

Entre la permanencia
y la temporalidad.
Campos, urbanidad
y tiempo

In between permanence
and temporariness.
On camps, urbanity
and time

AYHAM DALAL

Amman: Reading the City
through Displacement

Ammán: Leer la ciudad a
través del desplazamiento



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Abstract

Amman is a city shaped by multiple displacements. In 1952 and 1955, two refugee camps, called Al-Hussein and Al-Wihdat, respectively, were established for displaced Palestinians near the city centre. Shortly after, the city began to experience rapid growth due to continuous waves of displacements. A few years later, the camps blended with the emergent urban fabric of the city. This paper elucidates this urban transformation and how it led to the polarization of the city into two sides: the impoverished east dictated by informal arrangements and the rich west with formal support structures. After 2011, Jordan received Syrian refugees, many of whom settled in Amman. This paper discusses the following question: how did Amman grow vis-à-vis displacement? And considering the relatively recent arrival of Syrians to the city (in comparison with other refugees), how did they encounter the city and navigate its socioeconomic disparities? Building on fieldwork conducted in Amman in 2022-23, the author shows how Syrians were split between the two parts of the city, and how those with fewer resources ended up living in the east with its Palestinian camps, while those who have more resources struggle to survive in west Amman.

Keywords

Amman displacement, syrian refugees, informal settlements, socioeconomic divide.

A recent report by UN-Habitat¹ suggests that Jordan has the second highest percentage of refugees per capita in the world “with 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants”. In total, Jordan has a population of around 11 million, with 42% of its population residing in the capital, Amman, equal to approximately 4.5 million inhabitants (ibid). Yet, historically speaking, it has been argued that “for more than 700 years there had been no permanent population in Amman”.² The rapid growth of the urban population due to sudden refugee influxes pushed the city to develop a special relation with temporariness. The most recent survey in 2015 suggests that there are 1,681,469 refugees living in

1 UN-Habitat, ‘Amman Spatial Profile’ (Amman: UN-Habitat, 2022), 156.

2 Ala Hamarneh, ‘The Social and Political Effects of Transformation Processes in Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Amman Metropolitan Area (1989-99)’, in *Jordan in Transition* (Hurst & Co, 2002), 172.

the city, most of whom originate from Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, in addition to less “visible” refugees like the Somalis, Sudanese and Yemenis. This fact stands against that asserted by the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which indicated that by October 2021, there were only 273,329 registered refugees living in the city, including 198,217 Syrians³. This number still represents a major jump from the 22,394 Syrians who used to live in Amman in 2004.⁴

This paper seeks to answer the following question: how did Amman grow vis-à-vis displacement? And considering the relatively recent arrival of Syrians to the city (in comparison with other refugees), how did they encounter the city and navigate its socioeconomic disparities? To answer these questions, the paper builds on fieldwork conducted in Amman between July 2022 and January 2023, using 20 semi-structured interviews with registered Syrian refugees living in Amman (from different origins, professions, and socioeconomic backgrounds), 3 semi-structured interviews with Syrians who lived in Amman prior to the influx of Syrian refugees, and 2 semi-structured interviews with Jordanian urban planners working at the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). Additionally, this study was enriched by access to rare maps of the city found at the library of the Institut français du Proche-Orient (Ifpo).

Amman before 1948

Cities have always been under the influence of population movements, but Amman is perhaps one of the most vivid examples of how these dynamics can determine the main features of the city. Amman began as a village of 150 people in 1879, grew to a population of 1,000 in 1893 with mostly displaced Circassians, who took refuge in and around the Roman amphitheater “using its columns to dwell between them, or using its stones to build new ones”, and expanded again in 1923 to a city of 6,000 individuals, including merchants from Syria and Palestine.⁵ At the declaration of independence in 1946, Amman had 100,000 inhabitants, and due to the first Palestinian exodus in 1948, the city was overwhelmed by thousands of refugees (Figure 1). Strikingly, in 1952, 29% of Amman’s inhabitants were estimated to be living in tents, and 8% in caves.⁶ This sudden increase in population changed the building patterns and morphology of the city. At the beginning, Amman remained attached to the river and thus relatively compact. Building was mostly limited to housing on the slopes leading to the river and the main market.

However, the arrival of refugees stretched this urban fabric, leading to the production of “small ‘settlements’ where buildings are set amidst agricultural lands”. According to novelist Abdulrahman Munif, this resulting urban pattern, particularly the voids between the “settlements,” became one of the city’s main characteristics at the time. This can still be seen in the modern city, where urbanization is not centred on state-led housing schemes, town planning, or even neighborhoods. Urbanization is led by only real-estate developers building private housing, transforming the city into a construction site, haunted by “fear”. What drives Amman’s rapid urbanization is not placemaking, but uprootedness—a haunting image of a city with no place of refuge except for temporary tents, caves and makeshift housing. Munif⁷ describes the first arrival of refugees in Amman as starting first with the hills in the centre—Jabal Al Weibdeh and Jabal Amman—before expanding further: “Other hills too were affected: Al-Natheef, Al-Ashrafieh, and Al-Jawofeh, all were filled with houses which started to accumulate rapidly, built without precision, to host the new arrivals whose numbers increased significantly”.⁸ Indeed, the arrival of Palestinian refugees in Amman in 1948 forever changed the relationship between the city and its “inhabitants.” Since then, Amman has been repeatedly impacted by various population “shocks” (1948, 1967, 1976, 1991, 2003, 2012) that

