

Urban diversity and social disparity between public spaces in Amman City: A Case Study (New Abdali and Al-Balad)

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of the emergence of modern spaces on the diversity of public spaces in Amman City and the extent of their contradiction and differences with old spaces. This aim is achieved through analysis of the economic, social, cultural and spatial aspects of public spaces in New Abdali and the old city centre, Al-Balad. This study also sought to highlight the most significant physical differences between these spaces and their visitors' qualities, economic and social characteristics, behavioural patterns, activities, interactions and marketing preferences and attitudes towards public spaces. Henri Lefebvre's concept of urban space was utilised in the discussion of public spaces, role of globalisation, neo-liberal approaches to the diversity of public spaces in Amman, the disparity between both spaces and of its impact on inequality and social exclusion. Each public space had visitors who differ from those of the other space in many economic and social characteristics, including behavioural patterns, marketing preferences and gender mainstreaming, which led to the decline of social integration and interaction. The study recommended the need for creating a common public space to combine the highest number of social groups of both sexes and to pay considerable attention to the youth and their needs in public spaces.

Keywords: public space, Amman, social disparity, New Abdali, old city centre

1. Introduction

A series of circumstances and developments led to the emergence and diversity of public spaces in Amman. Petroleum revenues (Petrodollar) from the Arab Gulf States were invested in large projects, globalisation, neoliberal policies and privatisation, which required more government reforms. In addition, crises and wars in the Arabic region attracted investors towards the city of Amman due to its peace, security, stability and steady increase in population as a result of successive internal and external migrations. Thus, new public spaces, which differed from old ones, emerged. These modern public spaces were designed following global specifications, and after privatisation, have become accessible to high-income visitors.

As such, Amman City now has diverse public spaces. The modern and globalised public spaces are connected with neoliberalism and large private investments, such as New Abdali, high towers, malls and shopping centres and gated communities (Daher, 2013). By contrast, traditional public spaces in the old city centre are often populated by low-income visitors. These public spaces include refurbished and urbanised spaces such as Al Wakalat Street, Culture Street and Rainbow Street. In addition, cafés and restaurants are renovated in the old-fashioned style (Al-Jafari, 2014). Modern markets and spaces also emerged following the expansion of Amman in new neighbourhoods, including Shmeisani, Sweifieh, Tla' Al-Ali, Abdoun and other western neighbourhoods. These circumstances created economic, social and cultural variation in time and space between these public spaces and amongst their visitors. Such social disparity and polarisation are evident between the modern, well-maintained spaces and the neglected traditional spaces, which therefore incurred a declining number of visitors.

2. Problem of the study

Historical, social, economic, political and spatial development of Amman City contributed to the emergence of modern public spaces with multifaceted characteristics and forms. Compared with old public spaces, the new urbanised spaces increased the diversity and disparity between the districts of Amman. This recent economic developments and transformations, particularly the emergence of modern spaces, led to a sort of socio-economic spatial division in public spaces. Nowadays, Amman has various types of public spaces, including those for modern and old neighbourhoods, open and liberal spaces, Islamic conservative areas and old traditional centres. Each type has its own visitors with unique economic, social and spatial characteristics. This disparity is clearly evident between traditional spaces in the old city centre and the neoliberal modern spaces, such as New Abdali, which have become inaccessible and expensive for certain social classes despite being public. Therefore, neoliberal policies generated spatial inequality and economic, social and cultural differences between these public spaces and amongst their visitors.

This study explores the emergence of diverse public spaces in the capital city of Amman and its effect on the disparity between these spaces and their visitors, attracting certain classes of people or international companies to invest in Amman City and on the emergence of new uses and activities. The role of neoliberalism and globalisation in the establishment of globalised modern spaces are compared with traditional spaces in the old city centre, known locally as *Al-Balad*. The study is primarily based on Henri Lefebvre's concept of the Production of Space (1991).

Public space is defined as a place that is open and accessible to all people, individuals or groups without any restrictions,

regardless of their economic, social and cultural level and ideological and political affiliation. Public spaces include roads, public squares, parks, markets, stairs, libraries, cafés, restaurants, shopping malls and towers (Shrinagesh & Markandy, 2016).

3. Questions of the study

What are the nature and causes of the disparity and polarisation between public spaces in the New Abdali and Al-Balad?

How does the emergence of modern spaces promote disparity between visitors in both study areas (visitors differ in terms of their economic, social, spatial and behavioural characteristics)?

What is the nature of interactions and activities that occur in the public spaces of the study areas? What types of professions, economic activities, goods and services appear in the modern spaces but not in the old spaces?

4. Objectives of the study

This study aims to:

Highlight the important material, economic, social, cultural and spatial differences between the different public spaces in New Abdali and Al-Balad;

Analyse and understand the impact of neoliberalism and privatisation on the emergence of the modern public spaces in the study area compared with traditional spaces;

Explore new additions that differentiate modern public spaces from old spaces; and

Analyse and discuss the views of the public space visitors, actors, researchers and authorities towards public space diversity in Amman City.

5. Study methodology

This study depended on a set of resources for information collection.

A. Primary sources

The primary sources are as follows:

1. Interviews with officials from the Greater Amman Municipality, New Abdali Administration, researchers and concerned parties in public spaces.
2. Personal observations
3. Questionnaire

The study instrument (questionnaire) comprised 290 respondents from New Abdali and 350 respondents from the old city centre. The study sample consisted of visitors to the abovementioned public spaces, and the sample size was calculated using a preliminary survey of 35 cases from each area. The age range for all cases was processed to determine its standard deviation. The following formula was used to identify the sample size in an area with an unspecified population number:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \sigma^2}{d^2},$$

where *n* is the required sample size; *z* is ±1.96, which is the corresponding value of reliability; *σ* is the standard deviation; and *d*² is the 0.05 difference between the average of the study community and the average of the study sample (Al-Baldawi, 2009).

B. Secondary resources

Data were obtained from various institutions, including the Greater Amman Municipality, Department of Statistics and the Centre for the Study of the Built Environment.

