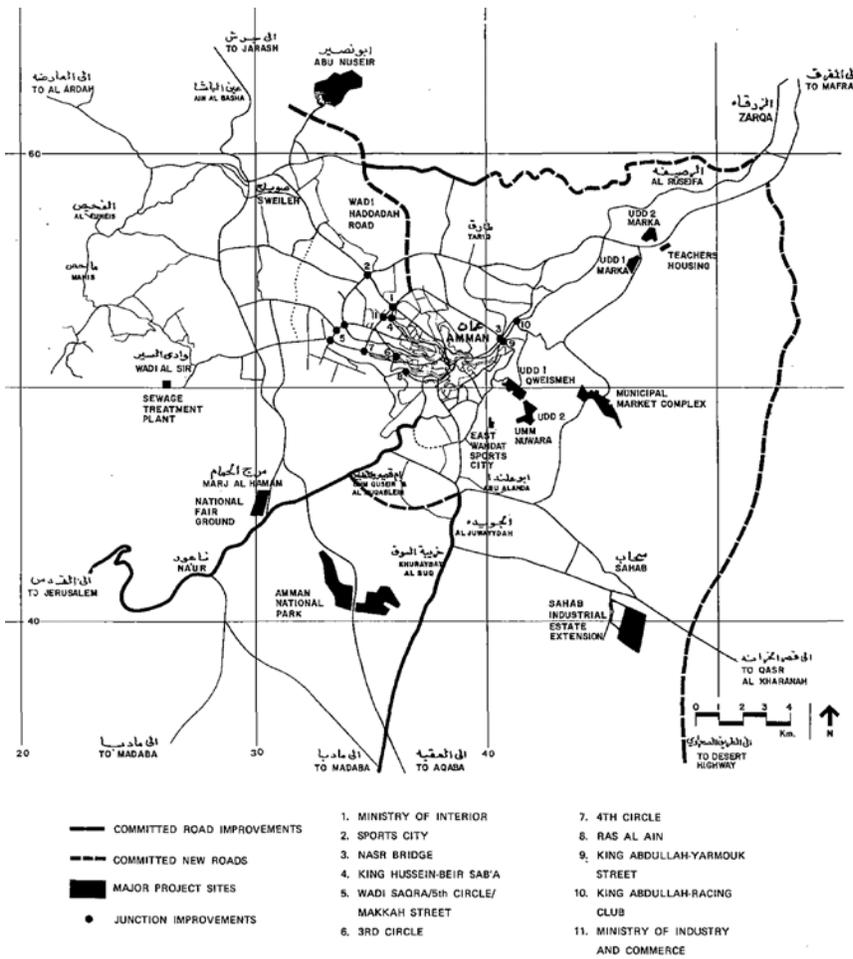


FIGURE 12. Map of approved projects in the GACDP. Source: Greater Amman Comprehensive Development Plan, sec. 6.32.



FIGURE 13. Incomplete Roman amphitheater plaza improvements in 2013. Photo by author.

Nevertheless, the scale and type of development in areas of contemporary West Amman demonstrate well that, despite Hussein's best efforts, the reach of tribal and wealthy elites is largely undiminished. Certainly, the wealthy elite, or king's men, succeeded in maintaining the legitimacy and stability of the monarchy. But the development prerogatives they com-

manded in have now been passed on to a new generation. And too often today this elite makes demands on the municipality to accommodate and facilitate their personal proposals. This is so much the case today that municipal planners admit that it is the tribes and their elite that have created and perpetuated divisions in the city.<sup>37</sup>

These divisions have grown along social and economic lines measured by levels of education and literacy, occupation and employment, housing type, and, of course, income (FIG. 14). The impact is so significant that in 2013 the Institut Française Du Proche-Orient produced a series of exhibits mapping social disparities in the city. The maps portrayed the social demographics of occupation and wealth, consistently indicating a clear east/west divide of Amman (FIG. 15).<sup>38</sup>

Social and economic status was, and remains, a very real factor separating the quantity and quality of representation and power in East and West Amman. Areas of West Amman are better serviced and maintained, and more often benefit from public projects. East Amman, by contrast, is underrepresented, its residents disempowered by a lack of political reach.