3 UN-Habitat, ‘Amman Spatial Profile’.

4 According to DOS, *Population and Housing Census 2004* (Amman: Department of Statistics, 2004) only around 20% of Syrian refugees in Jordan live in camps. The majority are settled in urban areas, including cities like Amman, Irbid and Mafraq.

5 Abdelrahman Munif, *تايين عبر آل ايف نامع: قديم قريسي*, 6th ed. (تاساردل قيسؤملا), 6th ed. (رشنلا و تاساردل قيسؤملا), 2018), 408.

6 Nabil Abu-Dayyeh, ‘Persisting Vision: Plans for a Modern Arab Capital, Amman, 1955–2002’, *Planning Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (2004): 79–110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0266543042000177922>.

7 Munif, *تايين عبر آل ايف نامع: قديم قريسي*, 404.

8 Most of these hills (Jabals) are considered sites of informal refugee habitations, especially for Palestinian refugees, forming what is often referred to as “informal camps.” Currently they host most of Amman’s poorest inhabitants.



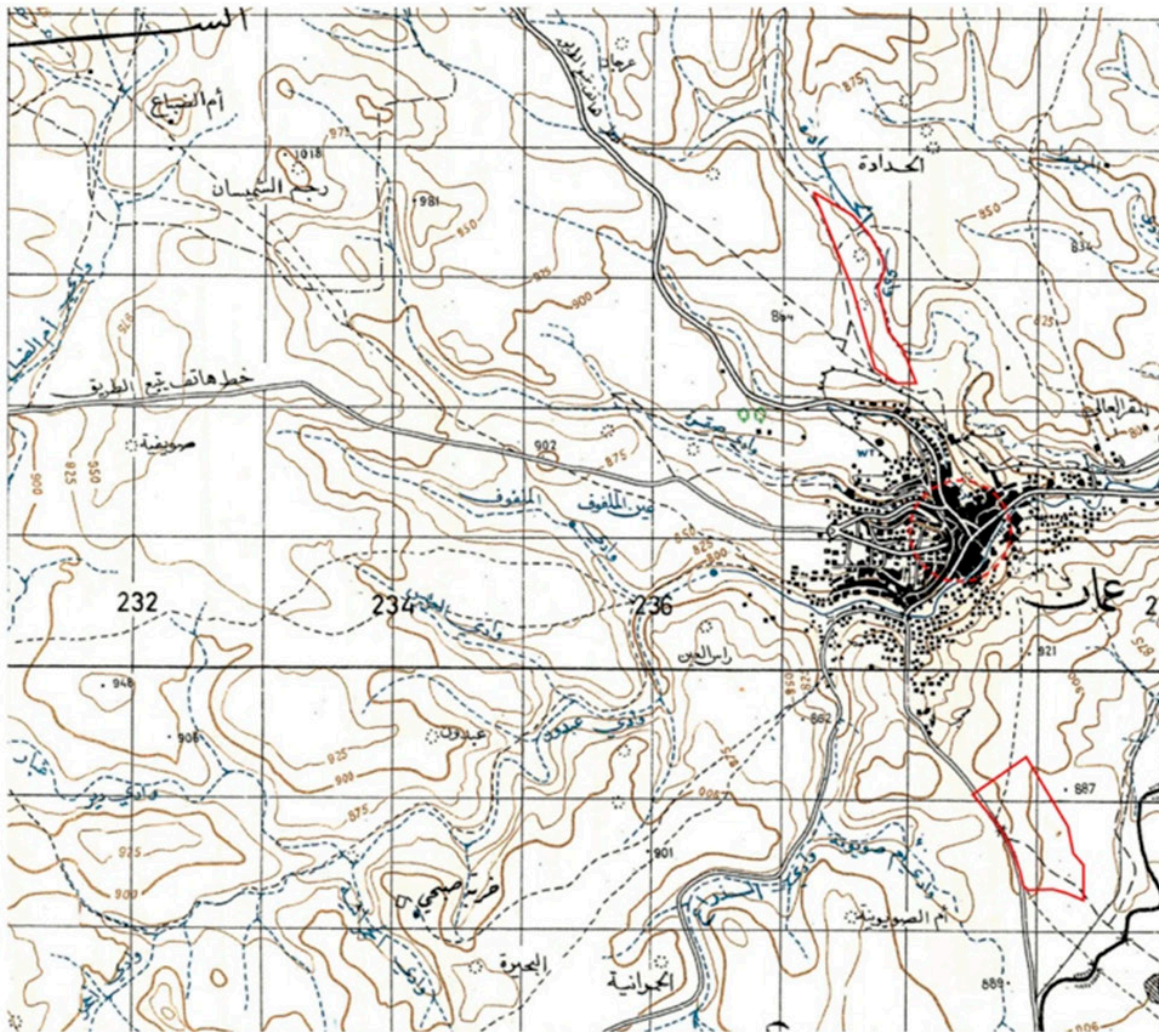
Figure 1. A picture showing part of Amman in the 1950s with hills covered with tents.