A descriptive, analytical method was used to explore public spaces in Amman, their forms, characteristics and visitors. Data from the questionnaire and interviews were also analysed and processed. The comparative approach was used to distinguish the modern urban spaces in New Abdali with old traditional spaces in Al-Balad. The behavioural approach was used to analyse the visitors’ daily activities, interactions and behavioural patterns in the above public spaces.

The study was mainly based on Lefebvre’s concept of public spaces, which addressed their emergence, time development, diversity and contradictions. Lefebvre’s theory of spatial practice and space representations was heavily used to understand the current transformation of public spaces in Amman City.

Statistical Analysis Software was used for data processing. Geographic Information System software (GIS) was used to draw maps, while Excel was used to create figures and charts. Different data were analysed and processed to determine the important differences between public spaces in both study areas.

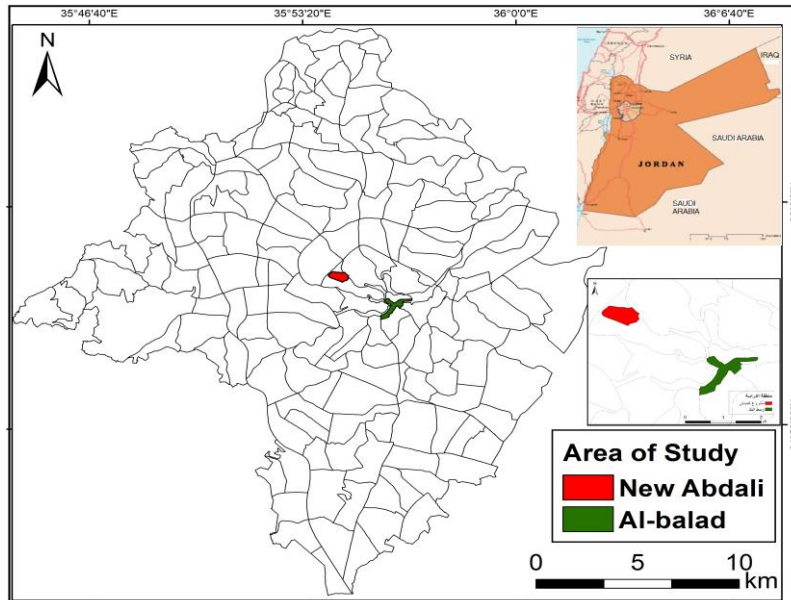
6. Study areas

Two different public spaces in Amman City were selected as the study areas. The New Abdali (Abdali Project) in the city’s west-central part is the largest regeneration project in the history of Amman City and Jordan. The New Abdali is an example of the partnership between the public and private sectors and the spread of globalisation and neoliberalism, and has many uses that include residential buildings, recreational and commercial utilities, offices, hotels and health facilities. The total built-up area is 2 million m². The project has a modern style with state-of-the-art infrastructure, buildings and spaces and hosts top-notch activities and occupations that differ from all other adjacent areas ^[1]. New Abdali accommodates many public spaces, such as the Boulevard and Abdali Mall and high-end towers, hotels and offices.

The study also surveyed the old city centre, Al-Balad, as an example of traditional spaces that constitutes the oldest neighbourhood in Amman City. There, public spaces in the city reflect the historical dimension, authenticity and originality. In addition, Amman witnessed commercial prosperity before expanding to the surrounding mountains. *Saqf Al-Sail*, formerly known as *Sail Amman*, first inhabited the Circassian immigrants after their migration wave in 1878. These immigrants were considered the first residents in the modern history of Amman after suffering from population decline for a long time (Jaber, 2013).

The public spaces in the old city centre include the Hashemite Square, Roman amphitheatre, Al-Nakheel Square, Faisal Street, Hussein Mosque, King Talal Street, Quraysh Street, Hashemi Street and Basman Street. Cafés, restaurants, confectionery shops and old markets are also present. These places represent historical spaces and serve as examples of Lefebvre’s absolute spaces. Figure (1) shows the location of the study areas.

¹ <http://www.abdali.jo/index.php?r=site/page&id=6>

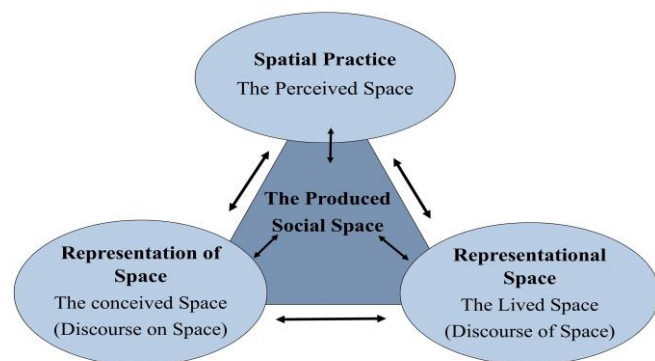


Source: by the researcher based on Greater Amman Municipality data

Fig 1: Location of the study area: New Abdali and old city centre (Al-Balad)

7. Theoretical framework

This study explores the study areas on the basis of Henry Lefebvre’s concept of the production of social space in his famous book, *The Production of Space* (1991). Lefebvre considered public space as a product of practices and social relationships and believes that everyday life has been colonised by capitalists through spatial control (of public spaces). Lefebvre suggested that, shortages of bread, and never a shortage of space, were experienced in the past. However, now that corn is plentiful, space is in short supply. At present, public spaces are lacking due to the control of capitalists and their various instruments (Elden, 2007). Lefebvre’s theory combines all types of spaces and their methods of evolution in the actual production of public spaces. The production of space is a continuous process of social development of the dialectical relations of material engagement, scientific conception and cultural expression (Pugalis, 2009). This Model of the Production of Space is conceptually concerned with three immaterial elements, namely, (1) Perceived Space, (2) Conceived Space, and (3) Lived Space. Later, these immaterial spaces were converted into spatial terms, such as (1) Spatial Practice, (2) Representation of Space, and (3) Representational Space. Each element of this *Triad* represents an aspect of the social production of public space (Carp, 2008). Figure (2) shows Lefebvre’s model.