During Hussein's reign, the political economy of Amman was determined by wealth and power, and this situation continues, and is perhaps even more pronounced, in contemporary Amman. The municipality and its hard-won policy controls remain pawns in this imposing system that is, as much as ever, reliant on and run by entrenched systems of tribalism and the will of the elite.

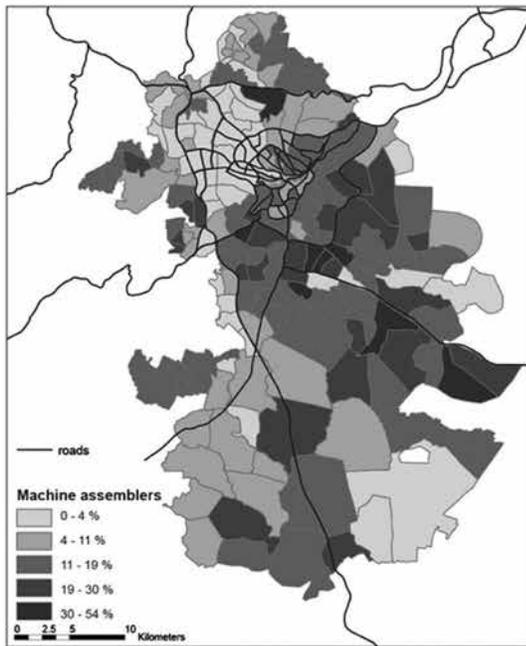
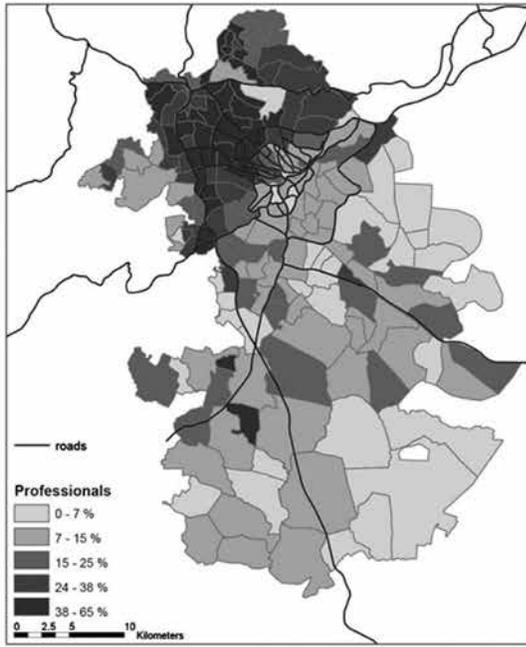


FIGURE 14. Map of occupation type. Note that West Amman is occupied predominantly by professionals. Source: Abasa, ed., Atlas of Jordan, p.397.

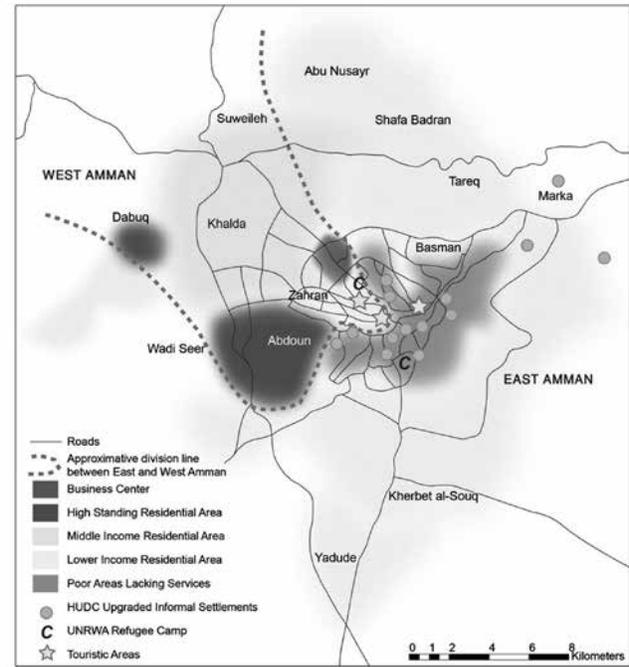


FIGURE 15. The map of social disparities indicates a clear east/west divide. Source: Abasa, ed., Atlas of Jordan, p.400.

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