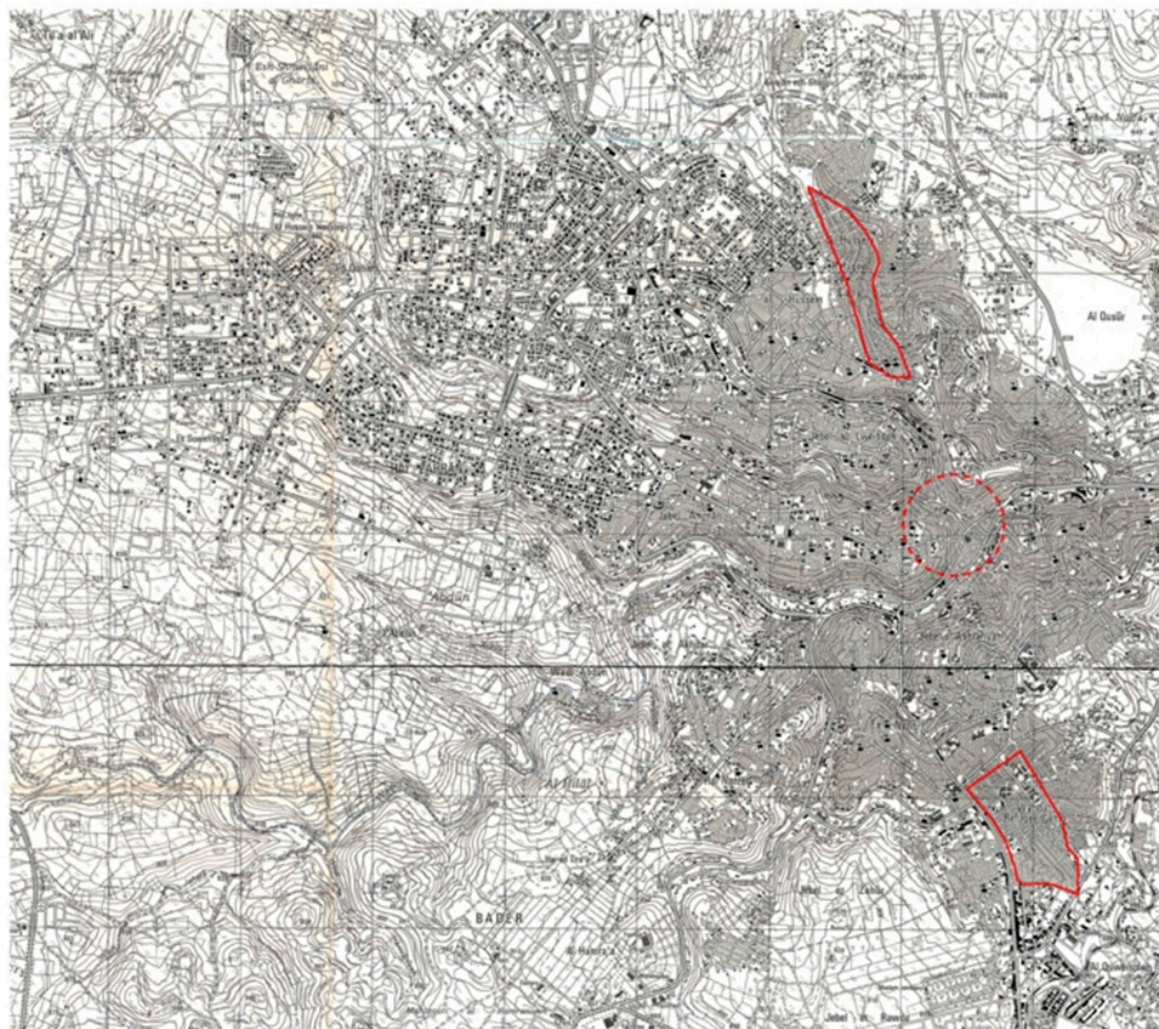
Figure 2. A picture showing stereotypical scenery of Amman with porous urban sprawl and cubic stone buildings.

resulted in sudden population increases, and consequently, high demand for housing, services and infrastructure.⁹ The porous urban fabric of the city with its voids—of possibility, of preparedness, of potential—has been expanding, producing what could be Amman’s most predominant “urban scene”: a porous urban sprawl of cubic housing encroaching on agricultural land and wheat farms (Figure 2). While this urban sprawl becomes more spacious as it stretches towards the west, the

9 These waves include: 100,000 Palestinian refugees in 1948; 300,000 Palestinian refugees in 1967; 350,000 Palestinian and Jordanian expellees from the Persian Gulf in 1991; between 200,000 and 400,000 Iraqis between 2003 and 2005; and finally, around 500,000 Syrians since 2012 (Ababsa 2012). It is even argued that the involuntary mass return of Jordanians and Palestinians from the Gulf in 1991 resulted in 9 to 10 percent of increase in the overall population (van Hear 1995).