Source: Hansen (2013)

Fig 2: Lefebvre’s Conceptual Model of the Production of Space

Public space is produced through the interaction of different elements (Figure 2). Spatial practice is defined as the daily routines of a group of people living in a common area, including different routes and daily destinations (Carp, 2008). People in this area produce, use and perceive space through their senses (Owhin, 2015). Representation of space is the conceptualised area of planners, scientists and urbanists who attempt to understand the material space (Carp, 2008). This space is usually imposed on individuals and does not represent the people’s desires. Representational Space is the everyday space, and refers to the actual experience of public space users. This space is produced as a result of dialectic interaction between material space and social practices (Leary, 2010).

In addition to his spatial triad, Lefebvre distinguished between three modes of space production according to historical development. First, Absolute Space is fundamentally religious, comprising religious, political and cultural spaces such as temples, palaces, ancient monuments and shrines. In Amman, the Roman amphitheatre, Amman Citadel (Jabal al-Qal’a), and King Faisal Square with their historical and symbolic features can be considered clear examples of absolute space. Second, Abstract Space is the capitalist space, produced and perpetuated through commodities, global strategies and the power of money. This space is run through extensive networks of commercial centres, funding, banks, markets and labour spaces. Abstract Space arises from absolute space that is colonised by capitalism. The New Abdali is a clear example of the abstract space. Third, the Differential Space emerges as a result of fragmentation and contradictions in abstract space. Differential space is not bestowed on city dwellers through the largesse of landowners or the state, but rather appropriated through the active assertion of rights to urban space. Lefebvre is ambivalent about differential space and associate it with a utopian post-capitalist world (Owhin, 2012).

8. Analysis and discussion of diversity and variation between the public spaces of the two study areas

8.1 Physical characteristics of the study areas

New Abdali was constructed on the basis of a comprehensive plan, and thus differs from the surrounding buildings, neighbourhoods and the old city centre. The city projects and infrastructure were based on this plan, which was prepared according to modern global standards. New Abdali was produced in cooperation with accredited global and regional companies, such as Foster & Partners, Architecture Studio, Erga Group and Claudio Nardi Architects (Abdali Investment & Development, 2018). The project comprised huge buildings and high towers, which were mainly built from glass and steel (Figure 3). In a few buildings, local stone was used for the first floors to preserve the local identity to a certain extent^[2]. All designs and construction materials were imported and did not reflect the traditional urban identity of Amman. The administration aimed to establish an attractive environment for tourism, business and companies to encourage trade and business in the new central business district and place Amman on the world's regional and global maps.

The old city centre and its surrounding neighbourhoods lacked such innovative, cutting edge designs because their expansion was random and unplanned. This portion was the original and ancient part of the city. Events in the surrounding countries led to Amman's rapid expansion to accommodate the huge influxes of refugees, especially from Palestine after the 1948 Nakba. Buildings in the old city centre were not as tall as those in New Abdali and mostly consisted of two or three floors. The construction material was mainly old local stone in addition to cement and bricks (similar to most of the cities in Levant). Circassians used wood in construction.

New Abdali is surrounded by a wall that separates it from the surrounding neighbourhoods. It has six main gates with security staff. Thus, several restrictions are imposed on access to this public space. The streets were constructed in an orthogonal shape on the basis of a global standard design. By comparison, streets in the old city and the surrounding neighbourhoods of New Abdali are curved on the basis of contour lines (Zalloom, 2015). As a district of Amman, the old city centre is an open space without any restrictions, walls or entrances. However, New Abdali is a new joint venture between public and private sectors, and thus has private ownership of its public spaces.

New Abdali's modern planning and design are sustainable, contemporary and advanced in infrastructure, including the following: 1) central cooling and heating system, 2) central gas system, 3) pedestrian-friendly environment, 4) facilities for greywater and rainwater harvesting and recycling, 5) reliable high-speed Internet connections and 6) spacious parking (Abdali Investment & Development, 2018). This modern design and the versatile, integrative comprehensive plan converted New Abdali into an outstanding environment in Amman and Jordan in general. Such upmarket facilities and utilities were unavailable in the old city centre because it was built in the early period without such modern planning.

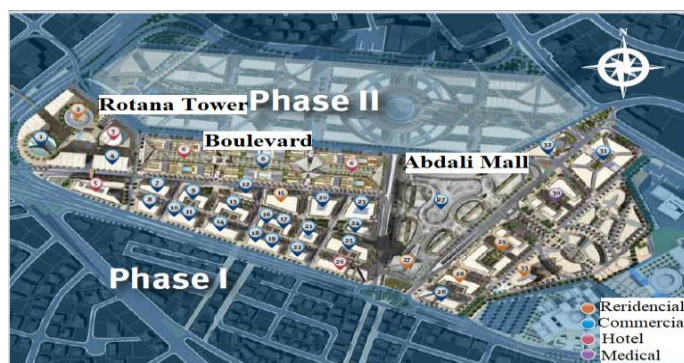


Source: Abdali Investment & Development (2018)

Fig 3: Pictures of important buildings in New Abdali with modern and various designs.

8.2 Land use in New Abdali and Al-Balad

The diversity of commodities and services in New Abdali is associated with mixed-use design in the main project plan, including residential and commercial facilities, offices, hotels and health and recreational facilities. Sets of similar uses are positioned in a specific area in the buildings and towers. On this basis, the New Abdali is distinguished from other neighbourhoods with its land-use preplanning that increased its organisation, interconnectedness and complementarity compared with the unorganised mixed-use old city, especially in Al-Balad and East Amman. In addition to various commodities and services, New Abdali includes several entertainment facilities such as modern cinemas, outdoor play areas, parks, gardens, plazas, cafés and restaurants. The Abdali Boulevard is also designed to be an outlet for visitors and to interconnect offices, hotels and residential apartments with a wide and friendly pedestrian strip. Benches and amphitheatres are also available for performances and celebrations. The project consists of a pedestrian strip surrounded by 12 buildings, six on each side (Abdali Investment & Development, 2018).



Source: Abdali Investment & Development (2018)

Fig 4: Land uses in New Abdali

The commodities and services in New Abdali are from foreign and global brands, including Turkish, German, Australian, Austrian, British, Italian, Swiss, French, Polish and American. These services are directed at a specific group of shoppers. Shop owners reported that the Boulevard offers high-class global brands and commodities. These establishments must offer cutting-edge brands with top-notch specifications (interviews with shop owners, 2018), and those that sell ordinary-quality commodities are prohibited

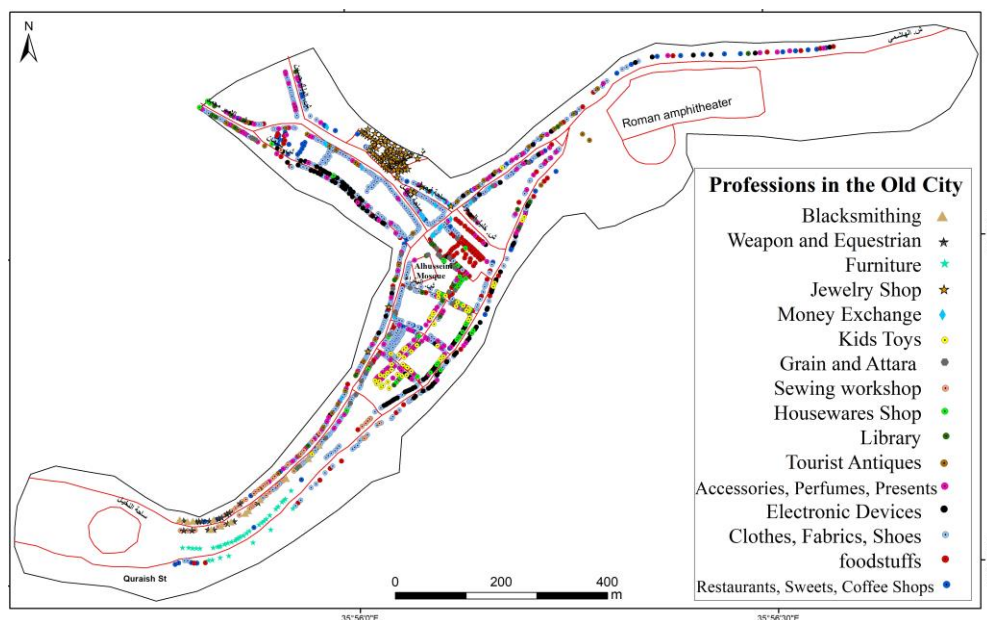
²Interview with Firas Al-Rabadi 14 Nov 2018, *ibid*.

from renting spaces in the Boulevard. New Abdali featured a free market that sells tax-free goods. The project hosts branches of international companies that offer on-hand goods and services to local residents. The Boulevard offers global electronic services. Numerous shops, restaurants and cafés are likewise available, such as McDonalds, KFC, Subway, Pizza Hut, Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts (Figure 5). Stores for international furniture, clothing and footwear, smart devices, accessories, perfumes, gifts, jewellery and confectionery are also established.



Fig 5: Several international brands in New Abdali

By contrast, the old city centre hosts a large number of markets (Figure 6), such as green groceries, butchers', bakeries, Attara and cereal shops, clothes, shoes and Jordanian and Palestinian embroidery shops (the clothes, shoes and fabrics shops comprise nearly 36% of the study area which located on the ground floors overlooking the main street). Shops for electronics, accessories, perfumes, gifts, housewares, antique shops, tourist artefacts, sweets, juices and gold are also present. Money exchange stores, cafés and restaurants, bank branches, furniture stores, equestrian tools market and a weapon store are also established. Traditional professionals, such as shoe repairers, tailors and blacksmiths, can be found in the city. Street vendors are common as part of the informal sector. Thus, the old city centre has become a market for all traditional goods and services, attracting domestic and foreign tourists. However, the emergence of modern spaces run by the private sector or in partnership with the government led to the decline of the old city centre and converted it to a favourite place for ordinary people from East Amman.



Source: Field survey and basic map in the GIS

Fig 6: Types of professions and shops in old city centre (Al-Balad)

Land uses in the middle of the old city of Amman are disorganised. Professional uses are mixed with administrative, commercial, and public spaces. Large trucks drive through to unload goods, thereby causing traffic problems and noise pollution. Commercial uses are also mixed and disorganised; no single market serves a single purpose. Specific types of goods and services apparently dominate certain streets. Such mixed-uses are regarded as one of the features of old cities because a self-sustaining city requires planning.

8.3 Demographic and economic characteristics of visitors in New Abdali and Al-Balad

Despite the short distance that divides both study areas (almost 3 km), large differences are observed between their visitors in numerous demographic, economic and social characteristics in terms of activities, interactions and behaviour. Following are the visitors' demographic and

economic characteristics.

8.3.1. Age

Both modern and traditional public spaces in the study area are dominated by young adults. The proportions of the age group 20–29 years old were 45.2% in New Abdali and 45.1% in Al-Balad. The average ages of the study respondents were 32 in New Abdali and 33 in Al-Balad (Field survey, 2018). These young adults often spend their free time in public places. By contrast, older people prefer to spend their free time either at home or in the neighbourhood, which are quieter than public spaces. The proportion of young people is higher in Jordan and in developing societies compared with a higher percentage of older people in western nations. Young people are generally susceptible to modern development. The urbanisation of Amman has made its public spaces as the only available places for the youth to spend their free time. Thus, all types of public spaces, particularly cafés and

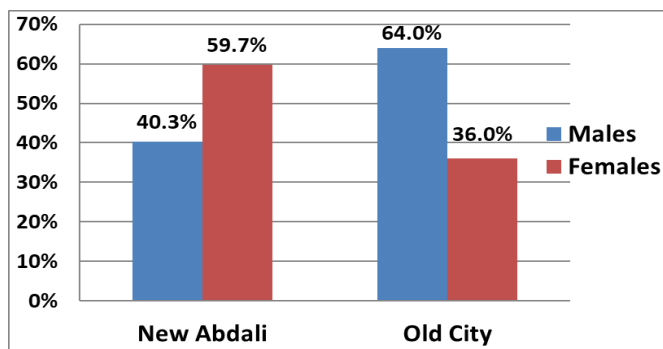
restaurants, are crowded with young people. The percentage of people aged 50 years old and above reached 11% in New Abdali compared with 9.4% in Al-Balad. The contemporary design of public spaces in New Abdali considers the needs of this older group in public spaces. However, public spaces in Al-Balad lack comfortable benches for this group, and the traffic jams place their lives in danger.