1947



1978

Al-Hussein
Camp

Downtown

Al-Wihdat
Camp

Figure 3. The blending of Palestinian camps into the urban fabric of Amman.

city centre in the impoverished eastern part became denser. The voids were filled with informal and self-built housing. However, two delineated spaces were temporarily “suspended” from historical events in the city: Al-Wihdat camp (built in 1955 and located three kilometres south of the city centre), and Al-Hussein camp (built in 1952, one kilometre north of the city centre).¹⁰ Both camps were built and managed by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees.¹¹ However, as Amman grew and urbanized, the two camps became embraced by the city and its expanding urban carpet (Figure 3).

Camp Urbanization

Refugee camps are temporary spaces set during emergencies to provide displaced populations with a safe haven; however, they gradually urbanize, producing new hybrid arrangements of spaces, architectures and social structures, often referred to as ‘camp-cities’.¹² In the case of urbanized Palestinian camps, many were initially built relatively close to cities and the main street networks to facilitate transportation,¹³ yet they grew and developed new relationships with the cities that embraced them. For instance, Al-Wihdat was located on the peripheries of Amman, yet, with time, it turned into the economic centre of east Amman. The camp was initially built on an area of 0.48 km². It started with 1,400 shelter units, but 1,260 shelters were added to the camp in 1957, making a total of 2,660 units.¹⁴ These units gave the camp its name (Al-Wihdāt means ‘the units’ in Arabic). According to a Palestinian refugee who was born and raised in the camp, each shelter unit comprised “one room,” which was around only three metres by three metres when “empty,” and can still be seen amidst the appropriated built environment of the camp.¹⁵

Despite the unregulated growth of Amman, the political nature of the camp meant that it had to remain “temporary”—at least in the eyes of the government. According to Ala Hamarneh,¹⁶ “shelters and tents dominated the camp scene until the early 1970s”. Yet, incremental appropriations to the shelters resulted into an overall transformation of the camp and its urbanization. This was enforced by new regulations and the gradual “cementing” of the camp.¹⁷ According to Hamarneh:¹⁸ “The housing reconstruction boom began in the early 1980s with the new regulations for permanent cement roofs (until that time the housing units could only have tin-plate or zinc-plate roofs) and limited second floor permissions”. This meant that the camp was gradually becoming simultaneously included and excluded from the city. It was included as it was welded with the urban fabric and, later on, turned into a major urban and economic hub for the less privileged members of the city; and it was also excluded, as the inhabitants of the camp were, and still are, discriminated against. While Amman was expanding to the west with vast villas and fancy hotels and malls, the eastern part of the city—and Al-Wihdat in its centre—was growing poorer. In a survey conducted in 2011, it was estimated that the residents of Al-Wihdat were among the poorest of the Palestinian camps in Jordan.¹⁹

Al-Hussein camp was also located on the northern periphery of the city, in particular, on the northern hill of Jabal Al-Hussein; however, it merged with the city over time. The camp was initially designed to host 8,000 refugees over an area of 0.42 km². The location of the camp on the northern slope of the hill contributed to its shape: an elongated ellipse with a central main street (known as Ein Jalout)

10 Al-Wihdāt camp is also known as Amman New Camp.

11 Before UNRWA was established on 8 December, 1949, and became operational on 1 May, 1950, Palestinian camps were mostly managed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

12 Michel Agier, ‘Between War and City: Towards an Urban Anthropology of Refugee Camps’, *Ethnography*, 2002.

13 Jalal Al-Husseini, ‘The Management of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jordan between Logics of Integration and Exclusion’, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2166837>.

14 UNRWA, ‘Amman New Camp’, 2022, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/amman-new-camp>.

15 Personal interview, 29 December, 2022, Al-Wihdat camp, East Amman.

16 Ala Hamarneh, ‘Transformation of Al-Wihdat Refugee Camp’, *ISIM Newsletter*, 2002, 15.

17 Nasser Abourahme, ‘Assembling and Spilling-Over: Towards an “Ethnography of Cement” in a Palestinian Refugee Camp’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 2 (2015): 200–217, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12155>.

18 Hamarneh, ‘Transformation of Al-Wihdat Refugee Camp’.

19 Åge A. Tiltnes and Huafeng Zhang, ‘The Socio-Economic Conditions of Jordan’s Palestinian Camp Refugees: Summary of Findings from Two Surveys’ (Oslo: Fafo, 2014), <https://www.faf.no/images/pub/2014/20394-web-ENG.pdf>.

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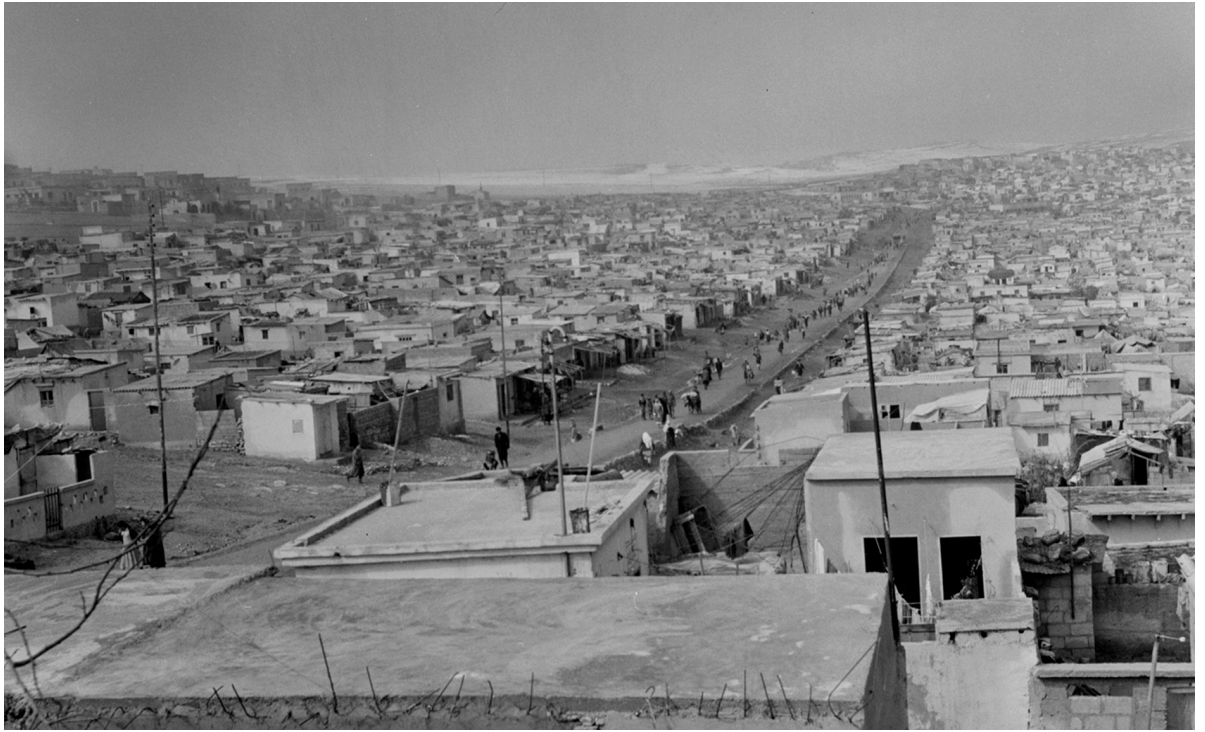


Figure 4. Al-Hussein refugee camp in 1981.

stretching over one kilometre, which turned over time into the main market space. From that street, around fifty comparatively narrow and short streets branch off orthogonally. Refugee families were assigned to a space of 100 m² (ten by ten metres), and guidelines on how to build the shelters were offered based on family size.²⁰

Yet this process endured incremental transformations, just as it did in Al-Wihdat camp. Refugees started altering the shelter units to suit their needs, and rooms of concrete blocks were built. Between 1970 and 1984, only one-story structures were permitted. However, once this law was changed, refugees began adding additional floors, starting with external ladders that can be seen in both camps—Al-Wihdat and Al-Hussein—and are considered a “spatial violation” of the restrictions on the assigned plots.²¹ As mentioned by the Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question:²² “The types of shelter units were constantly developed either by UNRWA or the residents. Over the years, many refugees started building small rooms from concrete and bricks to provide better shelter during winter. These rooms would later transform into one- or two-story houses within the initial 100 square meter plots. Through this process, the fabric of the camp become [sic] more organic in its composition, with certain alleyways and roads disappearing as people expanded their houses” (Figure 4).

In 1980, estimates put one quarter of the city of Amman as occupied by informal settlements populated by Palestinian refugees, including both camps and other “informal” Palestinian camps in east Amman. The spread of informal shelters and the housing problem has sparked several urban policy responses, such as the birth of the UDD (Urban Development Department) at the GAM, which conducted an urban upgrade project in the eastern part of Al-Wihdat camp.²³ However, despite the attempts to cope with the spread of “informality” in east Amman, the east–west divide continued to increase, especially with the return of Gulf money to Jordan in the 1990s.

20 Lucas Oesch, ‘The Refugee Camp as a Space of Multiple Ambiguities and Subjectivities’, *Political Geography* 60 (2017): 110–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.05.004>.

21 Samar Maqusi, “‘Space of Refuge’: Negotiating Space with Refugees Inside the Palestinian Camp”, *Humanities* 6, no. 3 (2017): 60, <https://doi.org/10.3390/h6030060>.