8.3.2 Gender

Lefebvre cannot be described as a feminist; however, his theoretical concepts of social dynamics of urban spaces have clear implications for gender relations. Lefebvre asserted that seclusion and segregation in the modern city reduce people’s ability to produce public space and suggested that neoliberal practices such as privatisations lead to social isolation (Beebeejaun, 2017) ^[4].

Oriental cities differ from Lefebvre’s western cities in terms of gender integration and interaction in public spaces. However, globalisation and openness are spreading worldwide. Similar to New Abdali, majority of cities in the Middle East have modern and open neighbourhoods and urban spaces where mixed interaction occurs without consideration of gender issues. By contrast, cities also retain conservative neighbourhoods with public spaces that are dominated by males. In these spaces, such as Amman’s old city centre, women barely appear due to customs, traditions and religion or because of harassment and/or abuse. Figure (7) shows that the percentage of female visitors to New Abdali is 59.7%, thereby demonstrating a strong presence in public spaces, unlike in old traditional spaces that are characterised by strong male dominance.

Gender participation in New Abdali and the absence of restrictions such as in Al-Balad or East Amman represents an aspect of Lefebvre’s model of social participation. However, this gender interaction in New Abdali comes from a single social group, that is, West Amman residents (62%). This finding demonstrates the impact of neoliberalism on social attraction and exclusion.



Source: Field Survey (2018)

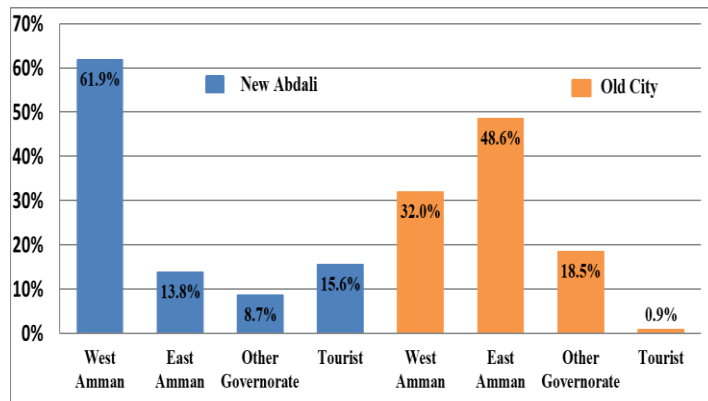
Fig 7: Percentage of gender in New Abdali and old city centre (Al-Balad)

Public spaces in Al-Balad and East Amman are predominantly conservative and dominated by males (64% of the study sample). The low percentage of women is due to the lack of cleanliness that discourages family visits or the fear of harassment. People in the eastern side of the city are conservative and disapprove of the idea of women visiting public spaces. In such areas, men are the decision makers and refuse social changes. These people spend their time in public spaces and cafés, yet disallow their women and girls

to go out on their own. Men still believe that the woman’s main role is housework and child care (International conference II, 2017). During the data collection, several girls in Al-Balad were reluctant to express their views to the male researcher and declined to answer the study questionnaires. These young girls were somehow anxious because of the common customs and traditions. In addition, majority of the females in the Downtown area were amongst their families. Conversely, women in New Abdali were willing to express their views in the interviews, and young girls were often accompanied by their families or friends.

8.3.3. Place of residence

New Abdali is located in the central area between West and East Amman. Most visitors come from the richer West Amman, a certain socioeconomic group for which the services are directed. Researchers refer to this social exclusion and isolation in which Amman’s identity is unrepresented (Qudah, 2011; Daher; 2007; Zalloom, 2015). Figure (8) shows that the percentage of visitors from West Amman is 61.9% compared with only 13.8% from East Amman. The latter were mostly interviewed in the public spaces (cost-free squares and terraces), and they come to sight-see, not shop. By contrast, the former spend their time in luxurious, international cafés and restaurants. Thus, visitors who come from West Amman are characterised by high income and strong purchasing power compared with those from East Amman. Majority of the tourists in New Abdali are from the Arab Gulf States and stay in hotels in the same area. These people can afford the high costs of accommodation and consumption due to their strong purchasing power. New Abdali is intended for a certain socioeconomic group that can afford the high costs of commodities and services. The Abdali administration maintained that the project is not established to be a public market, but rather designed as an attractive financial centre for entrepreneurs and global and regional companies. Accordingly, the goods and services in New Abdali are suitable for this group ^[3].



Source: Field Survey (2018)

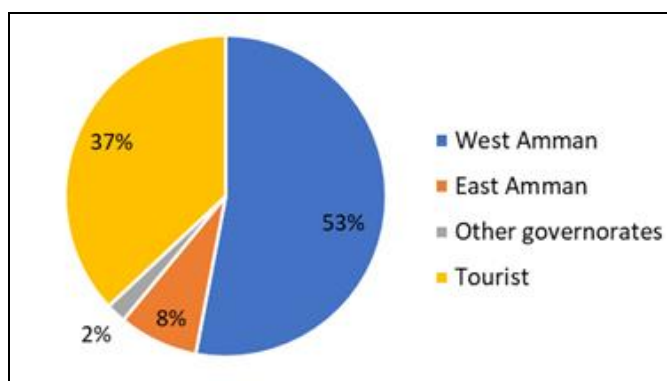
Fig 8: Place of residence of visitors in New Abdali and old city centre (Al-Balad)

Figure (8) shows that public spaces’ visitors in Al-Balad come from different areas. In general, approximately 48.6% of the visitors come from the less advantaged East Amman. During the weekends, West Amman visitors (32%) come to visit either the Roman amphitheatre or the cafés, such as

³Interview with Fahmi Al-Saifi 19 Nov 2017 ibid.