22 Mazen Jubeihi, ‘Jabal Al-Hussein Refugee Camp’, 2024, <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/35142/jabal-al-hussein-refugee-camp>.

23 Myriam Ababsa, ‘Public Policies Toward Informal Settlements in Jordan (1965–2010)’, in *Popular Housing and Land Tenure in the Middle East*, ed. Myriam Ababsa, Baudouin Dupret, and Eric Denis (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2012), 259–82.

Eventually, in 2023, estimates put 33,835 registered Palestinian refugees in Al-Hussein camp, and 61,795 in Al-Wihdat camp. Gradually, the two camps blended into what has become known as “east Amman”, which is considered the poorest part of the city—cramped with small and poorly constructed residences—in comparison with “west Amman”, which represents the richest part of the city, with fancy villas and well-constructed residences.

Reorganizing Amman: The East–West Divide

The arrival of refugees was indeed a source of diversity and heterogeneity. Amman became accustomed to “strangeness” as one of its main features, leading to a struggle for a coherent identity that continues today. As a Syrian refugee who lived in Amman for over eight years explained: “This is a city of strangers. No one lives here unless they are forced to. The visitor [comes] to see his relatives, to get medical assistance, to study, to work, but not to live here. No one wants to live here”.²⁴ This idea of seeing Amman as a “transit stop”, as it is described by many scholars, continues to be engraved in the minds of its inhabitants²⁵. The transience of Amman is reflected in the urban sprawl filled with voids, as if the city were racing with time to prepare for more refugees and displaced persons to come.

The arrival of refugees and displaced persons to the city transformed its neighbourhoods, increasing its social and architectural richness. As Munif wrote²⁶: “New residential mixtures started to emerge as the same neighborhood started to embrace residents from different locations and backgrounds, and the bonds of the city became stronger than before”. While villas and courtyard housing were prominent historically²⁷, the city started to stretch. Amman was gradually turning into two cities: “one for the rich and one for the poor, and this feature was enforced and increased after 1948”²⁸.

Between the 1970s and 1980s, the sociospatial divide of the city was increasing rapidly. East Amman, with its two refugee camps, became a symbol of poverty and crowdedness, whereas west Amman was growing with its villas, or villa-like housing, in addition to cultural facilities and commercial centres. Gradually, the “city of many hats”²⁹, was turning into a city of two hats: one for the rich and one for the poor. This process was accelerated in the 70s and 80s as many inhabitants of Amman were bringing remittances from Gulf countries to build residences³⁰. At the same time, the identity of east Amman as an impoverished part of the city was being fostered. In the mid-1980s, it was estimated that 25% of households lived in the camps of east Amman or were squatters (ibid). Although it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line that demarcates east and west Amman, the city became polarized between these two emerging socioeconomic spaces in which the temporary spaces of the camps were embedded (Figure 5). Notably, the first urban plan for Amman by King and Lock, which was designed in 1955, proposed relocating the tents of Al-Hussein camp to southern Amman to create one neighbourhood for refugees. However, this vision was abandoned as refugees continued to arrive and settle in and around the camp.^{31,32} The idea of relocating the camp, moreover, reflects a limited understanding of the political nature of that space. Although camps are mechanisms of “care and control”³³, they tend to organically establish ties with the spaces and urban functions around them. In the context of Amman, these ties were centred on poverty and survival, especially with the workers’ need for inexpensive housing in an increasingly neoliberal city.

24 Personal interview, 18 September 2022, West Amman.

25 Hamarneh, ‘The Social and Political Effects of Transformation Processes in Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Amman Metropolitan Area (1989-99)’, 173; Shami, “‘Amman Is Not a City’: Middle Eastern Cities in Question”; Daher, ‘Understanding Cultural Change and Urban Transformation Qualifying Amman: The City of Many Hats’.

26 Munif, *بنايين عبر آل ايف نامع: فنيدم قريسي*, 405.

27 Shami, “‘Amman Is Not a City’: Middle Eastern Cities in Question’.

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29 Daher, ‘Understanding Cultural Change and Urban Transformation Qualifying Amman: The City of Many Hats’.

30 Shami, “‘Amman Is Not a City’: Middle Eastern Cities in Question’.

31 Jubeihi, ‘Jabal Al-Hussein Refugee Camp’.

32 Although Amman has seen several attempts to orchestrate its growth through urban planning, there is a general consensus that the city is unplanned.

33 Liisa H. Malkki, ‘Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization’, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1996.

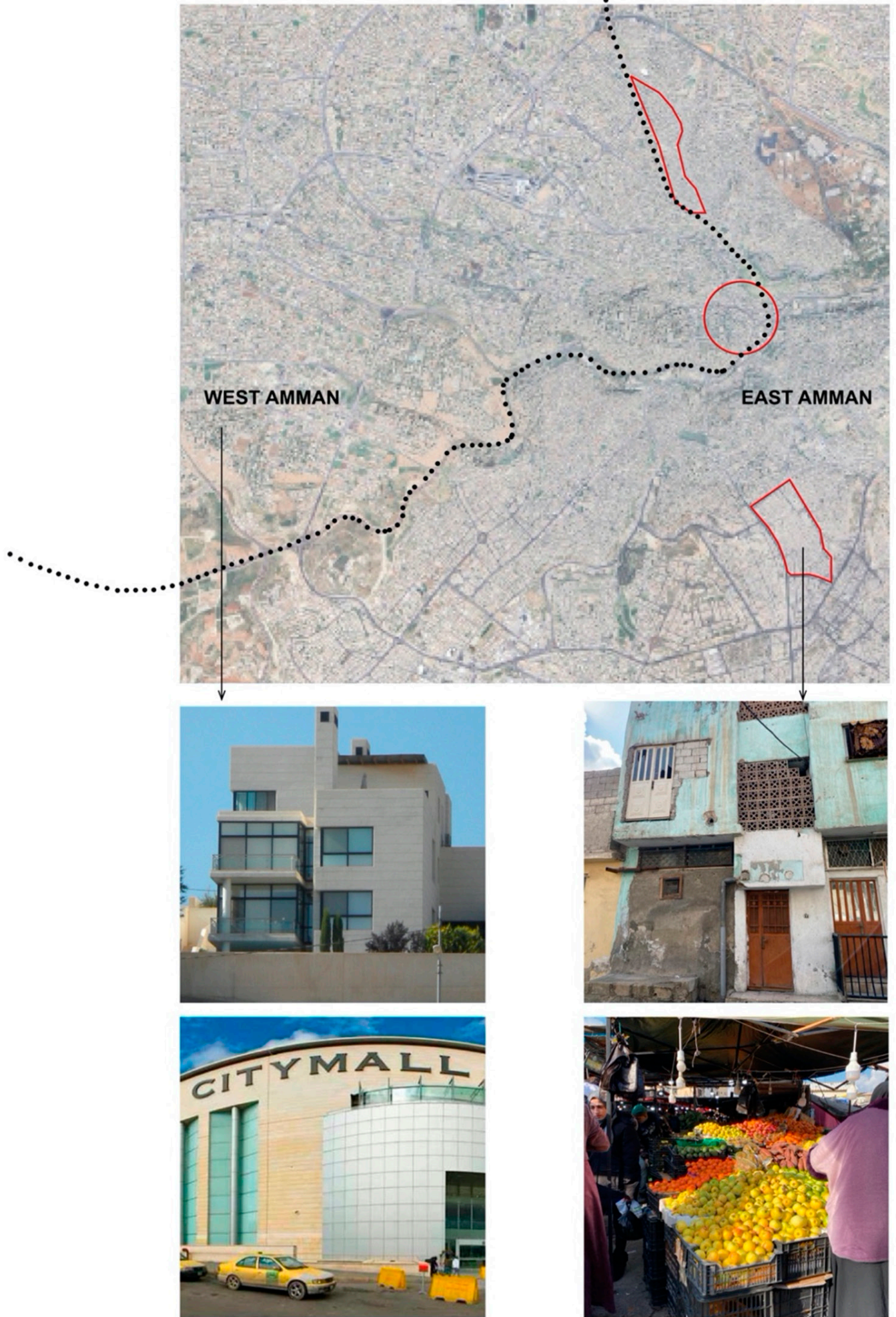


Figure 5. The approximate division of Amman between west/formal and east/informal.

The arrival of refugees in Amman has fed the east–west divide. Iraqi refugees who were well-off for instance, contributed to the expansion of the real-estate market in west Amman,³⁴ whereas less visible refugees like those from Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, found refuge in the older parts of east Amman, such as Hayy Al Masarwa in Jabal Amman³⁵. But how do Syrians experience Amman with its east–west divide?

Syrian Refugees in a Divided City

Syrians are accustomed to balanced urban life, in which formal planning was used from the 1960s onwards to create harmony between different parts of the city: state-led housing schemes, green parks, schools, markets, and so on. In contrast, Amman was growing in constant tension with the “fear” of crises and unexpected human movements pulling on the “belief” that neoliberalism would lead the city to a safe destiny.³⁶ It is no exaggeration to say that many Syrians experienced their first contact with neoliberalism in Amman—a city dominated by an economic rush, bridges, tunnels, shiny cars, big malls, privatized public spaces, and an individualized living style.