Jafra Café, Afra and Zajal, which simulate past times. Other confectionery stores and restaurants, such as Hashim Restaurant and Habibah Sweets, are popular amongst all visitors. During the weekdays, visitors to the public places are residents of East Amman and foreign tourists.

Figure (9) shows the percentage of New Abdali respondents who work abroad. Crosstabs was used to determine the largest proportion of people who work outside Jordan. The percentage of visitors in New Abdali from West Amman who work abroad is 53%, whereas that of visitors from East Amman who work abroad is only 8%. Therefore, people who work abroad regularly visit modern spaces for leisure and shopping because these places meet their desires and needs. By contrast, local residents and workers of East Amman or other Jordanian governorates rarely visit such modern posh spaces, which they consider eccentric and untraditional.



Source: Field Survey (2018)

Fig 9: Percentage of New Abdali visitors who work outside Jordan

8.3.4. Education, profession and monthly expenditure

Education, profession and monthly expenditure reflect the socioeconomic disparity between the visitors of both study areas. Below is a detailed description of these variables.

Education

During the field survey, no illiteracy or elementary education was observed amongst the respondents in New Abdali. On this basis, New Abdali is distinguished from other public spaces, especially Al-Balad and East Amman. The visitors in New Abdali speak several languages and have a high level of education. Amongst the study sample, the proportion of postgraduates is 15.6%, whereas that of undergraduates is 70.3% (Field survey, 2018). The personal interviews show that many of these visitors obtained their university degrees from overseas. Therefore, visiting the public spaces in New Abdali reminds them of places they used to visit in foreign countries. In addition, these visitors enjoy high income and strong purchasing power and can afford to buy global brands. The field survey also revealed visitors with illiteracy and elementary education in Al-Balad. In this old centre, approximately 67.2% of the visitors come from neighbourhoods of East Amman and other Jordanian governorates and are less educated compared with those from West Amman. Consequently, the educational level played a role in determining the type of visitors' preferred public spaces. People with lower educational levels often prefer traditional public spaces that are free or affordable.

Profession and monthly spending

The nature of work played a prominent role in choosing public spaces because jobs are pertinent to income and spending. Field interviews and personal observations show that the majority of the study population in New Abdali is engaged in high-paying occupations, such as managers, entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers and others. New Abdali is actually classified as a consumers' space. People need to spend large amounts of money to enjoy its services, restaurants, cafés, shopping, and entertainment. In New Abdali, the proportion of respondents who work in top occupations, such as managers and specialists, is 46.4% whereas that of students is 21.1% (Field survey, 2018).

Social stratification in Amman depends on various factors. Shteivi's study (1996) summarised these factors as job, income, property and clan. Social stratification in Jordan is based on the rapid social transition, which likewise ensued the economic development in the world. Tremendous social changes can be observed in developing societies due to neoliberalism; which presents harsh implications on the lower classes. Social classes in Amman are divided into four categories, namely, upper, middle, working and lower classes (Khawaja, 2015; Shteivi, 1996). This class distinction leads to variety of public spaces based on socioeconomic factors. A clear distinction is evident between public spaces frequently visited by residents from East and West Amman.

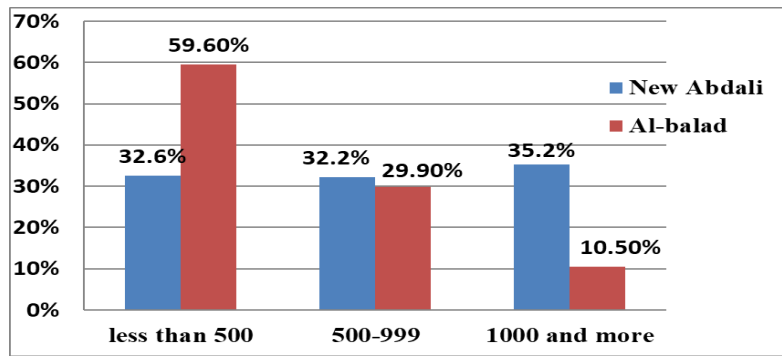
The members of the study population from Al-Balad work in jobs that differ from those who come from New Abdali. For example, fewer managerial or specialist jobs are offered and the unemployment rate is higher. The old city centre has more police officers, craftsmen and traders than New Abdali. This finding indicates that visitors from the old city centre work in low-paying jobs and may be less familiar with the different spaces because they do not travel abroad, or disapprove of public spaces in Abdali as eccentric. Most people pass through the spaces in the old city to work, shop, or meet other needs.

The results show that 41% of the visitors in Al-Balad have not visited New Abdali, and a few have not even heard about the new place. Others argued that they are not interested in the New Abdali Project because they cannot afford the luxurious commodities and services in that area.

Monthly spending

The average monthly spending per person in New Abdali is 970.6 JOD. The rate is too high, considering that students represent 21% of the study sample. A small proportion of limited-income people comes from East Amman. The monthly spending is divided into groups (Figure 10) to compare the percentages of each group and identify the exact reality of monthly spending. The proportion of the study population in New Abdali that spends >1000 JOD per month is 35.2%, whereas that in Al-Balad is only 10.5% (most of whom are tourists). A clear economic distinction can be observed between these urban spaces in Amman and the areas where visitors come from, leading to a certain type of

social attraction. This reality leads to the separation of socioeconomic classes.



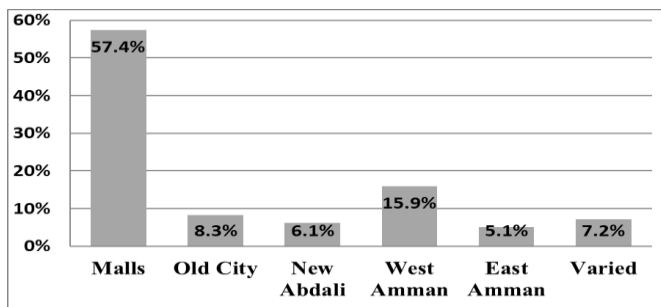
Source: Field Survey (2018)

Fig 10: Average monthly spending (in JOD) of visitors in New Abdali and in Al-Balad

By comparison, the study sample manifested that the average monthly spending of Al-Balad visitors, including foreign tourists and residents of Western Amman, is only 541 JOD, much lower than that of New Abdali visitors. Figure (10) shows that the largest proportion of public space visitors in the old city centre that spend less than 500 JOD a month is 59.6% whereas that of visitors who spend greater than 1000 JOD is only 10.5% (compared with 35.2% in New Abdali). This finding indicates that high-income earners visit modern, high-class spaces, whereas low-income ones visit traditional spaces. This scenario leads to exclusion, wherein each space has its own visitors with different characteristics from those in other spaces.

8.4. Favourite shopping spaces for visitors of New Abdali and Al-Balad

Visitors in both study areas differ from each other in terms of choosing shopping spaces due to their divergent socioeconomic characteristics and behavioural patterns. Figures (11) and (12) illustrate the preferred shopping markets for both groups.



Source: Field Survey (2018)

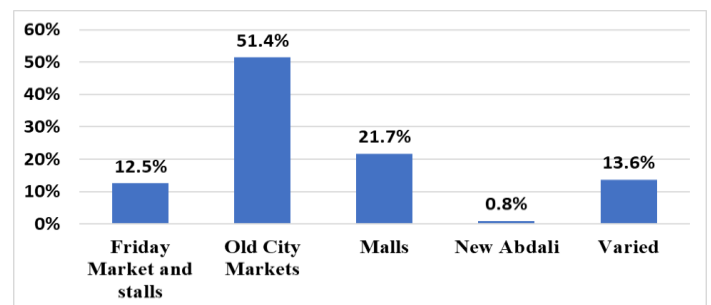
Fig 11: Favourite shopping destinations of visitors in New Abdali

Figure (11) shows that 57.4% of respondents in New Abdali favour malls for shopping. These malls have spread in Amman since the beginning of the 21st century and offer a new shopping trend caused by economic reforms and globalisation, which pave the way for foreign investment and urbanisation. The emergence of shopping malls has led to the decline of small stores. People turn away from small shops in favour of modern spaces that offer large amounts of goods, services and entertainment (Abu Ghazaleh & Abu-Ghanimeh, 2012). Interviews with researchers and concerned parties in public spaces indicate that malls have become the prominent and favourite destination for shopping and

entertainment amongst Amman residents [4].

Not everyone visits New Abdali for shopping purposes. Several people visit for the restaurants and cafés or to enjoy time in its public spaces. Other people visit because they have just heard about it and come to enjoy its panoramic views and to take pictures. The proportion of people who prefer to shop in New Abdali markets is only 6.1%, most of whom come from the Gulf countries. These people look for upmarket commodities and services, especially in the Boulevard. By contrast, the proportion of the New Abdali visitors who prefer to shop in the markets of Al-Balad is 8.3%. People who visited high-class spaces prefer to shop from high-end shopping centres that offer high-priced items and luxury goods. These people unlikely purchase cheap products favoured by residents in East Amman. Thus, two dissimilar consumer styles and cultures are observed.

Figure (12) shows that 51.4% of the respondents in Al-Balad prefer shopping from the old popular markets, which is a natural reflection of their economic characteristics. Such markets offer a large variety of cheaper products compared with those of other shopping areas. Items and services in Al-Balad are traditional, popular and affordable. Low-income earners prefer to shop from the Friday market and stalls due to lower prices compared with those of other areas.



Source: Field Survey (2018)

Fig 12: Favourite shopping destinations of visitors in Al-Balad

Figure (12) shows that a small percentage (0.8%) of people prefer to shop from the Abdali project. This small group may be due to the attraction to the diversity in Al-Balad, which has visitors from all over Amman and other Jordanian governorates, in addition to tourists. Certain social groups regularly visit the city centre because it represents Amman’s

⁴Interview with Mohamad Al-Asad, 12 Dec 2017, Centre for the Study of the Built Environment. Amman, Jordan

historic places with its ancient ruins alongside popular restaurants and cafés. However, these groups prefer shopping from modern spaces with high-class items. Thus, the groups' occasional visits to old public spaces are mainly for nostalgia.

8.5 Nature of social and cultural activities and interactions in both study areas

Interaction in public spaces through various activities has led Lefebvre to propose his social space theory (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre asserted that public space is a continuous production of social relationships (social production). That is, people produce their own spaces through relationships with others. In public spaces in the study areas, people engage in various activities, such as walking, sitting, standing, attending events and celebrations, shopping, doing business, visiting restaurants and cafés, leisure and meeting others.

New Abdali is equipped for various celebrations and activities. By comparison, Al-Balad suffers from traffic jams and lack of suitable fittings and means for running everyday activities. Thus, celebrations and activities are almost limited to the Roman amphitheatre and the Hashemite Square because the historic streets are crowded with cars. In the study areas, certain social groups interact in public spaces. New Abdali attracts residents, male and female, of the same social class, but excludes other social classes. By contrast, Al-Balad attracts people from the lower classes of East Amman. Such area is also dominated by men, and thus lacks gender equality and social integration.

The field survey shows a general satisfaction with services in New Abdali, which is constructed as an integrated project

with a comprehensive layout aimed at securing the services that visitors may need, including housing, shopping, leisure, entertainment, 25000-car parking and clean environment (Abdali, 2018). Security guards in the place make visitors feel safe and secure. Nevertheless, strict security measures prevent male access on certain days.

The results show that numerous people complain about car access to New Abdali. Approximately 51.2% of the respondents reported that they are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. This finding is a natural result of the traffic jams because New Abdali constitutes an important traffic joint in the city. The different institutions in the area make access even more difficult.