As one Syrian refugee commented: “Is this even a city? Where are the streets with sidewalks? Where are the green parks? Where are the theatres and cinemas? I just want to find one street where I can walk naturally and interact with people like I used to”.³⁷ In their journeys, refugees do not necessarily end up in camps, but it seems that all of them experience what had been previously theorized as the “refugee-more-than-human” encounters³⁸; encounters with new urban and built environments (in this case cities), leading to the emergence of new spatial knowledge. However, while refugees develop further understanding of their host cities, these cities push them according to their own urban dynamics, and in our case, according to the east–west divide. This divide is clear from salaries and monthly house rents. For instance, a group of Syrian men living in west Amman and working in a nearby mall would pay 350 JDs for a 3-bedroom apartment, whereas for the same size, they would pay 100 JDs for a flat in Al-Wihdat camp in east Amman. Moreover, salaries differ hugely. In west Amman, Syrian workers with an official work permit would receive an average monthly salary between 300 and 450 JDs, and could reach more than 500 JDs based on interviews,³⁹ but in east Amman, refugees struggle to obtain official work permits, leaving them with the choice of either remaining unemployed or working informally for a fluctuating income.⁴⁰

Refugees in Al-Wihdat camp, for instance, rely mainly on informal work that provides between 5 and 15 JDs per day (if lucky!), per person. Activities available for them include informal work in the construction sector, along with food picking and food processing, and children can engage in street vending. Moreover, while in west Amman, many Syrian shops and restaurant have used their “Syrianness” as a marketing strategy to attract customers. Either by using well-known shops’ names that have relocated from Syria to Jordan, or even by using the traditional Syrian style in architecture to build facades and decorate interiors. Conversely, however, many Syrian shops in the east, and especially in the camps, operate undercover. As explained by a Syrian sweets maker hiding inside a closed shop in east Amman: “I hide so the police don’t see us. I tried working in other cities officially, but it was always a hassle... Here we make sweets and sell them to famous sweet shops in west Amman. They rely on us. If we don’t produce daily, their business will be affected”.⁴¹ Informal and formal arrangements, as this last example shows, are often intertwined, complementing each other. Similarly, east and west Amman need not be understood as a clear-

34 As mentioned in the UN-Habitat report, the number of land and housing transactions by Iraqis rose from 125 transactions in 2002 to 1,811 in 2005, or from JOD 4.9 million to JOD 100 million.

35 Solenn Al Majali, ‘Interactions et Altérités Des Réfugiés Subsahariens En Jordanie’, *Civilizations* 68 (2019): 95–115.

36 Christopher Parker, ‘Tunnel-Bypasses and Minarets of Capitalism: Amman as Neoliberal Assemblage’, *Political Geography* 28, no. 2 (2009): 110–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2008.12.004>.

37 Personal interview, 01 August 2022, West Amman.

38 Ayham Dalal, ‘The Refugee Camp as Site of Multiple Encounters and Realizations’, *Review of Middle East Studies* 54, no. 2 (December 2020): 215–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2021.10>.

39 Personal contact, 15 March 2024.

40 which is above the average monthly income estimated to be around 225 JD in 2023. For more info see: “Socio-economic situation of refugees in Jordan Q2 2023”: <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/UNHCR-Socio-economic-situation-of-refugees-in-Jordan-Q2-2023.pdf>

41 Personal interview, 03 September 2022, East Amman.

cut division, but rather as defined by blurry boundaries that keep changing over time. While the city expands and economic neoliberalization restructures the city, refugees turn into “workers”, “investors”, or “guests” depending on how relevant and useful they are to the city and its growth machine. Within this context, camps might be “fixed” spaces, but as we have seen, their populations have been changing, following an economic order.

Conclusion: Displacement and Neoliberal Cities

Cities, with their ability to absorb and produce displacement, are increasingly the product of “capitalist urbanization”.⁴² As shown in this paper, Amman is no exception to this rule. These capitalist urbanization trends, however, did not have to struggle with thick layers of history. Despite its small centre near the Roman amphitheatre on the bluffs of the disappeared river, surrounded by hills, the city was an ideal “tabula rasa” for a new urban space to be built. This city was not built on social or utopian ideals, and it had little to no government interference or avant-garde, top-down plans. Amman did not have a crowded, maze-like historical core to struggle with, or palaces and urban texture predating the establishment of the kingdom in 1946. The forces that shaped Amman, and continue to do so, consist of a growing tension between the “fear” of nearby hostilities incurring the inability to find or seek refuge in the city and a strong “trust” in the powers of the economy and its neoliberal order. Within this context, urban displacement becomes the result of, and the reason behind, economic restructuring of the city. The new arrivals bring their memories, culture and knowledge to the space, but survival only falls in place whenever it makes sense to the economic order. Similarly, the refugee camps, often the results of “unresolved political conflict”, turn into primary spaces for new emergent urban identities: the east Ammani, in contrast to the affluent cosmopolitan west Ammani. Moreover, as were shown, the west–east, formal–informal divide is not static. The Syrian refugees’ experiences in the city (or “refugee-more-than-human” encounters) provide us with unique opportunities to see what Amman is missing and what it could have become if socially-just planning was utilized. Displacement allows us to see what cities have become, under capitalist urbanization, and what they could become, in an ideally, just, open and fairer world.

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Figure sources

Figure 1: Harrison Forman collection, American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

Figure 2: Author 2020

Figure 3: Author, based on maps obtained from the Ifpo Library

Figure 4: Source: UNRWA Archives

Figure 5: Source: Author

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