Results also show that people are more dissatisfied with transport services in the public spaces in Al-Balad than in New Abdali. Citizens and shop owners complain of lack of car parks and traffic jams, which drive people away from stores and public spaces. Vehicles predominantly use streets and pavements at the expense of pedestrians. In addition, although the Greater Amman Municipality constantly renovates the sidewalks on Faisal Street, shop and stall owners block the way with their items thereby hindering mobility at peak times. Public space visitors are also dissatisfied with health services and facilities, such as public toilets and benches. Consequently, people are discouraged from visiting the old city centre.

In terms of prices, 60.6% of respondents reported that they are satisfied and very satisfied. Al-Balad offers cheap goods and services in its various markets, especially the old traditional market. Accordingly, people come from different districts to shop in this area.

Table 1: Summary of comparison between New Abdali and old city centre (Al-Balad)

Comparative criteria		New Abdali	Al-Balad
Economic standards	Average monthly spending	970 JOD	541 JOD
	Types of goods	Global brands and branches of international companies that offer different services	Popular local and imported goods; various services; repair workshops; and non-official sales
	Types of shops	World company branches (Al-Abdali Mall) and the free market	Variety of shops and stores
	Types of jobs and land use	Residential; commercial; leisure; medical uses; hotels; organised offices; world restaurants and cafés; and various high-quality goods and commodities	Commercial uses and public spaces; mixed and unorganised commercial uses; public spaces are unclean and not well-equipped
	Types of customers	Most people have high incomes and come from West Amman and the Gulf states	Most people are from East Amman and belong to the lower classes or are tourists
	Prices	Upmarket goods and commodities, international brands	Suitable for shoppers from the general public
	Favourite shopping place	Modern malls and markets	Downtown markets
	Capital	Large capital in the project and stores; goods need large capital; and main company's terms of design and decoration	Small shops; mostly small projects; cheap products; and shop rent is cheap
	Shareholders	The project is a partnership between the public sector and private global companies; shops are mostly owned by companies and a group of shareholders	Most shops are owned by one person and run with children (sons); a few shops are run by partners
	Night economy	Stores are open late at night. Cafés, restaurants and hotels are run almost 24 h.	Except for cafés, stores close after sunset
Social standards	Visitors' place of residence	West Amman and Gulf states	East Amman, Arab and foreign tourists
	Gender interaction	Gender integration and interaction; clear female participation; and family visits to spaces	Gender disintegration with male dominance; and individual visits only
	Logos and signboards	Logos in English target specific groups	Local, popular and religious logos
	Mixed cafés	All cafés are mixed	Only tourist cafés are mixed
	Hijab	Less commitment to Hijab	More commitment to Hijab; a conservative

			society
	Visitors' job and educational level	Higher educational levels and high-income jobs	Lower education levels and low-income job
	Leisure time in public spaces	45.5% of visitors	34% of the visitors
Physical standards	Quality of construction	Towers from glass and steel	Old stone, cement and bricks
	Store size	Standard sizes based on global standards	Mixed and random sizes
	Number of floors	Huge buildings and high towers	2-3 floors
	Access	Gates and security guards and some restrictions on access	Entry for all; no restrictions
	Planning and design	Planned by international companies on the basis of a unified standard	Almost random and unplanned
	Hygiene, services and facilities	Clean environment with needed services, benches and facilities	Insufficient hygiene, services, furniture and benches
Cultural standards	Type of occasions	Christian and Islamic holidays; spring celebrations; celebrations of events from other countries (e.g. French week and Chinese week); concerts in public spaces, especially in the Boulevard	Several national and Islamic events are held in the Hashemite Square; art events are held in the Roman amphitheatre, but no fee is imposed; attendance is restricted to certain groups
	Art modes	Mostly western	Eastern traditional and conservative
	Store names	Foreign names	Local, traditional and religious
Political standards	Political activities	Non-political; economic, social and cultural activities only	Political activities (e.g. marches and demonstrations from Al-Husseini Mosque) and economic and social activities

Source: Researcher

Results

1. New Abdali and Al-Balad differ from each other in terms of planning, design, construction quality, construction material, number of floors, ownership, prices of goods, services, land uses, amenities and facilities. This study showed the presence of spatial and socioeconomic disparity between the public space visitors in New Abdali and Al-Balad. Each space is characterised by a particular group of visitors with distinct economic and social characteristics, behavioural patterns and preferences. Most visitors of New Abdali come from the urbanised West Amman and the Gulf states, whereas those of Al-Balad come from the less-developed East Amman.
2. Public space visitors in both study areas differ in terms of demographic, economic and social characteristics, including gender, place of residence, level of education, job and average monthly spending. The participation of girls and women is clearly observed in New Abdali, thereby demonstrating gender integration in urban public spaces compared with the male-dominated public spaces in Al-Balad. The average monthly spending of New Abdali visitors is 970 JOD, whereas that of Al-Balad visitors is 541 JOD. In addition, New Abdali visitors have high levels of education, particularly BAs and PhDs, and work in high-paying posts such as directors and specialists, which allow for high spending.
3. The favourite shopping destinations of New Abdali visitors are malls, which have emerged since the beginning of the 21st century and have become a landmark in West Amman. However, Al-Balad visitors favour shopping in traditional markets that are suitable for their economic situation.
4. New Abdali offers services and commodities with high-priced international brands in addition to the free market. Offices of international companies offer high-tech and non-traditional services. By contrast, Al-Balad offers affordable local and imported products for public consumers. Various workshops such as tailors, black

smitheries, and repair are also present.

5. New Abdali is a joint venture between the public and private sectors with the participation of the government and large regional and global firms. In Al-Balad, private individuals or the Islamic Waqf often own the stores, especially those around the Al-Husseini Mosque.

Recommendations

1. Public spaces in Al-Balad should be developed by providing appropriate benches and services, allocating space for walking and shopping and providing security staff to encourage females to walk around without fear of harassment.
2. The means of transport between New Abdali and Al-Balad should be developed. In fact, the 3 km that divides the two study areas is a window on modern and ancient civilisation, including urban projects and ancient ruins. Gender integration and alliance amongst different social groups should also be promoted.
3. The developmental projects of public spaces in old zones in line with private projects or joint ventures with the private sector should be supported. The youth and their role in making decisions regarding public spaces should also be given attention.

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